INTERPRETING ORALITY WITHIN THE MIZO PARADIGM: A STUDY OF SELECT NARRATIVES

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A STUDY OF SELECT NARRATIVES

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In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English of Mizoram University, Aizawl

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "**Interpreting Orality Within the Mizo Paradigm: A Study of Select Narratives**" is the bonafide research conducted by K. Vanlalthabera under my supervision. K. Vanlalthabera worked methodically for his thesis being submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy in the Department of English, Mizoram University.

This is to further certify that he has fulfilled all the required norms laid down under the M.Phil. regulations of Mizoram University. Neither the thesis as a whole or any part of it was ever submitted to any other University.

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DECLARATION

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

This is being submitted to Mizoram for the degree of **Master of Philosophy in English**

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CHAPTER I

Introduction: Orality in the Mizo Tradition

The notion of orality can be found in abundance in Mizo folk literature – in their tales, songs, chants, lullabies, proverbs, and maxims. An in depth analysis of the orality of the long lost cultural past of the Mizos is necessary to bring a better understanding of their once rich orality. Mizos have had a very rich oral narrative tradition and since time immemorial, the aspects of orality have always been a part of the Mizo identity: "Orality must be treated as a component of a specific social space with its own particularities of gender, class, sexuality, and politics" (Nayar, 222). There seems to be a deeper, yet unquantifiable connection to the people in the primary orality that is found in the oral tradition of the Mizos.

Walter J Ong has denoted that within the aspect of orality, primary and secondary orality exists within a culture. He explains that primary orality belongs to the cultures that have no knowledge of writing before the presence or occurrence of any other outside influence. Primary orality, Ong explains, is "the pristine orality of mankind untouched by writing or print which remains still more or less operative in areas sheltered to a greater or lesser degree from the full impact of literacy and which is vestigial to some degree in us all" (3). He further explains that the primary oral culture's main way of maintaining and preserving its orality is through repetitions; repetitive style of narration, folklores and folk songs that were all handed down orally. As there was no written language yet, this was the only way in which orality could be preserved, or otherwise, it would have vanished. "Since in a primary oral culture conceptualized knowledge that is not repeated aloud soon vanishes, oral societies must invest great energy in saying over and over again what has been learned arduously over the ages" (Ong, *Orality and Literacy,* 41). This automatically invites the formation of many new versions or interpretations. The original can never be known or traced as each version and interpretation gets downgraded and revised based on the oral folktales and folk songs that were handed down. Scholars laid strong emphasis on the functions of repetitions in primary oral cultures. This repeated sequence of oral narrative element does not necessarily add to its unreliability or inaccuracy. Yet, this repetition only intensifies their values and potentials for a cumulative effect on the persons listening to

it: “In repeated sequences of images, even when each is identical to the next, the aesthetic effect of the second and subsequent repetitions is never the same as the earlier experiences” (Beardsley, 524). As primary oral cultures have no fixed rules of orality the knowledge and information, folktales and folksongs that are orally transmitted are passed on in a unique way unlike the written script. Ong thus claimed that “an oral culture has no text” (33). Due to this total absence of any writing whatsoever, there can never be anything outside the thinker and narrator of the oral tales. Since there were no texts or written words to guide the thought processes in the oral tales, it enables the primary oral culture to be free to a great extent. Ong has claimed that “at every telling the story has to be introduced uniquely into a unique situation, for in oral cultures an audience must be brought to response, often vigorously. But narrators also introduce new elements into old stories. In oral tradition, there will be as many minor variants of a myth as there are repetitions of it, and the number of repetitions can be increased indefinitely” (Ong, 41-42). From here it is clear that memory and repetition play an integral part in the basis of orality. Verbal memorization is an important asset with regards to primary oral cultures.

Ong differentiates between the primary orality and secondary orality and describes it as the orality that a culture and society receive from the orality of phones, televisions and radios which depends largely on the print and writing for its existence. The secondary orality is brought about with the introduction of an outside influence unlike the primary orality. Ong states that secondary orality “is in a fundamental way an oral-aural medium. It must have sound and . . . never uses purely visual devices” (*Literacy and Orality in Our Times,* 3). In this light, the Mizo culture predominantly belongs to the primary oral culture. It has its own ways of transmitting and passing down information and knowledge through the various aspects of orality like folklore, folk songs, proverbs, and rituals. As there was no written script among the Mizos, orality had been deeply rooted among them. This significantly adds to the richness and importance of orality as it has been central within the context of the Mizos. Due to all of these, the oral narratives have always been pivotal especially in the literary context. Mizos have

numerous folk tales that have been passed down throughout history from one generation to the next through the medium of oral narratives. The ancestral Mizos passed on their knowledge and information orally to the next generation as orality was the only mode of communication. This leads to the transmission of oral interpretations and meanings from individual to individual and generation to generation: “Skill and knowledge are passed on by way of personal participation and practice. In this manner, the categories of thought are appropriated in the immediacy of person-to-person communication and interiorized as communal knowledge” (Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 41). Due to differences in narration through different oral narrators and story tellers these stories inevitably and undoubtedly have different versions. For each of these versions of oral literature, there also exists a variety of oral literary criticism. Ong gave an example of the same tale, but different versions using an example of the exact song sung by two completely different singers. He said that although a singer would sing a song to perfection, two different singers can never sing the same song exactly alike, even if they were sung in the exact tune. Such is the same for oral tales as the same tale told by brothers witnessing the same event could never be the same. Due to all of these complications the collection of oral narratives has never been easy as there is a high probability that much of it has not been formulated and transmitted or narrated in its truest sense. Simon Bronner has stated that “there is no one right interpretation of an item of folklore any more than there is but one right version of a game or song” (81). There are multiple versions which sometimes make it extremely hard to determine the version of interpretation because there is not enough, if not limited, collection of oral literary criticism. In most cases, Bronner notes that “the interpretation which is made is inevitably from the collector’s point of view. There is nothing wrong with analytic as opposed to native interpretations, but the one does not eliminate the need for the other. Unfortunately, in a few instances, the analyst-collector suggests that this interpretation is really the natives’ own interpretation” (81). Due to this, Mizo oral literature, especially the folktales are somehow regarded as mere fantasy and are believed to be useful for children’s literature only; to guide the children’s moral state and there is nothing more to it rather than a mere fable or fantasy. It has to be noted that in folktales the laws of

nature are violated in such a way that they are not improbable. Propp states that in folktales "the events are so unusual that they could never have occurred in reality and that is what makes them interesting. . . . the narrative is not based on normal characters or actions in a normal situation . . . it chooses things which are strikingly unusual" (19). Mizos have a very rich variety of oral tales, especially during the pre-Christian era. These oral tales not only resemble and represent their culture, they also represent Mizo identity.

The Mizos have very rich oral folktales, and these folktales reflect their values and dreams, traditional beliefs and practices. It has to be noted and taken into account that folktales are not mere fantasy. On the contrary, it is an autobiographical ethnography as folktales are people's own description of themselves and not by another culture or an outsider. This alone makes folktales very true and very original as well and it is a way of seeing culture "from the inside out" instead of "from the outside in" (Bronner, 55). These oral folktales have wide differences among them. Though a precise time and year is unknown and cannot be traced back with absolute certainty as to when the Mizos started telling their stories, folktales had always been told and handed down through oral narration. It is certainly clear that the Mizo "ancestors no doubt told and composed stories in the year 1350 A.D when they inhabited areas around the Run River" (Lalthangliana, 311). As no written documentation was available, many of the stories would have been lost through time and ages. The Mizos are said to have originated from Chhinlung, in China. They are said to have migrated through Burma (now Myanmar) and into the present location Mizoram, having had to cross the Tiau River. From one of the oral songs, it is evident that the Mizos had already begun to compose and sing songs before entering into Mizoram. The oral songs that existed while they resided between the Run and Tiau River runs thus:

San khuah lenpur a tla,

Mi raza tlan thier e.

A khu khual khu khawii khua maw?

San khual ka ni, Sanzawl khual ka ni.

Famine has ravished the San village,

And we are probing for food.

From which village do you visit?

I am from San, a visitor from Sanzawl. (my trans.; 62)

As 'Sanzawl' is located in the south of Chin state, district of Falam, it can be taken into perspective that orality played an important role in tracing the origins of the primary Mizo oral culture. There are oral stories that had existed before the crossing of the Tiau river that has survived till today. Many stories are told and narrated even after the "cross-over" (311). Judging from the names of rivers, mountains, terrains, environment and style and mode and themes of storytelling it may be noted that folktales have existed even before the crossing of Tiau River. However, there is a drastic change in the narratives that existed in the pre and post Christian era. The oral folk songs and tales that were composed before and after the advent of Christianity in Mizoram are very different as colonization brought a huge and undeniable change. The oral tales and oral narratives underwent a drastic change with the coming of the Welsh missionaries on 11th January, 1894 as Christianity and literacy were introduced to the Mizos. The primary oral culture that was once untouched by other foreign culture underwent a change and brought an irreversible, yet inevitable major shift. Changes can be seen in the composition, the mannerism as well as the new set of focus which gave the Mizos a new form of narratives and tales. According to Paula Mc Dowell, "once literacy is introduced, *primary* orality disappears" (171). This is true as the primary orality of the Mizos was transformed by colonialism which changed and shaped the psyche and the orality of the Mizos through the medium of the narratives. "The notion of orality and the oral tradition has yet to find an ethos that is given serious perspective in Mizo domains. . . . religion and its power . . . thus succeeded in confining oral narratives to the background, almost as an insignificant other" (Pachuau, 172).

Colonialism brought with it a decided sense of the resistance and censorship of the 'old' culture. Not only that but it also ingrained the belief of using and clinging to the 'old' orality as almost being close to savagery or a way of reverting back to savagery; the old customs and form of storytelling or compositions and narratives were taught and thought to be an anti-Christian practice, while leading people away from modernity and Christianity. Due to this, there was resistance of the pre-existing form of oral literature that the Mizos had passed down from their ancestors through generations. The oral literature, especially the composition of songs, underwent a setback not only due to the belief that oral literature was tantamount to animism, but also due to the introduction of the written language introduced by the Christian missionaries - J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge. Oral literature began to be slowly and gradually replaced by the written script. Oral compositions and oral performances can be said to diminish and have its decline with the introduction of the written language. Although this is the case, it has to be noted that "oral expression can exist and mostly has existed without any writing at all, writing never without orality" (Ong, *Orality and Literacy,* 8). He clearly asserted his opinion upon the difference on orality and writing and stresses upon the difference between literacy and orality. In *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World* Walter J. Ong denoted that "the scholarly world has newly awakened to the oral character of language and to some of the deeper implications of the contrast between orality and writing" (5).

Some of the Mizo tales bring out the myriad instances of man-animal relationships in the oral narratives. As the Mizos have always been a predominantly tribal community a number of animal imagery have been drawn in the aspects of their oral tales. "Oral cultures tend to use concepts in situational, operational frames of reference that are minimally abstract in the sense that they remain close to the living human life world" (Ong, 49). Most of the oral folktales have a close connection with that of nature and the world of the animals. In terms of the oral perspective there is a significant focus on the animal world as far as Mizo orality is concerned. However, with the advent of Christianity these tales were all considered as mere fantasy and were cast aside as

mythical stories that were told orally by 'savages'. Man and animals had lived in close harmony for a long while according to the oral Mizo lores. From the tales, it is denoted that the Mizos had existed in tandem with animals, birds and beasts. Tales like 'Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi', 'Chemtatrawta' and 'The War Between the Creatures of the Air and the Creatures of the Land' are animal-themed tales. From these tales, it can be assumed that the Mizo ancestors lived in close harmony and coexisted with the animal world as well as with nature itself. From the oral tales, readers can find that there was a peaceful and uninterrupted coexistence of men with animals as well as nature. "The concept of identity formation within the pre-colonial era was significantly inter-linked with that of nature and animals, as well as human beings" (Pachuau, 183). A fine example of this can be seen with the treatment that was given to the slain animals, especially the tigers. Tigers, then, were not even called by their common name but were given some other respectable name *sapui*[1] or *sakawl*[2]. Even when animals were slain and killed in a hunt, well administered ceremonies known as *ai*[3] followed it. *Ai* used to be performed when animals like the bear, deer, eagle, the king cobra were killed. *Salu lam zai*[4] was performed to celebrate a successful hunt which was accompanied by the beating of gongs and drums of the *dar bu*[5] which too are a very important part of Mizo orality. There are varieties of *ai* which differ according to the slain animal. Some of the chants of *ai* were accompanied with the beating of drums and gongs. One of the chants runs thus:

Ami ngul maw zing zawk, a sa ngul maw,

Hrualhrui an ban kherh chiai e, kan tual hmaiah

Hrualhrui an ban kherh chiai e, kan tual hmaiah

A zik e thim hman love, a tualto ang.

Is that the *ai* of an enemy or an animal?

They hung on the porch our house.

They hung on the porch our house,

The branches planted never dry. (my trans.; 30)

These are pride chants to proclaim the skill and prowess of a hunter in killing the wild and dreaded animal. Hunters took great pride in their ability to kill these animals, and they denote thusly through the oral chants.

The whole community joined in these ceremonies and the events were celebrated with much enthusiasm. Animals such as gayal, deer and other wild animals were also respected as they were the main source of meat. This is why possessing and having plenty of the skulls of such animals were believed to be a symbol and sign of honour and respect by the Mizos. Skulls of such animals could be seen in various houses and such a man was considered to be honourable and respectable. A man was considered to have a respectable status and great hunting skills if his house displayed plenty of the said trophies. Besides, the tiger there were other animals that had special significance. A stag, barking deer, bear, wild boar and gayal were considered special animals. If they were hunted down and killed, the hunter was considered to be a special hero and called *thangchhuah*[6]. Killing of all the animals mentioned above is considered necessary to enter into *pialral*[7]. Killing of a king cobra or an eagle or an elephant besides the mentioned animals was considered to be even greater.

However, all of these chants and celebrations were resisted against, with the coming of the missionaries. Animals had lesser significance in the lives of the Mizos. All attention and focus were turned upon the Almighty Creator, the one true God, who created all living and non-living creatures. As a result, love and respect for animals and nature were shifted to God in the post Christian era. This resulted in the censorship, decline and resistance of the orally chanted *hlado*[8]. This form of orality is considered to be one of the oldest forms of orality among the Mizos. It is a very important oral tradition of the Mizos after a kill to commemorate as well as rejoice over a slain animal on a hunt and a game. *Hlado* had a very important significance especially among the Mizo skilled and elite hunters. It was considered to be an extremely important part of

the hunt. Anyone who had had great skills in hunting and shooting of animals were considered to be automatically skilled and an expert in chanting the ferocious *hlado*. This form of orality needs to be chanted at the killing of certain animals specifically called *sa hrang*[9], namely – an elephant, bear, wild gayal, mithun, tiger, leopard, panther, and a wild boar. The frequent chanting of *hlado* would give the hunter a better status and respect among his peers as he would be considered respectable and fearsome. Such is the place that the oral *hlado* holds in the hearts of Mizos in the pre Christian era. Each slain animal has their own *ai* song performed when their death was celebrated in the form of the oral *hlado* (hunter's cry). The *hlado* of an elephant, which was considered to be one of the greatest achievements, runs thus:

Sai lian e, khek chel chul law, hmingtha Lalngova than nan e,

Chunglum e, phaikip tlantu thangah pai mawi fungki tial e.

Chung tur e, sa vung vung law, ni hnuai, valpan a sul kan zui

Sai lian e, kan kaihpen e, val tha keini zui u law.

The loud groaning pain of the elephant intensifies the pride of the hunter,

It shall wait and glorify the hunter in the after-life.

Oh sun, glow hot

As we trace the great elephant's tracks. (my trans.; 45)

These oral chants used to be performed to commemorate the great hunt. The hunter rejoiced over the kill and took great pride to be able to perform this form of orality.

This feature of orality took a back seat in the post Christian era. With the passage of time it was soon forgotten as it was rarely or no longer practiced among the hunters and warriors. Songs and folklore about the beauty of nature and animals were turned to Biblical themed songs and narratives. This is because the Biblical stories spread deep roots in the psyche of the Mizos. The concept of the power of the pre Christian oral

narratives was remarkably different from the narratives after colonisation, where Christianity is the main focus and has thus managed to relocate beliefs and ideas that were once associated with the power of the folklore of the pre Christian era. All of the earlier oral tales took a back seat as they were censored in the post Christian era; and resistance began to take place. As Leela Gandhi pointed out "hybridity generally refers to the destabilising of colonised culture" (136). Thus, there was hybridity in terms of the Mizo belief system with the Christian faith and religion, and also with the Mizo narratives, and with the Biblical narratives.

Shape shifting occurred in many oral narratives. Shape shifters varied from man to animal and vice versa. Transition to and from another dimension or another world, as well as the interaction of man's world or the world of the living with the spirit world and the world of the dead are often seen in the Mizo oral narratives of the pre Christian era. Some of the tales where there are animal-human or human-animal transformations are 'Mauruangi' which is a tale where Mauruangi's own mother "had turned into a catfish" (Pachuau, 71). 'Ngaitei' is a tale where Ngaitei's father had transformed into a giant water snake. 'Kungawrhi' is a tale in which the only daughter of a poor man is married off to a *keimi*[10]. All of these have existed within the domains of the oral folktales. From these tales alone it can be assumed and believed that the Mizos had lived in close contact with the animal world, to the extent that there were beings that were capable of even exchanging their physical form. 'Kelchawngi', 'Kawrdumbela', 'Sichangneii', and 'Vanchungnula' were tales that had the interaction of human beings with other beings from another world dimension. Besides these tales, there were plenty of other tales that were told orally as well as those that survived in the written form. In terms of contact with another world, an oral form of narrative that became lost with the advent of Christianity is *thla koh*[11]. This aspect of orality involves the chanting of specific oral incantation to call the spirit of a person which had deserted him. These evil spirits are supposed to be particularly afraid of anybody bearing the title of *pu*[12]. For this reason the maternal uncle (*pu*) was always chosen to call out and chant. He would go to the forest with a spear and a gourd, and when he reached the spot where it is presumed the

spirit is being detained he called its name aloud and sounded his gourd. The spirit therefore is believed to come to him, and the maternal uncle would immediately head for home while telling the spirit to walk in front of him. As soon as the two reached home the sick person began to recover, and eventually got well again. The chant used for calling of such a spirit was a dangerous act, for, if the *pu* exhibited, or even felt, the slightest fear, not only would the sick man's spirit escape from him, but the evil spirits would seize him and make him their prisoner in place of the spirit. Such types of acts and chants were strongly considered to be the works of the devil and the evil spirits, after colonialism and the advent of Christianity. With the advent of Christianity, all these chants and tales were considered to be the works of the devil, who was believed to be trying to snatch the converts away from Christianity. Therefore, these tales were resisted upon as they were thought to be tales about contact and communication with beings from other dimensions, who were thought to be the descendants and worshippers of the Devil. Therefore, the oral compositions, the awareness and the practices of these oral narratives were abruptly stopped altogether. Narratives were composed and focused wholly according to the Biblical beliefs and teachings in the Christian era: "the *Bible* became in coherent ways the legitimate parameter within the post-Christian ethos" (Pachuau, *Orality*, 184). This continues till this day, in Mizo literature, art, song composition and film making.

Due to all of these strong resistances and censorships, a change of opinion took place among the Mizos. Their legendary characters, heroes and strong men of the oral narratives like Mualzavata, Thuamchaka were considered obnoxious, irrelevant and close to being devilish. Their incredible god-like strength and popularity that were once admired and celebrated among the Mizos were strongly believed to be the works of evil energies and evil forces. There grew a strong feeling of fear and resentment towards these beings. Therefore, these types of tales were no longer rendered orally and were no longer passed around or handed down anymore. Due to this, their legend and legacy soon became almost forgotten and lost with the passage of time. The psychodynamics of orality among the Mizos entirely formed and created their thought processes and

creative capabilities. Their oral verbatim and their pre-literate expressions were all contained within the structures of their existing orality. They could not think or form ideas beyond their pre-existing form of orality. However, the advent of Christianity and post colonialism had a deep impact among the Mizos in terms of the formation and creation of ideas, as well as upon their psyche. This process lead to a consistent negation of the cultural oral myths. Their ancestral roots and cultural beliefs were almost negated and completely converted by colonization. There occurred a very close rejection of the oral heritage by the Mizos. Creative compositions from the post-colonial period were mostly Bible based. This makes it all imperative for hybridity to occur in the Mizo narratives. Due to this, hybridity can be said to be inevitable among the Mizos in the post Christian era. Thus, the Mizo culture was merged with Christianity while the power dynamic was not entirely shifted but hybridised. "Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects" (Bhabha, 159).

Mizos had numerous oral tales about the after-life before the arrival of the British administrations and the Christian missionaries. Death and the treatment of the dead was, and still is, taken very seriously among the Mizos. It was and always had been, till this day, treated with special care and attention. Therefore, it is not surprising that Mizos have rich oral stories and tales that deal with the after-life. The tales encompasses the process and journey one had to undergo in order to enter and be accepted into the world of the dead. Some of the oral narratives and tales that talk about the abode of the dead are 'Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana' where the two lovers Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana turned into stars after they both died; 'Tualvungi leh Zawlpala' where the lovers Tualvungi and Zawlpala could interact between the world of the living and the world of the dead; 'Tlingi leh Ngama' where the lovers Tlingi and Ngama turned into butterflies at the end after they both died. Not only that, but the Mizos also have oral narratives that denote that as a soul is about to enter into *mitthi khua*[13], it had to pass through a certain place called *Pawla kawt*[14]. Pawla is said to have a huge catapult and he would shoot any man who had not slept with a woman. This is why, even unmarried

young men attempted to sleep with the most number of women in their lifetime. Therefore, Mizo men in the past attempted to sleep with plenty of women in order to avoid Pawla's punishment in the afterlife. On the contrary Pawla would shoot any woman who had not slept with any man in their lifetime. Oral tales denote that Pawla used to shoot the people who were found unworthy to pass through his area with fearsome huge pebbles which was the size of an egg. Mizos were extremely respectful of these oral stories that had been passed down for ages. As it has been passed down for so long, they could not help but believe in these oral tales. The tale further denotes that the shot by Pawla could cause serious pain and terrible damage to the shin, and it could cause an infection for at least three years or more in the after-life. Therefore, young men would try to sleep with as many women as they could even as women tried to remain virgins before marriage. There is a contradictory situation here in this oral tale which automatically solicits forced and unwanted sex on women. This led to cruelty, domestic abuse, physical as well as psychological abuse upon women, all due to the orality that had been passed down.

All these changed with the aftermath of post colonialism. As the Mizo belief in the after-life is inherently different from the Christian belief, Christianity changed the mode of thinking and belief. Mizos began to reject their cultural belief of the after-life and the existence of either *mitthi khua* or *pialral* or Pawla and his terrible punishments regarding the passage to the abode of the dead. Moreover, they resisted the pre-existing idea of the process one had to undergo in order to enter the abode of the dead. Mizo women especially were liberated in plenty of ways after the advent of Christianity in Mizoram, as there were lesser sexual assaults and abuses that existed due to their primitive belief and fear of the after-life. The pre-existing oral tales were once a tool of enslavement while trapping the women to the pleasures and lusts of men. The complications that the oral tale of Pawla and his catapults had caused on the lives of the Mizos made it easier for them to be convinced and influenced by the after-life teachings of the Bible as it was a much more pleasurable, pleasant and beautiful place with no more suffering. Women were much more safer from sexual violence, as well as any

other misdemeanour and mistreatment that they had once faced before the advent of Christianity. Christianity had played a major role in the formulation of the new culture and belief systems of the Mizos. With the introduction of Christianity, the power dynamics of folktales underwent new perspectives among the Mizos. The power of orality that holds fast the Mizo identity and culture was dramatically changed with post colonization. The concept of hybridity has occurred in many post-colonial societies. Loomba has denoted "one of the most important themes of postcolonial theorizing, as we have already seen, has been its emphasis on the hybridity of cultural identifications and the instability of dominating cultural paradigms" (343).

The history and culture of the Mizos are oral in perspective. These oral sources include their tales, songs, rituals, superstitions, and proverbs. Another form of orality practiced by the Mizos that came to be done away with the arrival of Christianity were the rituals, prayers or devotions of the ancestral Mizos. They used to appease the spirits of the big trees and big rocks which they believed were possessed by spirits. They had mountain gods known as *Tlang Lal*[15] and they prayed to Lengthuampuii, a deity, who was believed to be the god of the Mawmrang mountain. Their prayer and chant runs thus:

Sailo Laldanga chang rel a sual ngai lo,

Kelchalpa lu tar mawi kan hlan chhuahtlangah;

Dam nan lengthuampuii kan bia e.

"The Chief Laldanga's decisions are seldom wrong. We offer the head and blood of a goat to thee. We offer our prayers to Lengthuampuii for our health" (my trans.; 51).

These oral rituals were performed from memory, which deserves a closer study. As they were performed orally and only through memorization, there was no possibility that they were performed in one manner only. This is why oral memorization became lost with time. Ong gave an example of this with reference to the Bible. He stated that when Jesus told his disciples at the Last Supper to "Do this in memory of me", the

Christians, after he was gone, continued to render this as an act of worship because of his directive. But Ong claimed that the exact words of Jesus were lost with time as they "do not appear in exactly the same way in any two places where they are cited in the New Testament. The early Christian Church remembered, in pretextual, oral form" (64). To add to this decline is the abolishment and censorship of such rituals. Thus, oral performances and oral verbatim that were recited from memory underwent a decline, with or without the presence of Christianity.

The Mizos during the pre-colonisation prayed to some big trees that they believed and feared to have spirits. Some of their oral rituals and prayers had been mentioned earlier. It has to be noted that the prayers to the spirits were not in any way a kind of worship. On the contrary, they were prayed to, by the Mizos in order to avoid the anger and wrath of the spirits that were believed to have lived inside the trees and rocks. Due to this they would often appease these spirits, not as a form of worship but as a kind of agreement with the spirits. All of these changed in the post Christian era as the oral prayers were shifted to the Christian God. They started praying to the Christian God and their fear of the spirits and the after-life were gone. Thus, censorship of the old tales took place and a resistance of the old traditions, beliefs and customs were in place. Even without censorship, the oral verbatim and oral memorization would have been lost as it differed in variation. This is because narrators, ritual performers, chanters of prayers would narrate what audiences would tolerate and listen to. Due to the advent of the Christian religion in Mizoram after 1894, there has been an inherent loss of the status of oral myths within the Mizo community in the post-colonial dynamics. There is a demystification of the oral past and histories. Colonisation has brought with it a change in the creation and narration of oral tales. Every aspect of the new narratives have become dominantly Christianised. Christianity played a major role in the resistance and censorship of the oral tales of the pre Christian era. In terms of censorship religion and power are seemingly in tandem with regards to orality within the Mizo paradigm.

One of the most noticeable aspects among the oral narratives that had been lost with the passage of time is the warriors' chanting of *bawhhla*[16]. It is a very important

and significant part of Mizo orality which the Mizos often sung at the defeat of an enemy in a battle. To explain this, one would have to revert back to the introduction of Christianity in Mizoram. Christianity brought with it a much awaited peace among the Mizo tribes and villages. Therefore, communal and inter-village wars and battles slowly vanished. Warring villages and neighbours and surprise attacks to gain and enlarge one's own territory slowly vanished. This resulted in the decrease in warring villages, looting and killing of other villages. As lesser wars were fought, so were the numbers of killing of one's enemies. With the advent of Christianity, there were no more raids and there were no more wars. No wars also meant no victors which also meant no more slain enemies in a battle. This resulted in the downfall of the oral tradition known as *bawhhla.* Some of the most popular *bawhhla* sung by the Mizos are denoted thus:

Arsi e, thlapa chaw law, ralvawn zal ang ka duhin e,

Hawikawm e, thanglung thawn e, ka do rimnampa ka tlun e.

Keichu e, ka sentet e, chhawn fual ka laihrui ah nak e,

Tlang rawn e, sial khaw tun e, thangchem ka pun mi roh ngai e.

"My friends, I have fought under the stars and have killed our enemy. My name too had been composed by my grandfather to be respected and be above the rest" (my trans.; 97).

These were sung in honour of the warriors who had killed and taken the severed heads of their enemies in a battle. Their victory was always enthusiastically celebrated by the whole community. The return of the warriors to their villages was celebrated with the participation of almost all of the villages. Their return was celebrated with the use of oral instruments like the gongs and drums and were received with many other oral chants and songs that were all in praise and in awe of the great warriors. Moreover, fearful and frightening songs and chants used to be sung and chanted in a bid to put fear into the minds of the enemies. They would often engage in fierce oral battles before, during or after a fight to provoke the enemy either into submission or to ridicule the

enemy as much as they could. All of these oral traditions were lost with time as peace was brought in the post Christian era. There was no longer a need to chant *bawhhla* (warriors' chant) anymore.

Ong states that "oral people commonly think of names as conveying power over things" (33). This is because in the primary oral culture names are believed to give power over the one that bears the name. The word or sound produced by the calling out a name had a lot to do with the identity of the people in a primary oral culture. The oral folks "think of names as labels, written or printed tags imaginatively affixed to an object named" (Ong, 33). In terms of names and naming, orality has very close connection among the Mizos. To delve deep into this, we might need to go a bit further into the history of the Mizos, particularly the abolishment of chieftainship among the Mizos. With the advent of Christianity and colonialism in Mizoram there came the abolishment of chieftainship in Mizoram which had been practiced since the beginning of the Mizo society. Thus, 'power' was shifted and given to the 'common' people in the post Christian era in terms of the naming system. This effectively and immediately had a huge impact on the naming of the new born babies among the Mizos. A name which is a very important part of one's identity could now be composed more freely. Earlier, every name had to be composed so that it would not resemble or be close to the Mizo chieftainship. With Christianity, the power dynamics was shifted in terms of identity, particularly in naming new born babies. They could now be given names that were in celebration of the Almighty God.

Another form of oral narratives that were lost and censored in the post Christian era is the chants and songs sung by the *bawl pu*[17]*, sadawt*[18] *and puithiam*[19]. They would often compose chants and sing songs to heal sickness or disease. Their chants were called *thiam hla*[20] and *dawi hla*[21]. One of the *thiam hla* known as *Sakung*[22] goes thus:

Sain aw ka sahrial lo chhang ang che,

Sakunga thovin ka sahrial lo chhang ang che.

"Spirits of *sa* hear me. Pay heed to my prayers that I have made with the *sakung*" (my trans.; 127).

A pig would be sacrificed in this ritual. Some of the other ritual practices that the Mizos used to perform their prayers which involved oral incantations were *Chawng*[23], *Dawi no chhui*[24], *Lasi Khal*[25], *Chung*[26], *Hnuaipui*[27], *Sedawi*[28].As the Mizos believed that sickness and diseases were caused by the evil spirits, they would often compose and chant these oral incantations.

Mizos had many numerous other sacrifices which have their own oral chants. Animal-blood sacrifice rituals often followed these chants. Some of the sacrifices were *Zunthiang*[29], *Daibawl*[30], *Bawlpui*[31], *Hrilawn*[32], *Lo-hman*[33], *Kawngpui siam*[34], *Thlahual*[35], and *Hmarkhal*[36].These oral forms of narrative was lost with time as the Christian era brought a halt to these rituals and oral chants. They were forbidden by the missionaries as it was strictly against the Christian beliefs. Christianity taught that all of these practices as well as chants was a way a reverting back to savagery and censored it all together. "Censors worried about anti-Christian issues in stories also are troubled by the psychological aspects of fantasy. They seem to worry that the escapism of fantasy leads children into the occult or Satan" (Tunnell, 607). Other than the oral chants, these types of rituals often include the usage of drums and gongs. Drums and gongs too play a very important part of a primary oral culture. Beardsley even called it as the "talking drum". Drums and gongs were a huge part of orality among the Mizos and is almost undeniably important as much as any other form of orality: "the talking drum is not merely an element in some primary oral cultures but is also in fact a kind of paradigm of primary orality" (Beardsley, 522). He does not end there and further elucidates that "the drums exemplify and often informally exaggerate the characteristics of the oral lifeworld" (522). It inevitably goes hand in hand with the different oral performances of the primary oral cultures. As gongs were very important and strongly related to the Mizo oral traditional practices, the possession of one was considered a must for all families, be they poor or rich. The Mizo traditional gongs are *Darkhuang*[37], *Darbu*[38]*and*

Darmang[39]. Some of the most popular *darbu* songs that Mizos sung in their dances run thus:

Kal rawh, kal rawh, sai kawl rawh,

Tlawng dung zawh rawh, Hau rawn chil rawh, Pawi chil rawh.

"O elephant, carry on. Carry on up the banks of the river Tlawng and trample the Hau and the Pawi clan" (my trans.; 99).

Liando te unau, unau, dar ze nge in tum in tum?

Dar zeng mah kan tum lo ve, Liando bur chhe te kan tum kan tum.

Liando, what gong are you playing with your brother?

We play no special gong, just the trifle one we own. (my trans.; 99)

Darkhuang is the biggest and costliest of all the Mizo gongs. Due to its higher price, it could not be owned by the common man but only by the chiefs and the rich village elders. It was mainly used in the more important activities and celebrations like *lu lam*[40], *mitthirawp*[41], *and khuangchawi*[42].

The second type of Mizo traditional gong is the *Darbu*, which is a set of three different types of gongs that differ in size and sound. This type of gong is the most commonly used gong. It is mainly used in different festivities and different dances. As it is the most popular gong, the gong itself had its own songs and chants about it where people took pride in the possession of such gongs.

Duh leh kan Mangai darpui chu kal rawh se,

A aia tha Liando darpui tha hmingthang,

Kan lal lai runah a tum vung vung.

Though we do not have the gong of Mangaia,

We own the good and famed gong of Liandoa,

It is placed majestically at the house of our beloved chief. (my trans.; 83)

The third and smallest type of gongs of the Mizos is the *Darmang*. This gong had no particular usage of its own. This type of gong is only used as an instrumental gong to aid and give support to the other gongs when they were played simultaneously. Beardsley stated that "The drum talk may even be said to move in the direction of chirographic culture. For the sounds ... are withdrawn from immediate contexts of actions and events, in which people directly confront each other" (523).The usage of drums and gongs accompanied by oral performances were performed in almost every festival. Some of the most popular festivals of the Mizos are *Pawl Kut*[43], *Chapchar Kut*[44], and *Mim Kut*[45]. Sometimes these festivals could last for days.

However, though the drums and gongs played a very important part in the orality of the Mizos it declined in the post Christian era. They were both abolished and censored by the missionaries as it was believed to be connected with benevolent evil spirits. Songs and chants could not be performed well in the absence of it. The beat and rhythm of the drums and gongs were almost a part and parcel of the Mizo songs and chants. It has been stated that the Mizos loved to sing; but songs could not be sung well in the absence of drums. Though the drums and gongs carried many of the features of the Mizo oral culture, it was nevertheless censored by the missionaries. For a long time especially, the drums were censored by the Christians. Due to this, the usage of drums almost did not survive and were lost with the passage of time as it was not allowed to be used in the Churches at the inception of Christianity in Mizoram. As it had a very immense and deep connection with the Mizo orality, it was finally accepted by the colonizers and it was later on brought into the Churches. This revived and awakened Mizo orality. Thus hybridity of the Mizo traditional orality with that of Christianity took place as song compositions were mostly Christianised and were mostly sung in Churches.

With the introduction of Christianity, the power dynamics of folktales and songs have had a whole new different perspective among the Mizos. The power of orality that holds fast the concept of Mizo identity and culture was dramatically changed with post colonization. The concept of hybridity was seen to occur in post-colonial societies as a result of the Christian religion among the Mizos. This can be seen in how songs and poems were composed. Song compositions which were never before in association with God were Christianised, and sung. Even when a person is dead, Christian songs would be sung at the funerals and ceremonies to lament the dead as well and to ease the pain and suffering of the families that underwent the loss of their beloved family or friend. Thus, a new form of oral tradition was born among the Mizos and it became a very important part of Mizo identity. Today, it is impossible, to imagine going to *khawhar in*[46] without the oral traditional *khawhar zai*[47] being sung at such places. These songs are incomplete without *hla chang hril*[48] which itself is a very important part of the primary Mizo orality that the Mizos had practiced for so long. This is a huge step towards the promotion of orality as the Mizos had been known to be a tribe that love to sing and compose songs. It has also been claimed that composing and singing of songs is one of the many hallmarks of the Mizos. Thus, Christianity played a huge role in building and enriching the oral tradition and oral compositions and performances of the Mizos. Thus, Christianity changed the oral tradition of singing and song composition. Idioms and phrases were newly coined and many new language and speeches were born in the post Christian era.

There is a very strong interrelationship between orality and folklore with particular reference to the Mizo culture in the pre-colonial and pre Christian era. According to Walter J. Ong, orality is not an ideal and it has never been till date: “to approach it positively is not to advocate it as a permanent state for any culture. Literacy opens possibilities to the world and to human existence unimaginable without writing” (Ong, 171). This is true of Mizo oral tradition because the transition from orality to writing took place only after the advent of the Welsh missionaries. The missionaries after colonisation introduced and taught the Mizos the written script and thus, there was a

sudden transition from the long held oral expression to writing. After colonisation, there was a complete transformation in the oral literature of the Mizos, as it can be said to have stopped suddenly. The post-colonial Mizo society saw the transformation of a seemingly tribal community into a community that became gradually literate as well as educated. Due to all these there was a transformation of a tribal community of animism to Christianity. With the introduction of literacy by the missionaries, literacy along with Christianity was prevalent among the Mizos and there is thus a hybridity interrelating both the oral and the written domains. There has been a sense of embracing both the Christian values and placing them in the context of the post-colonial domain while merging oral culture and Christianity.

GLOSSARY

[1]Tiger. ‘Sapui’ is used by Lushais instead of ‘sakei’. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 404.

[2]A tiger or leopard. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 400.

[3]To kill a domestic animal and perform a ceremony over or for a wild creature killed 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 protecting him from evil consequences during this life. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 4.

[4]A dance and song accompanied with feast held to celebrate success in the chase, and to *ai* the head of the animal killed. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 402.

[5]A set of three different sized gongs. Each has a different tone and they are used in Lushai dancing, singing, etc. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 105.

[6]The title given to a man who has distinguished himself by killing a certain number of different animals in the chase, or by giving a certain number of public feasts; the possession of this title is regarded by the Lushais as a passport to *Pialral* or Paradise. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 447.

[7]Paradise in erstwhile Mizo belief. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher’s Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 220.

[8]The hunter’s cry or chant which is raised directly when a wild animal has been killed in the chase, and also on the road home, and before entering the village. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 148.

[9]A term applied to the larger and more dangerous wild animals, especially to those which are hunted. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 398.

[10]A mythical tiger-man, a person possessing the magic power of changing himself or herself at will into a tiger, and back again into a human being. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 242.

[11]To call the spirit of a person which has deserted him and is detained somewhere in forest by the evil spirits. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 476.

[12]A maternal uncle. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 376.

[13]Abode of the dead. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher's Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 192.

[14]The place or space in front of Pawla's house. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 241.

[15]A spirit that resides and lords over the mountains. K. Zawla, *Mizo Pi Pute Leh An Thlahte Chanchin* [*History of Mizo Ancestors and Their Descendants*]. Lengchhawn Press, 2000, p. 51.

[16]The warriors' chant or cry; the chant or cry raised by warriors when returning from a successful raid. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 31.

[17]An exorcist; a priest. James Herbert Lorrain. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 33.

[18]A private exorcist or priest, especially such as are employed by ruling chiefs. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 397.

[19]An exorcist. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 371.

[20]An incantations, an invocation, an exorcism, a spell, a charm, a mantra. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 459.

[21]Verse forms of invocations and incantations, chanted by the traditional priest and witch while performing rituals. Laltluangliana Khiangte, *Mizos of North East India: An Introduction to Mizo Culture, Folklore, Language & Literature*. L.T.L Publications, 2008, p. 65.

[22]The name of a sacrifice that involves the killing of pigs. B. Lalthangliana, *Mizo Culture*.Gilzom Offset, 2013, p. 127.

[23]The name of a sacrifice and three days' feast and dancing given by a single indicidual or a family; the first of a series of sacrifices and feasts to ensure entrance to the Lushai Paradise. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 65.

[24]The name of a sacrifice. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 106.

[25]The name of one of the 'khal' class of sacrifices offered to restore good fortune or skill in hunting which the offerer once enjoyed but has lost. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 286.

[26]The name of a sacrifice. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 96.

[27]The name of the sacrifice needed to appease the dreaded evil Hnuaipui. The owner of a sow may not kill it unless he offers it in sacrifice to this spirit. Should the spirit be offended nothing short of a sow which has had three litters of pigs will satisfy him, and even then he is said to kill and carry off the spirits of three human victims before he is

appeased. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 175.

[28]The name of two of the series of sacrificial public feasts given by aspirants for the distincion of *thangchhuah.* James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 412.

[29]The name of a sacrifice consisting of a dog which is offered outside the village and cooked there. The flesh is eaten in the house of the person offering the sacrifice who may invite huests to partake of it. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 575.

[30]The name of a sacrifice offered outside the village for a sick person, in order to appease the evil spirits which are supposed to be causing his illness. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 99.

[31]The name of a sacrifice, consisting of a pig and two fowls. The whole of the vawlpui sacrifice must be eaten in the jungle where it is offered and no part of it taken into the village. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 33.

[32]The name of a sacrifice to stop the inflammatory disease of the glands, especially in children. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 183.

[33]The name of a sacrifice offered in the jhoom beneath the jhoomhouse in order to propitiate the spirits of the jhoom, and thus secure health for the whole family. If there are haunted springs, trees, etc. On or near the jhoom, the sacrifice is sometimes offered at the haunted spot. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 297.

[34]To offer an annual sacrifice to ensure prosperity for the whole village especially in the hunting and trapping of wild animals. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 238.

[35]To offer a sacrifice in order to quieten a person's mind – for widows, mourners, acceptance to be a slave, those who have been frightened by wild beasts, and those who had nightmares. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 475.

[36]The name of one of the *khal* class of sacrifices in which a white cock is killed. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 159.

[37]A large Burmese gong. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 105.

[38]A set of three different sized gongs which when not in use fit into one another. Each has a different tone and they are used in Lushai dancing, singing, etc. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 105.

[39]The name of a small brass gong; used in tiger hunts, and when carrying big stones or posts, and on all occasions when plenty of noise is needed. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 105.

[40]To hold a dance in honour of a severed head. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 300.

[41]The name of a festival held in honour of one's ancestors and deceased near relatives in which their effigies are carried and made to drink along with the living. The heads of the different persons, represented are made of their actual skulls if their bones happen to be preserved by the family. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 319.

[42]The name of a public feast given by chiefs and other well-to-do Lushais. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 266.

[43]The name of the Lushai harvest feast or festival. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 354.

[44]The name of the Lushai spring festival, held between the cutting and the burning of the jhooms. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 60.

[45]The name of a Lushai feast or festival held in hnour of the dead, at which the first fruits of certain vegetables, etc. and bread are presented to them. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 315.

[46]A house of mourning, a house where one of the family has lately died. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 253.

[47]Any dirge, requiem, or lament songs sung in honour of the dead. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 253.

[48]To chant verses of a hymn especially as a prompter. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher's Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 83.

CHAPTER II

Situating Orality: The Colonial Perspective

This chapter shall situate the aspects of Mizo orality within the realms of the colonial perspective. It shall analyse the aspects of orality that existed during the colonial rule and the changes that were brought in with the introduction of Christianity into the lives, customs and cultural traditional practices of the Mizo society. It shall delve into the aspects that are related to the changes in the form of orality that were produced by the Mizos during the colonial period. In addition to this the chapter shall also analyse the concepts and differences of the dynamics of power relation with the religion of the old customs and beliefs with the newly found religion, namely Christianity that swept throughout Mizoram.

Folktales, folk songs and other forms of oral literature have been passed down throughout the history of the Mizos from one generation to the next, through the medium of oral narratives: "Skill and knowledge are passed on by way of personal participation and practice. In this manner, the categories of thought are appropriated in the immediacy of person-to-person communication and interiorized as communal knowledge" (Ong, 41). Orality however underwent a drastic and immediate change after the arrival of the Christian missionaries - J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge on 11th January, 1894. Mizos have had a very rich variety of oral tales. These oral tales not only resemble and represent their culture, but they also represent their identity as Mizos. With the introduction of Christianity the old religious practices that involved many oral narratives of songs and chants were not only replaced but was censored to a great deal; so much that it became negated to the periphery and was almost forgotten. With the newly introduced religion in place, the old religion and its practices and rituals of the past underwent a change in its dynamics of power relation. Colonialism brought with it a decided sense of the resistance and censorship of the 'old' culture. Due to this, there was resistance of the pre-existing form of oral literature. Christianity played a major role in this resistance and censorship of the oral tales of the pre Christian era. In terms of censorship, religion and power are seemingly in tandem with regards to orality within the Mizo paradigm. The earlier religious practices and chants where the Mizo ancestors prayed and appeased the spirits and the supernatural beings, stopped altogether as

Christianity spread its teachings into the culture of the Mizos. Thus, it brought about a shift in the dynamics of power relation with reference to religion in the context of the Mizos; the newly found Christian God became the supreme divine being in the lives of the Mizos rather than the benevolent spirits who were believed to have some power and authority over the land, fields, crops and the weather. The Mizo prayers and chants to one of the spirits called *Tlang Lal*[1] in times of long drought and scanty rainfall that was composed by Awithangpa goes thus:

Lurhpuii thang nuar leh la khua hnim rawh,

Zawlkhaw siktui za tam tlang dawn a kam e;

Chawnpui par Chhingpuii ruang bualna.

Lord of the mountains we beg you to bless us with rain.

The water here in our village is scanty.

The beautiful ladies need a bath. (my trans.; 18)

This spirit was believed to possess the power to render small blessings. However, when angered he could cause heavy rainfall and extremely strong winds. This was why it needed to be appeased as its wrath was harmful for the crops of the Mizos. This spirit was appealed to, in times of long drought and scanty rainfall.

The other spirits that the Mizos prayed to were the *lasi*[2] who resided mostly in the mountains of Lurh and Tan. These types of spirits had a close connection with the prophets of the Mizos from whom the *lasi* would demand pigs from them. They were believed to be the protector of the wild animals, and they could also reward them with all kinds of animals. Therefore, they prayed to them by asking for a successful kill when on a hunt. The chant of the *lasi* runs thus:

Cham a rel e, laisen khaw zawlah,

Zeltluang tuai te, Tantinchhinghniangin;

A ngen a ngen e.

You have decided to remain at your abode for quite a long time,

The god of the Tan mountain has demanded for pig;

A pig in demand, in demand. (my trans.; 52)

In the colonial era, with the arrival of the Christian religion, the old religious practices where blood sacrificial rituals had been performed were banned and were no longer practiced. In turn the Mizos found peace and solace within the context of Christianity as it drove away their fear of the spirits and the supernatural beings. It gave them a sense of freedom from evil forces in their physical as well as spiritual form. Due to this there was a decline of the old religion, its practices, customs, prayers and offerings. However, this led to a decline of many of the rich forms of the Mizo oral narratives. With reference to the religion of the pre Christian era, the Mizos believed that the blood of the sacrificed animals was necessary for their wellbeing and protection from disaster and different forms of calamities. *Daibawl*[3] was one of the blood sacrificial rituals that was performed for the healing of very high fever. For this ritual, both a hen and a rooster were required for the sacrifice. After mentioning all of the *bawlhlo*[4], the incantation to heal the sick thus began:

"*Mantu hi lo haw rawh u, a lu, a ban tlan nan ka ti e. Hruaia in hlin chuan phelh ula, lungin in delh chuan phawk ula, thingin a delh chuan phawk ula . . . I vuan thei tawh lawng."*

"Let the captor of the person release him, his head, his arms and the rest of him. Undo the strings that bind him down. Undo the rocks that weigh him down. Undo the logs that bind him down. You can now no longer cling to him" (my trans.; 65).

Artepumphel[5] ritual was practiced with the sacrifice of a chicken when a pregnant woman could not give birth at the expected time. The oral chant for this ritual was

performed thus: "*Tau tek tuk nu, tau tek tuk pa, khaw dunga hrung nu, khaw vanga tan nu, kaw dung hrung nu, khaw vang tan nu tak hi aw ka thal tak e ka sumtual zawla."*

"Beings of male and female, beings of the length and breadth of the village I hereby beat you with this spell here in my own place" (my trans.; 67).

Hring[6] and *khuavang*[7] was a ritual that was practiced while sacrificing a dog. *Hring* was performed to heal sore muscles, dizziness and to prevent oneself from any form of evil curses. *Khuavang* was performed to heal the yellowing and soreness of one's eyes. For instance, if the name of the person for whom the ritual was performed was Liana, the chant would run thus "*Liana hringin lo chhang ang che, Hnam tina hring aw, ka lengpui lo chhang ang che."*

"Let the spirit of Liana hear me. Let the spirit of every clan hear me. Let my prayers and chants be answered" (my trans.; 67). The oral chant for both the *hring and khuavang* is the same but they differ only in the ritual performances.

Zunthiang[8] was another form of ritual practice where a dog was sacrificed to heal a person suffering from immense convulsions and involuntary quivering of the muscles. The ritual chant for this sacrifice runs thus: "*Se kawng rau rawn zui che, vawk kawng rau rawn zui che, Thanga hnenah I awm thei tawh lovang, a pheiphungah rawn vuan che, a chawnbanah rawn vuan che, a sakruangah rawn vuan che, a thlungluah rawn vuan che, Thanga hi I man thei tawh loving*"

"Even if you follow the path of the gayal, and the pig, you can no longer bind Thanga. Your hold over his flesh, his arms, his body, and his head is no longer possible. You can no longer bind Thanga" (my trans.; 67-68).

Khalpui[9] also known as *kelkhal* was a ritual sacrifice of a goat performed for a person who was on his death bed and could no longer move his body, apart from only two fingers: "*Khawphunpulah lo tho che, Sangauvah lo tho che, ngau tarah lo tho che, nau buangah lo tho che, Zawngte tlangah lo tho che, Pautu tlangah lo thovin, ka mualhawih lo chhang ang che."*

"Rise again at the streets, at the plains of Sangau, to play and be merry again. Rise at the mount of the monkeys. Rise at the mount of the Pautu. Hear and answer my prayers" (my trans.; 68).

Lo hman[10] was the ritual sacrifice of a hen and a rooster in order to ask for blessings and health from the spirits that were believed to be the inhabitants and rightful owners of a particular plot of land: "*Khai, Khai! Vawiin ni chu rawn inkhawm rawh u aw. Mim za, fang za ka rawn dil dawn e, nun tluak, pang dam ka rawn dil dawn e. . . . Hei buh leh fang za ka ngenna a ni."*

"Hear Hear! Gather here today as I hereby ask for harvest, life and good health. . . . Hear my prayer for plentiful rice" (my trans.; 73).

Kawngpui siam[11] was a ritual sacrifice which could be performed only by the *sadawt*[12] to ensure prosperity for the whole village. The ritual was focused on the welfare of the community in order that they could be protected from wild animals and raids. The animals used for this sacrifice could either be a hen or a pig. The oral chant for this ritual runs thus:

"Hual ang, hual ang, Thanga thlah hual ang; Thanga te chhung hual ang, mi thuai chhiahah tla lovin, mi ralvanah tla lovin, mi chem pelin hual ang, mi fei pelin hual ang. Kawng ka siam e, kawnpui ka siam e, mi lu lawi na ka siam e, sa lu lawi nan ka siam e, buh za lawi nan ka siam e. Khua ding e, khua ding e."

"Blessing, let there be a blessing. A blessing on the ancestors of Thanga, and his family in order that they would not be below anyone in a raid or be held captive by anyone. I bless them to be protected from the power of machete, and spears. I pray for their paths, their strength and good health. I pray that the heads of enemies, the heads of animals will be theirs. I pray for their rice to be plentiful. Bless them, bless them" (my trans.; 75).

Fanodawi[13] was the ritual sacrifice of a hen in order to ask for good harvest of their rice in their fields. The *sadawt* would chant these lines: "*kumin hian kan thlawhhma tluang rawh se, lengrual ram tuanin phei lai khawi zang rawh se."*

"Let our fields be prosperous and bear good harvest in plenty this year. Let it bear harvest in plenty throughout the whole field" (my trans.; 76).

Thlahual[14] was a ritual sacrifice of a hen, a pig, or a dog for a person who could not be at peace due to certain reasons. It was performed in order to quieten and give a person peace of mind, especially for widows, and recent mourners (amongst other persons who had been inflicted with trauma). After every name of the family member is pronounced an oral incantation was chanted thus: "*nun tluakin hual ang, pang damin hual ang; khup bihin hual ang, tar kunin hual ang, nipui dam chen hual ang, buh ba thlovin hual ang, fang za thlovin hual ang."*

"Peace for the soul, peace for the body. May he live long, long like the sun. May he have plenty rice, and plenty harvest" (my trans.; 76).

Dawisut[15] also known as *Khangpuizam* was the most complicated, the hardest but yet the most rewarding and greatest form of oral ritual practices and chants among the Mizos. It was performed by slaying a dog, pig and a red rooster. This ritual was practiced for healing a severe stomach ache as well as any other form of chronic diseases and illnesses. The oral chant for this ritual runs thus:

"Amah tak pum va rit e, ka zaiin mual tin a hrut chiai e, chungtiang e . . . khum phel khatah zalh ing e, pasalpa, a thu thovaiin bawm chiah e . . . nangin kei mi ngam ngainawh."

"My chant is heard all across and all over . . . here lies a man on his bed, unable to rise up . . . You too do not dare mess with me" (my trans.; 82-83).

Tuihritlang[16] was a ritual oral chant performed by slaying a rooster in order to heal a person suffering from severe rheumatism. This illness was believed to be caused by

the person's consumption of water. Due to this, it would be performed near the mouth of the source from which the sick person fetched water: "*Tuihritlangin aw, kan hluikhuang lo chhang ang che, tui kungpuia lo thovin, ka hluikhuang lo chhang ang che... nun tluak pang dam ka rawn dilsak a ni e, palai ngai lo ka palai a ni e."*

"Tuihritlang spirit, hear and answer my prayer. Arise from your watery slumber and answer… I pray for good life and good health and ask this of you for him" (my trans.; 84).

The rituals mentioned involved the slaying of animals. All of them needed to be performed with the chanting of a specific oral narrative. From this, it is evident as to how the power of orality was valued and considered to be of great significance among the Mizos. However, this long held custom changed after the introduction of Christianity. Animals had lesser significance in the lives of the Mizos. "The Mizos were inherently associated with the plants, animals, and the natural as well as the supernatural" (Pachuau, 34). Christianity taught that men were made in the image of God and that they were superior to other forms of creation. This created a huge paradigm shift in terms of power relations within the context of the culture and religion of the Mizos. As a result, love and respect as well as the interconnection with animals and nature were shifted to God in the post Christian era. The sacrificial blood of various animals were no longer needed as they began to believe in the blood of Christ as the path to salvation. The spirits and the supernatural beings no longer needed to be appeased anymore. Before the introduction of Christianity, the Mizos lived in constant fear of the spirits and would often appease them with various blood sacrifices. They would perform countless oral forms of chants and sacrifices to please them. This is evident from the fact that the Mizos had many form of practices and ritual chants that were offered to the spirits for their blessings, safety and health. Due to this, the Christian religion that brought them safety as well as salvation of the soul in the afterlife, was well received and was widely accepted within the ethos of the Mizo community.

The Mizos had rich oral stories and tales that dealt with aspects about the after-life, and also the processes that one had to undergo in order to enter and be accepted into the world of the dead. One of the stories is about Pawla, who is said to have had a huge catapult and he would shoot any man who had not slept with a woman. This was why, even unmarried young men attempted to sleep with the most number of women in their lifetime. Therefore, Mizo men would try to sleep with plenty of women while they were alive in order to avoid Pawla's punishment in the afterlife. Pawla also shot any woman who had not slept with any man in their lifetime. Such were the oral tales of the Mizos in the pre Christian era. With Christianity being introduced, the newly believed concept of the afterlife was not so much a place to be dreaded. Christianity changed the mode of thinking and belief of the after-life among the Mizos. They began to reject the cultural belief of the after-life and the existence of Pawla and his terrible punishments in the after-life. Thus, it can be said that Mizos, especially the women, secured liberation in plenty of ways, after the advent of Christianity in Mizoram. This is evident from the fact that after the belief in the Christian religion as the concept of the afterlife changed altogether, it resulted in lesser sexual assaults and abuses on women that had existed earlier. The pre-existing oral tales that were once a tool of enslavement that trapped them to the pleasures and lusts of men were slowly done away with the arrival of Christianity. In the post Christian era, the after-life that the Mizos had believed for so long, slowly diminished and it was finally regarded to be a mere myth. Due to the problems and complications that the oral tale of Pawla and his catapults had caused in the lives of the Mizos, they were easily convinced and influenced by the after-life teachings of the Bible. Christianity had played a major role in the formulation of the new culture and belief systems of the Mizos. It has made a vast and huge shift in terms of the oral traditions and story-telling within the ambit of the Mizo society. With the introduction of Christianity, the power dynamics of folktales underwent new perspectives among the Mizos. The power of orality which holds fast the Mizo identity and culture was dramatically changed after colonization. Due to this, it can be said that the Christian religion spread rapidly among the Mizos, as it was a definite means of liberation and a form of freedom for the Mizos.

The aspects of orality changed to a great extent with the introduction of Christianity. The oral tales and oral narratives underwent a drastic change with the coming of the Welsh missionaries on 11th January, 1894. The primary culture of the indigenous Mizos that was once untouched by other foreign culture underwent a change and it brought irreversible, yet inevitable shifts and changes. Changes can be seen in the composition, the mannerism as well as the new set of focus which gave the Mizos new form of narratives and tales. From the tradition of orality of the Mizos, it is evident that the Mizos lived in close proximity with animals, nature, as well as the spiritual world. "Oral cultures tend to use concepts in situational, operational frames of reference that are minimally abstract in the sense that they remain close to the living human lifeworld" (Ong, 49).Most of the oral folktales have a close connection and relation with that of nature and the world of the animals. In terms of the oral perspective there was a significant focus on the animal world as far as Mizo orality is concerned. The religion of the Mizos before the advent of Christianity was known as *sakhua*[17]. *Sa*[18] which literally translates to 'animal' was believed to be the god and protector of a race and family; a pig was sacrificed for this. *Khua*[19] which literally translates to 'nature or weather' was believed to be the god and protector of the whole village and community; it also acted as a messenger between men. The sacrifice of a domesticated gayal was necessary for this ritual of *sakhua*. Both the terms were combined to form *sakhua* which was the core of their religion and "the life principle or basis of the Mizos" (Khiangte, 18).

As animals played a significant role in the lives of the Mizos, animal sacrifice and the chants and songs that went along with it became an important rite of passage for the Mizos. Animals and the oral practices held a high position and significance in the lives of the Mizos. Mizo oraltiy and religion of the past went hand in hand, and could not be separated. "The fact that oral peoples commonly . . . consider words to have magical potency is clearly tied in, at least unconsciously, with their sense of the word as necessarily, spoken, sounded, and hence power-driven" (Ong, 3). Religion and the oral chants that were performed were very important aspects. It was what gave meaning to their existence, as it was believed to be inevitable to have a *sakhua* (religion) to be

accepted into *pialral*[20]. Some of the religious and oral practices that the Mizos were expected to perform in their lifetime in order to be accepted into *pialral* were:

Sakung[21]*:* This form of ritual practice is one of the very first steps a man had to perform in order to have a religion of his own. This practice had to be performed with the slaying of a pig so that a man and his family would have their own religion. To complete the ritual a *sadawt* (priest) would sing these lines:

Thlan chhaka thovin ka sahrial lo chhang ang che,

Thlan thlanga thovin ka sahrial lo chhang ang che,

Kawtlaia thovin ka sahrial lo chhang angche,

Kawtpuia thovin ka sahrial lo chhang angche,

Leiruta thovin ka sahrial lo chhang angche,

Lawilawta thovin ka sahrial lo chhang angche.

"Spirits of the lower and upper grave, hear me. Sprits of the streets, spirits of the earth and the earth below, pay heed. Spirits of the cultivated land, answer my prayers" (my trans.; 127).

After this ritual, oral performances and practices were performed, and a man and his family could establish their own religion and this was considered to be the first step towards his own '*sakhua'* (religion). When a man is married and had a family of his own and performed the *sakung* (first ritual practice of a man) with the slaying of a pig, the man is conferred the status "*Sakung a phun ve ta*" – "to form his own religion and that he could be separated from his father's religion" (my trans.; 257). From then on, he could have his own *sa* (god of a family) and have his own *sabiak*[22]. This form of practice is very much in tandem with Christianity. In Christianity, when a child is born they would be baptised, following the path and faith of the parents until he is considered mature enough to have his own choice in choosing to follow Christ. Then at a later point

in time, he would be accepted into the congregation as an adult with his own consent, having faith in God out of his own free will.

Dawi No Chhui[23]*:* This form of religious practice consists of several sub-ritual oral performances. They are *Hnuaite* ritual - which involves the killing of a swine for the blessing of the household and its surroundings. The oral chant runs thus:

Hnuaitein ka zeltluang lo chhang ang che,

Thuaidura thovin ka zel tluang lo chhang ang che,

Banrel bula thovin ka zeltluang lo chhang ang che,

Thawmmawl bula thovin ka zeltluang lo chhang ang che.

"Hear me spirit of *Hnuaite.* Arise from the dry earth under the house. Listen from the pillar inside the house. Answer from the pillar under the house" (my trans.; 133).

Lasi[24]*:* This form of orality was performed in order to ask for the blessing of a *lasi* so that a hunter would be able to shoot and kill animals in a hunt. The lasi was believed to be the spirit that created all the animals and which presided over them: "*Lasiin ka zel tluang lo chhang ang che, . . . Nizung rawn zui che, Thlazung rawn zui che"*

"*Lasi* spirit, hear my prayer . . . listen from the sun and the moon . . ." (my trans.; 133-134).

Chung[25]*:* This form of orality was performed when praying for a good and plentiful harvest. It involved the killing of a piglet, and the lines runs thus:

Chungin aw ka zeltluang lo chhang ang che,

Van sanga lengin ka zeltluang lo chhang ang che,

Chumchi kara lengin ka zeltluang lo chhang ang che,

Romei kara lengin kazeltluang lo chhang ang che.

"Spirit of the sky, hear me. Spirit that resides over the mountains, the clouds, the mist, hear my prayers" (my trans.; 134).

Vansen[26]*:* This chant and sacrifice involved the slaying of a rooster to invoke the blessing of the gods. The chant runs thus:

Van senin ka hluikhuang lo chhang ang che,

Van sanga lengin ka hluikhuang lo chhang ang che,

Nikara chengin vansenin ka hluikhuang lo chhang ang che.

"Vansen spirit, hear me and the sound of my drums. Spirits of the skies, spirits that live among the sun, the moon. Follow the rays of the sun and the moon. Pay heed to my chant and the sound of my beating drums" (my trans.; 135).

Hnuaipui[27]*:* This ritual involved the slaying of a female pig in order to ask for the blessings of the house and the earth beneath. The chant performed by the *sadawt* (priest) runs thus:

Hnuaipuiin ka chhurpui hi lo chhang ang che

Inrel hnuaia thovin ka chhurpui hi lo chhang ang che

Kalvang hnuaia thovin ka chhurpui hi lo chhang ang che

Banrel bula thovin ka chhurpui hi lo chhang ang che.

"*Hnuaipui* spirit, hear my prayers. Spirit below the house, spirit near the pillar of the house, pay heed and answer my prayers" (my trans.; 135).

Sedawi[28]*:* This involved the slaying of a mithun for blessing and for longevity of life. The *sedawi* ritual had one of the most elaborate and numerous forms of oral chants. One of the most popular oral chants was chanted likewise:

Hual ang aw, Hua lang aw,

(Chumi) thlahual ang aw,

Nipui dam chen hual ang aw,

Thlapui dam chen hual ang aw.

"Songs of protection be chanted, songs of protection. Let the spirit of (the name of the person was mentioned here) be protected. Be safe, sound and secure as long as the sun and the moon exist" (my trans.; 139).

However, all of these chants, ritual practices and customs were resisted against with the coming of the missionaries. Animals had lesser significance in the lives of the Mizos because animal sacrifices were no longer equated with any form of blessings. It can be said that the love and respect, the deep connection and association that the Mizos had with nature and animals and the natural world were greatly diminished. This was because almost all attention and focus were turned to the Almighty Creator, the one true God, who created all living and non-living creatures as well. As a result, love and respect for animals and nature were shifted to God in the post Christian era. This resulted in the censorship, decline and resistance of the chants of the *sadawt* (priest), *bawlpu*[29]*, and puithiam*[30] as this aspect of orality took a back seat in the post Christian era. Songs and lores about the beauty of nature and animals were turned to Biblical themed songs and narratives. This is because the Biblical stories spread deep roots in the psyche of the Mizos. The concept of the power of the pre Christian oral narratives were remarkably different from the narratives after colonisation. Christianity was the main focus and it had thus managed to relocate beliefs and ideas that were once associated with the power of the folklore of the pre Christian era.

Another form of orality that was forgotten and negated with the introduction of the Christian religion was the performances of songs that were sung during the festivals: *Pawl Kut, Chapchar Kut* and *Mim Kut. Pawl Kut* originated during the period when the Mizo ancestors lived alongside the banks of the Run river. During this period, a three

year famine known as *Thingpui tam*[31] ravaged the Mizos where numerous people died of starvation. People mourned for the deceased and would gather and sing songs of lamentation known as *thuthmun zai,* which literally means songs sung at one's seat. One of the songs runs thus*:*

Khua tinan thim khawzin a tlung e,

Thalai leh dawn tuai an tliak zo ve.

Thi lovi khua awm maw, fam lovi khua awm maw?

Laiah suang lungpui e, fam loten fam na ngai.

Death visits every village

Youths and children are withered

Could there be any place free of death?

Hearts ache as the dead are mourned. (my trans.; 171)

Thuthmunzai is one of the first forms of the oral *khawhar zai*[32] and *lengkhawm hla*[33]. They were also known as *tah hla* and khawhar hla (songs of lament). These songs have now become a part and parcel of the Mizo community. It was sung at every house where there was a dead person. After three years of the famine, in the fourth year there was sudden surplus of harvest. Food was produced in plenty. Rice and other harvests were in such abundance that their granary could not hold their harvest. In order to celebrate this, the Mizos would feed their neighbours and friends with food and eggs and this was the origin of the festival known as *Pawl Kut.* The whole village would be merry and would sing these lines:

Kutpui serh khua an kham ni'n e,

Kei chu lung lem ka nei lo;

Mi nuthai tualah an leng e,

Hringhniang banah an kai e.

The festival is merrily celebrated for the day,

While I have nothing else in mind;

People wander around with smiles,

Holding each other in unison. (my trans.; 61)

On the day of the festival, the children and some young boys and girls would be seen collecting *zulawm*[34] which they would later sell in order to buy valuable items for themselves. The songs that the children would chant when asking for *zulawm* runs thus:

Mim neiin mim min pe u,

Fang neiin fang min pe u;

Chhawhchhi pawng e, lai pawng e.

"Those with corn, gift us with corn. Those with a single grain, gift us grain, or sesame of any kind" (my trans.; 61).

As orality was a huge part of this festival the people who gifted the children with stock from their harvest too replied to their chants with another chant:

Dam ang che, dam ang che,

Tar kun khup bihin dam ang che;

Kum tin buh za thlo vang che.

"Go in peace and live long life, live a long life. Live to be a ripe old age and be blessed with plenty harvest of rice each year" (my trans.; 61).

Apart from this, the children cursed the people who did not gift them anything. This too was done with another chant:

Thi ang che, thi ang che

I ngal ngetin thi ang che.

"Die, may you die. May you die in a painful manner" (my trans.; 61).

Such was the prevalence and the significance of orality in *Pawl Kut*. Mizos were a tribe that had always loved and implemented orality in most of the aspects of their activities and festivities.

Mim Kut originated from the tales of *Tlingi* and *Ngama* where the transition from the living world to the world of the dead is depicted. Due to this, the festival is for the remembrance of the deceased by their family and friends. After this festival, the souls of the deceased were believed to depart to their destination into the *mitthi khua*[35] where they would go on pining for the world of the living. Due to their immense longing of the world of the living they would drink *lungloh tui*[36]:

Ami zuapa bel lian khawn thiang karah,

Kei ka zuapan lunglohvi tui tapin dawna e.

"Whilst living peacefully with my dear father, he suddenly yet unwillingly decided to sip the waters of *lungloh tui*" (my trans.; 58).

Due to this, the month when this festival is celebrated is called *Thi Tin Thla*[37], literally meaning the month for the departed souls. During this festival, the family members of the deceased would lament over the deceased by engaging in drinking of *zu*[38], and weeping over their departed loved ones all over again while singing songs of lamentation. Along with *Pawl Kut, Mim Kut* played a huge part in the formation of Mizo orality as it can be said to be the pioneer of the oral *khawhar hla* (song of lament). This form of orality went hand in hand, with that of Christianity as the families of the departed mourned over the dead with the hope of meeting them in Heaven. The songs that originated and were sung in this *kut* (festival) runs thus:

Bungpui a tang bal e, a zik a thim reng e,

Milai kan tang bal e, laikhum a thing reng e,

Lurhpui a sang khi e, van hnuaiin an hril e,

A chhipah chuang ila, fam ka ngaih khua lang maw.

We mourn near the Bung tree which too has a sad aura in its roots,

We long for you as your bed rests empty,

Even the mountains mourn your absence,

Would I be able to see the abode of the dead had I climbed up to the top. (my trans.; 64)

From these lines it is evident that the earlier form of *khawhar hla* (songs of lament) had no connotation to God. All kinds of oral composition to soothe and aid the family members of the deceased were composed with reference to the Christian teachings. This changed the mode of composition of the *khawhar hla* where Biblical and Heavenly themed songs were composed.

Another form of orality that underwent change with the coming of the Christian missionaries was the usage of drums which was a very important part of the Mizo oral tradition: "the talking drum is not merely an element in some primary oral cultures but is also in fact a kind of paradigm of primary orality" (Beardsley, 522). The drums could arguably be said to be one of the most significant aspects of Mizo orality, as it was the most important instrument that aided them in their oral performances. It was considered to be an important characteristic that was a part of their oral traditional practices. The drums played a huge role in the Mizo orality and were central to their oral performances as it inevitably went hand in hand with the different oral performances, as well as dances performed by the Mizos. It has been said thus: "*khuanglova chai ang mai*" - "the act of dancing and merry making without a drum is incomplete" (my trans.; 90). From

here, it is evident as to how much the usage of the drums was loved by the Mizos. Songs, chants, all forms of dances and celebrations were incomplete, in the absence of drums.

It could be said that Christianity brought the drum tradition to a halt, almost bringing it to a point where it was no longer practiced. On the other hand, it could also be said that Christianity (after almost putting the drums to a decline) in turn, gave and amplified the power that the drums held over the Mizos. In the pre Christian era the drums were used in the rhythmic oral performances, when they prayed to and appeased the spirits, when they sung in celebration and lamentation. Drums were used in almost every aspect of their festivities which were usually accompanied with the drinking of *zu* (rice beer). Due to the drum's association with the evil spirits and *zu*, they were abolished and censored by the missionaries. One of the main reasons for this, apart from its connection to *zu,* was because the usage of the drums and gongs was believed to have a connection with the benevolent evil spirits. Due to the close relationship regarding the use of alcohol and drums, they were both associated as the tool which the devil would use to sway the Mizos away from Christianity. They were considered to be a deviance from the Church and Christianity itself. In the initial stages of the conversion of the Mizos to Christianity, drums were not used in the churches. As it had a very immense and deep connection with Mizo orality, it was slowly and gradually accepted by the colonizers at a later point in time. One of the first usages of drums was at the house of the deceased where the families of the deceased would mourn over their loved ones while singing Christianised *khawhar hla* (songs of lament). It introduced a new form of orality where drums could be employed freely under the umbrella of Christianity; singing Christian songs while employing the rhythmic beating of the drums. This formed a new genre of orality known as *khawhar hla.* Due to this, gospel songs could now be sung and performed while lamenting for the deceased. The Mizos could then sing songs with the beating and rhythm of a drum. However, it took a little bit of time for the drum to be employed in the Churches as the notions of drums were associated with evil spirits. However, with the passage of time, as Christianity grew, orality also

grew simultaneously. The oral performances were felt incomplete without the drums. The 1919 evangelical Revival in Mizoram brought in the usage of drums. In the said revival, the need for oral performances such as singing and praising God were strongly felt. This finally led and brought with it the usage of drums, as it had been mentioned that drums played a very significant and important part in the context of Mizo orality. From then on, drums were considered a necessity while praising God. It was in the same year, 1919, that drums were used for the first time in a Church at a village called Nisapui. From then on and to this day, it has continued to play an important role in Mizo orality. Drums then played an important role once again while being in tandem with the Christian religion. This revived and awakened Mizo orality again. From then on, Christian songs were widely composed and sung in Churches, and in every possible area where songs could be sung.

The other form of Mizo traditional musical instruments that played a pivotal role in Mizo orality are the traditional gongs. The Mizo traditional gongs are *Darkhuang*[39], *Darbu*[40] and *Darmang*[41]. The gongs too, like the drums went hand in hand with the different oral performances and were central to the oral performances of the Mizos. *Darkhuang* was the biggest and the costliest of them all. The Mizo ancestors had an oral saying: "*Hmeichhe man sial, mipa man darkhung*" - "the price of a woman is mithun, the price of a man is darkhuang" (my trans.; 82). This denotes the high place and value of the *darkhuang* in the minds of the Mizo community. Due to the high price and the high consideration of the gong, it was not common for people to own one. This was why its usage was mainly limited to the most important activities and celebrations like *milu lam*[42]*, mitthirawp*[43]*, and khuangchawi*[44].

The *darbu* is a set of three separate gongs, each having their own unique sound. This type of gong was the most popular and widely used gong among the Mizo traditional gongs. Due to this, the most popular gongs are mostly the about the *darbu.* One of the most popular *darbu* songs runs thus:

Kinga lu thle lekah,

Laikinga lu kinga lu thle lekah;

Darkawlchhunchheka, ama Darkawlchhunchheka.

The lizard tilts its head;

Here is Darkawlchhunchheka. (my trans.; 99)

Besides this, the mention of *dar*[45] within the context of the day to day lives of the Mizos until this day is all about the *darbu*. Commonly used phrases about the *darbu* are "*dar ang leng za*" which literally means 'to live and exist together peacefully like the gongs'. The other usage of the *dar* is, "dar ang tawng leh[46]". These phrases are all derived from the *darbu.* Thus it played an important aspect of the Mizo orality not only in terms of songs, chants and dances but also in enriching the aspect of the language of the Mizo culture. *Darmang* is the smallest of the Mizo traditional drums and had no particular usage of its own. This type of gong is only used as an instrumental gong to aid and render support to the other gongs when they were played simultaneously.

Tingtang[47] is also another important musical instrument that was closely related to the orality of the Mizo culture. The *tingtang* played a very huge role in the aspects of Mizo orality, but it did not come close in comparison to the drums and gongs. *Tingtang* was the Mizo version of a guitar and it was commonly used and it too had a deep impact on Mizo orality:

Si-ar hnuai ah tual ka va leng a,

Thapuii te keini lam sul ang an hawi si lo.

Ka Tingtang leh zaithiam nen e.

I leng zel ang Thadangi runah.

Roaming around under the star-lit night,

Only to realise that a beautiful maiden would not approve of me.

Continuing with my guitar and my voice,

I head along for another beautiful maiden. (my trans.; 85)

Some of the other forms of the Mizo traditional musical instruments that were used in oral performances are *Lemlawi*[48], *Phenglawng*[49], *Tumphit*[50], *Mau tawtawrawt*[51], *Rawchhem*[52], *Tuiumdar*[53], *Talhkhuang*[54], *Bengbung*[55], *Sekikhawn*[56], *Hnah tum*[57].

Another important aspect of Mizo orality that was done away after the arrival of Christianity was the oral performances that accompanied the killing of enemies in a battle or in a raid. When warriors were successful in a raid or a war, there would be celebrations in their own village with numerous forms of songs and chants, while employing many of the already mentioned traditional musical instruments. Before the raid began if a cow was heard mooing towards the outskirts of the village, it was believed to be a sign of a successful raid or war. A *bawhhla* is thus chanted to celebrate the possibility of the successful raid:

Ka chung e, bawngvapi leh nem ziar hmarin chhawn chi maw,

Ram tha e, chhawn ta ngei e, tialnghian tha hawl kavah liau ve.

"Since I have heard the cows mooing towards the outskirts of the town, I am enthusiastic. It happens to be a good sign, therefore, I shall be successful in the raid and bring home the head of our enemies" (my trans.; 91).

However, if the cow was heard mooing towards the direction of the village, the raid was called off immediately as it was believed to be a sign that the raid would be unsuccessful. In the raid, if a person killed an enemy, he was to chant a *bawhhla*[58] over or beside the dead body, while repeating the name of the slain enemy at least three times. This was because oral stories denoted that the slain enemy was supposed to be the slave of the victor in the after-life. The *bawhhla* along with the name of the enemy had to be chanted so that the soul of the slain enemy could remember him in the afterlife.

After the chanting was done, the victors would enter their village after dinner and would chant his *bawhhla* as loudly as he possibly could after firing a shot that would alarm the whole village of the successful raid:

Arsi e, thlapa chawl law, rawlvawn arkhuan an e,

Zanthim e, zing hman se law,

Kei chu e, ka do rinawmpa ka tlun e;

"With the aid of the signs from the stars, I had killed an enemy and returned at the crow of the rooster. As night has come, I will enter the village in glory at the wake of the day, as our hunt was legendary. For I have slain and brought home the head of the enemy" (my trans.; 118).

The following morning, the victors would enter their village where they were warmly welcomed and celebrated with much enthusiasm. The celebration of the slain enemies know as *milu lam* (dance celebrating an enemy's head) would follow where a *tingtang* (one stringed fiddle) was employed in commemoration of the bravery and strength of the warriors. Ladies of the village would follow them and songs accompanying the *tingtang* were sung in praise of the warriors:

Tuirual zai e, mihrang sulah,

Lengi ka thle e.

Di loh Sialin lam chhawn ka hlan,

Tuirual chawiin lengi ka thle.

Clothing myself with a beautiful attire I walk behind the brave warriors

For I am a lady at peace.

Though the brave are not my husband I present them a warm welcome,

For I am lady at peace in this beautiful attire. (my trans.; 120)

In these welcome celebrations, various musical instruments like the *darbu*, *darkhuang* (gong), *tumphit* (pandean pipes) *and khuang*[59] were employed in order to celebrate and give thanks to the warriors who protected their village and killed their enemies. The *pasaltha*[60] who were successful in the raid would engage in the *rallulam*[61] where they would dance around the severed heads of the enemies. The first in line of the dance after eating half a boiled egg would then put the remaining half of the egg, along with cooked rice, near the mouth of the severed head. The food was given to the severed head by the *pasaltha* with his passive left hand, all in the act of taunting, while chanting these lines:

Hei mal chaw ka vei lam in ka pe a che,

Lamthlang I rap ang a,

Lamchhak I rap zel ang'

I meithal chawi kha zawp sela,

Kei a meithal chawi I thin leh lung ah tla rawh se,

I hereby give you food and an egg to eat with my left hand,

You will always be unfortunate while I shall always be fortunate,

Let your weapons be tarnished,

As my weapons are the weapons that ended your miserable life. (my trans.; 93)

This taunting of the heads of the enemies is known as *mal chaw pe* (giving food to the severed head). For this taunt, three *darbu*, three *tumphit*, one drum and *darkhuang* were all employed. This taunt is followed by another *bawhhla* along with three shots of their guns. After this, the *darbu* and *tumphit* played: "*ral hawlna in dal e, ral sial hawlna in dal e."* - "you are in the way of killing more enemies and wild animals" (my

trans.; 121). The *pasaltha* (brave men) followed this with an oral chant "*leidoral thuam ang kan do, thlangpui thlungtlu kan lam e."* - "we had slayed an enemy in a battle, and now we dance and celebrate around it" (my trans.; 121). Then the *darbu* was immediately sounded: "you are in the way of killing more enemies and wild animals", "we had faced and killed a great warrior, and now we dance and celebrate around it" (my trans.; 94). Later the *darbu* followed by the *tumphit* was sounded again. More taunts and mocking of the severed heads with guns being shot at the head and mouths of the severed heads followed these oral performances.

However, all of these chants, killings, raiding and slaying of enemies were censored with the arrival of Christianity. It brought with it peace and a sense of tranquillity among the Mizos. It resulted in the decrease of warring villages, looting and killing of other villagers. As lesser wars were fought, the number of victors and also the killing of one's enemies diminished. With time, there were no more raids as there were no more wars. However, no wars meant no victors, which also meant no more slain enemies in a battle. This resulted in the downfall of the oral tradition known as *bawhhla* (warrior's chant) which is arguably one of the most noticeable of all the oral narratives that had been lost with the passage of time There was no longer a need to chant *bawhhla* anymore. Apart from this, the other aspects related to orality in the colonial perspective also gradually declined.

GLOSSARY

[1]A spirit that resides and lords over the mountains. K. Zawla, *Mizo Pi Pute Leh An Thlahte Chanchin* [*History of Mizo Ancestors and Their Descendants*]. Lengchhawn Press, 2000, p. 51.

[2]The name of one of the *khal* class of sacrifices offered to restore good fortune or skill in hunting which the offerer once enjoyed but has lost. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language.* The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 286.

[3]The name of a sacrifice offered outside the village for a sick person, in order to appease the evil spirits which are supposed to be causing his illness. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 99.

[4]The general name for the sacrificial paraphernalia of the Lushais. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 33.

[5]The name of a sacrifice to exorcise the evil eye. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 14.

[6]The name of a class of sacrifice including *ar huai hih, ar thla thîng thiah, ar thla zah, hring-pui, khuavâng hring, ui hring*. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 184.

[7]The name of a guardian spirit. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 267.

[8]The name of a sacrifice consisting of a dog which is offered outside the village and cooked there. The flesh is eaten in the house of the person offering the sacrifice who may invite guests to partake of it. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 575.

[9]The name of one of the *khal* class of Lushai sacrifice. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 248.

[10] The name of a sacrifice offered in the jhoom beneath the *thlâm* or jhoomhouse in order to propitiate the spirits of the jhoom and thus secure health for the whole family. If there are haunted springs, trees, etc on or near the jhoom, the sacrifice is sometimes offered at the haunted spot. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 297.

[11]To offer an annual sacrifice to ensure prosperity for the whole village especially in the hunting and trapping of wild animals. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 238.

[12]A private exorcist or priest, especially such as are employed by ruling chiefs. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 397.

[13]To offer the annual sacrifice which is made to protect the young growing rice crops on the village jhooms from disease. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 133.

[14]To offer a sacrifice in order to quieten a person's mind – for widows, mourners, acceptance to be a slave, those who have been frightened by wild beasts, and those who had nightmares. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 475.

[15]To break a spell of witchcraft, to render a spell harmless. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 107.

[16]To offer sacrifice of a rooster to heal a person suffering from severe rheumatism. This illness was believed to have caused from the person's consumption of water. K. Zawla, *Mizo Pi Pute Leh An Thlahte Chanchin* [*History of Mizo Ancestors and Their Descendants*]. Lengchhawn Press, 2000, p. 84.

[17]An object of worship, a god. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 401.

[18]An object of worship, a god. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 396.

[19]Time, weather, atmosphere. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 264.

[20]Paradise in erstwhile Mizo belief. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher's Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 220.

[21]The ritual practiced when a man wished to embrace the *sakhua* of another clan. After performing the ceremony, he can now cut himself off from all connections with his old clan. Laltluangliana Khiange, *Mizos of North East India*. L.T.L Publications, 2008, p. 18.

[22]To worship or offer sacrifice to one's ancient ancestors. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 397.

[23]The name of a sacrifice. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 106.

[24]The fabled creator of animal. The spirit which presides over hunting. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 286.

[25]The name of a sacrifice. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 96.

[26]The name of a sacrifice in which a red cock is offered. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 544.

[27]The name of the sacrifice needed to appease the dreaded evil *Hnuaipui*. The owner of a sow may not kill it unless he offers it in sacrifice to this spirit. Should the spirit be offended nothing short of a sow which has had three litters of pigs will satisfy him, and even then he is said to kill and carry off the spirits of three human victims before he is

appeased. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 175.

[28]The name of two of the series of sacrificial public feasts given by aspirants. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 412.

[29]An exorcist; a priest. James Herbert Lorrain. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 33.

[30]An exorcist. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 371.

[31]To die simultaneously as certain forest trees do in large numbers periodically. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 467.

[32]Any dirge, requiem, or lament songs sung in honour of the dead. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 253.

[33]It is also known as *tah hla* and *khawhar zai.* Specifically the name of a solemn dirge, requiem or lament sung by old people in a house of mourning any time after the burial. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 253.

[34]Beer which has been made by two or more girls or mother people, generally with the idea of selling it and dividing the proceeds between them. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 574.

[35]Abode of the dead. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher's Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 192.

[36]The name of a mythical spring on the way to *mitthi khua* (abode of the dead) of which the spirits of the departed drink and lose all their longings to return to earth. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 303.

[37]The moon or lunar month nearly corresponding to September. The Fanais however use this name for the moon or lunar month nearly corresponding to August. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 473.

[38]Beer or any fermented liquor. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 570.

[39]A large Burmese gong. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language.* The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 105.

[40]A set of three different sized gongs which when not in use fit into one another. Each has a different tone and they are used in Lushai dancing, singing, etc. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 105.

[41]The name of a small brass gong; used in tiger hunts, and when carrying big stones or posts, and on all occasions when plenty of noise is needed. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 105.

[42]To hold a dance in celebration of a head taken in a raid. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 375.

[43]The name of a festival held in honour of one's ancestors and deceased near relatives in which their effigies are carried and made to drink along with the living. The heads of the different persons, represented are made of their actual skulls if their bones happen to be preserved by the family. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 319.

[44]The name of a public feast given by chiefs and other well-to-do Lushais. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 266.

[45]Brass, a gong. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 104.

[46]Poetic word for ‘meet’. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher’s Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 220.

[47]The one stringed Lushai fiddle, any stringed musical instrument. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 503.

[48]A mouth organ, a harmonicon. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 293.

[49]A bamboo flute. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher’s Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 216.

[50]Pandean pipes. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 530.

[51]A bugle, a cornet, a trumpet made from bamboo. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 439.

[52]The name of a Lushai musical instrument - a kind of bagpipes. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 379.

[53]Stringed musical instrument having three strings, producing three different notes. R.L. Thanmawia, *Mizo Poetry*. Din Din Heaven, 1998, p. 22.

[54]A hollow out piece of wood. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher’s Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 260.

[55]The Lushai dulcimer made of wood. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 39.

[56]To strike a gayal’s horn in order to keep time when singing. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 413.

[57]To make music by blowing through a folded leaf. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher’s Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 94.

[58]The warriors' chant or cry; the chant or cry raised by warriors when returning from a successful raid. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 31.

[59]A drum. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 266.

[60]A man of courage. A manly/brave/courageous personality. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher's Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 211.

[61]To hold a dance in celebration of a head taken in a raid. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 375.

CHAPTER III

Orality: The Post-Colonial Paradigm

This chapter shall render an in depth analysis of the selected tales of the post Christian era through aspects of postcoloniality that have been found within the Mizo community at large. This can be found in abundance in their oral literature, folklores, songs, lullabies and even in their cultural and socio-economic life as well. The chapter shall also render insight into the existence of a newly hybridised culture of the Mizos in 1894 as a result of the advent of Christianity into the primary oral culture of the Mizos. It shall narrate how the various lores and oral traditions have undergone hybridity in its various processes of transition from the pre to the post-colonial era.

The advent of the Christian missionaries on 11th January, 1894 brought about social, religious and oral transformation among the Mizos. This is a result of the introduction of many new practices and beliefs in the society. In the meantime, when this occurred, some of the existing social practices and customs had been modified, censored and even abolished. All of these changes and transitions had given rise to the reformation of the Mizo society in various ways, especially in terms of oral narratives. One of the most prominent and noteworthy changes was the introduction of a written Mizo script. Thus, writing had come into being within the context of the Mizos. Narratives were not only confined to orality anymore as the written script had been introduced to the Mizos, and the themes in the Mizo narratives had thus changed.

In the pre Christian era, the Mizos had a very rich form of orality, bereft of a script. Due to this, the tracing of the history of the Mizos was very difficult. That is why the only source of information that could be used was orality. Before the arrival of Christianity Mizos were illiterate as they had no written language of their own. Due to this, they would often carve on stones and pillars in order to pass on messages. For instance, to commemorate the dead on his hunt during his lifetime, animal figures would be carved onto his tombstone along with a human figure. This method was the only way in which they could pass on information. This was changed upon the arrival of Christianity when the written script was introduced to the Mizos. This brought enlightenment on the Mizos as they received formal education. F.W Savidge and J.H Lorrain on their arrival in Mizoram in 1894 noticed that the Mizos had no written

language and realised that they communicated only orally. Thus, they began to devote themselves in learning the language of the natives and became masters of the same after a span of four years. In the year 1898 they brought in writing by introducing alphabets and grammar to the Mizo language. This refined and changed the Mizo language and orality. These changes allowed for the modifications of various pronunciations and meanings of different vocabulary. One of the most important contributions by the missionaries was the diacritical marks. "Diacritical marks introduced by Rev. Savidge and Rev. Lorrain in Mizo language have been used to convey the different sounds of an alphabet, and different meanings of a word. Diacritical marks '^' has been used with all the vowels except 'o' and the mark '.' used under the consonant 't'" (Nag, 135). Later, as the written language developed, J.H Lorrain prepared a dictionary which helped in the analysis of words into writing. The process used by the missionaries in the formation as well as the reduction of the Lushai script is clearly explained by J.H. Lorrain himself wrote:

> In reducing the Lushai language to writing we followed . . . the phonetic Hunterian system of orthography as closely as possible. The one particular in which we found it necessary to deviate from it to any extent was in the use of '**aw**' for the long vowel sound . . . But later on, [they had found that] *vowels closely allied to one another, and which are liable to change from one to the other, should be represented by the same symbol.* We could therefore see the necessity of making an alteration in our original Lushai system, and, as we could discover no better solution than that suggested by the Welsh missionaries, we agreed to their proposal.
>
> The following alphabet adequately expresses every sound in the Lushai language: - **a, â, aw, âw, b, ch, d, e, ê, f, g, h, i, î, k, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, ṭ, u, û, v, z. (Introduction, x)**

While J.H Lorrain was tasked with the responsibility of preparing the dictionary, F.W Savidge shouldered the responsibility and task of grammar section. While forming his dictionary, many new words were coined by the missionaries which has had a very huge impact on the aspect of orality as well as upon the language of the Mizos. Words were borrowed from both the English and the Hindi language:

> Rev. F.J Sandy, a Welsh Missionary, later had made a list of those borrowed words and they are:
>
> a) From English: Baptisma, Barik, British, Evangelist, Examma, Griep, Kantin, Kampinu, Manding, Mel, Pastawr, Pisa, Pulpit, Presbiteri, Skul, Sacrament
>
> b) From Hindustani: Alu, Babu, Bangla, Bawrhsap, Chabi, Chhuti, Choka, Dak, Laltin, Mawn, Mawza, Mithai, Mitiri, Paruana, Pawisa, Phatak, Phulalen, Rashi, Rawmawl, Rawng, Rangrut, Sabun, Sapser, Sibudar, Sipai, Tanka, Tarik, Tel, Tin, Zamader."
>
> (Nag, 137-138)

Due to all of these contributions by the missionaries, the oral practices of the Mizo were reduced to a very large extent with the introduction of the written language and the introduction of the alphabets. With the advent of Christianity by the Christian missionaries the reduction as well as transition of the oral language of the Mizos into the written form has paved a way for the general masses of the Mizos. It was through the formal education imparted by the missionaries that they could be educated. The missionaries made it possible to pave a way for educating the masses. It has to be noted that teaching and preaching went hand in hand and this is why Christianity played a very important part in the implication of education in Mizoram. Nag has stated that "it is not illogical to say that it was the direct philanthropic impact of Christianity and not any other agency that had influenced the life of the Mizos in the origin and progress of their mass education and literacy" (145). With the introduction of literacy, by the missionaries, literacy along with Christianity was spread among the Mizos.

Besides imparting formal education to the Mizos one of the most important contributions of the missionaries was the introduction of a proper use of scientific medicines. This aspect replaced the use of medicinal herbs and the practice of sacrificing animals for curing and healing the sick. The pioneer missionaries were concerned with the physical hygiene of the Mizos and were particularly shocked by their treatment of sickness and ailments. Thus, they developed the use of medicine and checked the aspects of hygiene among the Mizos. Earlier the Mizos would use their own medicinal herbs along with the blood of animals and offered this to the spirits: "The hope of cures or treatment lay in the propitiation of the interested spirits, whoever they happened to be" (McCall, 178). Though this was the case, the sacrificial practices were also beginning to decline with the introduction of Christianity. Nag has noted that the missionaries "ventured to acquaint the Mizos with modern medicines. . . . The Mizos never knew what medicine was and . . . the use of medicine was welcomed, for people found that medicines were cheaper than costly sacrifices for curing diseases on the one hand, and on the other, they observed quicker and better results by the use of medicines than in the offerings of sacrifices for the cure of diseases. . . . leaving their traditional practice of healing. The initiator of this change was none but the missionaries" (155). This put an end to the oral performance of chanting to the spirits in order to heal the sick. Thus, it was a step towards Christianity and a setback for the oral nature of the Mizos to an extent.

The Mizos had totally given up on their traditional sacrificial practices in order to appease the spirits either to cure the sick or in order to ask for their blessings. They were now inclined to the usage of scientific medicines for any kinds of ailments and diseases. The tradition of the long practiced blood sacrifice for curing the sick has been totally dismissed altogether as medical care and medical treatment. Thus, there was a miraculous transition from the customary practice. This too had a huge impact on the aspect of orality as all of the oral performances that went along with the sacrificial chants and incantations were stopped altogether. The oral forms of narratives that were associated with sacrificial healing were lost with time as the Christian era put a halt to

these rituals and oral chants. They were forbidden by the missionaries as it was strictly against the Christian beliefs. Christianity taught that all of these practices as well as chants was a way of reverting back to savagery and thus they censored it. "Censors worried about anti-Christian issues in stories also are troubled by the psychological aspects of fantasy. They seem to worry that the escapism of fantasy leads children into the occult or Satan" (Tunnell, 607). Thus, in the post-colonial era, the belief in superstitions, and the sacrifice of animals in order to appease the spirits slowly began to vanish. Due to this, the oral tradition that followed this practice also deteriorated. The practices of orality that went along with a series of costly feasts for the benefit of after-life were stopped altogether. With the advent of Christianity, the superstitions that were formed out of ignorance and animistic nature gradually disappeared with time. "With the spread of Christianity, the belief in all the multifarious spirits and in the efficacy of appeasement was replaced by the new faith. The belief in *pathian*[1] continued with a new connotation as of God of Christianity. The sacrifices yielded place to church and prayers. The transformation is so complete by now that none of these old rituals is practised anywhere in Mizoram today. The young generation does not even know about their indigenous faith and the religious customs" (Ray, 63). Christianity thus, completely changed the mode of life of the Mizo people; their customary practices, beliefs, fears and superstitious nature and characteristics.

The arrival of the Welsh missionaries – J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge on 11th January, 1894 into the Lushai lands had long been orally prophesied through visions and dreams. Two men from the southern part of Mizoram had prophesied about the arrival of Christianity. One was Selkhuma, a prophet, who prophesied:

The horizon will be stirred,

Then will come the annihilation of all human beings.

There will be lights in the South and the North.

One who has never been a chief will rule at the source of the Tlawng river. (Carter, 39)

The second man to have prophesised upon the coming of the missionaries was Darphawka who prophesised that "a great light will come upon Lushai: follow the light for the people who bring it will be a ruling race" (Carter, 39). What needs to be taken into account is the fact that the new religion of the white man was described as a "light" and "a great light" by both prophets. The colonial ideology had been implemented in the mind and psyche of the Mizos. From the post-colonial perspective, this is a strategic representation of racial prejudice over the Mizos who were regarded as the 'other' by the 'civilized' white men. The native Mizo's way of looking at the whites and the whites' view on the native is very clear from this point forward. "Eventually, the native also admits loudly the supremacy of the white man" (Nayar, 22). From here on, it was as if the native Mizos 'agreed to be colonized'.

With these oral prophesies, it can be assumed that the Mizos already had prior knowledge about Christianity. With the introduction of a new religion into the long held religion and religious practices that had had a huge connection with their orality, and traditions, the Welsh missionaries faced countless troubles. In their initial pioneering days, everything did not go smoothly. It was not unusual for the Mizo natives to reject the newly found religion. This was because they had had a well administered existing religion that had been passed down in their ancestry which had its deep roots in their orality, life and culture. Chaos and resistance was not unexpected when the new found religion tried to overtake the pre-existing one. The Mizo chiefs and upper classes were resistant of the pioneers of Christianity and the first few Mizo converts were accused of betraying their traditional mode of living, faith and belief system. The Mizo converts were regarded as traitors to their own clan and tribe. They were treated heinously and were often subjected to physical torture. Some early converts were punished, ostracised, and beaten, and their houses were demolished while some Christians were exiled from their villages by their chiefs. Due to this, there emerged a song to uplift the spirits of the Mizo Christian:

Ka Pawlte u, en r'u hriatna

Vana khi a awm.

Min puitu tur an lo lang ta,

Kan ngam ngei ngei dawn.

Lo tang r'u ka lo kal dawn a,

Lalin a tih khi!

Van lam hawiin chhanna phet r'u.

Brothers and sisters, cast your eyes above as help is coming from above.

We shall overcome as we were promised by the King.

Look above and by strong and faithful. (my trans.; 195)

From these lines, it is clear that the Mizo orality and their culture as well have been clearly influenced by the missionaries. The Mizos have internalised and imitated the forms and habits of the Christians. They began to model themselves through the white men: "Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage" (Bhabha, 85). Mizo traditional oral compositions had never seen words such as '*Lal'* to denote the term god. However, after the influence of the missionaries, lyrics could be seen among the Mizos which is tantamount to 'mimicry' – an attempt by the colonizers to make the colonized imitate, internalize and even adopt their forms and styles of the colonial masters. Their compositions began to be "almost the same, but not quite". Later, this mimicry of the colonizer by the colonized achieved a distorted identity, thus, leading to a hybridised existence. Due to this, there is the creation of a new cultural identity among the Mizos. The clash of cultures between the West and the East produced something new and brilliant in terms of orality in the Mizos. This clash that colonialism had strongly invoked, influenced and encouraged the formation of new cultural hybrids. The concept

of hybridity has occurred in many post-colonial societies as Loomba has denoted “one of the most important themes of postcolonial theorizing, as we have already seen, has been its emphasis on the hybridity of cultural identifications and the instability of dominating cultural paradigms” (343).

As a result of this hybridised culture, the orality of the Mizos greatly benefited from it as “orality is thus the central indigenous mode in most postcolonial writing” (Nayar, 222). Amidst all of the resistances from the non-converts mentioned, there were four major revival movements that occurred in Mizoram which greatly affected the orality of the Mizos in the post Christian era. “There was four major revival movements and several minor ones recognized by Zo Christians during the period under study. Though revivalism was always present, these were times during which the phenomena ‘peaked’ into great waves and spread throughout Mizoram” (Kigpen, 219).

The first wave of evangelical revival in Mizoram occurred in the year 1906. Earlier, Mizo orality had no mention of the Almighty God in any aspect. Since the first revival, songs and hymns were composed and sung with ample references to God: “*Kan inhmuh Kan intawh leh hma zawng*” meaning ‘God be with you till we meet again’ (Nag, 128). It was the signing of this farewell hymn that started the revival. The strange noises, sounds and oral performances that were made by those who attended the meeting attracted people living in the neighbourhood. The meeting was marked by continuously singing Gospel hymns. Thus, it could be said that the change in the dynamics of orality played a huge role in the revival itself. On the other hand, this could be said to have worked the other way round too, as the revival influenced the orality of the Mizos. The Gospel songs that were sung and composed played a great role in the development of the orality in the post Christian era.

The main theme of the first revival was deeply concentrated on the conviction of sin by the Mizos as they had an urge to confess their sins in public. J.M Lloyd, one of the missionaries, has stated that “The chief characteristic of this revival which occurred in 1906 was that it gave all who came under its influence had a tremendous conviction

of sin" (54). This aspect of being a sinner who needed to be saved can be seen through their oral compositions. Hymns that dealt with the compositions of confessional songs of sinning became popular:

Eng nge sual tifai thei ang?

Isua Krista thisen chauhvin.

Eng nge min tidam leh ang?

Isua Krista thisen chauhvin.

What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

What can make me whole again?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. (*Kristian Hla Bu*, 18th ed., 172)

While Christianity eventually grew in Mizoram, in the initial stages, there was strong opposition towards it. Persecution from the chiefs was a direct reaction to the revival. In addition to this, in 1908, a form of anti-revival movement occurred and gave rebirth to a form of orality that had once been lost. This newly revived form of orality was called *Puma Zai*[2] which is also known as *tlanglam zai*[3]. "In the year 1908 an unprecedented movement began in north Mizoram, inspired by a new song called *Puma Zai*. It was so called because the word "puma" was used as a refrain at the end of every verse's first line. One of the famous *Puma zai* runs thus:

Lam dawn e, lam dawn e, lam dawn e, Puma,

Kan khaw tleitir ban vai mawi a lam dawn e.

A dance will insue, will ensue, Puma,

The famed beauty of the village is about to dance. (my trans.; 315)

Oral stories and legend denote that *Puma Zai* was composed by a jungle spirit who passed it on to a man who was possessed by demons. This form of orality then became popularised as he was often heard singing. Another oral story narrates that it originated from the Biate clan when some Mizos heard them singing during the 1880's. *Puma* literally means 'god' in the Biate language which is equivalent to the *pathian* (god) of the Lushais. Thus, *Puma zai* in its original form was perhaps a chant used by the Biate clan while worshipping their family god. In the year 1907, this form of orality was largely popularised at the village of Zawngin, where Lalzika Sailo was the chief. One of the famous *Puma zai* composed by Thangkunga runs thus:

Kan tuikhur hi khur tha a lo ni Puma

Sirte Ainawnpari bual kan hmu,

Lalbawrhsappa Lalhmeltha a lo leng e Puma,

I vangkhua chung si-ar zat chu kan tlanglam.

Kan lam man sialin a rel dawn e Puma,

Lal lai thansei Lalbawrhsappa Lalhmeltha.

Zawngin Tuikhurin a daih dawn lo Puma

Chawn leh lam sechhun a tam em e.

Our spring water is the best, Puma, as we saw a pretty lady bathe.

The handsome chief visited, Puma, and his citizens danced the *tlanglam* in plenty.

He will reward us with a mithun, Puma, the generous and handsome chief.

The water at Zawngin cannot sustain us, Puma.

As there are feasts in plenty to celebrate. (my trans.; 175)

This newly popularised form of orality caused huge problems for the missionaries and the development of the Church and Christianity. J.M Lloyd too has stated:

> Though Christianity gained ground steadily, there were occasional setbacks. One of the severest tests came in 1908, when there was a sudden resurgence of heathenism. An old Lushai tune was set to new words and became immediately popular. The words were generally in praise of a great village chief. . . . It spread like wild fire to all parts of the hill. Amazing manifestations of feeling accompanied the singing-almost as though the revival was being parodied. Great feasts were held during which the young men and girls danced in ecstasy. These demonstrations were made in every village. The cause of Christ seemed doomed in Lushai. (pp 54-55)

Puma zai was very popular among the Mizos and it enveloped the whole of Mizoram from the year 1907. It was one of the greatest orally inspired movements that ever existed among the Mizos. Many chiefs celebrated it with feasts that invoked drinking of *zu*[4] and dances that were never seen before among the Mizos were performed. It was due to this reason that the Christians strongly believed that it was the work of the devil in order to slow down the workings of the Church and it was termed as anti-Christian by them. Despite these accusations, during the *Puma zai* movement, people of different classes were treated alike within the celebrations. There were seemingly no distinctions between the poor or the rich. The community was in harmony and there were fewer crimes committed during that time. As orality grew and expanded throughout Mizoram, different versions of *Puma zai* gradually came into existence. Some of them were: *Hrangchhawni zai* (songs by Hrangchhawni), *Lalthanga (Lungphunlian) zai* (songs by Lalthanga), *Lianrikhumi zai* (songs by (Lianrikhumi), *Lengzem zai* (loves songs), *German run zai* (songs about World War II), *Awithangpa zai* (songs by Awithangpa) and *Kaihlek zai*[5]. These new and modified forms of songs took Mizo orality to a new level. It influenced many song compositions and had its effect and influence even up to the end of the *Puma zai* movement.

Among them the *Kaihlek zai* enriched the oral nature of the Mizo song tradition. The name literally means songs that were twisted. J.H Lorrain described it a song used "to parody or burlesque a sacred hymn" (224). *Kaihlek zai* were used to make changes in the tunes of Christian songs. The tunes had been originally used for the singing of profane songs. There were two aspects: "a survey of *kaihlek zai* shows that there are two different types of songs – one type was a profane song indeed and the other was purely lyrical in nature" (Thanmawia, 101). This form of orality came to be popularised when the leaders and authorities of the Church strictly forbade the singing or composing of any type of songs that were not related to Christianity. Songs about lovers being in love and songs that did not proclaim the Christian faith were all disdained and abolished. Singers who sang these songs were considered to be against the Church. To perform and sing them was regarded as a punishable offence. This was how the *Kaihlek zai* had its origin: as "the natural inclination between the opposite sexes compelled them to scribble out these kinds of songs from inside the doctrinal bars. The composers presumed that the Church leader, on hearing their singing even from a distance might take it to be a sacred hymn" (Thanmawia, 102). The first types of *kaihlek zai* were clearly profane. The twist of the sacred hymns utilised the removal of extremely Christianised words like Jesus, Calvary, and blood and were replaced by the names of their lovers.

Aw, khawi ah nge Chhandamtu chuan

Lungngaih hrehawm a tuar?

A hmel duhawm tak hmuh ka chak,

Hmangaih thisen luanna.

Oh! Where does my saviour suffer in pain?

I deeply long for his face where his blood flowed. (my trans.; 102)

The above lines are the Christianised version. This was twisted into another song to soothe the lovers' interest. It was twisted and the profane *kaihlek zai* runs thus:

Aw, khawi ah nge Thadangi chuan,

Nipui sen sa a tuar?

A hmel duhawm tak hmuh ka chak,

Hmangaih dartui luanna.

Oh! Where does my beloved woman suffer the scorching sun?

I deeply long for her face where beauty flowed. (my trans.; 102)

Mau tam[6], struck Mizoram in 1911, and thus, the festivities, large feasts and gatherings that were held during the *Puma zai* movement declined. As the famine passed, people revived the movement and gathered in singing and feasting once again. As large numbers of people were always involved in singing and dancing, the *Puma zai* in the later years came to be known as *tlanglam zai*, which literally translates to 'dance-song of the community'. Later this form of oral narration (though having its origin from *puma zai*) slowly developed into its own mature form of orality. There were differences in the number of lines, diction, and form. It is usually found in triplets or quartets while the *Puma zai* consists of only two lines with the word *Puma* at every first line of a stanza. *Tlanglam zai* has three lines with *puma* at the end of the first line of every stanza:

Mahniin siahthing an phur ngai lo Puma,

Ramsa pelin Kaprualan a pel ang che,

Relthang hlau ang che aw, tlan ang che.

Bur an chhem, bur an chhem, bur an chhem, Puma

Tleitir zunzam Puithiam an ruai ngai em le,

Tuar har chhemkiangin ka ring love.

Nobody gathers firewood alone, Puma . . . Kapruala will hunt you like an animal,

Be cautious of being complained about by others.

Playing the bottle, blowing the bottle, tuning the bottle, Puma,

Do priests ever end your loneliness in prayer, I seriously doubt that. (my trans.; 178)

In the later period, the *Tlanglam zai* (communal dance-song) developed further away from its origin *Puma zai* and dropped the word 'puma' from the first lines of every first stanza:

Senvawn tlangval kan tlanglam a duai ngai lo,

Vaipa siamsa khawnvartui ka entir e,

Tum mawi sialki nen kan tlanglam e.

The brave men's dances in Senvawm are always beautiful,

We dance in the light of the lantern, made by the plain dwellers,

We dance the *tlanglam* at the tune of the beating horn. (my trans.; 177)

These anti-revival movements brought a setback to the first wave of revival. The purpose of the introduction of these new forms of orality was to deride and oust the Christian hymns that had begun to play a role among the Mizo Christian. In reaction to the Mizo Christian songs and hymns that were composed and sung at Churches, the *Tlanglam*[7] and *Tlanglam zai* became widely popularised by the non-converts. The new converts were condemned as traitors who focused on the traditions and customs of the white men, rather than their own. J.M Lloyd stated:

> But there always was hostility and, after the revival began in 1906 this hostility grew very bitter. . . . Soon, when converts began to appear, they also were persecuted. . . . If a Christian died the other villagers would refuse

> to bury him. . . . Christians were often forced to work on Sundays or punished for not helping to make beer for a village feast. If the Chief wanted chickens for some special entertainment he took most of them from the Christians. This was a very common occurrence and in fact, the majority of the Chiefs made great efforts to stop the rising tide of Christianity. (33)

As the popularity of the oral *Puma zai* increased, it eventually became difficult for the people to understand as to why some of the populace could not be affected by the song. Later on, some changes and developments could also be seen in its presentation. As it was a reaction to the revival of the Christians, some of the *Puma zai* were clearly aimed at discrediting the Christian religion. Thus, they sang:

> *I lengkhawm ang hmiang le kan runah, Puma,*
>
> *Puma zaia lungleng lo chu siam sualin a siam, in a siam*.
>
> Gather and sing at our home, Puma
>
> Those untouched by our tunes
>
> They are created by one, who is a false creator. (my trans.; 344)

Due to the rapid spread of the movement of the *Puma zai,* the songs and the ecstatic dance movements that were performed had enveloped a large part of Mizoram, it was considered by the Christians as "the work of the spirit of Satan" and was believed to be "a great manifestation of the power of darkness". It was often regarded as a movement devised by Satan to put an end to the spread of Christianity among the Mizos. The main reason for this suspicion was that the movement led the entire population (the young and the old, men and women, the rich and the poor, illiterate and the educated) to lose interest in their daily livelihood. It made it hard for the Christian preachers to widen their expansion of Christianity. There was a clash between the wave of *Puma zai* and the Christian songs. Both groups identified themselves as the more authentic movement. The Puma songsters would sing and dance to abusive and provocative songs:

Lehkhabu keng vai lem chang,

Chanchin hril reng reng, Puma.

Imposters of foreigners carrying books,

Always preaching, Puma. (my trans.; 87)

Due to all of these resistances, Christianity among the Mizos was losing ground in the initial stages as nobody cared for the teachings of Christianity. The entire community was overwhelmed by the massive and successful movement of the *Puma zai.* Preaching and singing hymns of the Christian songs became quite troublesome for the Christian workers. Furthermore, it was rumoured that those who followed *Puma zai* would be exempted from offering sacrifices. It was felt that they need not perform costly sacrifices anymore as it enabled them to offer only a few strands of hair or feathers to appease the spirits. There were also rumours that this movement would put an end to the Christian hymns that had been a part of the new religion.

Due to all of these, it was a purely natural response for the Christians to regard and perceive the *Puma zai* movement as anti-Christian. However, it has to be noted that in the initial years of Mizo conversion to Christianity, there was a tendency to regard that every aspect of the Mizo traditional practices were anti-Christian. It was for this reason that the *Puma zai* too was considered to be anti-Christian. Looking from the lines of the *Puma zai* that has been given earlier, one can find that there were no particular lines or verses about it being anti-Christian, or it being of demonic origin or demonic lyrics and lines as it was claimed. The verses were not anti-Christian and demonic in its content and nature. From here on, it can be safe to assume that all of the accusations were greatly exaggerated by the general public as anything that does not belong to the Christian religion, and anything that belonged to the Mizo cultural practices, rituals were considered anti-Christian in nature and form. “Though it is true that there were cases of ill-treatment of individual Christians by members of their own families, such cases had always been there and no direct linkage with the *Puma zai* movement need be

assumed" (Kigpen, 232). Therefore, it is safe to assume that the *Puma zai* was not necessarily anti-Christian in nature as it had been so believed. It was essentially a revival or rebirth of the orality of the Mizos that had once been forgotten and never practiced anymore. This orality was centred upon a particular tune and dance that was not practiced by the Christians and it made them believe that it was the work of the evil forces. In this light, it can be assumed that the effect it had on Christianity was that it led the people's concentration away from Christianity for quite some time. It also had adverse effects on Christianity, in an indirect way as it diverted the attention of the people and the evangelists from performing their evangelical work in the Church and among the people at large. "Whatever adverse effect it had was temporary and, in fact, in the long run it contributed positively to the growth of Christianity" (Kigpen, 232-233).

Despite the criticism and strong resistance during that period, there was an evolutionary change in the lives of the Mizos in terms of religion. In this context, it must be mentioned that the first conversion of the Mizos took place on the 25th June, 1899. From then on, it was very clear that there was a gradual and steady rise of Christianity among the Mizos. There was a miraculous rise in terms of conversion to Christianity amongst the Mizo society. This had a huge impact upon the Mizos as there was a rapid decrease of animism amongst them. There grew a strong thirst for knowledge in the newly found religion, and thus led to numerous religious awakenings and revivals that occurred within the years 1906, 1913, 1919, 1935 throughout Mizoram. These revivals had an immeasurable impact on the aspect of orality of the Mizos. Almost all of the traditional forms of orality like storytelling, oral superstitions, song compositions and many other form of oral culture were done away with. Moreover, these revivals led to the composition of many new Christian hymns. Stories that were once about nature and its elements, the supernatural and the mystical were all converted into narratives that had Biblical perspectives. It was rapidly becoming very clear that Christianity gained members at a very fast rate among the Mizos. Prayers that were chanted to the spirits in the pre Christian era were now changed to prayers to the Almighty God in the post

Christian era. This involved the casting away of the rituals and religious practices that went with the customs earlier: gongs, drums, animal sacrifices, sacrificial chants were forgotten and lost with the passage of time. The chants to the spirits were also replaced with the singing of hymns to the Christian God who was all supreme and all powerful. Earlier, the Mizos in the pre Christian era used to pray to different types of spirits, but Christianity taught them that they were blessed and had received salvation through one true God. It can be said that the first revival movement brought about an evolutionary change in the mind of the Mizos. As Leela Gandhi pointed out "hybridity generally refer to the destabilising of colonised culture" (136). The culture of Mizo orality was destabilised as almost all of the new song compositions were Christianised. Thus, there was a decided hybridity of the Mizo belief system with the Christian faith and religion.

The second religious revival broke out in Mizoram in March in the year 1913. This was very important for the growth of Christianity and orality in Mizoram as it was a much more powerful and extensive movement in comparison to the first revival. J.M Lloyd has stated: "This happened to be a special year in Lushai History for several reasons. The effects of the great famine of 1911-1912 were still felt by the people. The brotherly spirit shown by the Christians during the famine had made a profound impression on the non-Christians. . . . 1913 was also the year when first Lushai Pastor was ordained. These factors no doubt helped to prepare the minds of the people. The revival broke out with great power at a gathering of the Presbytery in the presence of many delegates and soon spread to all parts" (55).

Orality had moved from the customary practices to the aspects of orality centered around the second coming of Christ. "This time it was the sufferings of Christ upon the Cross which gripped the thought of every person. This led emphasis upon the love of God for us, and in the wake of this, the necessity for brotherly love came into prominence" (Lloyd, 56). Sermons and songs that were composed and sung were about the second coming of Jesus Christ which was an important feature in the development of the orality of the Mizos. "The revival was even more ecstatic [than the first revival]. The powerful preaching with its emphasis on Christ's second coming was backed up by

appropriate well-known hymns such as, ‘Lo, he comes with clouds surrounding’ and ‘Be ready when he comes’ which were translated into Lusei and sung with great excitement” (Kigpen, 259). The characteristic facet of this revival was that the oral performance, especially the songs and dances that were composed and sung and performed, were all spontaneous. The revival movement of 1913 had had a greater and pivotal role and impact on the religious lives of the Mizos as it had played a tremendous role in converting and influencing the Mizos. This revival added many new believers to the various Churches throughout Mizoram. The old animistic religious practices vanished completely at this point in time. It was almost as if there were no more clashes between the cultures of the west and the Mizos anymore; the new religion had become the culture of the Mizos. Such was the state in which hybridity took place among the Mizos. They were now “placed in a position of in-betweenness: between ‘adopted’ Englishness and [being] ‘original’ [Mizo]” (Nayar, Contemporary, 170). This created a ‘third space’: “the stairwell of luminal space , in-between the designation of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower . . . this interstitial passage between fixed identification opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, 4). It was a space of the intermingling of the colonizer and the colonized. It was here that the two colonial and native identities met and formed a new cultural identity of the Mizos. This was why almost all oral compositions from this point forth were Christianised. Having mentioned this, the Mizo cultural roots were never negated completely as songs started to include the elements of the traditional Mizo culture into its lyrics.

The third religious revival occurred in the year 1919. The revival spread throughout Mizoram and was not concentrated to a particular area. Its impact was even felt in the neighbouring states like Manipur, and even up to some parts of Myanmar. The main focus was on how Jesus died on the Cross for the sins of the people. J.M Lloyd, one of the missionaries, mentioned that “this time it was the sufferings of Christ upon the Cross which gripped the thought of every person. This led to emphasis upon the love

of God . . . brotherly love came into prominence" (55). Mizo orality benefited from this revival in the aspects of their compositions which were based on the glorification of what Jesus suffered at the cross on Calvary. This was why all the sermons, songs and hymns that were popularised in Mizoram all bore a sense of deep feeling and realisation about the torture and sufferings of Jesus Christ. "Preaching and singing hymns both were directed towards the same result . . . two or three girls of Nisapui were said to have been so successful in their efforts to identify with the crucified Christ that the stigmata appeared on their bodies" (Kigpen, 268).

Another aspect of the importance of this revival was that it revived the usage of the drum which was once a very important part of the Mizo oral tradition: "the drums exemplify and often informally exaggerate the characteristics of the oral lifeworld" (Beardsley, 522). In the earlier era of Christianity, the usage of drums was not appreciated as it was believed to have a connection with that of animism or the worship of benevolent spirits. With this revival, the drum which had always played a pivotal role in the oral traditions of the Mizos was revived, not only to its former importance and glory but it held a much more important position in the lives and hearts of the Mizos. During and after this revival, the Mizo Christians began to use drums in accompaniment while singing Gospel hymns: "Hymn-singing became much more popular. The use of the drum to accompany the singing spread to every church at this time" (Lloyd, 56). However, in the initial stages, the re-introduction of the drum received opposition from within the Mizo-Christian sensibility. The reason for this was that they strongly believed that it was an instrument that had a close association with the evil spirits. Since the drum was an instrument that was frequently used when the Mizos prayed to the spirits, the Mizo Christians were hesitant to use it. The traditional musical instrument used to appease the spirits could not be used by them in their worship of the Christian God. It was also believed that the usage of the drum was ousting their prayers and it distracted them from listening to the preachers. The other reason for the rejection of the drum culture was in terms of the mind-set of the newly converted Mizo Christians. According to the previous beliefs, all sorts of the Mizo traditional items, and musical instruments

were the instruments of the devil and the evil spirits. They had undergone a transition and they regarded all things that were non-Christian to be unholy. They seriously felt that the western way of life and their religion was the only appropriate way of religious practice and considered it superior to the traditional ways, and this led them to abandon the usage of drums. This was the impact of the rulers whose religion they had come to accept, while almost discarding an important part of their orality, like the usage of drum.

However, with the passage of time, the usage of the indigenous drum in the Mizo-Christian Churches had come into practice again after the revivals. The other factor that made the earlier Mizo Christian and missionaries hesitant about the usage of the drum was that it was considered to be a musical instrument of the indigenous Mizo society. With the advent of the third revival, the usage of drums was not only revived, but was taken into the Church in order to aid in the singing of the Gospel songs. "The first concrete manifestation of indigenization was the introduction of the traditional Zo drum to accompany singing and dancing during the third revival. It was to become a prominent feature of Zo Christianity ever since. The drum was one of the few indigenous musical instruments that the Zos had possessed" (Kigpen, 270). The once banned drum was brought back and it immediately became an addition to the spiritual movement. According to Liangkhaia, a historian, it was on the 29th July of 1919 at Thingkhuang (in Mizoram) that the drum was first used to accompany the mainstream Christian songs. From then on, the drums were beaten wherever the revival spread and its usage is still continued to this day and age. The beatings and rhythm of the drums became an important symbol in the Mizo Christian context. This led to the introduction of a new type of singing and song compositions as well: "When the traditional drums interacted with Christian hymns, the drums became meaningful. . . . using drums is no longer seen as unchristian, but rather as more spiritual and expressing Mizo Christian identity" (Ngurliana, 175).

One of the most notable contributions of this revival was that it encouraged the Mizo society in general to compose Christian hymns and songs. This played a huge role in the development of the Mizo literature as compositions were not all oral in nature

anymore. There was a huge transition from the compositions that were made during the pre-Christian era. “It is clear that one of this third revival’s main importance was the fact that it led to large-scale conversions to Christianity in Mizoram . . . The third revival wave went on for five years – from 1919 to 1923 – and produced the most rapid growth of the Christian community in the history of Mizoram” (Kigpen, 241). The increase in the number of Christians evidently led to increase in the number of more composers of songs which had a pivotal role in the development of the narrative tradition of the Mizos. Some of the most famous composers who emerged during this period were Patea, Hrawva, C.Z. Huala, R.L. Kamlala, Pastor Chhawna, Zasiama and Siamliana.

The songs that were composed during this revival were sung both at Churches and in social gatherings. The main theme and focus of these songs were about the glorification of the sufferings of Jesus Christ and how it led to the salvation of His followers. This is why it could be said that the 1919 revival was more effective in comparison to the two earlier revivals. It also played a role in expanding and widening Christendom among the general Mizos. Even J.M Lloyd remarked: “Of the revival experienced in Lushais this is said to have been the most potent. In 1919, about four thousand people gave themselves to Christ” (56).

With the introduction of the drum, the composition as well as translation of songs became much popularised. Mizo orality in terms of songs played a central role in the tradition of the new culture of the Mizos. At first, the missionaries simply translated songs from the western hymns and composed a few songs. These songs were translated into Mizo and were sung with much enthusiasm. Original compositions by the Mizos were regarded as profane and they had a strong attachment to the songs translated by the missionaries. “This reflects the antipathy of the first Zo Christians towards their own culture as well as the extent of western influence upon them. They developed a kind of conservatism which led them to stick with the western tunes even when they started composing their own songs during the second revival” (Kigpen, 275). This clearly showed the hybridised culture of the Mizos. It was as though the recovery of the

authentic voice, songs and tunes of the natives were impossible. It was clear that the 'subaltern' Mizos could not speak for themselves anymore. Their past cultural oral roots had been thoroughly interpreted and reinterpreted by the colonial masters, making them unable to express their own selves. "Hybridity derives its agency by activating liminal and ambivalent positions in-between forms of identification that may be asymmetrical, disjunctive and contradictory" (Bhabha, xii).

As the Mizos had used the translations and compositions by the missionaries only, their first songs, even during the first revivals, were composed by the missionaries. "In the postcolonial era, songs are still in existence but are located more in terms of a rather hybridised category, being translated from Western models rather than being located in the Mizo regional context" (Pachuau, 22). The first eighteen Christian Mizo songs that were composed and translated by the first two missionaries were compiled in 1899 at the Eureka Press, Calcutta. It was entitled *Kristian Hla Bu*. Some of them were:

1. *Isua vanah a om a,*

   Khawvela zuk-lokal a,

   Mihring angin a lo om,

   Keima min tidam turin,

   Baibala kan hmu thei e,

   Ava tha ber em ve le!

   Jesus who art in heaven

   Went down to earth

   As a man

   To give salvation to me

   This can be seen from the Bible

Which is the very best. (my trans.; 132)

The tune was taken from the English hymn.

2. '*Khawvela ka om chhung zong*' (As Long as I Live on Earth) which was "jointly translated by the two missionaries from SSS No. 478" (Thanmawia, 67).
3. '*Tuna ka oi ka oi ang e*' (I Shall Believe Now).
4. '*Enge sual tifai thei ang*?' translated from 'What Can Wash Away My Sin?'
5. '*Thonthu hlui chu min hrilh roh*' (Tell Me the Old Story).
6. '*Isu! Beram vengtu angin*' (Jesus! Like a Shepherd).
7. '*Isu Tidamtu khawvela a haw*' (Jesus the Saviour on Earth).

Four years later after the first Mizo Christian hymn book was published, a second and third *Kristian Hla Bu* was published into two parts – part I in 1903, and part II in 1904 which was later bound together containing 125 hymns. Thus, it could be said that Christian songs grew to a large extent. Mizos started to compose and translate their own songs from this point in time. The first ever recorded translation was by Thanga, a Mizo Christian, in 1903. His first work was '*Lalber Hma Ah Kan Ding Ang*' which was translated from the original hymn 'We Shall Stand Before The King'. With the passage of time more compositions and translations took place.

During the years 1900-1919 translated songs were found and sung among the Mizo-Christians. With this, more songs were added to the *Kristian Hla Bu.* In the initial years, the Mizo songs still borrowed tunes and melodies from western songs as they were still greatly influenced by them. However, as time moved on, the translated songs by the missionaries were insufficient to meet the spiritual needs of the Mizos during the revival. The Mizos began to compose their own songs and in due course of time, translated songs were overshadowed by original Mizo song compositions with western tunes. One such song composed by Liangkhaia, a Mizo historian, which can be found in *Kristian Hla Bu* runs thus:

Thisen hlu, thisen hlu,

Thing kraws chunga luang khan,

Sual laka min tlanin,

Mi sual thiam min chantir;

Mi sual dum ber a varna chu,

Kalvari thisen hlu a ni. (*Kristian Hla Bu,* 18th ed., 193)

It was translated into English by Mrs. Zomuani and the English version goes thus:

Precious blood, precious blood,

That flows from the wooden Cross;

Redeeming us from sin,

Justifying us, criminals,

Cleanser of the foulest sinner,

It's the precious blood of Calv'ry.

Compositions like these deeply touched the hearts of many Mizo Christians. The pre-colonial aspects of orality of the Mizos were revived with the association of the beating of the drums, to the original songs by the Mizos and it had a profound impact on them. Later on, more songs were composed. The compositions of one of the most famous composers named Kapliana (a Mizo song composer) runs thus:

Ka thla, thlawk la thuro angin,

I tlan chhuahna ram va fang teh;

Khawpui daiah I Tlantu sualnain a sawr a,

A in tur no kha chuan thisen thlanah a fartir;

Fly like a dove, O my soul to the place of your redemption;

Your redeemer is tortured on the outskirts of town,

And his suffering makes his sweat drop like blood; (my trans.; 261)

Compositions like these were popularised and they enveloped the Mizos far and wide. They were sung with great fervour both at churches and also at fellowship gatherings at homes and these were known as *khawhar zai*[8]. The power of orality that held fast the Mizo aspect of identity and culture was dramatically changed with post colonization. The concept of hybridity was seen to occur in post-colonial societies as a result of the onset of Christianity among the Mizos. Hybridity seeped into the minds of the Mizos as their identity and culture were now an amalgation of both colonial Christianity and their pre-existing culture. This can be seen in how songs and poems were composed. Song compositions which were never before seen in relation to God were all Christianised and sung from celebrations to lamentation of the dead. Even when a person died, Christian songs would be sung at the funerals and ceremonies in order to mourn the dead, as well as to ease the pain of the families that underwent the loss of their beloved. Thus, a new form of oral tradition was born among the Mizos which became a very important part of the Mizo identity and culture. These oral performances became significant in Mizo culture and shaped their identity as well. Performances comprised dancing to the beating of the drums and even the chanting of prayers. It provided opportunities for composers to enrich orality as well as the Christian songs. It invited and created a chance for the people to express themselves through composing of songs with their own tunes and melodies. There was an overlapping of the Christian culture with that of the Mizo culture where a new form of culture was formed among the Mizos: "The terrain of cultural hybridity is the contradictory ground upon which the organic and the conjunctural overlap; and this interstitial space, this movement back and forth between what is structural and what is conjunctural . . . is not the reconstruction of past history but the construction of present and future which is at stake" (Bhabha, xii).

The fourth wave of revival is said to have occurred in the year 1935. “It was found that the emphasis has shifted. In this revival, it is the doctrine of Holy Spirit which has been emphasised” (Lloyd, 56). All of these four revivals brought with it a transition and change in the Mizo society from the indigenous religious faith to Christianity. These religious awakenings and revivals not only resulted in the growth of the Church but the growth of the oral narratives of the Mizos, especially in terms of poetry and songs. During the revival alone, many Christian songs were translated and composed by the natives themselves. It is believed that more than 500 songs were composed and translated during this period alone. This is evident from the fact that the number of songs in the *Kristian Hla Bu* went from only eighteen songs in 1899 to 558 songs in the year 1915.

The celebration of the Christmas festival had a dominant role over the indigenous festivals - *Chapchar Kut*, *Mim Kut* and *Pawl Kut*. These festivals were celebrated enthusiastically every year. Lots of dances, singing, feasts and drinking of *zu* (rice beer) took place in these festivals. The missionaries categorized all cultural festivals to be worldly and sinful as it involved drinking of rice beer which was immoral and un-Christian in the Mizo context. Due to this, the oral performances and dances that were associated with these festivals were lost with time. The advent of Christianity and post colonialism had a deep impact among the Mizos in terms of the formation and creation of ideas, as well as on their psyche. This led to a consistent negation of the cultural oral myths, folks and cultural lores of the Mizos, which made it all imperative for hybridity to occur in the Mizo narratives. Due to this, hybridity remains inevitable among the Mizos in the post Christian era. Thus, the earlier Mizo culture was merged with Christianity and the power dynamics were hybridised. “Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects” (Bhabha, 159). The drinking of the rice beer that had been a part and parcel of these festivals was also done away with, when the Christmas festival came to be prioritised. The Mizos were in true festive mood only during Christmas celebrations as it too involved dancing and singing as they did in other festivals. However, there was a

dynamic shift in the composition of songs in the Christian era in comparison to the songs that had been performed in the customary festivals. The concept of hybridity comes into sharp alignment in this perspective “society wears a colourful and joyous look during this newly embraced Christmas festival” (Nag, 162).

There has been a sense of embracing both the Christian values and placing them in the context of the post-colonial domain while merging Mizo culture and Christianity. With the advent of Christianity, the written script was introduced and it had a significant impact on the literary development of the Mizos. The narratives of the Mizos had undergone a major change. Songs that were composed and sung had had a hybridised Christian content. Oral chants that were made to the benevolent spirits and blood rituals that involved lots of incantations were replaced by prayers to the Almighty God in the post-colonial context in the Mizo society.

GLOSSARY

[1]An object of worship of non-Christians/Christians' object of worship. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher's Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 211.

[2]The name of an anti-Christian song, 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. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 371.

[3]The name given to the anti-Christian song, also known as *Puma Zai* which later changed to *tlanglam zai* when it became popular and was celebrated with communal dancing in 1908. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 511.

[4]Beer or any fermented liquor. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 570.

[5]To parody or burlesque (a sacred hymn); to use a sacred hymn tune for the singing of a profane song. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 224.

[6]The name given to the periodic dying down of the above bamboos and to the subsequent famine. To die down simultaneously as the *mau* bamboos do periodically about every fifty years after flowering and fruiting. This occurrence is followed by a plague of rats which devour the rice crops and cause a famine. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 309.

[7]The communal dances or dancing which took place in 1908 in connection with the anti-Christian song known as *Puma Zai*. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 511.

[8]Any dirge, requiem, or lament songs sung in honour of the dead. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 253.

CHAPTER IV

Identity and Orality

This chapter shall dwell upon the aspects of the oral narratives of the Mizos and it shall focus upon how the oral narratives of both the pre and post Christian have been closely associated with Mizo identity. It shall also dwell on how the orality of the Mizos has created a niche among the identity of the Mizos as a tribe. Among the indigenous Mizo people, the oral narratives have always played a very significant role in their culture and literature. The chapter shall delve and focus on the aspects of formulating different identity parameters among the Mizos in the contemporary era.

As far as the orality of the Mizos was concerned, it had always been closely related with their identity since time immemorial. The oral traditional stories, lullabies, chants and songs were always part and parcel of the identity of the tribal Mizo culture. The Mizos have always had a very rich form of oral narrative and oral traditions. The aspects of orality have always been a part of the Mizo identity: "Orality must be treated as a component of a specific social space with its own particularities of gender, class, sexuality, and politics" (Nayar, 222). Mizos have a very rich variety of oral tales, especially during the pre-Christian era. The oral tales are not only a representation of their reality in their day to day lives. They are also the manifestations of their dreams, beliefs put into songs, stories and different chants in the oral tradition. Therefore, it is clear that the orality of the Mizos not only resembles and represents their culture and heritage, but is also the representation of their identity as Mizos.

The Mizos in the pre-Christian era identify closely with nature as they had always lived in close proximity to nature and the blessings it showered upon the people. Therefore, the Mizos had their identity strongly related to the forces of nature; they had close relationship with the nature that surrounded them. Due to this, there are various forms of narratives that are directly involved with nature. The Mizos were fond of nature and paid huge respect to nature and the life force. Songs, chants, and many other form of orality were in relation to that of nature. From the various forms of chants and songs performed with regards to the spirits of the natural elements, there is a tendency to regard that the Mizos were an animistic tribal people who offered prayers and sacrifices to the spirits. However, such was not the case. It is true, of course, that the Mizos had a

deep connection and relation to nature. The Mizo ancestors had been living in close harmony and coexistence with animals as well as nature. “The concept of identity formation within the pre-colonial era was significantly inter-linked with that of nature and animals, as well as human beings” (Pachuau, 183). A fine example of this can be seen in the treatment and respect given to the slain animals:

Pialral e, Kai Khamtu e, vawmphuai e, kai hlang ka duhin e,

Vawmphuai e, nang hmasa law, hnungah kawlfung a zuitu e.

Sa tin e, leng lakah khan, sai lian, mual a bang a chungnung e.

I badly wish to slay a bear to wait for me in the *pialral,*

Let the bear lead the way followed by the eagle.

The elephant is the greatest of the animals. (my trans.; 44, 45)

These oral chants used to be performed to commemorate the kill in a hunt. The hunter rejoiced over the kill and took pride to be able to perform this form of orality. There was a specific chant for each of the animals that were killed. Among them, the tiger has the highest value among the Mizos. Even when animals were slain and killed in a hunt, well administered ceremonies known as *ai*[1] followed it. *Salu lam*[2] was performed in order to celebrate a successful hunt. There are varieties of ‘*ai*’ that differ according to the slain animal. Since most Mizo oral folktales have an allusion to nature, animals and the worlds of spirits and the supernatural they are considered to be a deviation from the Church and from Christianity itself. Narratives were composed and focused wholly according to the Biblical beliefs and teachings in the Christian era: “the *Bible* became in coherent ways the legitimate parameter within the post-Christian ethos” (Pachuau, 184).

With the introduction of Christianity into the hills of Mizoram, there was a new paradigm shift in terms of identity. All of the previous chants and celebrations were resisted against with the coming of the missionaries. This led to the loss of a very important form of orality known as *ai* (a ceremony over wild creatures killed in

hunting). Animals had lesser significance in the lives of the Mizos. This aspect of orality took a back seat in the post Christian era. Eventually with the passage of time it was soon forgotten, as it was rarely or no longer practiced among the hunters and warriors. Songs and folklore about the beauty of nature and animals were replaced by Biblical themed songs and narratives. This is because the Biblical stories took and spread its deep roots in the psyche of the Mizos. The concept of the power of the pre Christian oral narratives was remarkably different from the narratives after colonisation, where Christianity became the main focus and has thus managed to relocate beliefs and ideas that were once associated with the power of the folklore of the pre Christian era. After the revivals that occurred in Mizoram the identity of the Mizos as a tribe was changed to a different level. The power of orality that holds fast the Mizo identity and culture was dramatically changed with post colonization.

Stories and tales that were once associated with the origin and identity of the Mizos gradually faded. Mizo oral tales like, 'How Creation Came to Be', 'How Rice Came to Be Eaten', 'How the Mountains and Lakes were Formed', and 'Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi' are about creation myths that deals with the origin of animals as well as humans. However, all of the earlier oral tales took a back seat in the post Christian era; and resistance of them began to take place. As Leela Gandhi pointed out "hybridity generally refers to the destabilising of colonised culture" (136). In the post-colonial era, all tales were concentrated upon the Almighty God and his supremacy. Thus, the Mizo origin tales that had a lot to do with their identity were replaced by the aspects of creation that were found in the Bible.

There occurred an amalgation of the Mizo culture with that of the culture of the missionaries. The concept of hybridity has occurred in many post-colonial societies as Loomba has denoted "one of the most important themes of postcolonial theorizing, as we have already seen, has been its emphasis on the hybridity of cultural identifications and the instability of dominating cultural paradigms" (343). This has had its impact upon Mizo identity as it has merged with the identity of the missionaries to an extent. In postcolonial literature, decolonization is characterized with the concern of the

undermined cultural identity of the colonized natives. The central concerns, questions and issues it tends to explore are as to whether a culture can reclaim their lost cultural identity. It also posits the question that if a cultural identity can be reclaimed, would it be an authentic one, in tandem with the pre-colonial past. If so, would it be desirable to return to the mixed or the authentic cultural identity. It also explores how traditional cultural identity can be adapted and changed to suit the new cultural context in the post-colonial era.

Hybridity has been seeped into the minds of the Mizos as their identity and culture have now been an amalgation of both colonial Christianity and their pre-existing culture. It has to be noted that there has been a significant emergence of hybridity in the formulation of the identity among the Mizos. Postcolonial theory through decolonization, addresses the question as to whether traditional culture can be adapted to suit new contexts. It also asks the possibility of "cultural identity mix-and match native and colonial forms" (Nayar, 83). In the context of the the Mizos, this is very much in existence amongst them as they have hybridised and adapted their culture to Christianity. With the strong and dominant influence of Christianity in the hills as well as the psyche of the Mizos, the power dynamics of Mizo orality have had a different perspective among the Mizos. The power of orality that holds fast the Mizo identity and culture was dramatically changed with post colonization being implemented into their lives, culture, traditions and various practices. This shift and transition from the pre-colonial folk dynamics to a post-colonial folk is a direct result of the new Christian religion that dominated Mizoram and its people to a great extent.

Due to the advent and the impact of Christianity among the Mizos, the narratives of the oral tradition and practices have been relegated and considered to be non-Christian. They were considered to be associated with the devil and evil forces. Due to this, they were merely often considered as tales which have little or no reference to the Mizo in terms of culture and identity. This is in keeping with Aime Cesaire's conception 'negritude'. He coined the term to describe the colonized cultural identity of the people of the Carribean and African people as he argued that colonialism destroyed the identity

of the colonized. He strongly believed that the colonizers presented the colonized as a culture with no history before colonization. This was what the Mizo Christian converts were subject to in the initial period of their conversion. In the context of the Christians, the religious practices of the native Mizos were constructed within the discourse of being primitive and animistic in nature. That was why all traces of it (though it had a huge influence in their cultural identity) were abolished. It became important and integral for them to denounce all claims of their cultural and traditional practices. Moreover, the circulation of the literary aspects and the teachings of the Bible went hand in hand. This had an influence on the natives who doubted about their existing traditional practices and ways of life. When the missionaries imparted education into the Mizos, they "framed laws for the natives, they used the stereotypes already in existence: primitive, pagan, childlike natives" (Nayar, 163). This was blindly and strongly regarded by the native Mizos as true and considered them to be a proof of an expert opinion: "When such irrefutable 'proof' was provided to the native, s/he accepted it as true. The consequences are fascinating" (Nayar, 163). As a result, the Christian converts regarded all things traditional as a false sense of Mizo identity. They began to look at their old customary practices and laws as false and unacceptable, and they began to look at themselves through the eyes of the Western missionaries as they had accepted that the representation of all things Western to be truth. "The identity of the native is what the colonial discourse generates and the native assimilates. It is this process that helps colonialism attain and retain its control. The empire, Said thus demonstrates, was kept not through coercion but through consent, and consent is achieved through discourse" (Nayar, 163).

In the colonial and post-colonial perspective, there has been a dramatic change in the perspective of the formation of identity among the Mizos. The defining parameters of identity were shaped and turned drastically after the emergence and the spread of Christianity which shaped and remodelled the definition of Mizo identity. In the years that followed colonisation, the Mizo society has inherently become a society which is greatly influenced by the nuances of the Christian religion. Due to this, the negation,

negligence as well as censorship of the old cultural myths, songs, stories, chants, folk, cultural lores and other form of oral tradition inevitably occurred within the psyche of the Mizos.

In the pre-colonial era, myths were largely a very important part of the religious practices among the Mizos. It had shaped the foundation of belief narratives. The belief in the afterlife was what shaped their reality. The tales concerning the after-life that had a very deep impact on the identity of the Mizos also changed dramatically. Some of the oral narratives and tales that denote narratives about the dead, the abode of the dead and the passages are 'Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana', 'Tualvungi leh Zawlpala' where the lovers Tualvungi and Zawlpala could interact between the world of the living and the world of the dead, 'Tlingi leh Ngama' and the oral tales concerning Rihdil. All of these tales were censored or demystified in the post-colonial era. There was a great paradigm shift as it affected the beliefs of the pre-colonial era. In the pre-colonial era, the Mizo belief in the after-life is inherently different from the Christian belief. Christianity completely changed the mode of thinking and belief of the Mizos. They began to reject the cultural beliefs of the after-life and the existence of either *mitthi khua*[3] or *pialral*[4] or Pawla and his terrible punishments on the passage to the abode of the dead. Moreover, they resisted the pre-existing idea of the process one had to undergo in order to enter the abode of the dead. Thus, the Mizos were liberated from their fear of the afterlife as they were now converts of the new religion that promised them salvation and admission into the Heavenly abode of the Almighty God. In as far as post-colonial Mizo society and identity is concerned, Christianity has played a major role in terms of the formulation of the identity of the post-colonial Mizo. There is a huge contrast with regards to the nuances of culture and identity in the pre and post-colonial era. The Mizo identity in the pre and the post-colonial era have a different sensibility altogether.

Identity in the pre-colonial Mizo society was inherently non-Christian. This can be seen from various tales and chants which the Mizos closely associated with the worship and appeasement of the benevolent spirits. Almost all of their belief systems were shaped by this: their belief in the afterlife, their traditions, practices, songs and rituals

that were practiced during their lifetime. All of these shaped the identities of the Mizos. One of the ritual performances that was offered to these spirits is:

Hrilawn[5]*:* A ritual sacrifice of a hen performed for a person suffering from an inflammatory disease of the glands, which was especially common among children. This was considered to be one of the deadliest causes of deaths in children. The oral chant for this was performed thus:

Kawlkungah lo thawk che,

Ni zung rawn zui che,

Thla zung rawn zui che.

Thanga pangti-ah i sen thei tawh lo vang,

Ka hluikhuangin ka thing che . . .

Hnai sen i chhuah thei tawh lovang,

Hnai var i chhuah thei tawh lovang.

"You may come thither through the lights, the sun or the moon but you may now no longer bind Thanga's flesh anymore. I command you with my drums . . . you can no longer cause him pain and suffering" (my trans.; 70).

A chant that the Mizos recited to the gods on the mountains is:

Lurhpuii thang nuar leh la ka khua hnim rawh,

Zawlkhaw siktui za tam tlang dawn a kam e;

Chawnpui par Chhingpuii ruang bualna.

Lord of the mountains we beg you to bless us with rain.

The water here on earth is scanty.

The beautiful Chhingpuii needs a bath. (my trans.; 51)

After Christianity, all of these changed as the Christian God was made supreme. There were a lot of different aspects altogether in the formation of the identity of the Mizos. Their belief system, their tradition, their way of life and everything about them changed as there was an eradication of their native religion and different ways of worship. Thus, their identity as a religious community, both individually and spiritually, changed to a great extent. After the advent of Christianity and the many revivals that followed, almost all of the aspects of the narrative, creative, critical thinking and perspective were changed. All other concepts of the pre Christian era were lost as Christianity had complete control over them. "The colonial Mizo began to gradually identify himself with the image of the Christian precepts of thinking and fashioned himself within such parameters. However, this was not to state that there were no other paradigms that had its bearings upon the arena of identity in the pre-colonial domains. The pre-colonial Mizo context was one that was rich in terms of carving out its own niche with regards to identity" (Pachuau, 34). In the various Mizo tales like 'Kelchawngi' and 'Liandova', readers can perceive the existence of gods, or goddesses. They are mentioned in the songs and chants of the old and earlier era. From creation myths to various tales, the Mizos had a complex and well defined identity. However, these gods and goddesses were of the earlier traditional beliefs which did not have any more significance in the identity of the Mizos in the post-colonial era.

After Christianity, the Bible and the Christian practices, teachings and preachings dominantly became the measure for formulation of identity within the post Christian era. The festivals which had played a very important part of the Mizo culture were lost. The drinking of the rice beer that was part and parcel of these festivals was also done away when the Christmas festival became prioritised. The use of *zu*[6] was particularly important in the *Chapchar Kut*. It lasted a week or more depending upon the amount of the rice beer that was available in the village at that point of time. The people would slay pigs for a feast that involved drinking of large amount of *zu*. It was also used as an honorary achievement that was given to the most suitable and bravest of men among the

youths of the Mizos. Guests were offered *zu* to give them a proper welcome; celebrations of any kind involved the intake of *zu* (rice beer). It was customary and compulsory to include the consumption of rice beer in religious ceremonies, customs and festive days. Such was the place that rice beer held amidst the cultural identity of the Mizos. The use of rice beer (though it was included in almost every aspects of the daily life of the Mizos) was abolished. It was banned by the missionaries and it was also one of the main reasons as to why the people would not convert to Christianity.

The old animistic religious practices of the Mizos almost vanished completely at this point in time. It was almost as if there were no more clashes between the cultures of the west and the Mizos anymore; the new religion had become the culture of the Mizos at that point of time. Such was the state in which hybridity took place among the Mizos. They were "placed in a position of in-betweenness: between 'adopted' Englishness and [being] 'original' [Mizo]" (Nayar, 170). This created a 'third space' – "the stairwell of luminal space , in-between the designation of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower . . . this interstitial passage between fixed identification opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha, 4). It is a space of intermingling of the colonizer and the colonized. It is here that the two colonial and native identities met and formed a new cultural identity of the Mizos in the aspects of orality. This was why almost all of oral compositions from this point onwards were Christianised. Due to this, there is a creation of new cultural identity among the Mizos: "one of the most important themes of postcolonial theorizing, as we have already seen, has been its emphasis on the hybridity of cultural identifications and the instability of dominating cultural paradigms" (Loomba, 343).

The power of orality that holds fast the Mizo identity and culture was dramatically changed with post colonization. The concept of hybridity was seen to occur in post-colonial societies as a result of the Christian religion (among the Mizos). Hybridity had seeped into the minds of the Mizos, as their identity and culture have now been an amalgation of both Christianity as well as their pre-existing culture. This can be seen in

how songs and poems were composed. Song compositions which were never before in relation to God were all Christianised and sung from celebrations of events to lamentation of the dead. Even when a person is dead, Christian songs would be sung at the funerals and ceremonies to lament the dead as well as to ease the pain of the families. Thus, a new form of oral tradition was born among the Mizos which became a very important part of the Mizo identity and culture. Today, it is hard (almost next to impossible) to imagine going to *khawhar in*[7] without the oral traditional *khawhar zai*[8]. These oral performances were followed by dancing to the beating of the drums and even prayers. This provided for the expansion of the orality of the Mizos that was hybridised with Christianity. It provided opportunities for composers to enrich the orality and the composition of Christian songs. It invited and created a chance for the people to express themselves through the composition of songs, tunes and melodies. There was an overlapping of the Christian culture with that of the Mizo culture where a new form of culture was formed among the Mizos: "The terrain of cultural hybridity is the contradictory ground upon which the organic and the conjunctural overlap; and this interstitial space, this movement back and forth between what is structural and what is conjunctural . . . is not the reconstruction of past history but the construction of present and future which is at stake" (Bhabha, xii).

It can be observed that there is a positive feature of hybridity that is acknowledged as a new form of the cultural identity of the Mizos. The culture that once clashed now began to be hybridised to form and create a new culture and identity among the Mizos. "The clash of cultures that colonialism invariably provoked, rather than producing a neat bifurcation between coloniser and colonised, encouraged the formation of new cultural hybrids" (Papastergiadis, 264). Thus this invariably leads to a new form of Mizo identity as compared to the concept of identity in the pre Christian era. This new cultural identity was taken up until the contemporary days in the creation of the literature of the Mizos. With regards to the new cultural and religious identity of the Mizos, right after the wide spread of Christianity, there was confusion among the Mizos as to whether to hold on to their ancestral past which they strongly believed had been greatly influenced by the

devil. The abolishment and the censorship of the drums were a result of this. There grew a strong feeling amongst the people in terms of the desire to forget the era before colonisation – branding it a denouncement to the cultural identity of the Mizos. All things traditional were considered unruly or unholy in relation to their new identity that was given to them through Christianity. There occurred a repression of their cultural identities that were once an integral part of their lives as a culture, as a society and as a traditional practitioner of rituals, songs and dances. The cultural identity of the Mizo as a whole had its power dynamics shifted due to the censorship and repression of the old cultural identity of the pre Christian era: "Homi Bhabha announces that memory is the necessary and sometimes hazardous bridge between colonialism and the question of cultural identity" (Gandhi, 9). The memory of the old traditional customs and practices were negated to the periphery and were repressed to the extent that all practices in the pre Christian era were considered to be un-Christian-like. This led to the abandonment and abolishment of many of the traditional practices like the drinking of rice beer, usage of drums, singing and composing of love songs. All of these banned practices had had a deep connection to the identity of the Mizos. The abolishment and banning of these items was a means of undermining the identity of the Mizos. It was a way of undermining their status and identity as a culture when their religious instruments, practices, were taken away from them by abolishing them.

Therefore, it is evident that due to colonialism, the identities of the Mizos were colonised in their minds and hearts. This affected the colonised societies in order to alter, change and transform their cultural values, priorities and cultural identities once and for all. The Mizo natives gave in to the new cultural identities in the post-colonial era. Natives allowed and let themselves be colonized when they choose to disregard their cultural identities. "Bhabha argues that identities are possible only in differential relations and displacement. Identities for Bhabha constantly moves between positions, displacing others and being displaced in turn" (Nayar, 27). In post-colonial theory, the colonial power tries to persuade the natives to adopt and conform and internalise the forms, ways, and habits of the colonial master: mainly that the natives should mimic the

master. It can be said that the mission for colonisation is to transform and bring a change to the native into one like the coloniser. This proves to be effective in the context of the colonisation in Mizoram as there was a negation of their cultural identities. This does not end only with the negation of their old cultural identities. It sets up a platform for hybridity to occur as there was an amalgation of the new cultural identity into a newly hybridised one. It can be said that the cultural forms and identities were not completely gone or destroyed but underwent hybridisation in relation to the practices of Christianity.

In some African cultures, the colonised natives are often left with an identity crisis in terms of their religion. This is due to the fact that these cultures had lost their gods, religious sacrifices or practices, songs or chants due to the effect of colonisation. Moreover, as they were not really influenced by the Christian religion and having not really been accustomed to the Christian God they were left without a god to worship as well, thus, having lost both 'gods': "Abandoned by both the native and Christian gods, the postcolonial has no more prayers, and all articulations are basically just blasphemies" (Nayar, 96). However, unlike some of the African cultures, the Mizos were well adapted with the Christian gods. This is due to the fact that the God of the Christians somehow had a similarity with the God of the Christians. Tales like 'Liandova' and 'Kelchawngi' mention a certain god-like figure, which lived in the sky and gave blessings to the poor and needy. These god-like figures can be identified with the Christian god when they first learned about the Almighty God. The Mizos had their own *Pathian*[9] though they were not certain of its real identity. Thus, they worshipped him in their own accord and was considered to be an 'unknown god'. "The Mizos believed in the existence of a family of gods, but they also believed in a Supreme God known as *Pathian*" (Thanmawia, 17). The god-family had three main gods or deities known as *Puvana*[10], *Khuanu*[11], and *Khuavang*[12].

It was easier for the Mizos to accept the God of the Christians as He is often portrayed as a male god. This was because the society of the Mizos is pre dominantly patriarchal in nature. Though they had female goddess like *Khuazingnu*[13] in tales like

‘Thanrawkpa Khuangchawi’, their most important god-like figures are still the male gods. In the views of the primitive Mizos, the sky is thought to be the abode of the Supreme Beings and other celestial beings are represented in tales like ‘Sichangneii’ and ‘Vanchungnula’. Legends and oral traditions convey that these beings and celestial beings of the sky often visit human beings in order to bless them and sometimes would be seen making revelations through their dreams. As the native Mizo culture’s roots in terms of their religion and spirituality were not easily abandoned, there was a sense of hybridity in terms of the Christian God and religion: “The distinctive fact is that the Biblical concept of God and the Mizo traditional concept of a Supreme Being enriched each other and a new understanding of God evolved in the Mizo Christian context” (Ngurliana, 87).

Unlike most other cultures that had shared a difficult history with the colonisers and the religion arriving with the colonial masters, the Mizo culture did not have difficulties. In fact, the issue of conversion was done with ease as compared to other cultures. “In the Mizo experience, his religion was chiefly a means of avoiding sickness and of postponing death. Its function was to maintain him and his family in life and health” (Lloyd, 211). Due to this, the Christian religion was well received by the Mizo culture and later shaped the core of their identity. The reason for the wide acceptance of Christianity was that it played a huge role as an escape from the harsh life and conditions of the people that they had faced in the pre-Christian era. They lived in constant fear of the spirits and priests. Ritual performances often cause them lots of money and fortune. This was why it was hard for some of the Mizos to follow and abide by their customary ritual sacrifices. One of the most notable changes that the missionaries brought to the Mizos apart from imparting education was the introduction of medicines. When they saw the poor health conditions of the Mizos, they made it one of their top priorities to assist them. This added largely to the expansion of Christianity. The earlier faith and animistic religious practices were not stopped altogether when the missionaries arrived. Most of the ritual performances were to appease the spirits for good health and to cure them of their sickness, sufferings, curses and ailments that they

believed was caused by the wrath of the angered spirits. The Mizo religious chants and ritual practices were mainly to avoid certain sickness and postponing of the death. The ritual performances always had a huge toll on them, and especially upon the poorer section of the society as it required them to slay their livestock. These rituals, as they had to be often practiced, caused them a fortune. With the introduction of the medicines brought by the missionaries, it was easier to be healed, besides causing them less money. Thus, as a result there were more Christian converts thanks to the effective medicines from the missionaries. This directly resulted in the dying of the oral traditions that were practiced in the rituals and ceremonies to heal the sick.

After all of these, the Mizos had totally given up on their age old cultural and traditional sacrificial practices to appease the spirits either for curing their sickness or asking for their blessings. They were now inclined to the usage of scientific medicines for any kind of ailments and diseases. The tradition of the long practiced blood sacrifice for curing the sick has been totally dismissed altogether: “In cases of epidemics it was noted that Christians as a rule tended to survive better than non-Christians. . . . The result was that even those who remained staunchly non-Christians were shrewd enough soon to see that a rupee or two spent on quinine secured better results than the purchase of a sacrificial hen, and was less expensive too” (Lloyd, 212). Thus, there was a miraculous transition from the age old customary practice as a result of the Mizo-Christian contact in the post-Christian era. This too had a huge impact on the aspects of orality as all of the oral performances that went along with the sacrificial chants and incantations too were stopped. The oral cultural identity was thus greatly changed from this point. The oral forms of narrative that were associated with sacrificial healing were lost with time as the Christian era brought a halt to these rituals and oral chants. They were forbidden to be practiced by the missionaries as it was strictly against the Christian beliefs. Christianity taught that all of these practices as well as chants was a way of reverting back to savagery and censored it. “Censors worried about anti-Christian issues in stories also are troubled by the psychological aspects of fantasy. They seem to worry that the escapism of fantasy leads children into the occult or Satan” (Tunnell, 607).

Thus, in the post-colonial era, the belief in superstitions and the sacrifice of animals to appease the spirits slowly began to vanish. Due to this, the oral tradition that followed this practice also deteriorated simultaneously. The practice of orality that entailed the costly performances of a series of feasts for the benefit of after-life were stopped. With the advent of Christianity, the superstitions that were formed out of the ignorance and animistic nature of the Mizos gradually disappeared with time.

One of the leading factors that contributed to the identity of any culture is their language – both the oral and the written language. In terms of the language in Mizoram, the Christian missionaries had a very important role in developing the language of the Mizos. Language is an important aspect of one's own culture. Mizoram is a small state having 23,980 square kilometres, bordered by Tripura and Bangladesh on the west, Manipur and Tripura in the north. The majority of the population in Mizoram belong to the Lusei, and Fanai, Pawi, Lakher and Mara clans. The Duhlian or Lusei dialect is the common language while the Lakher, Mara and Pawi speak Lai. There are many other clans and sub-clans that speak their own dialects as well. Thus, there was a huge array of languages spoken in a relatively small state like Mizoram. Due to this reason, the people as a whole found it hard to identify as a single culture and community due to the difference in their languages. The introduction of literacy and the written script among the Mizos played a very huge role in the formation of the identity of the Mizos. In the initial years, there were some issues in the language barrier between the native and the missionaries. However, this was soon ended as the missionaries focused their attention on educating the Mizos, in terms of language, education and health issues. Imparting education and the Christian faith went hand in hand. In *Things Fall Apart* (1958) education was the means by which the colonisers used to persuade the natives to appreciate their religion: "Mr. Brown learnt a good deal about the religion of the clan and he came to the conclusion that a frontal attack would not succeed. And so he built a school and a little hospital in Umuofia . . . new Churches were established . . . and a few schools with them. From the very beginning religion and education went hand in hand" (Achebe, 132).

There was a massive change in naming the babies in the post-Christian era. Ong states that "oral people commonly think of names as conveying power over things" (33). This is because in the primary oral culture names are believed to give power over the one that bears the name. The word or sound produced by the calling of a name had a lot to do with the identity of the people in a primary oral culture. The oral folks "think of names as labels, written or printed tags imaginatively affixed to an object named" (Ong, 33). In terms of names and naming, orality has a very close connection among the Mizos. With the advent of Christianity and colonialism in Mizoram came the abolishment of chieftainship. Thus, 'power' was shifted and given to the commoners in the post Christian era in terms of the naming system and identifying one's new born. Names, which in itself are a form of orality could now be composed more freely. Earlier, every name had to be composed so that it would not be too close to the Mizo chieftainship's name. Prior to the influence of Christianity, names of newborn babies had to be carefully composed. Thus, the term '*Lal hming sak dal lo'* was coined, which literally means 'giving names that do not resemble the kingly names'. With Christianity, the power dynamics were shifted in terms of identity, particularly in naming new born babies. They could now be given names that were in praise and worship of God and there was more freedom in naming. However, there was a change and a great shift in naming new born babies in the post-colonial era. Christianised names were given to almost every new born. Some of the character names of the pre-colonial stories are – Thailungi, Kawrdumbela, Chepahakhata, Samdala, Chemtatrawta, Mualzavata, Rimenhawihi, and Lengkawia. Their names were a measure of their own identity and had no specific connotation to the Almighty God. They were sometimes composed by the acts that were done by their parents, or grandparents. However, in the post-Christian era all the names of the characters as well as writers in the post Christian era and contemporary era have Christianised names. In today's Mizo society, it is hard to imagine a name that has no reference to the Almighty God.

In *Things Fall Apart,* the protagonist Okonkwo's son Nwoye had his native name changed to Isaac, a Christianised name: "Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, who was no called

Isaac" (Achebe, 133). The Australian writer Colin Thomas Johnson, who is better known as Mudrooroo, gives a critique on this matter. He claims that one of the colonial masters' main aim and powers lies in the fact that they attempted to erase all traces of the identity of the colonised subjects by imposing on the Christian names and also the notions of a complete Christian morality. In the case of the Mizo society, the naming of one's own children in tandem with the reference to the Almighty is a great opportunity in giving the child his identity as a Christian. This worked very well for the common man as they could not, earlier, compose names that resembled the names of the Sailo chiefs. As names are a very important aspect of one's own identity, Christianity that had been introduced and spread in Mizoram changed the composition of names and identity of the Mizos for good. "After colonialism, it is imperative to imagine a new transformation of social consciousness which exceeds the reified identities and rigid boundaries invoked by national consciousness" (Gandhi, 124). This can be said to be true as far as the identity of the Mizos in the contemporary era is concerned. The Mizos, after the long exposure to Christianity, have been accustomed and adapted to the teachings and practices of the Christian missionaries. It has long been considered as a part and parcel of nearly all the aspects of the Mizos as it has now developed into a full-fledged culture and identity of its own. There is a sense of indigenization, finding a middle ground for a sense of identity while amalgating both the influences of the natives and the Westerners as well. Mizo cultural identity reflects this ground where the Western culture and religion have been incorporated into their own, by creating a new and unique niche of identity among the Mizos in the contemporary era. According to Bhabha, there is a mixture of different identities within every culture which he termed as 'mixed-ness' or 'impurity'. He also states that there can be no culture that is truly pure on its own as there are always certain form of blending or mixing up of different cultures within every form of cultural identity. "In the case of cultural identities, hybridity refers to the fact that cultures are not discrete phenomena; instead, they are always in contact with one another, and this contact leads to cultural mixed-ness" (Huddart, 19). Identities of every culture are constructed through an amalgation of language, myths, legends, history, folk songs, folk tales, and race. Due to this, Bhabha

claims that there cannot be a single or original form of identity. He rejects the notions and idea of a fixed cultural identity and regarded the identity of any given culture to be formed through various processes of negotiations with and from other various other cultural identities: “this process of negotiating a new identity of new contexts – social, economic, political, literacy – is central to postcolonial migrant literature” (Nayar, 201). Due to this negotiation of multiple identities, between the Western and the native Mizos in this particular case, new ethnicities and new cultural identities came to be formed. There exists an assertion of multiple identities within a single cultural Mizo identity as it can no longer be exclusive and homogenous from the Western influences. Therefore, the cultural identity of the Mizos is a heterogeneous mixture of identities in the contemporary era. Identities are not ‘fixed’ but rather a combination of one or more cultures, with that of another which are crossed and re-crossed again with various categories of ethnicity.

Like most cultures across the world, the Mizos have a rich variety of tales and songs when it comes to the oral traditions. Stories, myths and legends have been told and handed down through generations for centuries. Due to this “orality is thus the central indigenous mode in most postcolonial writing” (Nayar, 222). Like most oral story-telling traditions found in other cultures, the oral stories of the Mizos are usually narrated by an omniscient third-person narrator. The narrator not only narrates the stories but also acts as a social commentator on the community and society. This form of narration too can be seen in various other cultures as well as they too have been passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. Animal fables were common themes of these oral stories and the Mizos too have these in abundance. One common theme that the Mizos have with the African oral literature is the trickster character: “Animal fables were common forms in African American story-telling. The stories of the trickster rabbit and the trickster tortoise were very popular” (Nayar, 225). This can be said to be the result of the untraceable intermingling of several cultural identities into their stories and story-telling. The trickster animals are often found to triumph over the stronger animals like the bear and the tiger due to their superior

intelligence. This too can be said of the Mizo lores as the trickster characters often win over the more powerful animals - the quail in 'The Monkey and His Flute', the bat in 'The War Between the Creatures of the Air and the Creatures of the Land', the frog in 'The Tiger and the Frog' and the monkeys in 'Tlana and the Monkeys'. One of the most famous trickster characters in the Mizo tales is Chhurbura. The Mizos have very rich folktales which are one of the most important primary sources for the reconstruction of their history as "these folktales reflect their values and dreams, traditional beliefs and practices (Dena, vii). Folktales are autobiographical ethnography, as it is people's own description of themselves which makes it very true and very original. The Mizos fantasised upon their desires and dreams through the medium of orality by giving them symbolical significations like the trickster animal character. Simon J. Bronner too has said that "folklore is collective fantasy and as fantasy, it depends upon the symbolic system of a given culture" (64). He further states that "folklore is one way for both adults and children to deal with the crucial problems in their lives" (Bronner 64). Thus, it is safe to assume that the orality of the Mizos represented their cultural identities through their oral literature.

In the stories of 'Awngpa', 'Buanhleia', 'Rengtea', 'Lawnglaii', and 'Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi', improbable similarities with the stories of different cultures can be noted. For instance, 'Snow White' has a very similar scene in 'Buanhlei' where a military officer was instructed to kill Buanhleia but instead "killed a deer and stained Buanhleia's dress with the blood ... [and] reported that Buanhleia had been killed by a tiger" (Dena 18). Another story that has a resemblance to Hindu mythology mentioned by Dena is 'Rengtea'. The characters Khena and Rama correspond to Laxman and Rama of the *Ramayana* while Tuizuari seems to be the counter part of Sita who were both abducted by a demon-like person – Lusariha and Ravana respectively. The final battle, the lives lost and the hero and saviour in both the stories have surprisingly very similar roles. Not only this, but Rengtea had seven wives which was very unlikely of a Mizo chief as Mizo chiefs never had more than one wife. Polygamy was not practiced among the Mizos. Lal Dena, a Mizo writer, had noted thus:

> Seeing the similarities between the two stories, it could be surmised that Mizo forefathers heard about the story of Ramayana from the plains people and adapted it to their own versions. Be that as it may, by the time this tale evolved, it is quite possible that the forefathers of the Mizos had perhaps gone on to have some sort of cultural ties with the plains people of Assam valley. (139)

From here it is evident that a cultural identity is never pure on its own as there are possibilities of an inter-cultural relationship in spite of the differences in the cultures of human beings: "culture, in all its aspects, is a language" (Strauss, 153).

It has to be noted that this intermingling of cultures does not end at any point in time. There is always an ongoing and continuous process of hybridisation. An example can be seen in the marriage ceremonies of the Mizos. The Mizos have largely adopted the Christian system of marriage which are performed in a Church, with the entire congregation as witness. Wedding vows are exchanged between the newly wedded husband and wife in Churches, while reciting passages from the Bible. However, there is a hybrid cultural identity here as the Mizo customary laws of wedding are still followed till this day. The bride price of rupees four hundred and twenty is paid by the husband's family as is customary. There also exists the employment of *man hlan*[14], *man leh muan*[15] and *lawi chal*[16]. The now deeply rooted Christian ideology has been hybridised with Mizo cultural marriage practices and has thus been lodged into the psyche and identity of the Mizos and it has become a part of their culture. In the post-colonial era, speaking and mentioning about the identity of the Mizo culture without a reference to Christianity is nearly an impossible feat.

In the contemporary era, the creation of the new cultural forms and identities has been suited and adapted to the contemporary artistic and social conditions of globalization and multiculturalism. Hybridity in the new cultural forms and identities has achieved a state where the old form of the Mizo traditions are somehow retained and also recast and reshaped to account for the contemporary present day concerns and

values: “the clash of cultures produces something new and brilliant” (Nayar, 200). In the contemporary era, what emerges out of the hybridised culture of new ethnicities and new identities is also a new means of dealing with the theme of identity. As the identity of the Mizos developed greatly due to the introduction of literacy among the people there was also a fair indication of the steady growth of literacy. This is evident from the fact that 1500 copies of *Kristian Tlangau Bu* (Christian Herald Journal) – which is the Presbyterian Church’s journal were printed and published in 1920. Thus, the Mizos began to formulate their own cultural taste, ethnicity and identity many years after the introduction of literacy. From then on there were translations of the Bible, and there emerged a dictionary and an establishment of the Lushai orthography along with the many printed revisions of the *Hla Bu* (Hymn Book).

The Mizos had always been a patriarchal society where the men reigned supreme in all livelihoods. There are multiple oral sayings, proverbs and maxims that demean the status of the women:

“*Hmeichhe fin in tuikhur ral a kai lo*” meaning ‘a woman’s wisdom never extends beyond a well’;

“*Hmeichhia leh uipui chu lo rum lungawi mai mai rawh se*” meaning ‘allow a woman and a dog to bark for as long as it pleases them’ (my trans.; 84).

However, this seems to have been changed to a great extent in the Mizo community. The once patriarchal society underwent a change as Mrs. Sandy (the wife of the F.J Sandy, a missionary) set up a school called Girls’ Boarding School in Aizawl in 1907. At first, this received a huge backlash and was frowned upon by not only the men but also by women. Women, then, were still considered to be servile, especially towards men. They found it of little necessity for the women to receive education. It was considered as a mere waste of valuable time and money as they were soon to be married off. The Girls’ Boarding School that was run and organised by Mrs. Sandy had slowly and gradually grown larger year by year and gained more and more students and fellowship. It had thus managed to “secure more acceptance among the Mizos, though

many still remained sceptical as to the value of educating girls. In 1920 three of her pupils secured a modest triumph for the school when they passed the Middle English Examination" (Lloyd, 207). This was a great achievement as it enabled them and their fellow women to pursue further education. They had set an example and it was a milestone for other women to follow in their footsteps. It has to be noted that the boy students still had better and distinct advantages over the girls in educational opportunities. Later, scholarships too were awarded to the girls as well, which marked another cautious, yet important step forward towards the emancipation and liberation of women among the Mizos. Thus, the Mizos who had always been identified as a culture that was largely dominated by the male members of the society were beginning to be more and more progressive towards women. Besides imparting education to women, they also had a very important role in the Church. In the pre-Christian era, women did not have any important roles in any type of social ceremonies or gatherings. However, the system of the Church allowed women to be more active in Church activities. "The women of the church too displayed their own enthusiasm and organizing ability. Through their "handful of rice" collection they were able to support a number of Bible women" (Lloyd, 215). All of these roles in the Church by the women were largely due to the pioneering works of Mrs. Sandy. There were trained nurses too, at times. Thus, the Church can be said to have rendered a new identity to the Mizo women during the post Christian era.

The work of any missionaries all around the world can only be considered fruitful and successful when they are no longer indispensable in their mission fields. This is true as far as the identity of the Mizos are concerned as the Church that was planted by J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge and many missionaries that followed later were now becoming self-ruling, self-supporting, self-propagating. They had a life of their own in the cultural practices and cultural identity of the Mizos. This was the reason as to why the withdrawal of the missionaries from the hills of Mizoram in 1968 could be finally accomplished. By this time, the Mizo identity had been deeply rooted into the psyche of almost all of the Mizos and the missionaries no longer felt the need for their presence on

a regular basis. Their mission was a success in terms of the formation of identity among the Mizo-Christians, or the Mizos in general: “Mizo Christian leaders, trained competent and trusted were able to take over complete responsibility in every section of the church’s life” (Lloyd, 294).

One of the various factors that helped in the determination of a solidified Mizo cultural identity was the presence of Major A.G. McCall (a superintendent Lushai Hills). This was largely due to the fact that he had a keen interest both in the aspects of religion and education. He paid great attention to the education in Mizoram up to the Middle standard and was largely responsible for the high literacy rate of Mizoram. David Edwards (one of the pioneer missionaries) with McCall’s approval too was trying his best to set up new educational system in Mizoram. This largely helped in the expansion of primary school system and in the reformation. Thus, all of these measures taken up by leaders in educational fields helped in shaping the literary status of the Mizos. As education and knowing one’s own identity went hand in hand, the measures taken up in the field of education is in itself directly proportionate in shaping the cultural identity of the Mizos.

GLOSSARY

[1]To sacrifice a domestic animal and perform a ceremony over or for a wild creature killed 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 protecting him from evil consequences during this life. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 4.

[2]A dance and feast held to celebrate success in the chase, and to *ai* the head of the animal killed. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 402.

[3]Abode of the dead. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher's Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 192.

[4]Paradise in erstwhile Mizo belief. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher's Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 220.

[5]The name of a sacrifice to stop the inflammatory disease of the glands, especially in children. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 183.

[6]Beer or any fermented liquor. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 570.

[7]A house of mourning, a house where one of the family has lately died. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 253.

[8]Any dirge, requiem, or lament songs sung in honour of the dead. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 253.

[9]An object of worship of non-Christians/Christians' object of worship. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher's Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 211.

[10]The father of the god-family who inhabited heaven. R. L. Thanmawia, *Mizo Poetry.* Din Din Heaven, 1998, p. 17.

[11]The mother of the god-family who was regarded as the God of love and blessing. R. L. Thanmawia, *Mizo Poetry.* Din Din Heaven, 1998, p. 17.

[12]Guardian of man. R. L. Thanmawia, *Mizo Poetry.* Din Din Heaven, 1998, p. 17.

[13]A powerful deity of the Mizo myth was believed to have created the earth. Margaret L. Pachuau, *Folklore From Mizoram.* Writers Workshop, 2013, p.25.s

[14]To offer, to give, to give over, to hand over, to pass to, to hold out a price. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 149.

[15]A girl's marriage price. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 308.

[16]The man who accompanies the bride to the bridegroom's house and if necessary protects her from being bespattered with mud, etc on the way, in accordance with the Lushai custom. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 287.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

This chapter shall sum up the issues that have been debated upon during the study. It shall also offer a reasoned conclusion of what has been dealt with and examined in the research.

Mizo literature has been founded on the basis of the rich forms of orality that have been pertinent and significant throughout the history of the Mizos. Orality has always been a part of the Mizos especially in the context of their identity as a tribe. The study has found that Mizo orality belongs to that of the primary oral culture as described by Walter J Ong. He explains that primary orality is the type of orality that belongs to the cultures that have no knowledge of writing before the presence or occurrences of any other outside influence. This is true in the case of the Mizos as they had no knowledge of any written script prior to the advent of the missionaries who educated them. It was through this 'outside influence' of the missionaries that the Mizos were taught how to read and write. Before education was brought into the hills of Mizoram, orality and its various forms was the only means of conveying messages. It was only through orality that information, stories and literary forms were transferred by word of mouth. "Skill and knowledge are passed on by way of personal participation and practice. In this manner, the categories of thought are appropriated in the immediacy of person-to-person communication and interiorized as communal knowledge" (Ong, 41). Otherwise, the Mizos had no written way of transferring knowledge or information from the previous generation to the next.

The research has rendered focus upon the various aspects of orality that existed in the pre as well as the post-Christian era. It has given a detailed analysis as well as a comparison of both the effects of orality before and after the introduction and spread of Christianity among the Mizos. Along with this, the research has discussed the problems about oral composition, oral performances and oral cultures especially with reference to the oral tradition and the numerous transitions that took place. Besides this, the research has also discussed at length about the aspects of oral narratives and has also stated the importance of the continuation of archiving in oral cultures.

Ong explains the concept of the primary oral culture: “Since in a primary oral culture conceptualized knowledge that is not repeated aloud soon vanishes, oral societies must invest great energy in saying over and over again what has been learned arduously over the ages” (Ong, *Orality and Literacy,* 41). In this sense, the research has deduced that the orality of the Mizo culture is indeed a primary oral culture. As stated earlier, since there was no means of passing on information or knowledge, the oral stories, songs, lullabies had to be transferred by word of mouth from one person to another and that had been practiced from one generation to the next. This has to be repeated again and again for generations in order to avoid loss of its content or form. However, with the passage of time, it has become inevitable for these oral literatures to be in its true form. Due to this, there is a formation of many new versions or interpretations of the various forms of orality. The original can never be known or traced as each version and interpretation gets downgraded and revised, based on the oral folktales and folk songs. The primary oral culture of the Mizo had to maintain and preserve its orality through repetitions; and repetitive styles of narration, folklores and folk songs were all handed down orally. “In repeated sequences of images, even when each is identical to the next, the aesthetic effect of the second and subsequent repetitions is never the same as the earlier experiences” (Beardsley, 524). Due to this, memorization becomes an important asset in maintaining and preserving the oral literature of the Mizos. Memory plays an integral part in the basis of the Mizo orality; verbal memorization is an important aspect with regards to the Mizo primary oral culture. It has been deeply rooted with their identity as a tribe that had migrated down from the Chin Hills to the present location in Mizoram. The oral narratives have always been pivotal especially in the literary context. The research has provided detailed information on how orality has always been, till date, associated with the production of knowledge, memory and how it is related with the written form of language as well.

The primary oral culture of the Mizos that had once existed and was once untouched by other foreign cultures underwent a change from the arrival of the Christian missionaries on 11th January, 1894. The reason for this was that the missionaries

brought along with them the concept of literacy which was taught to the people. According to Paula Mc Dowell, "once literacy is introduced, *primary* orality dissapears" (171). This is true in the case of the Mizos as literacy was widespread among them and the primary orality that holds fast the Mizo identity soon disappeared.

The research has clearly provided the interrelationship of orality and literacy and the orality of language as well. The psychodynamics of orality as it renders information and knowledge into the Mizos is dealt with in the research. This is seminal in understanding the tradition of the Mizos that was in transition. The Mizo oral tradition had under gone a rapid and drastic change due to the newly introduced written literary tradition. The research had shown as to how this had affected the aspects of Mizo psyche, oral compositions and mind-set in general. Due to all of these changes and transitions there was a sense of resistance and censorship of the old and traditional oral form of literature. The research has been successful in analysing the notion of censorship and resistance that have been pertinent in select Mizo oral narratives and it has denoted an insight into the usage of various censorships that can be found in the oral literature of the Mizos. It gave a detailed description of resistance and censorship found in the pre-existing cultural narratives and how they have been conditioned to soothe the dominating effects and impact of Christianity. The Church as a religious institution acted as a means of repressing the traditional customs and traditional practices. This was why composition and singing of non-gospel songs were once considered as an act against the Church.

The repression of cultural practices went further. The abolishment of the locally made rice beer known as *zu*[1] had played a very significant role among the Mizos. The greatest hunters that performed in a hunt, the greatest warriors and the person that had the most *tlawmngaihna*[2] were honoured with a special kind of brewed rice beer. This ceremony was known as *nopui hlan* (to award the esteemed cup) where the recipient was honoured with drinking rice beer. This was considered one of the greatest achievements that one could receive during his lifetime. It was for this reason that men tried to perform their best in all activities in order to get this prestigious prize.

Moreover, the drinking of *zu* was involved in all kinds of festivities, celebrations, marriages and even during mourning for the dead like *khawhar zai*[3] and *mitthirawp*[4]. It was never considered as a substance that could be abused and misused. Such was the place that the *zu* (rice beer) held in the lives of the Mizos. However, Christianity abolished the usage of it and resulted in it being considered one of the most evil substances. "The drunkenness which characterised old Lushai has very largely disappeared. . . . intoxication is somewhat of a rarity now just as abstinence was once" (Lloyd, 58).

All of the festivals like *Chapchar Kut, Mim Kut, Pawl Kut, Khuangchawi*[5] where the use of *zu* (rice beer) were employed came to be neglected: "drinking *zu* was always part of a communal celebration" (Lloyd, 58). Due to this, all of the oral chants and conversational songs were soon forgotten. One of the songs of *Pawl Kut* denotes*:*

Kutpui serh khua an kham ni'n e,

Keichu lung lemka nei lo;

Mi nuthai tualah an leng e,

Hringhniang banah an kai e.

The festival is merrily celebrated for the day,

While I have nothing else in mind;

People wander around with smiles,

Holding each other in unison. (my trans.; 61)

Censorship of the old culture, regardless of its involvement in the identity of the Mizos, had taken place in the post-colonial era. Christianity has also reawakened the use of the drum among the Mizo Christians: "the talking drum is not merely an element in some primary oral cultures but is also in fact a kind of paradigm of primary orality" (Beardsley, 522). The revival of the usage of drums had played a huge role in the

formation of the orality of the Mizos, as the new songs that were composed in the post-Christian era were all composed in order that it would be in rhythm with the beating of the drums. Thus, Christianity played a role in building and enriching the oral tradition of the Mizos.

The concept of identity formation that was significantly inter-linked with that of nature and animals, as well as human beings were gradually being censored in the Christian and post-Christian era. As the Mizos have always been a predominantly tribal community a number of animal imagery have been drawn in the aspects of their oral tales. "Oral cultures tend to use concepts in situational, operational frames of reference that are minimally abstract in the sense that they remain close to the living human lifeworld" (Ong, 49). Animals, wildlife and nature were largely the themes of many of the old and traditional Mizo folktales and folk songs. However, this form of orality had lost its significance in the traditional lives of the Mizos. This can be seen as it is evident from their compositions of orality. Oral literature had once given prominence to the wild animals and nature but they were replaced by Christianised versions of compositions. With the advent of Christianity these tales were all considered as mere fantasy and were cast aside as mythical stories that were told orally by 'savages'. *Salu lam zai*[6] and *ai*[7] were no longer performed along with the chants, songs, cries, dances and celebrations that always followed it. All these aspects had always been an integral part of the Mizo identity, but now it has lost its essence and importance in the lives of the Mizos. *Hlado*[8], *bawhhla*[9] and many other forms of oral chants and prayers that were once the pride of the Mizos were now mere orality of a past that has been long forgotten. One of the most famous *bawhhla* that is now forgotten runs thus:

Arsi e, thlapa chaw law, ralvawn zal ang ka duhin e,

Hawikawm e, thanglung thawn e, ka do rimnampa ka tlun e.

Ka ruang e, a ral tu e, ka do rimnampa ka tlun e.

"The stars have witnessed my kill,

The kill that I have made with my brothers in arms.

Is now laid beside me. (my trans.; 97)

The advent of Christianity and post colonialism had a deep impact among the Mizos in terms of the formation and creation of ideas. This process has led to a consistent negation of the cultural oral myths, as well as their cultural lores. Their ancestral roots and cultural beliefs were almost negated and completely converted by colonization. This makes it imperative for hybridity to occur in the Mizo narratives. Due to this, hybridity can be said to be inevitable among the Mizos in the post Christian era. Thus, the Mizo culture was merged with Christianity while having the power dynamic as hybridised. "Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects" (Bhabha, 159). The research has given an in depth analysis of the selected tales of the post Christian era through aspects of the postcoloniality that have been significantly found within the Mizo community. It has given an insight into the existence of a newly hybridised culture of the Mizos with the advent of Christianity into the primary oral culture of the Mizos. Moreover, it has narrated as to how the various cultural lores and oral traditions have undergone hybridity in its various processes of transition from the pre to the post colonial era as it explored how they have been received, adapted and developed in the post-colonial era with the advent of Christianity in Mizoram.

The research has situated and interpreted the selected tales through a post-colonial perspective especially in terms of the concepts of power and hybridity. There is a demystification of the oral past and histories. Colonisation has brought with it a change in the creation and narration of oral tales; and every aspect of the new narratives have become dominantly hybridised in the Christian sensibility. Christianity played a major role in the resistance and censorship of the oral tales of the pre Christian era. In terms of censorship religion and power are seemingly in tandem with regards to orality within the Mizo paradigm. Thus, the research has given a clear light on the inherent difference in sensibility that existed in terms of the pre and post-colonial Mizo culture. The Mizos

were once a culture that glorified the spirits and the gods and goddesses that they believed in. They were superstitious or religious in a sense that they believed that every huge tree or rock had their own spirits that resided within them. They would often appease these spirits to avoid their wrath and ask for their blessings. These appeasements would always involve the chants of some oral form of songs and rituals. These rituals required blood sacrifices of different kinds of animals. The chant rituals that needed to be performed differed largely according to the gods or spirits that they prayed to. Sometimes, it also depended according to the location where the ritual was held. The research has depicted that with the newly introduced religion in place, the old religion and its practices and rituals as well as chants of the past underwent a change. Colonialism brought with it a decided sense of the resistance and censorship of the 'old' culture. Due to this, there was resistance of the pre-existing form of oral literature. Christianity played a major role in the resistance and censorship of the oral tales of the pre Christian era. In terms of censorship, religion and power are seemingly in tandem with regards to orality within the Mizo paradigm, thus, bringing about a shift in the dynamics of power relation with reference to religion in the context of the Mizos. Narratives were composed and focused wholly according to the Biblical beliefs and teachings in the Christian era: "the *Bible* became in coherent ways the legitimate parameter within the post-Christian ethos" (Pachuau, *Orality*, 184). Thus, all the blood sacrificial ceremonies and rituals were abandoned and soon forgotten along with the chants and ritual performances that followed them. The research has been successful in locating the dynamics of power and religion in which orality has been situated within the Mizo ethos. It has given detailed information about the dynamics of power with the religion and culture of the Mizos that can be found in the selected narratives. It has thus been successful in situating the aspects of the Mizo orality in the colonial perspective and in locating the central themes that are pertinent to the same.

The research has also given insight into the change in the belief regarding the after-life. There are several tales about the after-life: 'Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana' where the two lovers Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana turned into stars after they both

died; ‘Tualvungi leh Zawlpala’ where the lovers Tualvungi and Zawlpala could interact between the world of the living and the world dead; ‘Tlingi leh Ngama’ where the lovers Tlingi and Ngama turned into beautiful butterflies at the end of the tale. Not only that, but the Mizos also have narratives concerning *Pawla* and his miserable punishments and large catapults. The Mizos took great measures in order to avoid *Pawla’s* punishments and also to earn himself a place in the after-life they called *pialral*[10]. They had to undergo and perform arduous and difficult tasks in their lifetime in order to be admitted into *pialral* and to be considered *pasaltha*[11] or a person who has achieved *thangchhuah*[12]. For this purpose they had to kill several animals, chant the *hlado*, and even organise several community feasts that required lots of time and this took a toll on the hosts. All of these were performed in order to be admitted into the after-life, which would be better than their present lives. They had to perform several religious practices known as *sakung*[13], *dawi no chhui*[14] and many more religious practices. However, all of these chants, ritual practices and customs were resisted against with the coming of the missionaries and the spread and acceptance of Christianity among the Mizos. This resulted in the censorship, decline and resistance of the *bawlpu*[15] *and sadawt*[16] *and puithiam*[17] who would chant and make sacrifices to the unknown gods of the Mizos. Some of the ritual performances that were performed were *Chawng*[18], *Lasi Khal*[19], *Chung*[20], *Hnuaipui*[21], *and Sedawi22.* As the Mizos believed that sickness and diseases were caused by the evil spirits, they would often render oral chants to the spirits:

Ka tuai chawnban a kai Manghauvan,

Suanglung tih lo ngunhnam chawi ila;

Zunfeii sial ang chhun i.

Manghuahva (Death) has taken my beloved child,

I wish to be armed with a deadly sword

And pierce right into it like a bison. (my trans.; 53)

The known Christian God, *Pathian* was introduced to them after the arrival of the missionaries. Christianity had played a major role in the formulation of the new culture and belief systems of the Mizos. With the introduction of Christianity, the power dynamics of folktales underwent new perspectives among the Mizos. The concepts of the power of the pre Christian oral narratives were remarkably different from the narratives after colonisation, where Christianity was the main focus and had thus managed to relocate beliefs and ideas that were once associated with the power of the folklore of the pre Christian era. With the aftermath of Christianity in place among the Mizos, there was hybridity in the composition of songs. An example can be seen in terms of the composition of Mizo traditional tunes and songs, which was done in harmony with Christianised lyrics and themes. Thus, this gave birth to the *khawhar hla*[23] also later known as *khawhar zai*, which has become a very important part of Mizo culture and identity.

The research has dealt upon the aspects of the oral narratives of the Mizos and has focused upon how the oral narratives of both the pre and post Christian have been closely associated with Mizo identity. It has focused upon how the oral narratives of both the pre and post Christian ethos have been closely associated with the identity of the Mizos. Among the indigenous Mizo people the oral narratives have always played a very significant role in their culture and literary heritage. The dissertation has delved and focused on the aspects of formulating different identity parameters among the Mizos in the contemporary era, and has provided the impact of post colonisation on the Mizo identity, and on the aspects of orality and literature. It has denoted that there is a hybridised culture among the Mizos and in this process has also explored the abundance of censorship and resistance of the narratives of the pre Christian era (with the advent of Christianity in Mizoram), which remains central to this day.

GLOSSARY

[1]Beer or any fermented liquor. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 570.

[2]Self-sacrifice, altruism, self-denial, unselfishness. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher's Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 301.

[3]It is also known as *tah hla* and *khawhar zai.* Specifically the name of a solemn dirge, requiem or lament sung by old people in a house of mourning any time after the burial. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 253.

[4]The name of a festival held in honour of one's ancestors and deceased near relatives in which their effigies are carried and made to drink along with the living. The heads of the different persons, represented are made of their actual skulls if their bones happen to be preserved by the family. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 319.

[5]The name of a public feast given by chiefs and other well-to-do Lushais. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 266.

[6]A dance and song accompanied with feast held to celebrate success in the chase, and to *ai* the head of the animal killed. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 402.

[7]To kill a domestic animal and perform a ceremony over or for a wild creature killed 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 protecting him from evil consequences during this life. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 4.

[8]The hunter's cry or chant which is raised directly when a wild animal has been killed in the chase, and also on the road home, and before entering the village. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 148.

[9]The hunter's cry or chant which is raised directly when a wild animal has been killed in the chase, and also on the road home, and before entering the village. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 148.

[10]Paradise in erstwhile Mizo belief. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher's Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 220.

[11]A man of courage. A manly/brave/courageous personality. B. T Nghinglova, *Mizo-English Teacher's Dictionary*. Khuma Educational Services Foundation, 2013, p. 211.

[12]The title given to a man who has distinguished himself by killing a certain number of different animals in the chase, or by giving a certain number of public feasts; the possession of this title is regarded by the Lushais as a passport to *Pialral* or Paradise. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 447.

[13]The name of a sacrifice that involves the killing of pigs. B. Lalthangliana, *Mizo Culture*. Gilzom Offset, 2013, p. 127.

[14]The name of a sacrifice. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 106.

[15]An exorcist; a priest. James Herbert Lorrain. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 33.

[16]A private exorcist or priest, especially such as are employed by ruling chiefs. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 397.

[17]An exorcist. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 371.

[18]The name of a sacrifice and three days' feast and dancing given by a single individual or a family; the first of a series of sacrifices and feasts to ensure entrance to the Lushai Paradise. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 65.

[19]The name of one of the *khal* class of sacrifices offered to restore good fortune or skill in hunting which the offerer once enjoyed but has lost. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 286.

[20]The name of a sacrifice. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 96.

[21]The name of the sacrifice needed to appease the dreaded evil *Hnuaipui*. The owner of a sow may not kill it unless he offers it in sacrifice to this spirit. Should the spirit be offended nothing short of a sow which has had three litters of pigs will satisfy him, and even then he is said to kill and carry off the spirits of three human victims before he is appeased. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 175.

[22]The name of two of the series of sacrificial public feasts given by aspirants for the distincion of *thangchhuah.* James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 412.

[23]Any dirge, requiem, or lament songs sung in honour of the dead. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, 1997, p. 253.

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ABSTRACT

INTERPRETING ORALITY WITHIN THE MIZO PARADIGM: A STUDY OF SELECT NARRATIVES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREEE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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The aspect of orality can be found in abundance among Mizo folk literature – in their tales, songs, chants, lullabies, proverbs, and maxims. An in depth analysis of the orality of the long lost cultural past of the Mizos is necessary to bring a better understanding of their once rich orality. Mizos have had a very rich oral narrative tradition and since time immemorial, the aspects of orality have always been a part of the Mizo identity. Especially for the Mizos, orality is very important and hard to part with as the oratorical power is as much a powerful force as the oral literature themselves. There seems to be a deeper, yet unquantifiable connection to the people in the primary orality that is found in the oral tradition of the Mizos.

Walter J. Ong had theorized that within the aspect of orality, primary and secondary orality exists within a culture. He defines primary orality as "the pristine orality of mankind untouched by writing or print" (Ong, 3). Due to this, the primary orality has to be repeated and passed on through verbalisation. As primary oral cultures have no fixed rules of orality the knowledge and information, folktales and folksongs that are orally transmitted undergo various changes. The constant repetitions through verbalisation led to the existence of different versions of oral narratives. This is why the Mizos too have different versions of their oral narratives: "In repeated sequences of images, even when each is identical to the next, the aesthetic effect of the second and subsequent repetitions is never the same as the earlier experiences" (Beardsley, 524). Ong also states that the secondary orality belongs to the orality sustained by electronic devices that depend on the written and print form: "a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print" (Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 11). From Ong's theorization, it is evident that the Mizo culture predominantly belongs to the primary orality. Mizos have a very rich variety of oral tales, especially during the pre-Christian era. These oral tales not only resemble and represent their culture. In fact, it is also the representation of their identity as it reflects their values and dreams, traditional beliefs and practices. Oral narratives act as autobiographical ethnography as they are the culture's own description of themselves. This alone makes orality very true and very

original as well as it is a way of seeing culture “from the inside out” instead of “from the outside in” (Bronner, 55).

Folktales, folk songs and other forms of oral literature have been passed down throughout the history of the Mizos from one generation to the next, through the medium of oral narratives: “Skill and knowledge are passed on by way of personal participation and practice. In this manner, the categories of thought are appropriated in the immediacy of person-to-person communication and interiorized as communal knowledge” (Ong, 41). Though a precise time and year is unknown and cannot be traced back with absolute certainty as to when the Mizos started telling their stories, folktales were and had always been told and handed down through oral narration. It is certainly clear that the Mizo “ancestors no doubt told and composed stories in the year 1350 A.D when they inhabited areas around the Run River” (Lalthangliana, 311). Orality however underwent a drastic and immediate change after the arrival of the Christian missionaries - J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge on 11th January, 1894. Mizos have had a very rich variety of oral tales. These oral tales not only resemble and represent their culture. It is also the representation of their identity as Mizos. With the introduction of Christianity, the old religious practices that involved many oral narratives of songs and chants were not only replaced but was censored to a great deal, so much that it became negated to the periphery and was almost forgotten as time went on. Colonialism brought with it a decided sense of the resistance and censorship of the ‘old’ culture. Due to this, there was resistance of the pre-existing form of oral literature. Christianity played a major role in this resistance and censorship of the oral tales of the pre Christian era. In terms of censorship religion and power are seemingly in tandem with regards to orality within the Mizo paradigm. The earlier religious practices and chants where the Mizo ancestors prayed and appeased to the spirits and the supernatural beings stopped altogether as Christianity spread its teachings into the culture of the Mizos. Thus, it brought about a shift in the dynamics of power relation with reference to religion in the context of the Mizos; the newly found Christian God became the supreme divine being in the lives of

the Mizos rather than the benevolent spirits who were believed to have some power and authority over the land, fields, crops and the weather.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION: ORALITY IN THE MIZO TRADITION

Mizos had no written script before the arrival of the two Christian missionaries - J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge (Pu Buanga and Sap Upa respectivesly) on 11th January, 1894. Due to the absence of any form of writing prior to the arrival of the pioneering missionaries, orality was the only means through which the history of the Mizos could be traced. This is why orality plays a very crucial role in tracing the history of the Mizos: "[The Mizo] ancestors no doubt told and composed stories in the year 1350 A.D when they inhabited areas around the Run River" (Lalthangliana, 311). The Mizos are said to have originated from Chhinlung, in China, then migrated down through Burma, now Myanmar and into the present location - Mizoram having had to cross the Tiau River. This is evident from the song which runs thus:

San khuah lenpur a tla,

Mi raza tlan thier e.

A khu khual khu khawii khua maw?

San khual ka ni, Sanzawl khual ka ni.

Famine has ravished the San village,

And we are probing for food.

From which village do you visit?

I am from San, a visitor from Sanzawl. (my trans.; 62)

From this alone it is evident as to how orality plays a significant role in the historical formation of the ancestral Mizos. The names of the rivers, mountains, terrains found in the oral narratives signify the importance of orality in the lives and culture of the Mizos.

The Mizos have always been a predominantly tribal community. This is evident from the fact that a number of animal imagery have been drawn in the aspects of their oral tales. “Oral cultures tend to use concepts in situational, operational frames of reference that are minimally abstract in the sense that they remain close to the living human life world” (Ong, 49). In terms of the oral perspective there is a significant focus on the animal world as far as Mizo orality is concerned. Tales like ‘Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi’, ‘Chemtatrawta’ and ‘The War Between the Creatures of the Air and the Creatures of the Land’ are animal-themed tales. From these tales, it can be assumed that the Mizo ancestors lived in close harmony and coexisted with the animal world as well as with nature itself. From the oral narratives, readers can find that there was a peaceful and uninterrupted coexistence of men with animals as well as nature. “The concept of identity formation within the pre-colonial era was significantly inter-linked with that of nature and animals, as well as human beings” (Pachuau, 183).

Another aspect of oral narratives that the Mizos performed were the *bawhhla*[1] and *hlado*[2]. The *bawhhla* is a very important and significant part of Mizo orality that the Mizos often sung at the defeat of an enemy in a battle. *Hlado* is the form of orality which is considered to be one of the oldest forms of orality among the Mizos. It is a very important oral tradition that the Mizos had sung after a kill to commemorate as well as rejoice over a slain animal on a hunt and a game. The *hlado* of an elephant, which was considered to be one of the greatest achievements, runs thus:

Sai lian e, khek chel chul law, hmingtha Lalngova than nan e,

Chunglum e, phaikip tlantu thangah pai mawi fungki tial e.

Chung tur e, sa vung vung law, ni hnuai, valpan a sul kan zui

Sai lian e, kan kaihpen e, val tha keini zui u law.

The loud groaning pain of the elephant intensifies the pride of the hunter,

It shall wait and glorify the hunter in the after-life.

Oh sun, glow hot

As we trace the great elephant's tracks. (my trans.; 45)

Besides this, there were various other forms of oral narratives that the Mizos had practiced. Some of them are: *thla koh*[3]*, thiam hla*[4] and *dawi hla*[5] performed by the *bawl pu*[6]*, sadawt*[7] *and puithiam*[8]. These incantations were made to appease the spirits that they believed to have caused sufferings and pain to them. However, it has to be noted that the prayers to the spirits were not in any way a kind of worship. On the contrary, they were prayed to, by the Mizos in order to avoid the anger and wrath of the spirits that were believed to have lived inside the trees and rocks. Due to this they would often appease these spirits, not as a form of worship but as a kind of agreement with the spirits. Thus, from here, it can be seen how orality played a significant role in the cultural tradition of the Mizos. Almost every aspect of their lives, cultural practices, religion, superstitions beliefs, and traditional customs are expressed through their oral narratives.

CHAPTER II: SITUATING ORALITY: THE COLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

The oral narratives of the Mizos underwent a drastic and immediate change after the arrival of the Christian missionaries - J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge on 11th January, 1894. The aspects of Mizo orality underwent tremendous changes within the realms of the colonial perspective. The colonial rule brought changes in the form of orality which can be seen in the customs, songs, and cultural traditional practices of the Mizo society. Colonialism brought with it a decided sense of the resistance and censorship of the 'old' culture. Christianity played a major role in this resistance and censorship of the oral narratives of the pre Christian era. In terms of censorship religion and power are seemingly in tandem with regards to orality within the Mizo paradigm. The earlier religious practices and chants where the Mizo ancestors prayed and appeased the spirits and the supernatural beings were stopped altogether. Thus, it brought about a

shift in the dynamics of power relation with reference to religion in the context of the Mizos and the newly found Christian God became the supreme divine being in the lives of the Mizos rather than the benevolent spirits who were believed to have had some power and authority over the land, fields, crops and the weather.

With reference to the afterlife, the Mizos had rich oral stories and tales that dealt with aspects about the after-life, and also the processes that one had to undergo in order to enter and be accepted into the world of the dead. Some of the folktales about the after-life are: 'Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana', 'Tualvungi leh Zawlpala', 'Tlingi leh Ngama', tales about Pawla and the oral tales concerning Rihdil. In the post Christian era, the after-life that the Mizos had believed for so long, slowly diminished and it was finally regarded to be a mere myth. Christianity had played a major role in the formulation of the new culture and belief systems of the Mizos. It has made a vast shift in terms of the oral traditions and story-telling within the ambit of the Mizo society. With the introduction of Christianity, the power dynamics of folktales underwent new perspectives among the Mizos. The power of orality which held fast the Mizo identity and culture was dramatically changed after colonization. Due to this, it can be said that the Christian religion spread rapidly among the Mizos, as it was a definite means of liberation and a form of freedom for the Mizos. All of the tales of the pre-Christan era were censored or demystified in the post-colonial era. In the pre-colonial era, the Mizos belief in the after-life is inherently different from the Christian belief. Christianity completely changed the mode of thinking and belief of the Mizos.

Thus, all of the pre-Christian oral traditions such as, the incantations to the evil spirits which was very important part of their cultural tradition and religion, chants to celebrate a kill and a hunt, and also all of the oral narratives about the afterlife were censored. The usage of the drum and gong too was censored. Though the drum played an important role in their celebrations and singing, it declined in the post Christian era. They were abolished and censored by the missionaries as it was believed to be connected with benevolent evil spirits that the Mizos had used earlier. The beat and

rhythm of the drums and gongs that were a part and parcel of the Mizo songs and chants, their important form of oral tradition was censored in the colonial era.

CHAPTER III: ORALITY: THE POST-COLONIAL PARADIGM

The advent of the Christian missionaries on 11th January, 1894 brought about social, religious and oral transformation among the Mizos. The precepts of postcoloniality have been significantly found within the aspects of the Mizo community at large. One of the most prominent and noteworthy changes that was brought was the introduction of a written Mizo script. Thus, writing had come into being within the context of the Mizos. Narratives were not confined to orality anymore as the written script had been introduced to the Mizos, and the themes in the Mizo narratives had thus changed. Prior to the missionaries' visit, the Mizos had had no formal education. All of the educations that had been imparted were done orally and all of their education had been informal. Nag has stated that "it is not illogical to say that it was the direct philanthropic impact of Christianity and not any other agency that had influenced the life of the Mizos in the origin and progress of their mass education and literacy" (145).

In the post-colonial paradigm, the song compositions of the Mizos underwent a major change. The Mizos have internalised and mimic the forms and habits of the Christians. They began to model themselves through the white men, transforming into something they had never been: "Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage" (Bhabha, 85). Due to this, there is the creation of a new cultural identity among the Mizos. The clash of cultures between the West and the East produced something new and brilliant in terms of orality in the Mizos. This clash that colonialism had strongly invoked, influenced and encouraged the formation of new cultural hybrids. As a result of this hybridised culture, the orality of the Mizos greatly benefited from it as "orality is

thus the central indigenous mode in most postcolonial writing" (Nayar, 222). There were four major waves of evangelical revivals (1906, 1913, 1919 and1935) which shaped the oral narratives of the Mizos. These revivals had an immeasurable impact on the aspect of orality of the Mizos. Almost all of the traditional forms of orality like storytelling, oral superstitions, song compositions and many other form of oral culture were done away with. Moreover, these revivals led to the composition of many new Christian hymns. Stories that were once about nature and its elements, the supernatural, and the mystical were all converted into narratives that had Biblical perspectives. Due to this, there is the creation of a new cultural identity among the Mizos: "one of the most important themes of postcolonial theorizing, as we have already seen, has been its emphasis on the hybridity of cultural identifications and the instability of dominating cultural paradigms" (Loomba, 343). Thus, there was hybridity in terms of the Mizo belief system with the Christian faith and religion, and also with the Mizo narratives.

CHAPTER IV: IDENTITY AND ORALITY

As far as the orality of the Mizos was concerned, it had always been closely related with their identity since time immemorial. The orality of the Mizos not only resembles and represents their culture and heritage, but is also the representation of their identity as the aspects of orality have always been a part of the Mizo identity: "Orality must be treated as a component of a specific social space with its own particularities of gender, class, sexuality, and politics" (Nayar, 222).

The Mizos had their identities strongly tied and related with the forces of nature; they had close relationship with the nature that surrounded them. Due to this, there are various forms of narratives that are directly involved with nature: "the concept of identity formation within the pre-colonial era was significantly interlinked with that of nature and animals as well human beings" (Pachuau, 183). *Salu lam*[9] and *ai*[10] were performed in order to celebrate a successful hunt. Such was the place that the animals had in terms of the identity parameters. With the advent of Christianity, there was a

paradigm shift in the formation of identity as most Mizo oral folktales have an allusion to nature, animals and the worlds of spirits and the supernatural. Narratives were composed and focused wholly according to the Biblical beliefs and teachings in the Christian era: “the *Bible* became in coherent ways the legitimate parameter within the post-Christian ethos” (Pachuau, 184).

The concept of the power of the pre Christian oral narratives were remarkably different from the narratives after colonisation, where Christianity became the main focus and has thus managed to relocate beliefs and ideas that were once associated with the power of the folklore of the pre Christian era. After the revivals that occurred in Mizoram the identity of the Mizos was changed to a whole new level. The identity of the Mizos underwent hybridity as it was destabilised in the post-colonial era. All of the earlier oral tales took a back seat in the post Christian era, and resistance began to take place: “Hybridity generally refer to the destabilising of colonised culture” (Gandhi, 136). In the post-colonial era, all tales were concentrated upon the Almighty God and his supremacy is mentioned in the new tales. This has had its impact upon Mizo identity as it has merged with the identity of the missionaries. Hybridity had seeped into the minds of the Mizos as their identity and culture have now been an amalgation of both colonial Christianity and their pre-existing culture. It has to be noted that there has been a significant emergence of hybridity in the formulation of the identity among the Mizos. This shift and transition from the pre-colonial folk dynamics to a post-colonial folk is a direct result of the new Christian religion that dominated Mizoram and its people. The defining parameters of identity were shaped and turned drastically after the emergence and the spread of Christianity which shaped and remodelled the definition of Mizo identity. In the years that followed colonisation the Mizo society has inherently become a society which is greatly influenced by the nuances of the Christian religion. Due to this, the negation, negligence as well as censorship of the old cultural myths, songs, stories, chants, folk, cultural lores and other form of oral tradition inevitably occurred within the psyche of the Mizos.

One of the leading factors that contributed to the identity of any culture is their language – both the oral and the written language. There are many clans and sub-clans that have no written script but speak their own dialects in Mizoram. Thus, there was a huge array of languages spoken in a relatively small state like Mizoram. Due to this reason, the people as a whole found it hard to identify as a single culture and community due to the difference in their languages. The introduction of literacy and written script among the Mizos played a huge role in the formation of the identity of the Mizos. Imparting education and the Christian faith went hand in hand. In *Things Fall Apart* (1958) education was the means by which the colonisers used to persuade the natives to appreciate their religion: "Churches were established . . . and a few schools with them. From the very beginning religion and education went hand in hand" (Achebe, 132). As the identity of the Mizos developed greatly due to the introduction of literacy among the people there was also a fair indication of the steady growth of literacy. This is evident from the fact that 1500 copies of *Kristian Tlangau Bu* (Christian Herald Journal) – which is the Presbyterian Church's journal, were printed and published 1920. Thus, the Mizos began to formulate their own cultural taste, ethnicity and identity many years after the introduction of literacy. From then on, there were translations of the Bible, and there emerged a dictionary and an establishment of the Lushai orthography along with the many revisions of the *Hla Bu* (Hymn Book).

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Mizo literature has been founded on the basis of the rich forms of orality that have been pertinent and significant throughout the history of the Mizos. The study has found that the Mizo orality belongs to that of the primary oral culture as described by Walter J Ong. He explains that primary orality is the type of orality that belongs to the cultures that have no knowledge of writing before the presence or occurrences of any other outside influence. It was through this 'outside influence' of the missionaries that the Mizos were taught how to read and write. Before education was imparted into the hills

of Mizoram, orality and its various forms was the only means of conveying messages. It was only through orality that information, stories and literary forms were transferred by word of mouth. “Skill and knowledge are passed on by way of personal participation and practice. In this manner, the categories of thought are appropriated in the immediacy of person-to-person communication and interiorized as communal knowledge” (Ong, 41).

The research has given a detailed analysis as well as comparison of both the aspects of orality before and after the introduction and spread of Christianity and education among the Mizos. According to Paula Mc Dowell, “once literacy is introduced, *primary* orality disappears” (171). The research has discussed the problems about oral composition, oral performances and oral cultures especially with reference to the oral tradition and the numerous transitions that took place. The Mizo oral tradition had under gone a rapid and drastic change due to the newly introduced written literary tradition. The research has denoted as to how this had affected the aspects of Mizo psyche, oral compositions and mind-set. Due to all of these changes and transitions, there was a sense of resistance and censorship of the old and traditional oral form of literature.

The advent of Christianity and post colonialism had a deep impact among the Mizos in terms of the formation and creation of ideas. This process has led to a consistent negation of the cultural oral myths. This makes it imperative for hybridity to occur in the Mizo narratives. Due to this, hybridity can be said to be inevitable among the Mizos in the post Christian era. Thus, the Mizo culture was merged with Christianity while having the power dynamic as hybridised. “Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects” (Bhabha, 159). The research has given an in depth analysis of the selected tales of the post Christian era through aspects of postcoloniality that have been significantly found within the Mizo community. The research has situated and interpreted the selected tales through a post-colonial perspective especially in terms of the concepts of power and hybridity. There is a demystification of the oral

past and histories. Colonisation has brought with it a change in the creation and narration of oral tales; and every aspect of the new narratives have become dominantly hybridised in the Christian sensibility.

The research has also dealt upon the impact of the oral narratives upon the Mizos It has concluded that oral narratives of both the pre and post Christian have been closely associated with the identity of the Mizos. This has been denoted through the selected tales while giving insight into the existence of a hybridised culture and narratives among the Mizos. It has also garnered that the abundance of censorship and resistance of the narratives of the pre Christian era with the advent of Christianity in Mizoram is significant to Mizo orality and identity at large.

GLOSSARY

[1]The warriors' chant or cry; the chant or cry raised by warriors when returning from a successful raid. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, The Asiatic Society, 1997, p 31.

[2]The hunter's cry or chant which is raised directly when a wild animal has been killed in the chase, and also on the road home, and before entering the village. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, The Asiatic Society, 1997, p 148.

[3]To call the spirit of a person which has deserted him and is detained somewhere in forest by the evil spirits. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, The Asiatic Society, 1997, p 476.

[4]An incantations, an invocation, an exorcism, a spell, a charm, a mantra. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, The Asiatic Society, 1997, p 459.

[5]Verse forms of invocations and incantations, chanted by the traditional priest and witch while performing rituals. Laltluangliana Khiangte, *Mizos of North East India: An Introduction to Mizo Culture, Folklore, Language & Literature*, L.T.L Publications, 2008, p. 65.

[6]An exorcist; a priest. James Herbert Lorrain. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, The Asiatic Society, 1997, p 33.

[7]A private exorcist or priest, especially such as are employed by ruling chiefs. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, The Asiatic Society, 1997, p 397.

[8]An exorcist. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, The Asiatic Society, 1997, p 371.

[9]A dance accompanied with feast held to celebrate success in the chase, and to *ai* the head of the animal killed. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, The Asiatic Society, 1997, p 402.

[10]To kill a domestic animal and perform a ceremony over or for a wild creature killed 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 protecting him from evil consequences during this life. James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, The Asiatic Society, 1997, p 4.

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