

## Chapter One

### Introduction

To study the folksongs of women in Mizoram is to engage a coexistence of various aspects that have led a chronically concurrences over time. Music has always played a significant role in the social functions of the Mizos. Subject of women's musical role in Mizo society have generated an understanding towards the fabrication of their history. Despite the existing sociological and historical records, the documentation of the voices of women through songs is few and scattered. The study will seek to survey the role of women's folksongs however broader ethical dimensions are left for a branch of other specialists. The aim of the study is specifically on women's songs and its contexts. It seeks to determine the social positions of women through the songs they sing and attempt to seek their individualities in a cultural/musical setting, how their songs serves as a role in reflecting or protesting the various gender arrangements, ranging from male dominance to female separation. Recollecting the Mizo women's past, oral traditions and cultural practices play an important role and the songs that were sung and composed by the Mizo women are a good example as events and circumstances do not simply happen. The study will reason the significance of the contributions of women in the patriarchal societies of the Mizos through their songs and how their involvements in the musical traditions make them preservers. Discourse on women issues has been gaining popularity beginning from the post-colonial period up till now and the subject of women issues gave an impetus of looking at the question of women's stance in the Mizo society.

A field of research that generally analyses the perspectives and innovations of the ways in which "culture" transfigures personal experience, the minute passing of everyday life, how individuals are related socially and mostly, how power relations in all spheres develop has been a serious engagement in recent times. Its methods and theories questions the problems of the world. It does not rely on answers that are universal for all time rather it develops flexible tools that condition itself to this speedy ever- changing world. Hence, culture and its practices are simplified as sustaining process of 'developing stage' and at the same time 'non-moving'. Kramsch in *Language and Culture* (1998) mentions that "one way of thinking about culture is to contrast it with nature. Nature refers to what is born and grows organically and culture refers to what has been grown and groomed" (4). The interpolation of this probing into culture is to study the cultural experiences and practices of a particular tribe,

the Mizos. The British, when they came in close contact realised the tribals called themselves 'Loosye', but later adopted Lushai as the official designation for the Zo tribals, as the ruling clans of these people were known to them as 'Lushai'. Vumson in *Zo History* (n.d) pointed out that "Lusei and related clans which settled in the Lushai Hills (Mizoram) called themselves Mizo from time immemorial; Mizo meaning Zo people... the term Mizo extend over all Zo people, as does Zomi and Laimi, according to their respective users" (1). Scholars in various fields have worked on the origin and history of the Mizo tribals and the simplest understanding on the subject of history is that it is a record of the experiences of people in the past. There are numerous discourses on the subject and have been deconstructed and re-interpreted from the earlier historical writings up to the present time. Speaking for the preliterate societies, people belonging to a culture that do not possess any written script or written history, literature is whatever the culture consider noteworthy of ample reiteration to assure it will be minded and passed along. So, for a culture like the Mizos, which have been passed down orally through generations, form a part of their literature. Examining the various genres of oral literature, Miruka, *Encounter with Oral Literature* (1994) said that:

..“poetry can be said to be ‘the expression of powerful human feelings (emotions), thoughts and ideas using words and sounds arranged in the best possible manner...so, poetry can be defined as the use of versified language to express human feelings, thoughts and ideas.’(88)

He mentions that ‘a song is not always poetry and poetry is not always a song.. in this sense, oral poetry can be said to be a literary piece in verse while song is a musical composition with words/ lyrics with voices that comes with performance’ (88). The simplest definition of folksong is that it is a traditional or composed song typically characterized by stanzaic form, refrain, and simplicity of melody (Webster). The two terms ‘oral poetry’ and ‘folksong’ will be taken as one and the same in this study.

The folk songs of the Mizos are sung, chanted, and accompanied with musical instruments. Since early times, these songs are passed on orally, well versed and known by everyone and are mainly short. Some of the origin and the composer of the songs are known but majority of the songs and its composers remain unknown. The content of the songs are mainly songs of lamentations, songs of the brave, songs of incantations, songs of courtship, songs of sorrow, lullabies and rhymes of children. Every culture has its own folk songs, and likewise the Mizo culture is enriched with songs. The early Mizo folk songs are mainly written in couplets and with the passing of time, the songs are then extended into three- four

lines. The songs of the Mizos can be chronologically divided into four parts. The first part in time is said to be *Thantlang Upa Hla*, and some even called it as songs that are sung before crossing the *Run* River circling around 1300-1450 AD. These songs comprises of- *Thuthmun Zai*, *Nauawih Hla*, *Dar Hla*, *Hlado*, *Bawh Hla* and *Salulam zai*; in which all are written in couplets. The second part is known to have been sung when the Mizos settled at *Lentlang* which was between *Run* and *Tiau* River, from 1450-1700 AD. During this time, songs began to take shape in triplets, rather than couplets, songs like *Chawngchen Zai* and *Chai Hla* came into the scene. The third part is said to be sung when the Mizos crossed the *Tiau* River circling around 1700-1900 AD. A number of songs are added to the previous styles of singing and during this time, songs bearing the names of individual came into existence- *Darmani zai*, *Mangkhaia zai*, *Lianchhiari zai*, *Laltheri zai*, *Tuchhingpa zai*, *Darpawngi zai*, *Saikuti zai*, *Darlenglehi zai*, *Tuchhingpa zai*, *Neihlaia zai*, *Lerha zai* and many more. Most of these songs are written in four lines. And 1900 AD onwards, with a shift in culture comes a great transition in the composition of songs. However, the style of singing of the early folk songs continued to flourish, like- *Awithangpa zai*, *German run zai*, *Abor run zai*, *Thlek zai* and many more. R.L.Thanmawia (1998) stated that during the early times, the life lived by the Mizo people were to a particular place, they did not travel far, their thoughts and hopes stayed centered in their place of dwelling. Thus, the songs they composed were a reflection of their everyday life, not moulded and affected by another culture. With Christianity, we can see traces of *Jordan*, *Bethlehem*, and *Calvary* etc. in their songs. The songs prior to 1900 AD thus, seemed entirely of the folk life, not added by anything. Just as it is difficult to trace the origin of the Mizos, tracing the origin of Mizo folksongs is equally difficult. Due to lack of documentation and information, its exact date cannot be known; however, what can be regarded as the oldest song from record available is *Thuthmun Zai* when the early Mizo settled at Chhinlung. It is recorded that most of the songs that were composed was when they settled at the *Lentlang* border. The collection of the oldest Mizo songs begins from a number of villages. The emergence of the composition of songs has different purposes and reasons (Hrangthiauva 263). Regarding the origins of folk music, Bohlman in *The Study of Modern Music in the Modern world* (1988) stated that “one may or may not believe it possible to muster enough empirical evidence to identify the origins of folk music or to discuss them in a meaningful way” (13). He explained that “the recognition of pieces whose origins one can identify and those about which can only be speculated. Just as the origins of folk music range from a mythic past to the specificity of the present, so too do concepts of folk music embrace elements of the unrealizable and the real, the intangible and the tangible... In part, folk music

is an aesthetic ideal; in part, it is a functional accompaniment to basic social activity. Tradition is fashioned from both an authenticity that clings to the past and a process of change that continuously reshapes the present. That folk music is both a product of the past and a process of the present is essential to the commingling of stability and vitality, which together provide the substance and dynamism of oral tradition” (13). In regard to this C. Chhuanvawra in *Hmanlai leh tunlai Mizo Hlate* (2011) wrote,

“*Heng hlate ka lak khawm chungchangah hian tlang taka thil sawi duh pakhat ka nei a. Mizo hla hlui zual ho bikah hian ka pa, Hrangthiauva ziah Mizo Chanchin (History and Culture of the Mizos) tih bua hlate leh chuta chuang lo ka hnena a sawi ka la hriat rengte chu thu lak nan ka hmang tam ber a....a tobul lam thuah pawh Mizo hla ziah ve dangten a tobul an ziah ve mang loh avangin source awm chhun, historical approach ni bawk a nih avangin nghenchhan loh theih a ni lo. Ani ziah lo pawh a awm chhun a nih chuan han belh chiana rin tlak nia lang chu ka la chhawng zel bawk a. Ani ziah pawh han zir chiana dik tawk lo nia lang chu ka hnawl tho bawk a.*”(intro.ix)

(With regard to the process of collecting songs, I have a statement to make. The songs of the Mizos that belong to the past days have been taken from my father Hrangthiauva’s book *History and Culture of the Mizos* and also from the things I remembered that he told me which were not written in the book.... regarding the origin of songs, many Mizos who have wrote of the history of songs failed to mention its origination and because of this, the only source available with a historical approach, is the only source that can be depended on. Sources that are reliable written by other historians are also taken, and the sources that seemed to be untrue are omitted as well).

The study is constructed on conjectures; as the information gathered to have knowledge regarding the timeframe of the folk songs of the Mizos is fragmented and incomplete. Bohlman (2) said that “nothing definite can be known about origins. He holds the view that many of our scholarly forbears were in search of just such origins. But the view they embraced was a restricted view of origins, predicated by a primary concern for data, facts and material products: the first scale, the first form of bone flute or slit drum, the link between speech and song. He said that there is also a broader context for origins, one that concerns itself not so much with products but with the processes of coming into being. How does a society create new songs? Whence arises musical change? When and how do new canons of folk music form? These questions, too, require speculation and often yield only

tentative answers”. Bohlman intentionally deflected on giving a rigid definition of folk music, such definitions are never cross-culturally sound, and said ‘the dynamic nature of folk music belies the stasis of definition. It is an arduous task to document the original homeland of the Mizos, and so are its folk songs. The study does not intent to be a study of the history of the folksongs of Mizoram. It is merely an overture of how the songs composed by women allow us to trace certain practice of socio- cultural activities entailing the conditions of women. It is based on a propositional interpretation with regards to the Mizo women and their songs, with the outcome of the study that cannot be all comprehensive nor definitive in its implications, however, the study will attempt to focus on the cultural identity and musical activity of the Mizo women within the patriarchal society they lived in.

Alan Lomax in *Folk Song, Style and Culture* (1968) on the importance of traditional cultures said that “the folk, the primitive, the nonindustrial societies account for most of the cultural variety of a planet. Though rich in expressive and communicative arts, these folk communities seldom have the means to record, evaluate, or transmit their songs and tales except by word of mouth; and the noise of our hard sell society is drowning out the quieter communications of these word of mouth traditions” (4-5). He further stated that “the bookish and literate West labels all expressive output not enshrined in print as inferior *per se*. Certainly any people without some technique for institutionalizing and fostering its traditions is at the mercy of societies with printing presses, schools and broadcasting systems. Such a lack of knowledge-saving devices and educational institutions, however, has little or nothing to do with the universal or local value of a style of communication. Each style is a way of experiencing, transforming, knowing, and expressing life, sharpened by the genius of a people through many centuries, as it adapted itself to some special environment”(4). Nothing can be known of a subject unless there is a study of the cultural history it is embedded in; and a feminist ethnomusicological approach, moreover, the expressions of women through songs that reflect their position will be explored in the study.

Bruno Nettl in *The study of Ethnomusicology, Thirty one issues and concepts* (1983) said that “it is difficult to find a single, simple definition, to which most people in this field would subscribe, and thus, ethnomusicologists have been excessively concerned with defining themselves”. Those who seek- or sought- to define ethnomusicology by the material that is contemplated have opted:

“Folk music, and music that used to be called ‘primitive’, that is, tribal, indigenous, or possibly ancient music.”

Those focusing on type of activity might choose:

“Comparative study (of musical systems and cultures), a basically musicological activity.”(Nettl, 1983 “Chapter 1”)

Also, Timothy Rice in *Ethnomusicology: A very short Introduction* (2014) stated that “ethnomusicology is the study of why, and how, human beings are musical. A definition which positions ethnomusicology among the social sciences, humanities, and biological sciences dedicated to understanding the nature of the human species in all its biological, social, cultural, and artistic diversity”(Ch.1 kindle ed.). ‘Musical’, as explained by Rice, “does not refer to musical talent or ability, rather, it refers to the capacity of humans to create, perform, organize cognitively, react physically and emotionally to, and interpret the meanings of humanly organized sounds. This definition assumes that all humans, not just those we call musicians, are musical to some degree and that musicality (the capacity to make and make sense of music) defines our humanity and provides one of the touchstones of human experience”. Rice (Ch.4) asserted that “the nature of music can be linked to other domains of human thought. Ethnomusicological theories about the nature of music consist, implicitly or explicitly, of truth claims in the form of metaphors. It can be understood that music is a resource with psychological and social functions; music is a cultural form; a social behaviour; a text to be read and interpreted; a system of signs and also, music itself as art”. He further added that “these metaphors, and others, can all coexist simultaneously or in sequence in any particular instance. They are based on theories that are being discussed broadly in social sciences, philosophy, and humanities, and when taken together, they illustrate the richness of music’s significance in human life. In its broadest sense, what ethnomusicologists do in their study, is, they strive for an “all embracing approach” that deals with any music and “everything that can shed light on the human context” of music” (Ch.4). Durga in *Ethnomusicology, A study of Intercultural Musicology* (2004) (10) described that “ethnomusicology as a discipline encompasses the study of folk music, art music, religious music, contemporary music of world music cultures, musical change, music as symbol, universals in music, the function of music in society, the comparison of musical systems, and study of other musical cultures from their own in musicological and cultural perspectives which distinguish ethnomusicology from musicology and has emerged as intercultural musicology” (10).An important factor that contributes to the desire of studying the music of a culture, as Nettl (Ch.1kindle ed.) explained is that “ethnomusicologists search for universals, hoping to generalize intelligently about the way in which the world’s cultures construct, use, and conceive of music. They try to understand human music in the context of human culture

as a unitary phenomenon. And yet they never cease to marvel at the incredible variety of manifestations of music. There is a great delight in imparting to the world the strange facts uncovered by musical ethnography and analysis. Regarding their beliefs, they regard all music as equal. Each music, they believe, is equally an expression of culture, and each culture and each music must be understood first and foremost in its own terms. All music seems worthy of study to them, recognizing that all, no matter how apparently simple, are in themselves inordinately complex phenomena. They believe that all musics are capable of imparting much of importance to the peoples to whom they belong, and to the world, and thus naturally also to the scholars who study them” (Ch.1 kindle ed. loc.366). In conducting research on the subject of ethnomusicology, Rice give a four main- activities explanation on fieldwork as: “interviewing, participant observation, learning to sing, play and dance, documenting musical traditions, transcribing and analyzing music and intellectual property rights. Fieldwork is a required practise for ethnomusicologists. By undertaking fieldwork, the ethnomusicologist not only collects the data for research but also tries to understand the culture of the other society and gets the first hand information of the music and people. For documenting information, an audio-visual tool is used. Besides collecting data, the ethnomusicologist tries to learn the music of the other culture during the field work” (Ch.3 kindle ed.). Durga (2004) described how the methodology is carried out and said that “musicologically trained researchers are concerned with the style and structure of the music for which the methodological tools like transcription and analysis are used. Anthropologically trained researchers are interested in studying the socio-cultural developments or social changes of the period in which the musical style undergoes changes and therefore the methodology of cultural anthropology is used” (12). Rice (2014) mentioned the various practices that an ethnomusicologist has to undergo. The first is “choosing a fieldwork site and gathering data” (Ch.3 kindle ed.). He wrote that “fieldwork begins with trust and rapport established with the community selected. This is carried out in four main activities: interviews, participant observation of musical events and community life and audio and video recordings” (Ch.3. kindle ed.). For the completion of the thesis, the fieldwork has been carried out in two periods, first during the mid- year of 2017, end of 2018 and May 2019 respectively. This was done by visiting Pu C. Chhuanvawra, and Dr. R. Zokhuma whose records and information are used reciprocally. The final period took place during the spring season in 2019 (May), a few places and districts that hold memories of the aforementioned songstresses were visited. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, places like Kanghmun ‘S’ which was the birthplace of Chhawnthangnu was visited, and 20 kms from Thenzawl, a visit to Zote ‘S’

took place where her tombstone has been erected. Although, the requirements of fieldwork for an ethnomusicologist calls for participation, observation and to live within the community, this work, as termed “ethnomusicological study” will focus on the multi-dimensional approach, where the study is not limited within the scholars of music and anthropology only but from a ‘literature’ branch of study. To justify the study, since 1950, two broad aspects have developed in the field of ethnomusicology in India; the professional aspects and the academic aspects. Scholars and researchers of other disciplines virtually research history, meaning and avenues of ethnic-aboriginal cultures. And from an academic aspect, the plight of Mizo women in the past, and the remnants and records of their creative outputs are studied to show their contributions in the musical traditions therein. Musical study as a cultural phenomenon will be used in this research process and the conditions of the women through the study of the songs they have composed is conducted.

As Durga (12) suggested, learning the music of a culture can be done under a guide during the field work. The western staff notation is used widely and sometimes additional symbols are introduced by the researcher to write down the music more accurately. This analysis of ‘music’ is made by transcribing the music. The transcription acts as a device for solving analytical problems and the ethnomusicologist selects the type of transcription to help the specific investigating problem such as comparison of section length in extended improvising, types of ornaments used by the performers during the performance of a specific recital, identification of rhythm and tonal variations in the performance. The selected songs of the Mizos suggest that majority of the tune of the songs are sung lazily and in regard to certain drawbacks, arranging them in the western staff notation proved difficult. The intellectual property rights goes to Benjamin Lalrinzuala, a Music school instructor, and standing (deputy) Bandmaster for Tuikual Temple Corp. for five years. Cantometric experiment on Mizo folksongs is attempted for the thesis as well. Alan Lomax (foreword 1968), who is the developer of cantometrics, a method of song measurements in *Folk Song, Style and Culture* stated that “comparative study of singing qualities was not possible until the 1940’s when large numbers of good recordings of folksongs from all over the world became available, and one could hear and compare the music of the world’s peoples for the first time. Work on cantometrics project began in the summer of 1961 by describing recorded folk song performances in empirical terms so that songs could be compared and clustered from culture to culture”(1968). Coming to the scene of the Mizo folksongs sung and composed by women in the study, it is difficult to locate the area of sex differentials in song



leadership. But attempts are made with songs of the women in study- that are sung by various societies for record which have been archived by All India Radio, Aizawl.

Koskoff in *A Feminist Ethnomusicology* (2014) said that recently, “ethnographers have tended to focus primarily on the more public, more easily accessible sphere occupied by males. Why this is so may reflect the world view and resulting methodologies of anthropologists more than the lack of women’s musical activities in the societies we study” (1). Among the various landmarks, an essay with important methodological implications are given by Nettl (Ch.4 kindle ed.) for a historical perspective, Sophie Drinker’s *Music and Women* (1948) showed the problems engendered by musicology, a field of scholarship that later came under sharp criticism because of its exclusively male-dominated perspective, were recognized already in the 1930s by a perceptive if not formally trained intellectual. Drinker repeatedly confronted “one of the perplexities in men’s scholarship and writing of history that baffles a sincere woman’s mind.” Nettl (para.2) hinted that “women were motivated to contribute in this direction as their unfavourable social position made them sensitive to oppressed peoples, and also because they found themselves directed to the margins- to marginal peoples, and to music, a marginal field”. Suzanne Cusick, in her foreword to *Feminist Ethnomusicology* stated that:

“Koskoff affirms feminism and ethnomusicology as always having shared certain qualities- a commitment to social justice, to understanding others, and to the struggle for equilibrium in relationships based on differences.” (x-xi)

On women’s music, Nettl (Ch. 4 kindle ed.) said that “among the various paradigm shifts that ethnomusicology experienced in the last 100 years, two developments, both striking at estrangements previously unappreciated, seem to have been most instrumental in establishing the field’s dominant directions as it entered the twenty- first century. One, as he pointed out, is the recognition that the understanding of gender as a factor in personal identity, and of gender relations in all aspects of society, is essential to the interpretation of musical cultures; and this is closely related to the second, the realization that virtually all relationships, and all developments in music, among societies, and of groups of people within a society, can be seen as a function and expression of power relationships”. He mentioned them together because “the unequal distribution of power between men and women and the domination of women by men in a variety of ways and to different extents is recognized as a

virtual universal in known societies. As a result of the development of these understandings, ethnomusicologists know a lot more about the musicking of women, having earlier on taken for granted that only men's music making was significant, or that musical activity was essentially gender-neutral" (Ch. 4 kindle ed.). Nettl (para.1) pointed out that all these realizations have made us question an important basic assumption: the fundamental homogeneity of culture in whose beliefs and concepts all member of a society participate with some degree of equality. Koskoff (2) is of the belief that women have always been in the margin and their identities have more or less been constructed for years as the weaker, more passive, quarrelsome or otherwise emotional. Few among the many were aware of the impact of a society's gender structure on all sorts of behaviour. And in reference to women and music, focus on female initiation rites, birth, or child care, women's musical activities associated with such events are frequently noted. Usually descriptive in nature, many do not explicitly address issues of women's status, inter-gender relations, or the effects of a society's gender arrangements on women's musical behaviour. She further stated that it is not surprising that the majority of existing descriptions of women's musical activities and rationales for their behaviour focus on their primary social roles, for those roles are central to women's gender identity in many societies(4) and addresses the role music plays in defining and reflecting established social and sexual orders and in acting as an agent in maintaining or changing such orders and hopes that the issues will encourage future exploration of the complex and ever-changing processes that affect both gender and music-making (16). Nettl pleaded that women too need to be understood on equal terms, though not necessarily identically, with men, for women's contribution to musical life to receive proper recognition, and for the development of an understanding that gender construction and relations vary enormously from culture to culture. He quoted Marcia Herndon:

..“the inclusion of gender as an essential aspect of all ethnomusicological research is far from becoming a reality.” (Ch. 4 kindle ed.)

The work will focus on selected women composers, namely- Pi Hmuaki, Thailungi, Lianchhiari, Laltheri, Darpawngi and Chhawntangnu. The study is an attempt in this direction with the following objectives: to understand adjustments made by women to her culturally constituted environment; to determine the social positions of women through the songs they sing. This approach will attempt to seek if there is an existence of gender biases in its patriarchal social code through the songs of the Mizo women in history and how these songs acted as a medium of the women's expressive behaviour based on genres like- women

as individuals in a cultural/musical setting, how their songs serves as a role in reflecting or protesting the various gender arrangements, ranging from male dominance to female separation.

The study of the thesis on how songs acted as a medium of expression for women is based on three texts; Pu C. Chhuanvawra (2011) in *Mizo Hlate*, has given 20 chapters and divided the collected songs of the Mizos in chronological order. In the third chapter, titled '*Tiau chhak lama chhuak hlate*' (Songs composed east of Tiau), it contains 20 sub categories and for the study, two songs are selected namely- Thailungi Zai and Pi Hmuaki Zai/Ngente Zai. The songs that existed while settling at Tiau region has been divided into twenty sub-categories, in which there are 214 stanzas (*hla fing*), 518 lines and 3804 words in which 3728 words belonged to *Duhlian* dialect. He stated this by mentioning on the unity of the Mizo people while they were settling at the borders of Tiau region, as it can be seen in the choice of language used for composing songs. And there are songs that were composed while the Mizos settled at Tiau and beyond its borders. Here, Pu C.Chhuanvawra has given 25 songs in the tenth chapter, and the songs- *Lianchhiari zai*, *Laltheri zai*, and *Darpawngi zai* belonged in the category. He stated that "some of the songs that were composed after settling at Tiau region are much older than the songs that were composed east of Tiau region. Since the songs are arranged according to its region and place, and not its time, they had to be included in the said category. In the twelfth chapter of his book, he explained the meaning of *Puma zai* and *Tlanglam zai* which after the year 1900, most of the tunes of the Mizo songs are either in *Puma* or *Tlanglam zai* tune; *Chhawnthangnu zai* belonged in this chapter and song category"(126-133).

Pi Lalsangzuali Sailo (1995) compiled a collection of songs that are works of Mizo women songstresses and have divided them into two parts; one, in which she named, *Mizo Hmeichhia te leh Hla* (Mizo Women and Songs); two, *Chanchin Tha thlen hnua Mizo Hmeichhe chhuanawm te* (Honourable Mizo Women after the advent of the Gospel). In part 1, nineteen chapters of women are mentioned, songs that are composed by them and songs bearing their names that are written for them and others. In part 2 of the book, 17 chapters are mentioned. Also, *Mizo Hla Hlui* written by R.L.Thanmawia (2012) and *Mizo Hlate* written by Pu C. Chhuanvawra (2011) give an account of the history and background of each selected song and composers. Pu C. Chhuanvawra included the songs of Thailungi in the category of songs that were composed east of Tiau borders (29). Dr. R.L. Thanmawia on the other hand, included the songs of Thailungi in the section of *Chai Hla* (167). The early Mizos termed

their book of songs as 'Zai' which can mean the art of singing, but, maybe they felt that the sound of 'Chai' and 'Zai' did not rhymed correctly, so instead of using 'Zai', they simply used 'Hla' which means a song. *Chai Hla* is one of the oldest songs of the Mizos, even though its exact date of origin cannot be known, in regards to the hearsay of the folk people, it can be known that Chai Hla existed while they were settling at Suaipui and Saihmun in Lentlang region. While they were celebrating Chapchar Kut at Suaipui, singing and dancing, they were attacked by their neighboring enemies and this incident is believed to take place around 1600 AD.

*Thailungi Zai* is one of the oldest songs of the Mizos, and is said to be the oldest songs in *Chai Hla*. It is believed to have been sang from 1550-1600 AD. The songs that are composed in the style of *Thailungi Zai* are based on the life story of Thailungi, and since it is sung while performing 'Chai', it is regarded as one of the songs of *Chai Hla*. Pi Lalsangzuali Sailo, in *Sakhming Chullo*, remarked a few lines that are not included by R.L.Thanmawia. In continuation to the life story of Thailungi and her brother, when Thailungi's brother departed from his sister's village. He set out to carry his sister's wish by taking the head of his mother with a dagger, and his mother's head was covered with the cloth that was given to him. However, another saying stated that this did not happen, instead Thailungi's brother moved out from his village and joined his sister and lived with them.

When we look into the songs of *Pi Hmuaki Zai* also known as *Ngente Zai*, different interpretations are given regarding her life story and the songs that bear her name. First, a take on the life story written by R.L. Thanmawia (213) stated that prior to Pi Hmuaki; there have been various compositions and songs bearing names have also existed. He stated that the songs of Thailungi are lyrical verses that were exchanged with her brother. The songs of Chawngvungi are not composed by her but an exchange of lyrical verses between her parents and her in-laws. So, Pi Hmuaki can be said to be the first composer in the history of Mizo Folksongs. Pi Hmuaki belonged to the Ngente clan and settled at Ngente village. Since childhood, she loved spending time with old people and would mostly spend her time listening to their tales. Regarding the death of Pi Hmuaki, one interpretation stated that since Pi Hmuaki was a talented and skilled composer, whatever comes out of her mouth were lyrical; she had included every name of the men in the village in her songs except for Thingtluruma and Zawsiala. The village folk were disturbed that she would have finished composing all songs and would not leave one for coming generations and decided to bury her alive. Pi Lalsangzuali, mentioned that the time when Pi Hmuaki lived was when the Mizos

settled between Run and Tiau region, and the year was believed to be around 1780 AD. She writes that Pi Hmuaki was a different child; the fact that she did not engage often with her peers seemed to be one of the reasons. She would instead spend her days with elderly people, and listened to them sing and telling old tales. As mentioned by Pi Lalsangzuali (1995), her talent of composing songs was believed to be envied by the villagers, hence, they decided to bury her alive. Since she was a good natured person, not a word of complaint was uttered by her when she was buried. Pu C.Chuanvawra (2011) stated that the story of Pi Hmuaki is mentioned by Pu Hrangthiauva, a Mizo historian and his book *Mizo Chanchin* (178), wrote that “Pi Hmuaki was not the person behind the style of songs composed; that they were songs in the style of singing of the Ngente clan. But he did not mention any of the Ngente songs prior to Pi Hmuaki Zai either. So, it can also be that the Ngente clans must have sung songs in the style of Pi Hmuaki Zai too” (33).

It is hard to define the exact time of Lianchhiari’s existence. Its estimation as given by Pu J. Malsawma stated, ‘Hman laiin Palian lal Pu Kawlha Selesih ah khian a lal a, chutih lai chuan Lianchhiari pa chu a ko va. Chawrhmun khaw te tak teah a laltir ve a’, *‘In olden times, the chief of Palian was Pu Kawlha Selesih, during that time, he called upon Lianchhiari’s father and made him the chief of a small village at Chawrhmun.’* Thus, it can be based on the above sayings that Lianchhiari’s father belonged to Selesih sangsarih, a period between 1740- 1750. He migrated to Dungtlang, this was believed and estimated to be 1750-1760, and the time when Lianchhiari’s fame was at its peak. (B. Lalthangliana.41-44) Lianchhiari’s life and songs mentioned that she was the daughter of Vanhnuaitanga, the chief of Dungtlang sangsarih and the time of their settlement at Dungtlang fall between the periods 1760-1774. Lianchhiari was in love with a commoner named Chawngfianga and was impregnated. With the decision to marry, their middleman set out to make arrangements, but out of jealousy, he disrupted their plans. Lianchhiari was heartbroken and would go to the outskirts of Dungtlang and sat herself at a large protruding rock, wept and composed songs that talks of her loneliness, heartaches and the unfairness of life that befell on her. Her songs came to be known as *Lianchhiari Zai* (Chuanvawra (94-96)

In *Mizo Literature*, Laltheri belonged to the Sailo clan, the daughter of Lalsavunga, whose father was Lalpuiliana, the son of the great Sailo chief Lallula. Her brothers Vanhnuailiana, Lalphunga and Thawmvunga were one of the bravest Sailo chiefs known. Looking at the timeframe of her ancestors and her lineage, Laltheri’s prime is believed to have been between the years 1850-1860. Laltheri was tall, slender and beautiful in stature,

and her wits and charms added the more to her beauty. As expected of her, being the daughter of a great Sailo chief, she would marry a great man, someone who could match her wit and beauty. But she fell in love with a commoner named Chalthanga. With the differences in their social status, Chalthanga was reluctant to be acquainted with Laltheri. With the knowledge of the dangers of a commoner to have a courtly relationship with the chief's daughter, Chalthanga was careful. But with Laltheri's persistence, Chalthanga denied his ineligibility and fell in love with her. Their courtship and love for each other developed and Laltheri was soon impregnated. At the time, if a commoner has any advances over one of the chief's daughter, the result would lead to their own death. So, Laltheri's father ordered his servant Lamhawiha to kill him (B.Lalthangliana 48-49). Laltheri's proper name was Lalchawngpuii, she was the fourth child among six siblings. She had three brothers and two sisters. Laltheri's relatives were disturbed at the chief's daughter falling in love with him so they decided his fate. Chalthanga feared for his life and fled from his village (R.L.Thanmawia 240-241). Chalthanga fled to Luangpawng in fear of Laltheri's relatives. The messengers who met Chalthanga lied to him and said that Laltheri was waiting for him to drink *Zu* (alcohol) with him and she would not even drink a single drop without him. Chalthanga believed them and before setting out, they drank and while he was unaware, they hit him on the back of his head. The messengers hid his body at Luangpawng cave and to this day, the cave is named *Chalthang Puk*. Laltheri gave birth to a son and named him Zakhuma. She was vengeful and wished for her son to take revenge on his father's unfair death.

Darpawngi belonged to the Ralte Bungsut clan. Her father was Manghauva. When she was a child, she lived at the house of the chief of Laisawral, Lalchema and was a slave. She was gifted with the art of singing. And people would gather, listen and joined her in singing. R.L.Thanmawia wrote that Darpawngi was believed to be born in the year 1845 and died in 1907, but this cannot be definitely taken as fact. As a child, she stayed at Chief Lalchema's house and as a teenager, she moved to Vuta's son Lalkhuma's (Tuchhingpa) house. Lalkhuma was a gifted singer and Darpawngi would sing along with him, and from then became well known as a gifted singer. Lalkhuma's son married Darpawngi but as Darpawngi was a commoner, her husband's parents thought that the pair would bring about disgrace to their Sailo chieftainship and divorced her. Lalbuta was devastated and would weep and weep for his wife. Darpawngi Lusun Zai (songs of lamentations) numbered to twenty two songs. Her songs are said to be different from other songs based on the fact that other composers did not compose a single song that are in the style and tune of Darpawngi. She also composed

songs that are in the style and tune of Saikuti's songs. However, since no one could compose songs or did not compose songs at the time that are in the style and tune of Darpawngi's, some claimed her to be the greatest composer and songstress amongst her contemporaries. Her two other categories of songs are termed *Darpawngi Thinrim Zai* (Darpawngi's songs of anger) and *Darpawngi Thlekzual Zai*. Darpawngi Thlek Zai or Thlekzual Zai (*Thlek* can be translated as movement or tilting of the head) is given the name as the people who sang her songs would tilt their heads in harmony to the tune of the song in a particular way. Darpawngi, at the autumn of her life migrated from Thentlang to Sialhau and then to Chhingchhip village. There she met Daipawla, the father of her daughter. They remarried at a very old age. Darpawngi's time can be estimated to be around 1880-1900 (B. Lalthangliana. 53-57). The last of Darpawngi's songs has a deep and resounding meaning. It spoke of the futility of human life, whereas words and songs will live on for generations to come. She can be regarded to be one among the many composers who sings of the immortality of songs, from past to her present time.

Chhawntangnu Zai is also known as Tualchepi Zai. To the south of Thenzawl, there is a village named Kanghmun and Tualchepi was born here in the year 1889. Her father was a brave warrior (pasaltha) named Kawlsata. She belonged to a prosperous family and her father owned a number of domestic animals. She married around the year 1912 and at that same year, migrated to Zote and lived there to her last. Her husband died leaving her with seven children. Out of loneliness, she started composing songs. Parents in the Mizo society are often called by the eldest child's name (eg: Mawia nu (eldest child's name), Mawia's mother), but Tualchepi called herself Chhawntangnu in almost all of her songs. As mentioned in *Sakhming Chullo*, Tualchepi started composing songs when her husband died. She had the urge to sing even when she was a bachelorette and said '*Hla phuah ka chak si a, ka zak bawk si a*' (I want to compose songs, but I am shy). Based on the songs of the Mizo women composers and glancing through their backgrounds, 'songs' or 'set of words set to music' that they sang appear to gravitate to their moments of desperation more than their state of elation. And the lives they lived, as represented through their songs reflect the traditions that were followed in their own time, also portraying the position of women, how they used their voices; to stay in touch with themselves and their existence. In respect of gender, power and music, Koskoff stated that "it becomes obvious that the performance and creation of music, as well as all other human social and expressive activities, are fundamentally dependent upon a society's understandings of men and women and the

interactions between them. She holds that music performance can and does provide a context for understanding the negotiation of power in inter-gender relations. She furthermore stated that tensions surrounding power and control that exist between women and men can be exposed, challenged, or reversed within musical performances” (89). The status of women, since the early time, cannot be drawn to a definite conclusion as aspects relating to their condition vary according to various frames of references. In her study of music and gender, Koskoff (7) claimed herself to be a feminist but explains that she is much more interested in the relationships between women (of all varieties) and men (of all varieties) than in espousing a particular case for either women or men. She is interested in why women and men have not achieved gender equality than in decrying the fact that they have not. For her, the word ‘feminism’ does not imply ‘for women only’ but rather, points to and exposes the obvious reality that it is women, after all, who are most often the unequal partners in power relations. With regards to Koskoff’s assertions, this study will explore the possibilities of gender dichotomies through the songs that were sung and composed by the women folk amongst the Mizos. With developments and gradual progress in various fields, from the early twentieth century, the Mizo society with the advance of the printing press, writers began to take interest of their own historical past and record events based on oral traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. However, the records they kept have its own limitations as its sources are the shadows of the colonial records. Understanding from a new perspective to recollect the Mizo women’s past, oral traditions and cultural practices plays an important role and the songs that were sung and composed by the Mizo women are a good example as events and circumstances do not simply happen; they are interpreted and created, and in each song repetition lies the possibility of reaffirmation, reinterpretation, and rebellion. In Anthony Seeger’s (Bohlman 26) words, “song texts deal with a limited number of topics and are performed almost exclusively in ritual- related activities. Singing is one of the means through which time, space and social processes are created and re-created. Songs are distinct from other verbal forms in that they alone are said to have extra-societal origins”. Despite the Mizo community following a patriarchal system and the women having lesser mobility than men, they have their own contributions, their own space to voice their sentiments against the order of the day.

Accordingly, the study is an attempt as to how songs sung and composed by Mizo women reflect the lives they lived as their songs mirrored the traditions also portraying the position of women of their time. The songs of Thailungi, Pi Hmuaki, Lianchhiari, Laltheri,



Darpawngi and Chhawthangnu indicate the different social bases in their communities at a given time in which they lived. The various themes in their songs addresses the women's identity at the cultural level, their originality equate their individuality but more so the songs provide a survival of much of musical traditions and cultural practices. As throughout the Mizo culture, women have always been represented as inferior beings in their culturally constructed society; Strom in *Wind through the Bamboos* (1983) stated that "the position of women before the entrance of Christianity was poor. Restrictions of women on various grounds were due to the fact that the Mizo had a strong opinion that a man should have a manly character and a woman should have a womanly character."(25) With songs as a medium of expression, the study will attempt to portray on how women are the principal transmitters of their song traditions even though there seemed to be a common tendency to ignore their individualities. It will try and observe these songstresses' contributions in a sociomusical tradition, thus making them a preserver of musical traditions.

Subsequently, the study of the thesis as a feminist ethnomusicological approach of selected Mizo women composers, the second chapter is titled "The place of music in Mizo culture" which will study the history of the folksongs of the Mizos and how songs act as a measure of culture, how folk music appears as a particularly appropriate symbol for past, present and future. Chapter three as titled "Mizo women composers as preservers of a musical tradition" will focus on the songs of selected Mizo Women composers and how their use of songs as a medium contributed to the richness of their tradition enabling them as musical preservers. In chapter four, titled "Mizo women composers: A sociomusical history", it will seek to determine the social positions of women through the songs they sing and attempt to seek their individualities in a cultural/musical setting, how their songs serves as a role in reflecting or protesting the various gender arrangements, ranging from male dominance to female separation. In light of the above study, chapter five will evaluate the findings of the research and provide a conclusion of how the articulation of the reality of Mizo women's existence through their songs is also an articulation in showing the events of their culture.

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## Chapter Two

### The Place of Music in Mizo Culture

Coming to the past and present of the Mizos, the nature of dynamism is clearly visible in their traditions and cultures. An experience of transitions from the 'old' to the 'new' and the activities and actions of change is still on-going and unceasing. Prior to the coming of the British in the eighteenth century, oral traditions holds that the Mizos had lived in a city-state of Sinlung (or Chhinlung) in central China until about the time of Christ. They lived as a family unit with a democratic government in which leaders were appointed by the people. They migrated south and west until they reached the Himalayas probably driven out by invading Chinese hordes. Turning southward to circumvent impassable mountains, they crossed the Irrawaddy River on rafts and forced their way into the Shan territory of Burma. Famine drove them north-westward in search of food into the rugged hills of the Indo-Burman frontier. Clans separated to the tops of defensible ridges, and there, isolated and unmolested for centuries, the Lushais sank into fearsome sorcery and headhunting (Strom 13-14). Till the entrance of 'foreign rulers', the cultural patterns of the Mizos appeared to be made up of their closed social structure, there seemed to be not much divergence in their age-old traditional beliefs and practices. Their cultural expressions can be seen with the traditional practices of folklores, dances, music, myths, festivities which were indicative of their ideologies.

Looking at one of the personal characteristics of the Mizos, they have innate musical ability, which some think may have developed from listening to echoes of whistles and songs resounding across the hills. Mizos sing together in the home, in the field, and on every occasion, including funerals. Their early instruments were handmade from gourds, bamboo, skin, and string, and Burmese brass gongs were also used for dancing and singing (Strom, 6). As written by Major M.G. McCall in *Lushai Chrysalis* (1977), "the Lushai is emotional temperamentally, and possesses the virtues as well as the vices of his qualities. If he is subject at times to disillusion, he is also capable of emotional enthusiasm". (171). The Christian missionaries made good in their missions amongst the Mizos, and the Mizos today have discontinued a majority of their traditional practices; their connection with the past is now an

indistinct recollection. Accordingly, to perceive the adjustments and change in traditional practices, it is fitting to study their folk-traditions as they have become the sole perceivable validations of their not too bygone past. The Mizo tribe lack a firm basis in account to their history. The records that we know of today were mainly written by the missionaries and colonial agents resulting in the absence of any objective studies by academically trained anthropologists. The earliest accounts available on Mizos are written by N.E. Parry, Lt. Col. Thomas. H. Lewin, Major A.G. McCall and others in which most of the contents dealt with the political administration, of facts and figures, or to say, the ‘official accounts’ of the Mizos. With the Mizos having their own alphabets, literacy spread from then and at this juncture, the Mizos located the importance of the printing press, and began recording their own history. As mentioned, the Mizos were fond of merry-making; feasts and festivals took place for almost every occasion. What forms an integral part to these occasions were the presence of dances and singing; not only on their day of celebration, on their moments of loss and mourning, they sang and danced too. They are well mastered with the skills of singing and had songs that pertained to different occasions- songs for different seasons, lullabies; mostly, anything that has intricate relations with their occupations, belief systems and social structures. The songs that are sung tell the stories of their everyday lives. Folksongs can be considered as the connotations to the narratives of the many folktales of the Mizos. Hence, the utilization of folksongs were not intensive to a single occasion, but in the varied aspects of their cultural life.

There is always a question as to the origin of everything and every matter, questions on why human exists, why we love, why a person belongs to a certain nationality and why humans have different ethnicities- a plethora of questions truly. To know the place of music in a culture, the question of its origin too accessed the rationale and the human tendency of reasoning. There can only be tentative answers to the questions of the origin of all that is important and less too. Why is there a song, a song catering to distinctively different sentimentalities? Bohlman (1988) said that “not because he would posit a new theory with regards to folk music, but because he prefers to counter with an observation that necessitates abandonment of more circumspect approaches, said: the need to relate folk music to its beginnings persists as an essential and pervasive component of folk music theory” (3). He said that “aesthetic and textual concerns, for example, often presume an understanding of origins. The social constructs of folk music, too, originate in different ways, as do different repertoires and styles of performance practice. The persistent pursuit of origins belies the

inability to “know anything definite.”(2) Another reactionary mode of scholarship, insists that folk music could only endure in rural settings and in a divined way of situating its origins in venues completely untouched by modernization and urbanization thereby proving a point by explaining folk music as it was or, as it ought to be. There are numerous theories and in relation to the mentioned views, the nature of music, explicitly or implicitly, consist of truth claims in the form of metaphors that link music to other domains of human thought and among the most common metaphors explained by ethnomusicologists is that: music is a resource with psychological and social functions, it is a cultural form, a form of social behaviour. Music is a text to be read and interpreted and a system of signs. Overall, music is art (Rice, 2014, kindle ed. 829). These metaphors, which are based on theories discussed broadly in the social sciences, humanities, and philosophy, when taken together, illustrate the richness of music’s significance in human life.

When we look into the history of the Mizo folk songs, it is seen that a detailed record of songs is absent, even Mizo historians have little proof of its existence in written record and the little record that they have differs as the songs of the folk was passed down orally. A study based on the records, will, however be attempted. K. Zawla (Thanmawia 33), one of the pioneers in recording Mizo history, in his book, *Mizo Pi Pute leh an thlahte* wrote, “Based on the hearsay of the folk, it is said that the Mizos did not possess any kind of songs while they were settling at the range of Lentlang and its upper borders and named it Lenchung”. He said that even though the folk people longed for a song and a dance, they could not, since they did not own any kind of songs. But much later on, they started with a ‘shout’ song, shouting at each other from a distance.

*Heta tang hian kha kha a lang a,*

*Khata tang khan hei hi a lang a.*

It is a simple line, stating that the person or object of the subject can be seen from here, and vice versa. They continued with another, in which the song involves a step taken in a descending order, which simply means walking down a path or way.

*Hnuang hnuang tak, hnuang hnuang tak.*

Also, they had songs for climbing up paths and stairwells as;

*Ur ur tak, ur ur tak.*

And while walking well rested and horizontal pathways;

*Vai vai tak, vai vai tak.*

After the passing of a mere two years, their songs developed into more sense, like;

*Hmarcha thak vit vawtah,*

Imitating the form of consuming a hot pepper, they would cover up their ears and sitting down, they would dance along to this line.

Another record with regard to the origin of the Mizo folk songs written by Thanpuii pa, in his essay, 'Zonun Bu' (Thanmawia 31-35), wrote of the time when the Mizo people settled between the *Tiau* and *Run* River. He writes that, a certain person, a man, killed a bison and wanted to celebrate the event and since they did not have any form of songs to sing. One person stood up and said he would compose a song for the occasion. Thus-

*Khatah khanin hei hi a lang a,*

*Hetah hianin kha kha a lang.*

(This is visible from there; From here that is visible)

Since it is difficult to know the exact recording of the origin of the Mizos, it is as difficult to know the history and origin of their songs. But what can be known with certainty is when the Mizos settled at Chhinlung, they composed a song which they named *ThuthmunZai*. While they were residing at Chhinlung, there was an epidemic, of illness and it took a majority of their lives, young and old. And due to their sufferings, these songs of mourning came into existence. Chhuanvawra (2011), also stated that, "since the records of the origin and history of the Mizo songs differed, as stated above, it is difficult to know which one is true and reliable, but whatever the records provide, we do know that the Mizo ancestors originated at Chhinlung, located at Awksa Ranges and the best way, he say, is to believe that the Mizo folk, would certainly have had songs even before settling at Chhinlung" (6-8).

The time when the Mizo folk people descended and crossed Tiau was believed to be around 1700 AD. Before the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the land was slowly infiltrated with mainland Indians, but the few remaining two hundred years of settlement in this area, a number of progresses took place; in religious field, in terms of village administration and

community development. It was during this period that composition of a number of songs flourished. Women songwriters increased on the scene and songs bearing the names of women numbered. The Mizos as a community do still possess an unflagging windfall of oral narratives which can be supportive enough in making them cultivated individuals as well as social beings and in encouraging a strong moral and spiritual energy, and above all, in building a non-segregated cultural distinctiveness. The oral narratives of the Mizos are inherently replete with segments of folk-ballads both in their form and content. They hold indication to the recreation and poignancy that the community had experienced throughout their migratory tribulations. The original creativity and artistry diminishes because of omissions and misrepresentations when they are given written forms for simplification. Nonetheless, the prose versions in the layout of stories and tales that are confronted with narratives in folk songs are thematically interlinked.

The origin and development of Mizo folksongs is extremely difficult to locate due to the absence of written records. R.L.Thanmawia (2012) stated, “K.Zawla believed that the Mizos did not have any kind of songs before they occupied Len Range... J. Malsawma also assumed that the Mizos had no single verse line during the first part of their settlement in Seipui Khur, Khawkawk, Suaipui and Sanzawl. These were the famous towns in Len Range where the first clan wise settlement was made... Zatluanga, on the other hand, noted that simple verses had already been made before they crossed the Run River of the Than Range but the songs they sang at these times had no implicit meanings... Vanlawma did not accept the four pieces as mentioned above to be the first verses of Mizo poetry. According to him, all these are based on assumptions. He believed that the Mizos must have a number of songs during those times” (31-35). The language of these songs is simple and contemporary which makes it difficult to accept it as the first kind of Mizo poetry. The settlement at the Len Range is estimated from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century to 17<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. During this period, a great democracy was replaced by clan dictatorship. Almost all the cultural festivals of the Mizos were formulated and developed during this period. But the greatest development noted during the settlement at the Len Range was the development in poetry. The songs of the Mizos are straightforward in nature. They convey no great logic. The rational attitude to life is also preoccupied. They are mainly songs of individual occurrence. The language of some of these songs is not difficult to understand. J.Malsawma (*Mizo Hla Hlui* 31-35) concluded that the composers were accustomed to the use of Pawi dialect for Hlado and Bawh Hla. But this does not mean that they are composed by the Pawi clans. The invocations and incantations are



mainly composed from Hmar and Ralte dialects. Chai Hla, Chawngchen and some other old songs were mainly composed in Lusei dialects and appear occasionally. It seems, therefore, that there was no principal language at this stage, and they can communicate different dialects from one another. As stated by R.L. Thanmawia (2012), “though the origins of traditional Mizo music and songs are unknown which as a result makes it difficult to chronicle, song-chants in the form of couplets developed during their settlements at Thantlang in Myanmar between 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. More progress is seen in the songs from the settlement at Lentlang in Myanmar, estimated between late 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. the couplets evolved into triplets. Though the song chants are simple in nature and convey no great philosophy, they are songs of individual experiences. The Mizos are believed to have occupied present Mizoram from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The pre-colonial period from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. was an important era in the history of Mizo folk orature. In this period, the songs progressed in both form and content while the flow of language became more polished. Most of the songs are named after the composers” (34). As stated by Laltluangliana Khiangte in *Mizo Songs and Folktales* (2002) “the lack of interdependence is the most important characteristic of the songs of this time. Every stanza is self-sufficient. It consists of introductions and conclusion. Each stanza has its own message. This is, in fact, the typical form of Mizo poetry. The metrical compositions of those poems are congenial to their customs and traditions. The Mizos used to sing on happy occasions as well as in times of sorrow for the whole day and night. As the tune of these songs is generally monotonic, they can sing the whole night without exhaustion” (intro viii). A number of biographical poems appeared during this period. Generally, their problems evolved due to the great difficulties they experienced in their life. Songs that are composed in the same tradition like the earlier songs began to bear the names of their composers. Thus, we have Laltheri Zai, Darpawngi Zai, and Lianchhiari Zai and these songs seem to be the echo of their hard experiences in life. It is remarkable that the famous lyricists of this period were all women, such as Darmani, Darpawngi, Laltheri, Lianchhiari, Aikhiangi and Saikuti” (35-36). One unique feature of Mizo folk literature is that in some of the Mizo folksongs the name of the composer or the tune of the songs can be known. Self- importance and self-centeredness is another distinctive feature of the Mizo poetry. A poem in which a poet does not talk about himself is very few (37-38). As the poetry of other cultures, Mizo poetry is also an interpretation of life; the life of the authors or the Mizo people in general. Bulk of the Mizo poetry dealt with the life of the authors. The ancient songs are mainly an expression of personal feelings. The life and experiences of other people are not mentioned. Laltheri alone

is pictured in Laltheri Zai. As such, their poems are named after the composers. Interpretation of the author's own life is still cherished in modern poetry. The Mizos are affluent enough in having a traditional way of classification of their songs, and accordingly the Mizo folksongs maybe classified as follows: Songs bearing names of individuals, songs named after traditional musical instruments, songs named after modulation of the voice, cradle songs, invocations and incantations. A study of their folksongs on the basis of the indigenous system of classification shows that the Mizos have about one hundred different types of songs such as Dar songs, Hla Do, Bawh songs, Salulam style of singing and others (220).

There are diverse views regarding the origin of Mizo folksongs, certain records that have been kept are expressed in different terms based on time and reason. Since, folksongs, in general, have been passed down orally from generation to generation; it is difficult to write down a definite timeframe. However, in commemoration to the celebration of Mizo Literacy Centenary, B.Lalthangliana (1894-1994) gave a history of the Mizos and their folksongs.

#### **Table Reference:**

Table 1 Chronological record of Mizo history and folksongs

HISTORY	LITERATURE
1300-1450: They resided at Thantlang and the banks of the river Run. They wore Siapsuap and Hnawkhal, with maize, sweet potato and fangra bean as their staple food. Tea was plentiful.	The Mizos started composing songs: Thuthmun style of singing, Nauawih songs, Dar songs, Hlado, Bawh songs, Salulam style of singing, Couplets started appearing. Stories and folklore first appeared.
1450-1700: They resided between Lentlang Range and Tiau River. They wore 'Hmaram', 'Puango' and started having village chiefs. Raiding lands and villages were practised.	Triplets appeared: 'Chawngchen style of singing, Pi Hmuaki's songs, Chai songs, Lalvunga's style of singing, Darthiangi's songs, Religious and ritual songs appeared.
1670-1680: Three village chiefs combined to form three thousand houses strong village of Dungtlang	

1700: The last of the Mizos crossed the Tiau River.	
1740- 1750: Seven village chiefs combined to form seven thousand houses strong village of Selesih.	Hlado, Chai songs and Chawngchen style of singing, Salulam style of singing became more prevalent.
1760: Vanhnuaithanga (Lianchhiari's father) was the chief of Dungtlang village.	Lianchhiari's style of singing first appeared.
1750- 1760: Lallula, the chief of Zopui village invaded and slaughtered Thlanrawn village. The Mizo chiefs migrated southwards and settle at present Mizo land.	Zopui style of singing (Chai style of singing appeared).the invasion and slaughtering of Thlanrawn was composed into songs and became renowned in Mizoram.
1760: Mangthawnga was the chief at Tuichhin village near present Champhai town. His son Mangkhaia was held prisoner at Zawngte village in the east of Tiau River.	Mangkhang's style of singing became famous.
1849-1856: War broke out between the southern settlers of Lalrivunga's progeny and northern settlers of Lallula's progeny.	1850- 1860: Laltheri's style of singing reached its pinnacle.
1861: Tualte Vanglai under the rule of Vanhnuaailiana was established. The first Mautam (Bamboo death) famine occurred.	The various styles of singing was further refined.
1871-1872: The British invaded Mizoram.	1870-1880: Tuchhingpa's style of singing first appeared.
1877-1880: War broke out between the eastern settlers of Lalsavunga's progeny and western settlers of Manga and Vuta's progeny.	Satirical verses and poetical battle began appearing.

<p>1888-1889: The second invasion by the British. They settled permanently and were opposed by the Mizo chiefs for four years.</p>	<p>1890: Darlenglehi style of singing became famous.</p> <p>1880-1890: Darpawngi's style of singing became prominent.</p> <p>1845-1990: Saikuti's style of singing was famous and her songs reached the whole of Mizoram.</p>
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Source: Lalthangliana, B. *Mizo Literature (Mizo Thu leh Hla)*. Mizo Literacy Centenary (1894-1994). RTM Press.

Regarding the oral literature of the Mizos, folk songs maybe considered as one of the most popular forms. The nature and character of their songs highlight the richness of the songs they have but it may be considered unfair to judge it with an in-depth and critical analysis based on today's written literature, as they are simple in nature. The oral tradition of the Mizo folksongs as explained by Ruth Lalremruati (*Mizo Studies* 2018) showed that they have a sort of uniform and regular characteristics wherein simplicity can be known as the first trait. They are straightforward in textual form and style, and in its melody and rhythm. Intricate situations and complex compositions are hardly seen in their songs. Their songs mostly have a sing-able tune and the Mizo folksongs mainly circle around three to four musical notes. The earlier tunes are simply constructed in a very straightforward character, having the note of mostly. 'd', 'r', 'm'(69). Their songs are also sung in a relaxed manner and easy voice and are characterized as strophic, wherein one melody is repeated for every stanza. They have a regular form of labelling folk songs which is characterized mainly by its tune and is termed as 'Hlabu'. Even if the songs consist of various nature and themes, based on their tunes, they mostly come under one category. Their songs are spontaneously composed. Since they used to sing this kind of instantly composed song, the lyrics of the songs are also quite simple, easy to learn, lively in tune with their present situations. Also, the theme of their songs is subjective in nature and is concerned with the composer's own reflections and feelings. Parallelism is used in their compositions, as such, their songs is usually a balanced arrangement achieved through repetition of the same syntactic forms. Couplets, triplets and quatrains are mainly used. (70) Pu Chhuanvawra (9) explained that the Mizo folk songs are in no way similar to contemporary songs, and to study them, first, one must be well aware of its content, and its meaning. In *Hla Bu* (Song book or book of songs), there are various *Hla fing*

(Songs in stanzas). The songs maybe in couplets or triplets in which the tune of the songs are similar. So, there can be a number of songs in the book, where some of the books that are compiled might be written by one person, or where the songs are composed by different persons in different period of time. The second point is the number of syllables that are used to make up the song. The third point is the name of the song that it bears. For example: in the early days, *Chai Hla* and *Chawngchen Hla* were popularly sung, but this does not mean that the songs belonged in a particular titled song book. The songs that are sung during a festival or *Kut* in a particular village may not resemble the songs that are sung in another, but the songs that are sung during these festivals are usually located in the categorised songs like *Chai Hla* and *Chawngchen Hla*. Another characteristic is the number of lines that are present in the songs. He said that some historians usually have this notion that if a song is written in couplets, they are the songs that are the oldest, but this is not true. The number of lines present, be it triplets or couplets, and some in four lines, depended on the composer's way of singing.

Before exploring the different depictions of how Mizo folksong is used as a measure of culture, a definition of folk song in *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2008):

‘A song of unknown authorship that has been passed on, preserved and adapted (often in several versions) in an oral tradition before later being written down or recorded. Folksongs usually have an easily remembered melody and a simple poetic form such as the quatrain. The most prominent categories are the narrative ballad and the lyric love song, but the term also covers lullabies, carols and various songs to accompany working, dancing and drinking’. (Baldick 132)

The tribal and oral tradition forms a major and integral part of the folk literature, i. e. folklore. Jadav Kishore (*Folklore and its Motifs in Modern Literature* 1998) mentioned that “since no specific term has been coined so far to categorise this aspect of tribal wealth into a distinct category or a separate grouping for its exclusive study, it will be a futile attempt to tear it apart from the vast spectrum of folklore and its conceptual framework. Folk literature is the lore of unlettered people transmitted by word of mouth. It consists, as does written literature, of both prose and verse narratives, poems and songs, myths, dramas, rituals, proverbs, riddles and the like. Each group of people has handled its folk literature in its own way, and neither its origin nor its evolution can be explicitly spoken of. Its transmission from person to person and its exposure to various influences that affect it consciously and

unconsciously has brought about its constant change. In the process, some items may find improvement and develop into a new literary form or may die out from the oral repertory due to overwhelming alien influences. The skilled practitioners of the tradition, storytellers or epic singers have preserved their literary expression in the memory of folk. Another important factor contributing to the understanding of literature is that children also play an important role in carrying on certain kinds of oral tradition such as singing games, riddles and dance songs. These are passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth and enriched by continuous additions, always remain within the oral tradition. He said that even though books, radio and television etc. have replaced folk literature, in the present day urbanised culture, it is still, as it has always been, the normal literary expression for the unlettered people of all continents”(1-3).

Ganesh. N. Devy (2018) in his foreword to *Mizo Songs and Folktales* said that “Indian literature is marked by its immense variety of styles and forms and the rich interchange of language traditions form its complex fabric. He said that the distinction between the classical or elite and the oral or folk styles of composition has not been as sharp in India as elsewhere. The dialects and languages spoken by tribals in India are numerous. The literary compositions in most of them have survived in oral form and the value of this oral literary works can by no means be undermined” (ii). He stated that “these works have been conventionally been perceived as a mere anthropological curiosity, or at best a source for oral history. A systematic study to attempt these documents should be emphasised in order to act as a representation of the tribal imagination and languages in Indian literature *per se*” (iii-iv).

Then we come to oral poetry, as defined by Miruka (*Encounter with Oral Literature* 1994), “in the analysis of oral poetry, there is often confusion between poetry and song. But he said that these two are not exactly the same. Song is used as an instrument of delivering poetry. A poem may be sang, declaimed or recited. And like verse, song may be devoid of poetry; it may not convey any feelings, thoughts or ideas and may be nothing but a set of sounds set to a tune. Song is not always poetry and poetry is not always song” (8). Coming into the context of Mizo folksongs, it is clear that when the Mizos started singing, the arrangement of their words did not have any deep or philosophical meaning, instead they set a tune to any words that came into their mind in relation to their present situation and sang. But with the coming of time, their composition of songs developed and the contents had deeper meaning reflecting their cultural beliefs and ideals. As mentioned in chapter one, in

justifying the songs of the Mizos on its terminology, the folksongs of the Mizos, when aligned to that of poetry, do not seem to have a separate entity. They appear synonymous. A study on *Mizo poetry* by Zothanchhingi (50-51) said that the Mizos do not have separate words for poem and song. The word 'hla' defines both a poem and a song. 'Poetry' does not exist as an entity separate from song. Miruka (1994) explained "the social functions of poetry and believed that it has certain ends to meet, a song or oral poetry at this juncture, whether recited, declaimed or sung, has its social functions. He further divided the functions into socialisation, aesthetics, interfluence (coming together of two or more genres in one performance), and social commentary, cultural and historical record. Socialisation is a way of fitting one into a social fabric or as a way of deriving pleasure through entertainment. Poetry as a tool of socialisation encompasses both the cases as pleasure is derived from poetry, as poetry is art in itself. Regarding the functions of aestheticism, oral poetry or song, in order to qualify to be performed, there must be something of beauty in a poem. This beauty lies in the language and out of the linguistic resources available, poetry selects what is most appealing and puts it together. Poetry as an interfluence can be explained as the coming together of two or more genres in one performance like argument narratives etc. As a social commentary, poetry expresses the feelings and ideas about life whether it is a fulfilling or discouraging experience. Poetry in all other forms is a vehicle of social comment on different aspects of life. And since poetry is composed out of experience, history is recorded in it. Certain genres like war songs, praise poems of kings and heroic poems particularly abound in historical allusions about people, events and places, and poetry plays a function of cultural and historical record" (120-123).

In a study on the languages of Mizoram, songs and poetry form the heart of Mizo language and culture. Many of the folk stories are interspersed with songs throughout. There are songs children sing when playing games and there are songs to be sung to infants and young children too (PLSI 2018). As have been mentioned above, "the earliest known records of poetry prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> century are *dar hla* (songs on gongs), *bawh hla* (war chants), and *nau awih hla* (cradle songs) which are sung as doublets or triplets to simple tunes. The words were not sophisticated and the songs mainly related individual experiences. From the eighteenth century to the nineteenth century, the songs developed in number, form and content. The language became more polished and the rhythm improved. Most of the songs of this period are named after the composers (ibid). Regarding the style and structure of the folk songs or poetry, poems were often composed in a language known as *Tawng Upa* (the old

language) and mentions in the book that, sadly, nowadays, only a few are able to compose a song in *Tawng Upa*. The Mizos have an indigenous system of classification of songs. And based on this classification, there are about hundred different types of folk songs. These can be further divided into ten categories. The ten different types of poetry or songs are: *Bawh Hla* (warrior's chants), *Hlado* (hunter's chant), *Thiam Hla* and *Dawi Hla* (invocation and incantation), *Dar Hla* (songs for gongs), *Puipun Hla* (festive songs), *Lengzem Zai* (love songs), songs named after tribes, villages, modulation of the voice and after individuals (composer of the tune or lyrics). The first three categories are individual in nature, the fourth one is played by musical instruments, the last six categories are meant for group singing. Even though some of them can be sung by an individual, most of the Mizo folk songs are to be sung together by groups of people accompanied by music. The highlight of the style and pattern of the Mizo folk song in terms of structure as given is its self-sufficiency. Each stanza can stand on its own; it does not need a line before or after it. Each couplet or triplet has its own message. (30)

When studying the place of music in Mizo culture, empirical evidence may prove absent regarding its origin and authenticity. However, speculation is also a process of questioning. As Bohlman (1988) said:

“Just as the origins of folk music range from a mythic past to the specificity of the present, so too do concepts of folk music embrace elements of the unrealizable and the real, the intangible and the tangible. In part, folk music is an aesthetic ideal; in part it is a functional accompaniment to basic social activity”. (13)

Creative activities are mainly studied through the finished products that have been created- art can be in the form of painting or sculpture, dance, a piece of music and literature. Each field has its own creator, a song-its composer, a novel-its author and so on, but these creations cannot stand alone on its own. There is always the question of how and why they were created in a particular given period of time. Another point in regards to this is that an individual cannot be its sole owner of the creation, what needs to be looked into is the social situation, and the context therein to have an understanding. At this juncture, taking the study of 'songs' independently from the rest of the work of arts, the approach is not to read the entire cultural practices of the Mizos through the mode of songs, but to study the cultural representations that can be read through the songs of the women folk, thereby using songs as



a medium of expressions. Based on records, we can examine that the Mizos are agriculturists and the tribes that settled in central areas of the Zo territories had their staple food of maize, millet, sulphur beans, beans, peas, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, melons and other crops that grow in colder region. These crops were grown as it was suitable to the cold and high altitude. In *chhim* (south) areas, which was hotter, and along deep river and stream valleys, rice was the staple food. Meat was scarce as was sugar and milk (Vumson 12). As with the differences in their consumption, so does their habit. These differences certainly led to the distinctness on their style of compositions of songs as well. The cantometric research (see ch.3) stated that the song styles of simple cultures differ in consistent ways from the song styles of technically more advanced societies. An extensive series of correlations revealed that: (i) many basic attributes of song style varied with the main subsistence activity of a culture; and (ii) certain factors of song performance were good indicators of the level of complexity of the main productive processes of a culture, especially of the organization of its work teams. Lomax (1968) explained that “song is a kind of universal human behaviour and so is work. Every person in every culture throughout history has usually been involved in the everyday, year-round food-producing activities of his culture. He has belonged to some kind of work team or was being trained for membership in one” (121). Vumson (n.d) stated that “songs are sung not only during feasts, but whenever there is a gathering. At the death of a child, the mother, the aunts, or the sisters recite, step by step, the child’s life story. Likewise, kneeling beside the deathbed, village women recall in song, composed at the instant, the story of the death as they saw it. Songs recorded the poor and rich, the loss of sons, brothers, daughters and sisters, and great hunts. And those who celebrated *khuangchawi* and all others who achieved something in life composed songs telling of their past, their success in war, the capture of slaves, and the loss of their loved ones” (14). These songs recorded personal as well as community history. For a people who have no writing, the recording of history has been possible only because these songs were sung repeatedly. Taking ‘song’ as a measure of culture, Lomax (1968) claimed that “when the human community sings, then, it seems to make many statements about the levels of complexity that strongly affect every aspect of its life-subsistence, stratification, government, leader differentiation, and general specificity. In performing a song, the human being reminds himself of the kind of community he comes from and its level of achievement. One function of song seems to be to reinforce the various levels of complexity that underlie all behaviour” (163). The cantometric parameters that seem to speak for orders of cultural complexity so strongly affect the outcome of musical performance that any alteration of them drastically shifts its effects. If this be true of an art

once thought to be so spontaneous, so abstract, so idiosyncratic, what must we surmise about the communication or more mundane systems such as the spoken and written language? In retrospect, Cantometrics, which is study of songs as a measure of culture, explained that an understanding of art, of man's nature, and of his culture can be broadened, deepened, and quickened by uncovering the associations, the dependencies, the derivations which unite the various aspects of man's emergence and invention. Thus, the theme of song and culture is both anthropology and musicology, both the study of an art universal in human societies and the exploration of a universal part of human culture. In short, it is expressive style, or the one characteristic occurrence of it found in song. It is a search for art's connections with the rest of culture (301).

The concept of music, hypothetically suggested by Nettl (1983) stated that "a society which considers music to be valuable may include a great deal within its conception of music, but it places ceremonial activities and dance in the same category of thought, unafraid to put things with music that might, to a member of another society, appear to be not obviously musical. Unlike stereotypical Middle Easterners, people in such a society regard music as a good thing and do not fear for the integrity and reputation of whatever else is included. In Western society, music is associated with good and with happiness. Sounds that somehow symbolize happiness to us (e.g., bird song) are called musical, while those we consider unhappy or neutral (again the barking dogs) are not. He said that the concept of music is metaphorically extended by the Europeans to the whistling wind, musical speech, and the orchestration of political strategy, and by some American Indian peoples to the supernatural sources of creation. And in contrast to this, the Middle Eastern Muslims, who gives music a lower value, appear to wish to restrict the concept by excluding its religious forms. Nettl said that "the point to be contemplated is that perhaps societies do not first develop the concept of music and then decide upon its attributes but, rather, faced with the existence of musical sound, accord it function and thus value, and then proceed to build a definition of the concept, using value as a criterion" (549). And with the existence of music, its affect and its study, ethnomusicologists claim that music itself is culture. Rice (Ch.5 kindle ed.) stated that each culture has a specific set of beliefs about the origin of music, its role and significance in society and culture, its proper performance, its classification and description and how it is valued. A simple example that Rice (Ch.5 kindle ed) gave spoke of the European's cultural views in which they believe music to be an unmitigated good (That's music to my ears), and in cultures influenced by a particularly strict interpretation of Islam believes that music is evil

because of its association with wine and women, and its distractions caused among believers from their proper religious duties

As ethnomusicology is a study of music in a culture, studying the folksongs of the Mizos parallels the study of their culture. In regards to the concern of what an ethnomusicological study is, Nettl (1983) stated that “it is difficult to find a single, simple definition, to which most people in this field would subscribe, and thus ethnomusicologists have been excessively concerned with defining themselves. There are various types of definitions: Some tell what each ethnomusicologist must do or be in order to merit the title, and some synthesize what the entire group does. Others focus on what has transpired in terms of research activity, or on what should have in fact been done. They defined in terms of a body of data to be gathered and studied, or of activities undertaken by typical scholars, or again by the questions that are asked of the raw data. Some seek to broaden limits, including within the scope of ethnomusicology all sorts of things also claimed by other fields or disciplines, while others envision narrow specialization”(149). Some of the definitions in their briefest form, without elaboration or commentary: Those who seek- or sought- to define ethnomusicology by the material that is contemplated have opted one of these alternatives:

“Folk music, and music that used to be called ‘primitive’, that is, tribal, indigenous, or possibly ancient music... non- western and folk music... all music that lives in oral tradition.all human music...”

Those focusing on type of activity might choose among the following:

“Comparative study (of musical systems and cultures), a basically musicological activity...the study of music in or as culture, or perhaps music in its cultural context, with techniques derived from anthropology , often called ‘anthropology of music’... historical study of musics outside the realm of Western classical music, using approaches of historians, area studies specialists, and folklorists”. (160-171)

Timothy Rice (2014) explained that “ethnomusicology is not a simple matter. He said that the definition he started with proliferated. Each one tells us something slightly different about what people who calls themselves ethnomusicologists do, and each is useful as a tactic for specifying the intellectual goals of the field, its subject matter, its methods and actual practices, or its difference from other fields” (Ch.1 kindle ed.).

As such:

“Ethnomusicology is the study of why, and how, human beings are musical.

Ethnomusicology is the study of all of the world’s music.

Ethnomusicology is the study of groups of people making music.

Ethnomusicology is the comparative study of human musical diversity based on fieldwork and musical ethnography.

Ethnomusicology is the study of traditional, non-western or world music.

Ethnomusicology is the study of music in (or as) culture.

Ethnomusicology is the study of humanly organized sound.

Ethnomusicology is the study of music and the sound environments in which it is made.

Ethnomusicology is the study of people making music.

Ethnomusicology is the study of human musicking.

Ethnomusicology is word-based, reasoned discourse about all music.

Ethnomusicology is the study of world music by any means, verbal and non-verbal.

Ethnomusicology is an academic discipline based on reasoned discourse in words about the full range, in all places and time periods, of human music and music making.” (Rice Ch.1.kindle ed.)

As mentioned, in justifying the study as an ethnomusicological approach, a multi-dimensional approach where the study is not limited within the scholars of music and anthropology only but from a ‘literature’ branch or an academic aspect of study is used. Coming to the scene of ethnomusicology in India, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the connotation of ethnomusicology has widened and is understood as a scientific study of all processes and products of music making in different cultural contexts. Durga (2004) stated that Akin Euba is the first non-western ethnomusicologist to suggest an alternate term for ethnomusicology as ‘Intercultural Musicology’ at a round table conference at the University of Pittsburgh in 1995. He defined it as “a study of one’s own indigenous music culture using techniques that are applicable to other music cultures or the study of music cultures other than one’s own indigenous culture irrespective of the techniques used in such study. Intercultural Musicology includes those areas of scholarship that belong to ethnomusicology

but also accommodates aspects of modern interculturalism, for example, symphonic music based on elements of non-western traditional music, which seem to lie outside the scope of ethnomusicology. It may be said that by the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the term Ethnomusicology can be replaced by the more appropriate terminology “Intercultural Musicology” because of its approach, methods and range of the subject matter”(vii-viii). In his ‘foreword’ to Durga’s *Ethnomusicology- a study of Intercultural Musicology* (2004) Akin Euba, said that “ethnomusicology with its theoretical principles largely reflect Western interests and priorities and that they are of dubious value for non-western societies. He is of the view that if western ethnomusicologists were truly interested in the ‘preservation’ and development of the music cultures of non-western societies, they would design theories that would lead to greater creativity in non-western idioms of music and to more jobs and income for non-western composers, performers and scholars. The theoretical principles of ethnomusicology are mostly based on information derived from the analysis of non-western music cultures and it is therefore paradoxical that the views of the non-western scholars are little reflected in the discipline. He said that the status quo suggests that ethnomusicology is a western rather than global discipline and in order to give it a global status, westerners need to recognize that their non-western colleagues have their own perceptions of the discipline and that these perceptions should be given a voice. The non-western ethnomusicologists who have their inclinations in this subject are voicing out their own cultures, but have to practise according to the principles that have been defined by the westerners. All musics of the world, according to the studies propounded by ethnomusicologists belonging to different parts of the world- are intercultural”. Goswami in *Emergence of Ethnomusicology: As traced in Indian Perspective* said that “the emergence of ethnomusicology in India was paved by the Indo-British interrelationship for intercultural communication through musical works and set the foundation for ethnomusicological study in India. The British started writing about Indian music in English language mainly for western readerships. This was done by collecting the varied folk songs of India and enabled their translations. From 1870 on, Indian scholars started research work on folk and tribal songs following the methodologies left by their predecessors. As mentioned, ethnomusicology is considered a branch of musicology that gives special emphasis on social and cultural perspectives in the context of the study of world music cultures. The phenomenon of music as an event occurs in various contexts. The core area of the study of ethnomusicology is to observe and analyse such events and the aspects to be regarded are: the performers or participants; the activities and actions; musical instruments that are associated with the song performance; analysis of music in terms of tonal and textual

interpretation (2014, 490). Another aspect is the inevitable component of field survey. The concept of ethnomusicology in the Indian context emerged later and not much attention was paid to study the musics of the folk before independence. The study of the folk songs of India started when Rabindranath Tagore, an Indian scholar started taking interests in them and his collection of the varied folk songs were published in a monthly magazine called *Sadhana* since 1899. The British scholars resorted to armchair method of fieldwork and the materials required for their song compilations were gathered by their Indian subordinate employees and translated them into English for non-Indian readers. The role of the Westerners is that they paved a way for an intercultural study of music. A multi-dimensional approach started in India since the 1950's for an ethnomusicological study. Multiple branches like- history, folklore, social science, mass communications, films studies, gender studies have entered into the ethnomusicological field. The studies not only remain limited within the scholars of music and anthropology. By applying the more advanced inter disciplinary techniques, ethnomusicological studies are conducted by scholars from various other branches or studies too. The professional aspect and the academic aspect are the two broad aspects that have been introduced since the 1950's. Under the professional aspects, the musicians, film makers, artists and performers are dealing with the ethno-musical elements to earn their livelihood. This results in a branch that has a direct relation to the life and existence of a certain group of people. The academic aspect, however, includes scholars and researchers of various disciplines like- fine arts, performing arts, literature, history, social sciences, mass communications and their works involve virtual researching of new history, meaning and avenues of our ethnic-aboriginal cultures (501). Goswami (2014) said that "the cultural contacts with the English writers during the British rule in India paved a way for the emergence of intercultural musicology in India as the tenets of ethnomusicological methodology are found in their writings on Indian music. This tradition as a multi-disciplinary approach opened a way for scholars that are related to varied disciplines" (503). With this stance, an ethnomusicological study on the songs of the Mizos from an academic aspect is attempted in this chapter and the chapters to follow. As mentioned above, various historians have probed and analysed on the origin and veracity of the Mizo folksongs and with the numerous discourses that are present, what is visible is that the music of the folk as stated by Bohlman (89) appears as a particularly appropriate symbol for past, present and future. Literature rarely discusses folk music by itself. Instead, folk music is compared and contrasted with other forms of cultural expression. Accompanying this justification, Timothy Rice (qtd in *How Musical is Man?*) captures ethnomusicological sensibility as:

“In this world of cruelty and exploitation...it is necessary to understand why a madrigal by Gesualdo or a Bach Passion, a *sitar* melody from India or a song from Africa, Berg’s *Wozzeck* or Britten’s *War Requiem*, a Balinese *Gamelan* or a Cantonese opera, or a symphony by Mozart, Beethoven or Mahler may be profoundly necessary for human survival, quite apart from any merit they may have examples of creativity and technical progress. It is also necessary to explain why, under certain circumstances, a ‘simple’ folk song may have more human value than a ‘complex’ symphony.” (214)

This implies the study of the music of all the world’s peoples as a path to understanding human beings.

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## Chapter Three

### Mizo Women composers as preservers of a musical tradition

According to Philip V. Bohlman, “Oral tradition fosters both the creativity and the stability of folk music. So strong is the correlation of oral tradition with folk music that most definitions treat oral tradition as fundamental to folk music, if not its most salient feature.”(14) This chapter will reason the significance of the contributions of women in the patriarchal societies of the Mizos through their songs and how their involvements in the musical traditions make them preservers. A study of the status of Mizo women in the past shows that the position that women holds in a society was not the same as what men enjoy. Their participation and involvement in various fields regarding their social, religious and economical position proves morally right as what their society and culture deemed right and true at the time. However, what can be seen is that they never did have much participation-politically, socially, and economically and their rights were limited. This can be acknowledged when we study the works of the various women composers, they took to composing songs that reflect their identity. Discourse on women issues has been gaining popularity beginning from the post-colonial period up till now and the subject of women issues gave an impetus of looking at the question of women’s stance in the Mizo society. The status of women, since the early time, cannot be drawn to a definite conclusion however, as aspects relating to their condition varies according to various frames of reference.

The chapter attempts to examine how women composers determine relations and negotiations using their voices as a medium and in turn, preserving a musical tradition of the Mizos. In respect of gender, power and music, Koskoff (2014) stated that “it becomes obvious that the performance and creation of music, as well as all other human social and expressive activities, are fundamentally dependent upon a society’s understandings of men and women and the interactions between them. She holds that music performance can and does provide a context for understanding the negotiation of power in inter-gender relations. She furthermore stated that tensions surrounding power and control that exist between women and men can be exposed, challenged, or reversed within musical performances” (89). The research in assessing the songs of the Mizo women and using their voices as cultural preservers requires the study of the position of the women in their social, economic, political and religious participations. Humanity that holds the Mizo society together in the past is a male and the man defines woman not in herself but as a relative to him; woman was not

regarded as an autonomous being (Beauvoir 16) and lack concrete means for organizing into a unit and as such there was an equal sharing of their world which further show a glimpse of a rather silhouetted equality of men and women. An anecdote regarding the position of women in the traditional society states:

*Hmeichhe finin tuikhur ral a kai lo*

Wisdom of a woman does not reach beyond the village water point

*Hmeichhe thu thu ni suh, chakai sa sa n i suh*

Flesh of the crab is no meat, word of the woman is no word

*Hmeichhiain sakhua an nei lo*

Women have no religion

*Hmeichhia leh palchhia chu thlak theih a ni*

Worn out fencing and a woman can be replaced.

Laltluangliana Khiantge (2002) argued that “the above proverbs as some people interpret these sayings are derogatory for women which suggest that the traditional Mizo men treated women almost as slaves. He said that it is nothing but a misconception and misinterpretation of Mizo proverbs. There exists a good division of labor, and women’s and men’s roles were clearly demarcated. From household work to the public water point, women could deal and solve almost their duties, whereas men would take care of all other hard work beyond the public water point like searching of jhum plot, clearing of thick forests, making traps for wild animals, fighting with their foes, etc. even if women tried to have a say on those things, the men folk would say that ‘Let them grumble and be satisfied by saying whatever they would’, but the reality can be gauged from the fact that Mizos do not consider crab as the main dish for a proper meal. On the other hand, if women say that a man’s wisdom has nothing to do with household works, it will be about as wise as the women’s saying as mentioned above” (64). He added that while all at the same time, there is one striking proverb:

*Ka vai bik long e, pasal pakhat leh thingphur khat chu (64)*

(Finding one husband and a basketful of firewood is not difficult at all)

For all these reasons, he said that “when women say this, they did not mean that they would find a husband all the time, it would not be wise to hold that women were looked down upon in the traditional Mizo society” (64). Different kinds of sexist proverbs and anecdotes may have existed, but he proved his point stating a fact that there was a clear cut division between the duties of men and women in the Mizo society.

A reverted view regarding the position of women in the traditional Mizo society can be seen as stated by J. Malsawma (1980):

*“Laiah chawi um ang a thu, hmeltha,  
Lalthanpuui sial sawm man tur a piang e,  
Chhantling dar bang mawia leng turin”.* (183)

(Like a woman holds her pitcher, the mother holds her beautiful daughter,

Lalthanpuui, who will fetch us ten bison, is born,

The rich man’s home will be adorned with her beauty)

The position of women in the earlier Mizo society as described in *Lushai Chrysallis* (1949) may be recalled. To quote A.G.McCall:

“There is little in the Lushai background to disclose the sense of any great chivalry towards woman. Without any ambiguity, Lushai has been and still is a country for men before it is one for women, or even children. But where better placed, Lushai spare their women the bondage common to the majority, the women retain chorus and grace well into the late years”. But the attitude of old Lushai is betrayed by an old saying on par with our own sentiment of old- ‘A woman, a dog and a walnut tree, the more you beat them, the better they be’ (Lalfakzuali 24).

As written in *Chhawkhlei (Mizo Robawm)*:

.... “Mizo women are sold like cattle; as a buyer examines the cattle and test their strength and endurance, the same applies in the case of women. The highest bidder is favoured by her relatives and women are sold like commodities which can be bargained and when they are bought, Mizo women

are further followed with the saying, ‘worn out fences and women can be replaced’. They are beaten, driven out of their homes”... (80)

From the above observations and merging the various views at hand, the sociocultural arrangements of the Mizos from the past to present time regarding the practices followed showed an inclination to a practice of ‘ambivalent sexism’. According to Glick and Fiske (1996, 2001), “sexism is a multidimensional construct that encompasses two sets of sexist attitudes: hostile and benevolent. While hostile sexism communicates a clear antipathy toward women, benevolent sexism takes the form of seemingly positive but in fact patronizing beliefs about women. Benevolent sexism as a set of attitudes are sexist in viewing women stereotypically and restricting their roles, but that are subjectively positive in feeling tone and also tend to elicit behavior typically categorized as pro social (e.g., helping) or intimacy seeking (e.g., self-disclosure). Its underpinnings lie in traditional stereotyping and masculine dominance (e.g., the man as the provider and woman as his dependent), and its consequences are often damaging.” (Chen et al. intro.). As stated by Laltnuanguiana Khiangte (2002) from the above observations, “the positions of the Mizo women to its extreme are not all lower in status to a certain viewpoint as they too enjoyed various rights constituted to them by its practicing patriarchal orders”(64). However, majority of records written by numerous historians and from various colonial accounts, women appeared to occupy a position of a secondary sex and for women to achieve the kind of independence that men enjoy, Shannon (*Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. A peer reviewed academic resource*) stated that with regards to Beauvoir’s ‘otherness’ concept, “women will benefit from non-alienating, non-exploitative productive labor to some degree and demands that women be treated as equal to men and laws, customs and education must be altered to encourage existence”(2003).

In *Folk Song, Style and Culture* (1968) Lomax used cantometrics, a coined word which means a measure of song or song as a measure, a method for systematically and holistically describing the general features of accompanied or unaccompanied song performances. With the cantometric system, the listener can evaluate a song performance in ways that supplement the conventional measures of melody, rhythm and harmony. “The cantometric system aim not to mirror the flowing language of song and its shifting nuances, as a detailed notation or a recording does, nor to examine the internal tonal structure of a piece of music. It can, however, broadly characterize song performance style in such a way that the main families of sung performance may be recognized, their geographical

distribution mapped, and their relationship to cultural continuity, acculturation, and the expressive arts perceived” (35). The coding book as proposed by Lomax (34) and his team, defined the rating measurements used in the cantometric experiment. Coming to the scene of the Mizo folksongs sung and composed by women in the study, it is difficult to locate the area of sex differentials in song leadership. To use Lomax’s (36) defense on coding parameters, a non-professional coder can console himself with the thought that even if he has to omit some coding parameters, his ratings will still be valid for comparative purposes. In the songs that are sung by various societies for record by the All India Radio, Aizawl, the songs that are sung are mainly started off by the male leader, women then joined in and in the Mizo folk song style, the women chants the song texts prior to its singing in unison. The measure of sex role amongst the Mizos can be of a collective vocalization in interlocked groups. Since there is an absence of the cantometric coding system for the study, the song style however is measured from non- professional parameters which are by listening to the tune of the song performance.

The coding book consists of 37 style factors and out of these lines, line 1, 4, 5, 10, 17, 25 style factors have been taken up as an example to explain the general styles of the Mizo folksongs. The songs of the Mizos are mostly monodic and run close to the measuring of the Mongolian scale. (Note: in Line 1, 13 coding points (39-40) have been given for the social organization of the singing group, and studying each and every definition, what resemble the Mizo folksongs in general is the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> coding points. Monophony, Heterophony, Polyphony and Unison are given under Line 4. And the Mizo Songs seemed to fit in to the category of Heterophony. It is symbolized as H in the coding book. Each voice sings the same melody in a slightly different manner. The variation is usually rhythmic, with some voices lagging behind, others pushing forward, or with some voices more rhythmically active than others. There may be some melodic individuality, but it is only temporary and usually inconsistent. Line 5 is to code the tonal blend of a group; the songs of the Mizos seemingly belonged to the minimal blend which is symbolized as b. Here, singers make no attempt to match one another in tone. Individual voices stand out. The effect is harsh and often noisy. Line 10 codes the use of words (to nonsense), songs of the Mizos lies between ‘words still dominant’ and ‘about half the text being repeated.’ Line 17 codes the phrase length, most Mizo songs are written in couplets, and the phrases are mostly phrases of average length spanning from 5-9 seconds. Line 25 is the precise degree of volume and the songs of the Mizo people are often sung in mid-volume.) (Lomax 38, 44, 45, 48-49, 61-62, 67-68)

To incorporate Lomax's cantometric code in the study is to reflect the group-oriented communication and musical situations which can be differentiated in terms of the level of participation of those present since singing seems to be a community directed practice (15) In justifying the cause of this section of study, Lomax(1968) himself stated that "the coder should not attempt to be analytical over and above the outlines of the coding book, nor should there be an attempt to read into a given performance of what the performers really meant or really felt"(36). The Mizo songs in sample are sung by various societies, in the tradition of how songs were presented. Regarding the complementarity of songs, Lomax stated that "the arrangements between singers have rather to do with a more personal, face to face relationship. The most important of these is the interaction of males and females and it is here, we discover that the cantometric profiles are most revealing. The feminine imprint turned up, however, far from any such sentimental setting- in the world of work, in the principal subsistence activity of a society. Among most gatherers, many incipients and the majority of cultivators, however, where women bring back most of the plant food into the village, do the cooking and mind the babies and the house, all of life has a somewhat feminine touch and the voices and bodies of women thread through the principal rituals. The fact is that relaxed, clear vocal performance and cohesive choruses are both more frequent in complementary societies. In complementarity, women are not forced to keep silent or inactive and where, therefore one would expect less tension, as represented in songs sung in tight voices and with strong nasality, is notably lower in those societies where women are responsible for fifty percent or more of the central subsistence task"(163-169). By listening to the songs that were sung, a suppositional location of the song performance indicates their relationship to the expressive arts and placing the production on the lines given in the coding book, the Mizos' song performance, with concerns to male and female interaction, can be positioned to maintain a complementary role in their singing style, revealing an undifferentiated role in their subsistence task, the 'feminine touch and the voices' as Lomax stated can be seen to tread through in the Mizo women's arrangement of song-texts. The partial use of the coding experiment reveals the complementarity of singing style and subsistence activities of the Mizos; but this does not reveal of what the performers, either male or female, really felt, as Lomax himself called for the coder to not be analytical over and above the outlines of the coding book. The sociomusical tradition as have been performed and recorded indeed presented the Mizos to obtain complementing roles of both the sexes when provisionally placed on Lomax's coding experiment, evaluating the song performance (34) and hypothetically, the social reality of the Mizo women in study can also

be identified as they were not forced to keep silent or inactive in their sociomusical participation and thereby used songs as an expressive outlet to show their actuality.

Coming into the scene of songs composed by women songstresses, Pi Lalsangzuali Sailo (1995) compiled a collection of songs that are works of Mizo women songstresses and have divided them into two parts; one, in which she named, *Mizo Hmeichhia teleh Hla* (Mizo Women and Songs); two, *Chanchin Tha thlen hnua Mizo Hmeichhe chhuanawmte* (Honourable Mizo Women after the advent of the Gospel). In part 1, 19 chapters of women are mentioned, songs that are composed by them and songs bearing their names that are written for them and others. In part 2 of the book, 17 chapters are mentioned. Also, a book on *Mizo Hla Hlui* (Mizo Folksongs) written by Dr. R.L.Thanmawia and *Hmanlai leh tunlai Mizo Hlate* (Mizo Songs) written by Pu C. Chhuanvawra give an account of the history and background of each selected song and composers. The study will be based on these books and an analysis of the songs is attempted. Pu C. Chhuanvawra (2011) in *Hmanlai leh tunlai Mizo Hlate* has given 20 chapters and divided the collected songs of the Mizos in chronological order. In the third chapter, titled '*Tiau chhak lama chhuak hlate*' (Songs composed beyond Tiau) contains 20 sub categories and for the study, 2 songs are selected namely- Thailungi Zai and Pi Hmuaki Zai/Ngente Zai. Chhuanvawra has given 25 songs and the songs to be worked on- Lianchhiari zai, Laltheri zai, and Darpawngi zai belonged in the category. He stated that some of the songs that were composed after settling at Tiau region are much older than the songs that were composed before living at Tiau region. Since the songs are arranged according to its region and place, and not its time, they had to be included in the said category. In chapter 12, he explained the meaning of Puma zai and Tlanglam zai which after the year 1900, most of the tunes of the Mizo songs are either in Puma or Tlanglam zai tune; Chhawthangnu zai belonged in this song category. Here, Chhuanvawra (2011) included the songs of Thailungi in the category of songs that were composed before settling at Tiau and above its borders. R.L. Thanmawia (2012) on the other hand, included the songs of Thailungi in the section of Chai Hla. The early Mizos termed their book of songs as '*Zai*' which can mean the art of singing, but, maybe they felt that the sound of '*Chai*' and '*Zai*' did not rhymed correctly, so instead of using '*Zai*', they simply used '*Hla*' which means a song. Chai Hla is one of the oldest songs of the Mizos, even though its exact date of origin cannot be known, in regards to the hearsay of the folk people, it can be known that Chai Hla existed while they were settling at Suaipui and Saihmun in Lentlang region. There seemed to be more than ten types of *Chai Hla*, and some of them are; *Thailungi Zai*, *Lalvunga Zai*, *Mangkhaia*



*Zai, Lallula Zai, Zopui Zai, Phunthanga Zai, Darlung Zai, Lera Zai, Neihlaia Zai and Chhim Zai.* Most of them are believed to be composed after crossing the river Tiau.

In traditional Mizo society, women's submission to its patriarchal administration has limited them from various participations. Despite their limitations and assignment of specific roles, they used their voices through songs as an expressive outlet. As stated by Koskoff, "women have a coping strategy that satisfies social expectations while symbolically relieving their need to burst out of confining gender roles". (41). Sophie Drinker (1948) stated that 'music in its elemental and primitive form, as still practiced by people of the simpler societies all over the world, is incantation' (4). While categorizing rhythm and sounds, applying them to objects seemed much more reasonable, forcing into them the kind of life one wants them to have (ibid). An example that she has given shows that music has a practical aim; it is designed to do something, like-when a Palestine girl thinking of her distant lover sings;

"O, trees, bend down to shade him,

O, stars, shine brightly for him!" (5)

She is making use of words to control the elements. Drinker holds that, "to us, such words are merely poetic parlance. But these women believe them to be a practical method of attaining their ends. Her explanation of women as singers of 'magic' stated that as a dead thing does not make a sound - as the beating of the heart stops; it seemed obvious to the intelligent nature worshipper that life is rhythm and sound, and that if one directs the right rhythm and sound upon something, one puts life into it. And in this case, according to Drinker, women are more closely related to the life force than men and woman's faith is made in the stupendous faith that if it is only made in the right way, it can turn the old into new and bring the dead to life." (6). This may be true when applied to the songs sung by women in the Mizo community. Taking one particular songstress, Aikhiangi, who is believed to have lived during the 1800's, expressed and projected her inner- self and restricted inhibitions through her songs. On hearing the news of her husband's death, Aikhiangi, keeping her self-consciousness of being a new bride aside, she covered her head with a cloth, and cried, wailed and lamented in deep sorrow bringing all the people who have gathered there in tears. Aikhiangi expressed her grief in songs:

*Arkhuang tlangah ka lo tlan buan buan e,*

*Anka ka chhawn hman lo Lianpuia u e.*

*Dawn ruam kuamah zan sial ang a riak,  
Thlafamin lawi ang a thang ta e.*

*Chhawrthla chhim chhuak a tha eng phung e,  
Liana u tual hnawmah leng ve lo.*

*Lal Sibuta lung chhovah e,  
Ka luaithli chu khuang ruahpui lo ang.*

*Ka luaithli chu khuang ruahpui lo ang,  
Sibut lung chungah ka luaithli ka nul.(233-234)*

Literal translations of the songs would render injustice to its original inspiration and the power of its creativity. However, the essence of the songs talks of the bereavement of Aikhiangi on account of her husband's untimely demise. The couplets talk of her hurried state of mind and body on reaching her husband's village, she was sad as she was not spared a time to utter a single goodbye to him. She expresses her anguish at the thought of seeing her husband's body lying alone at *Dawn* ridge throughout the night. And when the moon rises high and shone in the sky, she missed him more and vented her affliction singing that her husband was not there with her. She magnified her pain by describing her tears like the falling of a heavy rain that falls while at *Sibuta Lung* (Sibuta's tombstone). Looking at Aikhiangi's usage of songs, a reflection of its musical and artistic practices of the region can be seen. Taking songs as a measure of culture, Lomax stated that "the search for the patterning of the interpersonal relationships in the social space of a culture's activity other than song guided us in our effort to search out the cultural correlates of songs, on the old assumption of cultural anthropology that cultures are somehow integrated and ordered wholes. Song style is an integral part of each culture; it repeats its basic and common form of human relationships" (168). To study songs as a measure of culture, Lomax (1968) stated:

"..the chief function of song is to express the shared feelings and mold the joint activities of some human community...the content of the sung communication should be social rather than individual, normative rather than particular...song style is an excellent indicator of cultural pattern."(3)

In cultures like the Mizos, the sociocultural positions of women is different from that of men resulting in a distinctive and differentiated factor in the theme of their songs as well. Expressive behavior like singing may be one of the most sensitive and reliable indicators of culture pattern and social structure. Apparently, as people live so do they sing. (4) The first songstress amongst the selected song composers of the study is Thailungi. Thailungi Zai is one of the oldest songs of the Mizos, and is said to be the oldest songs in Chai Hla. The songs that are composed in the style of Thailungi Zai are based on the life story of Thailungi, and since it is sung while performing ‘Chai’, it is regarded as one of the songs of *Chai Hla*. The lifestory of Thailungi is recalled to the time when she was a child, her mother died and later her father remarried. Her stepmother was cruel to her and would think of ways on how she could get rid of her. And one day, while her stepmother was weaving, a Pawi merchant came to sell his goods. Thailungi’s stepmother wanted to buy from him but said she had nothing to offer him in exchange. She then asked if they would take her offer of Thailungi in exchange of the goods. Thailungi was aware of this incident but did not utter any words. With her stepmother’s instructions, she was asked to fetch water and during the act, the Pawi merchant abducted her and took her home. After she was gone, her stepmother later regretted that she did not send her in good attires and leaving her empty handed without any belongings, she ran after her with her *em* (basket) and *Tuibur* (nicotine water). At that time, they had already crossed a river, and upon seeing them she sang

*Thailungi, Thailungi*

*I tiangthirte lo nghak la*

*I hlantaite lo nghak la* (Lalsangzuali 10)

The song states that Thailungi’s stepmother called her and offered her to take her *tuibur* (nicotine water) and *em* (basket) with her. Thailungi knowing that her stepmother did not love her as her own replied:

*Chhaktiang khi chen ka thlen chuan,*

*Tiangthir a tha bo ngai lo,*

*Hlantai a tha bo ngai lo* (11)

The song talks of Thailungi’s reply to her stepmother by stating that upon reaching north, *tiang thir* (stick, in the song context) and baskets would readily be available there too.

Instead of stopping for her stepmother, she walked on with the Pawi merchant. On reaching the Pawi village, they rested and did not untangle her from her bondage. Thailungi was embarrassed in which she sang:

*Hrumsawmin hrual hrui ai ban e,*

*Ka ngir thiam o*

*Ka ngir thiam o dailungah (11)*

(The song states that even though her hands were roped, she could still stand atop the rocks even with that)

*Raltea, he pu Liana'n*

*Ka chawnbanah ai kai e*

*Ka chawnbanah ai kai e (11)*

(Thailungi was adopted by Pu Liana who belonged to the Ralte clan and the song above mentions how Pu Liana Ralte took her in, taking care of her)

She grew up to a beautiful woman and was married to Chalbawka. The day Thailungi was sold; her brother asked his mother where his sister was. And his mother replied that she went to fetch water. Thailungi's brother with great pride would play with the utensil in which his sister was sold for. And his friends would tease him, hinting him that he was playing with his sister's price. They would even tease him with a song while they were playing:

*U hralh, U hralh*

*Muallai zawla thian te kawirit;*

*Kap keh phawng phawng (11)*

(The song says that Tlumtea was teased and taunted by his friends for selling his sister and unknowingly played *kawi kah*<sup>1</sup> with his friends out in the field)

He was perplexed and asked his mother about his sister of what really happened to her. And, his mother on being interrogated confessed and told him the whole incident. He wanted to venture out and search for his sister, but his mother replied that he was still too

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<sup>1</sup>Popular game played by children and adult alike with jungle fruit bean.

young. And on reaching his puberty, he set out in search of his sister. He met different people and asked of his sister's whereabouts. He met a man, who was herding *mithuns* and followed him, and spent days and nights with him, the man took him home and coincidentally the house was where his sister was married and was the house of the village chief. Initially, they did not recognize each other. But on hearing the stories told by him, Thailungi came to realize it was none other than her brother. They were delighted to finally meet each other. Thailungi's brother stayed for three days, and whilst his stay, he was offered kind hospitality. He persuaded his sister to go home with him in a song:

*He u, hawng awh, kal he ling,*

*Na pa vangkhua zawng he ling*

*Na pa vangkhua zawng he ling (12)*

(The song explains Thlumtea's invitation to his sister to go back to their father's place)

But since Thailungi was married, she parted him with a gift- a dagger and a cloth instead, singing she would not go as he wished:

*Ka takin la zui na law,*

*Ka man sial sawm haw law Neu*

*Ka man sial sawm haw law Neu (12)*

(Thailungi said that she could not follow her brother and that her bride price -*price of amithun* would go to waste if she did)

*Hnamchem pha tak pa pia a,*

*Na nu lu tan nang ka ti*

*Na nu lu tan nang ka ti (12)*

(Thailungi told her brother that with the dagger being offered to him, he should take his mother's head)

*Puan num pha tak ka pia a,*

*Na nu lu chun nang ka ti*

*Na nu lu chun nang ka ti* (12)

(Also, Thailungi gave her brother a black cloth and with that she requested her brother to cover their stepmother's head)

Even though they longed to stay together, they could not. And before her brother set off, she packed him lunch and water for his journey. She went along with him till the outskirts of the village and bid him goodbye. Lalsangzuali Sailo (12) in *Sakhming Chullo*, added a few lines in continuation to the life story of Thailungi and her brother, it is said that when Thailungi's brother departed from his sister's village, he was determined to carry his sister's wish by taking the head of their stepmother with a dagger, and that their mother's head was covered with the cloth that was given to him. However, another saying stated that this did not happen, instead Thailungi's brother migrated from his village and joined his sister and lived with them. An analysis of the life and songs of Thailungi reflect a folk song tradition of the Mizos. The songs exchanged with her brother offers an understanding of women's roles in preserving cultural values as we see the many practices of their tradition of the region at their time. There is no proof of the reality of Thailungi's existence and based on hearsays it can be regarded as one of the numerous folktales of the Mizos, an oral tradition that has been passed down through generations. Nonetheless, the song style of Thailungi summarizes the ranges of behavior that are appropriate to one kind of cultural context (Lomax 6). Her songs present an immediate image of a culture pattern (ibid). In relation to this view, song texts often tell a tale of the women who sing them (Koskoff 47).

When we look into the songs of Pi Hmuaki Zai also known as Ngente Zai, different interpretations are given regarding her life story and the songs that bear her name. R.L. Thanmawia (2012) stated that prior to Pi Hmuaki; there have been various compositions and songs bearing names have also existed. He said the songs of Thailungi are lyrical verses that were exchanged with her brother. The songs of Chawngvungi are not composed by her but an exchange of lyrical verses with her parents and her in-laws. So, Pi Hmuaki can be said to be the first songwriter or composer in the history of Mizo folksongs. Pi Hmuaki belonged to the Ngente clan and settled at Ngente village. Since childhood, she loved spending time with old people and would mostly spend her time listening to their tales. There are two interpretations regarding the death of Pi Hmuaki, firstly, it stated that since Pi Hmuaki was a talented and skilled composer, whatever comes out of her mouth were lyrical and mainly in songs. She had composed and included every name of men in the village in her songs except for

Thingtluruma and Zawsiala. The village folk were perturbed that she would have finished composing all songs and would not leave a single song for the coming generations to compose, hence, they decided to bury her alive. The men folk told Thingtluruma and Zawsiala to approach her and if she mentions their names in a song, they would have to get rid of her. They visited her and Pi Hmuaki was boiling sweet potatoes at the time. They stayed for a while and while they were departing from her house, Pi Hmuaki parted them with a song:

*Thingtluruma, Zawsiala chhuah leh*

*Sobal ka chhum, thaltui ang nghak rawh* (Lalsangzuali 4)

(Pi Hmuaki was boiling yam and asked Thingtluruma and Zawsiala why they were out and invited them to have it with her) .Upon mentioning their names in her song, they hurried home and told the men folk of the incident. They then dug her grave and buried her alive. Based on the hearsay of the folk people, Pi Hmuaki cajoled her buriers to slowly cover her:

*Nauvate u, nau haia te u,*

*Tha te te khan mi han chhilh rawh u* (4)

(Pi Hmuaki pleaded the young men to cover her with caution)

A second interpretation stated that Pi Hmuaki was parted with her favorite gong to her grave. The sound of her gong could even be heard after seven days after her burial. Another interpretation was when the Pawi clan invaded Ngente village. Since Pi Hmuaki was old and could not defend herself from her enemies, she was a mere burden for her families. So, with permission from the elderly folk of the village, they decided to dig her grave and even when the Pawi clan invaded the village, they would lay her there and flee for their lives leaving her to die in peace. And when the Pawi clans finally invaded their village, they lay Pi Hmuaki in her dug out grave and out of altruism; they sat and gathered around her. They parted her with her favorite gong and water to quench her thirst. And since the enemies were near, they covered her with the earth they had dug out so as to make do like a proper burial. The bachelors then left. They could hear the sound of her gong for seven days, but after a week, the sound of the gong stopped. R.L. Thanmawia (2012) mentioned 14 songs of Pi Hmuaki-

1. *Ka Ngente khua, khua nun nuama kha,*

*Thla ka fam hman ki nghilh rua lo ve.*

(The song talks about Pi Hmuaki's village Ngente, how she enjoys the place and that she will never forget it until she dies)

2. *Ngente thangkhuala di ka tian zanah,  
Kawlngo thla kan inzap tam rawh se.*

(Pi Hmuaki in her song expressed her wish for her lover who is a guest at Ngente village to enjoy the last night of his stay there by exhibiting himself like that of Kawlngo birds flapping their wings)

3. *Ngente tualpui chhuahtlang lamrawn a,  
Lungrual taka tuanlai ing e.*

(The songs talks of how they lived in harmony at her Ngente village)

4. *Neihchawng an zu val an ki rui leh,  
Kan hai hi a zai tin kan chhiar e.*

(The song talks of how their intoxication with *zu* made them sing non-stop)

5. *Lelte lo kiu, awn thing lerah,  
'Thingpui lawn sang rem lang' a ti e.*

(The song talks of Lelte singing in the branches of a tree and Pi Hmuaki's plea for the bird to climb higher)

6. *Khuangpui ri chur, Neihchawng chhun inah,  
Pawnglam chhawn ang ka thlekpu mi u.*

(Pi Hmuaki sings of the time she danced like a cricket to the sound of the beating drums at the chief's house)

7. *An lal an fam, bellian pal ang tlar,  
Hnuaitiang hawih changsial a ngui zo ve.*

(The song talks of their deceased chief and pots (given to deceased people as a form of condolence in Mizo society) aligned like that of fences, and how the whole village was mourning, even the *changsial* (mithun) was grieving)

8. *Luia lengngha sang zar a rui e,  
An hai hlei, suanglai lian vel.*

(The song expresses how fishes swarm with intoxication in numbers)

9. *Lo kir leh la, bawngva Chaltuaia,  
Ka tawng umtui angka chhir leh e*



(Pi Hmuaki pleaded Chaltuaia to come back and that she has taken back her words and closed it like a lid to a bottle)

10. *Chhun thih inphal, tiandar inphal chuan,*

*A rugin rairah kan vui ngei ang.*

(Pi Hmuaki sings that if (they) allow them to die, the lonesome people will be left indignant)

11. *Thingtluruma, Zawlsiala chhuah leh,*

*Sobal ka chhum, thaltui ang nghak rawh.*

(Same as in page 55)

12. *Ka tak fam se, ka zai fam lo se,*

*Thlangkawr mi lal chungah chuang rawh se.*

(The songs talks of a wish for her songs not to be forgotten, this song as said by Lalsangzuali (7) might not be a song of Pi Hmuaki as this song also comes under Saikuti's songs)

13. *Bui bir angin a zal zuk thlak ila,*

*Khaw ruamah sial ang zu chhuak ila.*

(The song says while she was being led to her grave, she requested the young men to lay her body like a rabbit to its burrows and her body to leap like a mithun in a narrow valley)

14. *Nauvate u, nauhaia te u,*

*Tha te te khan mi hai chhilh rawh u.*

(Same as in page 55)

Lalsangzuali (1995) mentioned the time Pi Hmuaki lived was when the Mizos settled between Run and Tiau region, and the year was believed to be around 1780 AD. She said that Pi Hmuaki was a different child; the fact that she did not hung around with her peers seemed to be one of the reasons. She would instead spend her days with elderly people, and listened to them sing and telling old tales. As mentioned by Lalsangzuali, her talent of composing songs was believed to be envied by the villagers, hence, they decided to bury her alive. Since she was a good natured person, not a word of complaint was uttered by her when she was buried. Instead she sang:

*Nauvate u, nauhaia te u,*

*Tha te te khan mi han chhilh rawh u (3)*

On 22nd June 1983, Lalsangzuali (6, 7) had a visitor from a man who belonged to Maubuang village. As recalled by her, the man was well versed with the songs of the folk; he sang songs that were in the style of singing of Lianchhiari, Saikuti, Awithangpa and Pi Hmuaki. And the songs of Pi Hmuaki, passed on by him were:

*Lelte kiuin khawmual a awi e,*

*Lungrun erawh khiang a awi sual e (6)*

(While the lelte bird is lulling the village with its sweet song, the lover has made a blunder for getting married too soon)

*Lelte lo kiu awnthing in lerah,*

*Thingpui lenbuang awi tang ti e (6)*

(The song talks of the Lelte bird lulling the tree on which it perched)

*Ngente chhuahtlang aw kan lamrawnah,*

*Lungrual tea tuanlai ngai ing e (6)*

(Same as the song in page 56)

All her songs are in couplets. And there was one incident where Pi Hmuaki composed and sang a song for her drunken courter-

*Chawltui ningzu Vala'n ka ruih leh,*

*Ka haih leiah zaitin ka chhiar e (6)*

(Pi Hmuaki addressed her courter on why he was drunk)

When we look into the songs written by C.Chuanvawra (2011), he explained that “the story of Pi Hmuaki is mentioned in *Mizo Chanchin* (Hrangthiauva) proved a great source for his book. Pu Hrangthiauva mentioned that Pi Hmuaki was not the person behind the songs composed; instead she composed songs which were in the style of singing of the Ngente clan. But he did not mention any of the Ngente songs prior to Pi Hmuaki Zai either. So, it is believed that the Ngente clans must have sung songs in the style of Pi Hmuaki Zai instead. The latter can hold a firmer belief as Pi Hmuaki composed or sang songs whilst she was a bachelorette, a song she composed involved the birth of a son of their village chief”:

*A mi in piang Thangurpui in piang,*

*Thangtawna pa tluk in piang lo ve (34)*

(Pi Hmuaki praised the Ngente chief and it talks of how there is no other chief like Thangtawna's father). Lalmanga, the father of the newborn Thangtawna, was the last living Ngente village chief. The time of Thangtawna's birth is considered to be around the year 1690-1700 AD. The year 1670-1680 AD was the year when the Chhakchhuak clan invaded Pi Hmuaki's village, and Pi Hmuaki was in her late years at the time. And since there is no evidence of any songs sung by the Ngente clan, it can be considered that the songs of the Ngente clan were sung in the style of Pi Hmuaki instead. Chhuanvawra (2011) mentioned that all these stories that revolve around the songs and her life can be said to be just hearsays. They must have been tattle tales. As of today, there seemed to be a number of merely 6 songs that were truly composed by Pi Hmuaki. And a mere number of only 5 to 6 songs would not let her be put to death, if true, there would have been at least 20 to 30 songs by her. And the claim that she was the first ever song composer cannot be wholly true because the time when her songs were written seemed to circle around the year 1680-1760 AD. They left Chawnghawih village when the Chhakchhuak clan invaded their village and they had to flee to Ngente village which is a mile away from the then district capital, Champhai. After settling at Ngente village, the Chhakchhuak clan followed them there and invaded them again, to which in turn, they fled to Bapui village. And due to her ailments of old age, and the circumstances that took place around them, the village folk laid her in her tomb to rid her of the entire war stricken environment. The time was when the Sailo clan descended to Zawngte tlang from Tlangkhua village and this incident is yet span- new. Chhuanvawra concluded the life story of Pi Hmuaki by adding that the tragic story of her death is not true as it does not coincide with the history of the Ngente clan.

R.L.Thanmawia mentioned 15 songs, songs that were written that bear the name of women and songs that were composed by women themselves. Women like Aikhiangi, Lalchhungi, Laltheri, Lianchhiari, Saikuti and Darpawngi were talented songwriters, and since they sing their own song compositions, writings on their life stories are well known too. From the songs of Pi Hmuaki, it is evident that there is indeed a wide range of social contexts where women and music interact in certain ways. As she is regarded to be the first known Mizo woman composer, the traditions of the time she lived is reflected through her songs, she represented the pervasive mode of communication to the passion that have shaped them,

which in turn reveals the importance of cultural expressions. Defining the meaning of a musical tradition, Coplan in *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History* (1991) said:

“Music itself, therefore is crucial to the reapplication of memory and the creation and re-creation of the emotional qualities of experience in the maintenance of a living tradition.” (Stephen Blum et.al. 45)

The songs that are mentioned above is said to belong to the period when the Mizos settled between Run and Tiau borders which is estimated between 1300- 1700 (B. Lalthangliana ix). And the period that falls from 1700-1893 was the time when the Mizos crossed Tiau, before the Zosap (missionaries) arrived in their land. A number of songs came into existence at this time and the work will focus on three women songstresses namely- Lianchhiari, Laltheri and Darpawngi. The first known song along with the knowledge of its composer after crossing Tiau can be said to belong to Lianchhiari and her songs. It is hard to define the exact time of Lianchhiari’s existence. Its estimation as given by J. Malsawma stated, ‘*Hman lain Palian lal Pu Kawlha Selesih ah khian a lal a, chutih lai chuan Lianchhiari pa chu a ko va. Chawrhmun khaw te tak teah a laltir ve a*’ (In olden times, the chief of Palian was Kawlha Selesih, during that time, he called upon Lianchhiari’s father and made him the chief of a small village at Chawrhmun). Thus, it can be based on the above sayings that Lianchhiari’s father belonged to Selesih sangsarih, a period between 1740- 1750. He migrated to Dungtlang, this was believed and estimated to be 1750-1760, and the time when Lianchhiari’s fame was at its peak (*Mizo Literature* 41-44). Another interpretation of Lianchhiari’s life and songs mentioned that she was the daughter of Vanhnuaithanga, the chief of Dungtlang sangsarih and the time of their settlement at Dungtlang fall between the periods 1760-1774. Lianchhiari was in love with a commoner named Chawngfianga and was impregnated. With the decision to marry, their middleman set out to make arrangements, but out of jealousy, he disrupted their plans. Lianchhiari was heartbroken and would go to the outskirts of Dungtlang and sat herself at a large protruding rock, wept and composed songs that talks of her loneliness, heartaches and the unfairness of life that befell on her. Her songs came to be known as Lianchhiari zai (Lianchhiari’s songs or songs in the style of Lianchhiari). Chhuanvawra (2011) mentioned 12 songs that belonged to Lianchhiari, below are two of her songs:

*Kan va tih luat tukah,*

*Lengin ka zir sual e,*

*Ka pa Vanhnuaithanga,*

*A than ni bang kir e. (94-96)*

(This song talks of Lianchhiari's intimacy with her lover and how it has brought defamation to her father's reputation)

*Hmawng ang I pem tur hian*

*Hrui ang min zawt lo ve,*

*Kei chuan phal lem ing maw*

*Tuaitir ka lungdi e.*

(Lianchhiari sings of the incident when Chawngfianga left her village without informing her and that if she knew she would not have allowed him so)

*Sakhming Chullo* (1995) mentioned the time when Lianchhiari met Chawngfianga. The young men of Dungtlang at the time were playing a game called inkawihnawk (*a kawi bean with a part of its edge flattened enabling it to stand upright without having a notch dug for it in the ground when being played with in the games of inbah and inhnawk*) and the elder among them told a young adult to light his smoke pipe at the chief's house. Lianchhiari was at home and when he saw the boy, she found him attractive and requested him to visit her after his duty. He came back and asked her what the matter was and Lianchhiari told him that she had never seen him around and would be pleased if he would befriend her. The young adult was Chawngfianga who belonged to the Hnamte clan, a quiet and composed person. From that day on, their relationship kindled and Lianchhiari would always find time to meet him on their way to work. What can be added to this story as mentioned in *Sakhming Chullo* is the moment when Chawngfianga was about to descend from a tree, he told Lianchhiari to move out of the way as he might jump or fall on her. Lianchhiari did not move, and Chawngfianga decided to come down anyway with the attempt to not hurt Lianchhiari in the process. As he descended, Lianchhiari fell anyway, pretending to be hurt, in which Chawngfianga, was scared that he might have hurt her and tried helping her. Lianchhiari then told him that she could not get up as her abdomen was hurting and needed to be carried. Chawngfianga carried her on his back, Lianchhiari told him that she did not like being carried on his back, and instead asked him to carry her in front. Again, Lianchhiari told him he should carry her lower and they later reached her hut. From this moment on, Chawngfianga

took Lianchhiari to be a fully grown woman and fell deeper and deeper in love with her. *Mizo Hla Hlui* give an account on the life story of Lianchhiari and her songs. Lianchhiari was the daughter of Vanhnuaithanga, a Thangluah chief. Vanhnuaithanga is one of the seven chiefs who have joined their chieftainship together to look after Dungtlang with houses numbering to 7000. His duty was to look after one locality which was known as Thangluah veng with its entrance from Farkawn. Lianchhiari was known to be a woman of great stature, with a carefree, honest attitude. Her captivatingly beautiful eyes added to her beautiful physique. Even though Lianchhiari was the daughter of a village chief, she was humble and kind, and was approachable for all. Eventually, she fell in love with a commoner, portraying her state of mind regarding social statuses. One fine day, Lianchhiari's father who owned a great stretch of land, uttered his dilemma saying, '*Ka lova bungpui thlak thei saw chu ka haw lo tawp ang.*' (It will be hard for me to dislike anyone who can cut down that huge tree on my land). Lianchhiari on hearing her father's plea, decided to take advantage of the situation by informing her father that Chawngfianga was suitable for the work. On that day, the chief set out to watch Chawngfianga tackle the huge tree and was pleased to see that he was indeed the man for the job. Lianchhiari, composed a song relating to this incident and sang-

*Kan ram lovah Bungpui a thuam luai e,*

*Hmingtha Chawngfianga chuan;*

*Thlangva lam zir na ngai e.*

(The song talks of Chawngfianga's skill on cutting down a huge tree)

Chawngfianga belonged to the Hnamte clan, and even though he was an orphan and a commoner, Lianchhiari's parents accepted him and did not deny any of his shortcomings and were willing to take him as their son-in-law. Chawngfianga decided that he should proceed to their marriage and chose Mangmuai, his trusted friend to be their middle man. Mangmuai, then set out to make a marital agreement between his friend and Lianchhiari. Lianchhiari's parents were glad to hear from him and did not demand any extravagant bride price. Mangmuai on hearing this was jealous of Chawngfianga and misled him instead. Lianchhiari was suspicious of the sudden change of behavior of Chawngfianga and demanded that the middle man should set out again to make agreements. This time, Mangmuai, attacked Chawngfianga's vulnerability and told him a blatant lie saying that the chief had nothing to do with an orphan like him, and it was not his position to marry the chief's

daughter. Chawngfianga felt it was not safe for him and his siblings to reside there and moved to a neighboring village, Chhingzawl on the night itself. Lianchhiari was at loss at the sudden misconnection between her and Chawngfianga and could not understand why Chawngfianga decided to move even without uttering a word. It was at this time that Lianchhiari, on account of her loneliness, composed songs for comfort.

With the passing of time, Vanhnuaithanga decided to give a public feast (*Khuang chawi*) and invited his neighboring villages to join him on this day. That day, Chawngfianga too came to witness and experience the festivities and met Lianchhiari after years. On meeting, they could not spend a moment apart and spent the night together before her father's *Khuang chawi*. Lianchhiari's mother caught them and the news spread like wild fire and became the talk of the village. In which Lianchhiari sang:

*Kan va tih luattukah,*

*Lengi'n ka zir sual e!*

*Ka pa, Vanhnuaithang tur.*

*A than ni bang kir e.*

(Same as in page 61)

Chawngfianga who was now married with another woman on learning that it was their middle man who disrupted his fate with Lianchhiari, with deep remorse sang:

*Kan palai maw lei ang a sual a?*

*Lungruni buan ang ka pawm loh chu.*

(Chawngfianga sang of his fate with Lianchhiari and it was because of their evil-tongued middleman)

Reading Lianchhiari's songs and backgrounds, what is visible is the paralleling of its traditional practices and customs. Qureshi (Stephen Blum et.al. 103) said for the music historian in search of "the historical records" implies an inquiry into a people's musical past as it predicates an understanding of their present engagement with that past. On the matter of Lianchhiari as a preserver of musical culture of her time, the common form of human relationships as seen through her songs forms an integral part. In complementary to this view,

Lomax stated that “traits of a song performance show a powerful relationship to features of social structure that regulate interaction in all cultures” (3).

As written in *Mizo Literature* (1993) Laltheri belonged to the Sailo clan, the daughter of Lalsavunga, whose father was Lalpuiliana, the son of the great Sailo chief Lallula. Her brothers Vanhnuailiana, Lalphunga and Thawmvunga were one of the bravest Sailo chiefs known. Looking at the timeframe of her ancestors and her lineage, Laltheri’s prime is believed to have been between the years 1850-1860. Laltheri was tall, slender and beautiful in stature, and her wits and charms added the more to her beauty. As expected of her, being the daughter of a great Sailo chief, she would marry a great man, someone who could match her wit and beauty. But she fell in love with a commoner named Chalthanga. With the differences in their social status, Chalthanga was reluctant to come forward and be acquainted with Laltheri. With the knowledge of the dangers of a commoner to have a courtly relationship with the chief’s daughter, Chalthanga was careful. But with Laltheri’s persistence, Chalthanga denied his ineligibility and fell in love with her. Their courtship and love for each other developed and Laltheri was soon impregnated. At the time, if a commoner has any advances over one of the chief’s daughter, the result would lead to their own death. So, Laltheri’s father ordered his servant Lamhawiha to kill him. (B.Lalthangliana 48-49). Laltheri’s proper name was Lalchawngpuii, she was the fourth child among six siblings. She had three brothers and two sisters. While they settled at Ruallung, Laltheri fell in love with a commoner named Chalthanga. Laltheri’s relatives were disturbed at the chief’s daughter falling in love with him, they decided his fate. Chalthanga feared for his life and fled from his village (Thanmawia 240-241). In *Mizo Hla Hlui*, there are 24 songs of Laltheri, below are 5 songs:

*Bawmzo ral mah dar ang chhai ngam lo,*

*Belzu kungah ka di Chalthang, chawngsai ang sat e.*

(She sang of how her lover Chalthanga was killed)

*Kei mi thattu thah thung loh Laldanga,*

*Ka fam erawh khuavel thansar ah a zam tur chu.*

(The song shows Laltheri’s willingness to die for her lover. If she was the one they killed, news of her death would have spread more than the death of a commoner)



*Ka nemte puan ka chawi lo vang ka nu,*

*Ka di thangdanga zalna mah, chhimhlei tualdaiah.*

(Laltheri refused to clothe herself and told her mother that she would not do so when the body of her lover lay buried in the ground)

*Chhunrawl lovin thla ka fam lo vang ka nu,*

*Suihlunglengin Sailo ngurpui fam lo awl na e.*

(She told her mother that she would not die of hunger and the account of her missing her lover would lead her to her death instead)

*Bilpuan khumin Ruallung zodai ka vel,*

*Vangkhaw dungsei Chaldanga tual len nan ka ti e. (240-241)*

(Laltheri roamed about Ruallung without any attire on as she was grieving for her lover)

Songs of Laltheri belonged to one of the various Buizova's style and tune of singing. There are songs of lullabies composed by Laltheri as well. The years in which these songs were composed as written in *Hmanlai leh tunlai Mizo hlate* is believed to be around 1840-1845 (Chhuanvawra 107- 108). Laltheri's father Lalsavunga died in the year 1818 at Darlawng, with her brother Vanhnuailiana, they migrated to the border of Saitual in 1820 and settled at Ruallung. It was at this time; she met Chalthanga, a commoner and fell for him. Chalthanga fled to Luangpawm in fear of Laltheri's relatives. The messengers who met Chalthanga lied to him and said that Laltheri was waiting for him to drink *Zu* with him and she would not even drink a single drop without him. Chalthanga believed them and before setting out, they drank and while he was unaware, they hit him on the back of his head. The messengers hid his body at Luangpawm cave and to this day, the cave is named *Chalthang Puk*. Laltheri gave birth to a son and named him Zakhuma. She was vengeful and wished for her son to take revenge on his father's unfair death. While rocking the baby to sleep, she would sing to him-

*Lungduh lakah hraite han chawi ila*

*Kara thlak leh a riang tur hi ka ngai ngam love*

*Sawngka lerah Pa lo hraite ka awi*

*Ka lungdiah Chalthanga a riang ngei e. (108)*

(The song talks of her son and the way she would rock him to sleep out on her porch and her wish to parent him with a loving father)

She would tell her son in jest if he was able to hold a dao and kill enemies. Sometimes she would coax her son if he was strong enough to carry the head of her enemies and would tell him to grow soon as she knew who her lover's killers were and that her son would avenge for his father's death. It is said that the messengers who killed Chalthanga were in fear for their lives upon hearing this and left the village. However, her son did not live long. Laltheri's life was a life of loss and mourning.

Bohlman (1988) stated that "in many theories of folk music, folk music and social structure are inseparable; they mirror each other" (53). Taking this statement into the songs of Laltheri, it hinted the way in which Laltheri paved a way for women who belonged to the Sailo clan to mingle with commoners, and if a commoner did make advances towards the chief's female relatives, capital punishment would stop, but with a small price- such as cutting off body parts like the nose or ears. On the orders of her brother Lalphunga, Chalthanga was killed. Time went on, and when Lalphunga was on his deathbed, he asked for Laltheri to see him, but Laltheri did not budge and replied that she was not inclined to see him as he took the life of her lover. Lalphunga realized his folly and his dying wish was, '*Kha thilah khan thil diklo tak kan lo ti ta ani a, ka thi dawn ta a ni. Tun hnuah zawng kan fate'n emaw, kan farnu te'n emaw tlangval ngaiin lo sual mah se khatiang kha chuan ti tawh ngai hauh suh ang che u.*' (Regarding the issue, we misconducted ourselves, as I am dying now. From this day on, even if our daughters, our sisters have sentimental endearments whatsoever towards a man, let us not practice the misdeed again) (Lalsangzuali 31-45). With the study of her songs, Laltheri as an individual was not only a preserver of musical traditions but an innovator of the social practices mirroring both music and societal traditions practiced.

Based on the records given by Chhuanvawra (2011), Darpawngi belonged to Ralte Bungsut clan. Her father was Manghauva. When she was a child, she lived at the house of the chief of Laisawral, Lalchema and was a slave. She was gifted with the art of singing. And people would gather, listen and joined her in singing. When the people of the plains started to

settle in the Zo territory, and constructed a bridge at Tuichawng, she composed a song on occasion of this:

*Ri tleng tlenga Darngo kal nan a tha e,*

*Chawngtui hmingthang Mingo valin*

*Thirin lei sang an dawh e. (114)*

(Darpawngi sang of the steel bridge that has been erected by the Britishers and how it served a good design for reaching Darngo)

This was her first known song, and from then on, she would compose and sang songs. The songs of Darpawngi can be separated in three different categories/genres as - *Thlek Zai, Zuhmun Zai, Thinrim Zai*. And the time was considered to be around 1870- 1885 (Chhuanvawra 114-115). Her life story, as mentioned by R.L.Thanmawia stated that “Darpawngi was believed to be born in the year 1845 and died in 1907, but this cannot be definitely taken as fact. As a child, she stayed at Chief Lalchema’s house and as a teenager, she moved to Vuta’s son Lalkhuma’s (Tuchhingpa) house. Lalkhuma was a gifted singer and Darpawngi would sing along with him, and from then became well known as a gifted singer. Lalkhuma’s son married Darpawngi but as Darpawngi was a commoner, her husband’s parents thought that the pair would bring about disgrace to their Sailo chieftainship and forced Lalbuta to divorce her. Lalbuta was devastated and would weep and weep for his wife. When Darpawngi heard of this, she composed a song”(259)

*Mi zun ngai lo, keimahni zun ngai,*

*A tap ruai ruai thin e, ni chhunah,*

*Nikhumpa laldang a mawi lo ve.*

(Darpawngi sang this song on account of Lalbuta’s lonesome state, she told him it was not fine for a man to weep for her as he would for days after parting)

To support herself, Darpawngi went to chief Lalchema’s house and asked for his help. Lalchema was pleased to take her back. Darpawngi would compose and sing songs, and being a friendly person, she fell under the delight of her master. One day, her father came and asked for her daughter to come home, but Chief Lalchema replied that Darpawngi was his slave and that he has the ownership of Darpawngi. And since the chief’s words are final,

Darpawngi stayed on as his slave. A man named Thanglianpuia fell for Darpawngi and they would often go jhumming together. She was soon pregnant and on hearing this, Thanglianpuia decided that it would be a heavy task and duty to be the chief's son-in-law that he left her. Darpawngi was heartbroken, and her son died, leaving her the more devastated. While she was settling at the village of Khawbel, estimated around 1888-1889, she was again married to Daipawla, and had a child. Daipawla too left her for the same reason. Thawmpanga, son of Manga, when he heard of Darpawngi's situation, took pity on her, and since his mother was of the same clan as Darpawngi's, he took her to his home. There was a slave living at Thawmpanga's house at the time, his name was Chawngbawnga. Sharing the same social status, they understood each other and married eventually. With their master's permission, they moved to Siallukawt and earned their livelihood by cleaning and scrubbing utensils of the army. Whatever they earned, they would send it to their master. Thawmpanga was so pleased that he released them from their slave- identity and instead accepted them as his own children. They had a son and named him Bawihbanga, (freed from being a slave). However, their son died at the age of three. Darpawngi to vent out her anguish and sorrows would compose and sing songs and the songs came to be titled as *Darpawngi Lusun Zai-*

*Awmlai lengin tlang tin dungrawn zui,*

*Vanduai run ah ser ang cham na e;*

*Ka tuai chawnban a kai e.*

*Ka awihlai, ka puaklai ve kha,*

*Lungrawn a liam zo ve zing phulah;*

*'Ka chun ka ngai' ti ve maw?*

*Bawihbangpui, hai ang lo thang la,*

*I lenrualte'n sumtual kokaiah;*

*Kawilen dar ang an chhai e.*

*Sialkhaw bawar emaw pau thei lo,*

*Thangril laiah ka hraibung dawntuai;*

*Fam dairial maw a chan le!*

(The gist of the song explains Darpawngi's loneliness after the death of her son, asking if he misses her and that if he were alive, he would have played with his peers too)

Mentioned above are 4 songs, however, in *Mizo Hla Hlui* (2012), Darpawngi Lusun Zai (songs of lamentations) numbered to 22 songs. Darpawngi's songs are said to be different from other songs based on the fact that other composers did not compose a single song that are in the style and tune of Darpawngi. She herself composed songs that are in the style and tune of Saikuti's songs. However, since no one could compose songs or did not compose songs at the time that are in the style and tune of Darpawngi's, some claimed her to be the greatest composer and songstress amongst her contemporaries. Her two other categories of songs are termed *Darpawngi Thinrim Zai* and *Darpawngi Thlekzual Zai*. Darpawngi and her husband migrated to Thentlang which was under the rule of a Zadeng chief's widow. At the time, there was a feud between Darpawngi and one of the elders in the community regarding the ownership of a kid. The chieftess asked them to tie both the mother-goats of Darpawngi's and the elder and release the kid, in belief that the kid would eventually trudge towards its mother. The kid then moved towards Darpawngi's goat. But she was denied justice; the chief however gave the kid to the elder. Darpawngi was angered on how judgment was made, since she was a mere commoner. Thus, this gave birth to her songs- *Darpawngi Thinrim Zai* (Darpawngi's infuriated songs) (Thanmawia 259-268). *Darpawngi Thlek Zai* or *Thlekzual Zai* (*Thlek* can be translated as movement or tilting of the head) is given the name as the people who sang her songs would tilt their heads in harmony to the tune of the song in a particular way. Darpawngi, at the autumn of her life migrated from Thentlang to Sialhau and then to Chhingchhip village. There she met Daipawla, the father of her daughter. They remarried at a very old age. Darpawngi's time can be estimated to be around 1880-1900 (B. Lalthangliana 53-57). The last of Darpawngi's songs has a deep and resounding meaning. It talks of the futility of human life, whereas words and songs will live on for generations to come. She can be regarded to be one among the many composers who sang of the immortality of songs, from past to her present time. Her song:

*Tum ang vuai e, hai ang tar na,*

*Keimah Vanhnuaithangi tlang tin sel,*

*Ka zai puan ang chul lovin. (57)*

(She sang of the fatality of life, how humans aged with time in comparison to the immortality of songs)

What can be added to the life story of Darpawngi as given in *Sakhming Chullo* (1995) stated the misery that she battled with throughout her life. After Thanglianpuia divorced her, she met Daipawla, who again divorced her and gave her a daughter named Lalremi. Living in a patriarchal society, she did not have the rights or the authority to keep her daughter. Regarding this situation, Darpawngi remarked, 'I guess my fate is to die at the chief's house, and when I am old, I will fail to please them as my body will fail me. And the children that I bore do not belong to me but to their father. If only I have children of my own. The only way for me to live in comfort is to sacrifice my dignity as a woman which is to carry an illegitimate child.' She then planned on getting a child she could call her own and thought to herself, 'If I could get Daipawla to give me another child, and since our first child was not out of wedlock, the second one could perhaps be mine.' So Darpawngi made advances towards Daipawla and he fell for her again, and on this occasion, she sang-

*Pukpui angin ka hmu thim ruai e*

*Lalrempa run ram ang ka fang leh*

*Kan nun puan ang hlui love.*

(Darpawngi sang of her experience with Daipawla, how her time with him is compared to a land they once travelled and enjoyed together)

She again was blessed with a daughter and named her Thlangtladiaii. Since her daughter was an out of wedlock child, they nicknamed her Laktei from the word (*falak-illegitimate child*). Daipawla again fought for his daughter and planned on taking her back. Darpawngi was furious at the thought and told him that Thlangtladiaii was not only his daughter as there was another man involved. She sang of her fight for possession of her daughter:

*Ka tap ruai sappui dai kawmah*

*Ka hrai puan ang ka chan a hneh chuan*

*Kawrpui zia tial feng nang e. (58)*

(Darpawngi in songs cried for rights of ownership for her daughter)

Liannawna, a *Rahsipui* took pity on her and fought for her. She finally won and kept her daughter as her own. But her daughter died at the age of ten leaving her in a position close to lunacy. When her next husband Chawngbawnga died and after countless difficult journeys endured. She remarried Daipawla on her daughter Lalremi's request and died in the year 1907 at Chhingchhip (Lalsangzuali 57-73). The songs of Darpawngi represent a mingling of personal expressions and experiences on the one hand, and the portrayal of group assertions that have accumulated as social customs on the other. Basso (*Women and Music in cross-cultural perspective* 1987) examine that "music is multiply interpretable, it is effective when there is a need for communication between things that cannot, or will not, bring to a communicative event the same presuppositions about the truth of what is being said" (175). The last attempt for the study is Chhawntangnu Zai. She is also known as Tualchepi. To the south of Thenzawl, there is a village named Kanghmun and Tualchepi was born here in the year 1889. Her father was a brave warrior (pasaltha) named Kawlsata. She belonged to a well to do family and her father owned a number of domestic animals. The name Tualchepi was given to her as the animals they owned were many and at the time their lawn was filled with these animals and took up a lot of space (*Tual* can be translated as lawn or yard and *Chep* as narrow, small or tapered in this context). She married around the year 1912 and at that same year, migrated to Zote and lived there to her last. Her husband died leaving her with seven children. Out of loneliness, she started composing songs. Parents in the Mizo society are often called by the eldest child's name (eg: Mawia nu (eldest child's name), Mawia's mother), but Tualchepi called herself Chhawntangnu in almost all of her songs. Thanmawia mentioned 41 songs of Chhawntangnu. 3 songs are taken for study:

*A tarna reng reng a sang mang e,*

*Chhawntangnu darkhai leng thing lenbuangah,*

*Ka phak lo mi u, mi lo hlan rawh. (304)*

(The song talks of the nicotine jar being placed too high and her demand to a certain someone to fetch it for her)

*In chawltui ningzu ka lo rui e,*

*Ka kal thiamlo banah min kai rawh Thangngo,*

*In sumtual kokai a vei lawi e.(302)*

(She sings of being intoxicated and her requests to be caught in the arms as the way was too steep)

*Kan sumtual kokai a vei lawi lo,*

*Sul ang min tum lo reng e, pathlawi vala'n,*

*A ngur laldang mah a kai thiam e (302).*

(Here she sings of the path to her house not being too steep for the divorced man as even the chief can easily walk here too)

Another record showed that Chhawnthangnu's mother was Zatluangi. And after she was born, her family migrated to Zote and came back to Kanghmun. She again moved to Zote. Out of her seven children, she had two daughters and five sons. Chhawnthanga was her middle child, and named herself Chhawnthangnu in her songs, which frays from the normal norms of Mizo parents naming themselves on their eldest child's name. Her husband died in the year 1935 and this was the year her songs emerged. She added a new tune to Tlanglam Zai and this tune came to be known as Chhawnthangnu Zai. Mizo historian, Hrangthiauva said that Chhawnthangnu zai was also known as Hawrhzawk zai. It was called Hawrhzawk Zai because the style and tune of the songs after repeating the last line would again come to the second line and at this time, the note of the song would suddenly become higher and as such it was given its name (Chhuanvawra 174-175). As mentioned in *Sakhming Chullo*, Tualchepi's abilities to compose and sing songs emerged when her husband died. But the villagers said that she had the urge to sing even when she was a bachelorette, 'Hla phuah ka chak si a, ka zak bawk si a' (I wanted to compose songs, but I am shy). People in her village might have envied her of her family background, and when she heard this, she sang:

*Limnghatte lo pianna changtui lian,*

*Chhawnthangnu leh sakawl mim ang an piang e*

*A ziate puan ang a dang love.*



(Like fishes in the sea, Chhawnthangnu and a tiger are born alike like corn in a cob, their stripes are no different)

Once, she went to Chhipphir and stayed at Chalmawia's house. They were drinking *Zu* at the time, and she was intoxicated and could not walk properly. She sang of this incident as:

*In chawl tuining Zu ka lo rui e,*

*Ka kal thiamlo banah min kai rawh Chalmawi*

*I sumtual kokai a vei lawi e.*

(Same as the song mentioned above in page 72)

This phrase, '*sumtual kokai a vei lawi e*' (the compound of your house is too steep) became a common usage that it spread all over Zoram at the time.

One day, the chief, Thanmawia of their neighboring village Lungsai told Tualchepi to pay a fine for burning his land. She then set out with *Zu* and entered Chief Thanmawia's house with a song addressing him:

*I thaikawi bawkte ka lo hmu e,*

*Engtinngge a ngurpui leh Chhawnthangnu*

*Kan intai mai zawng ka ring love.*

(Chhawnthangnu sang that upon receiving the chief's letter, she came to see him and could not see how they could be in each other's way)

She handed him a glass (*saidawium*) of *Zu* and while doing so gyrated gently on his private parts and sat on him. Thanmawia then said, '*Lei han chawitir chi a ni ta lo hle mai a, a ngurpui min han ti ngawt pawh a huatthlala lo em em mai si a*' (how can I let her pay a fine, she alone calling me (ngurpui- authority) make it hard for me to dislike her). Knowing that she was a gifted songstress, her friends took her *Tuibur* (nicotine water on a pipe) and placed it on top of a tree. They told her until and unless she composed a song, they will not get it for her. She replied them that she was not able to and told them to hurry the matter. Still, they did not budge, in which she sang-

*A tarna reng reng a sang mang e*

*Chhawngthangnu darkhai leng thingpui lenbuangah*

*Ka phak lo mi u mi lo hlan rawh.*

(Same as the song mentioned in page 72)

Another incident was when she went to Pukpui from Valcheng to make trades with people living in the plains (*vai*), the villagers there were pleased to have her and she stayed on for more days. After days, she started her preparations to go home, and on the way, her loads were carried by the villagers, she was humbled and glad, so she sang-

*Chhawngthangnu vai leng a haw thei lo*

*Puk khaw zopui cheng khaw tual nuam inkarah*

*Chhawngthangnu lal len e, lal len e.*

(Chhawngthangnu sings of how she was treated like a ruler whilst her stay at Pukpui, and their hospitality makes it hard for her to leave)

Chhawngthangnu spent her last days at Zote and her tombstone is erected at Diltlang, Zote.

Philip V. Bohlman (*The study of Folk Music in the Modern world* 1988) remarked that “just as the origins of folk music range from a mythic past to the specificity of the present, so too do concepts of music embrace elements of the unreliable and the real, the intangible and the tangible... in part, folk music is an aesthetic ideal; in part, it is a functional accompaniment to basic social activity. Folk music is both a product of the past and a process of the present and is essential to the commingling of stability and vitality, which together provide the substance and dynamism of oral tradition.”(13) The oral traditions of the Mizos have been recreated and re-interpreted by various historians and scholars with a common aim- to preserve traditions. The studies or views presented by them may have differed slightly with time but the message they convey arises from the same objectives. Tradition is fashioned from both an authenticity that clings to the past and a process of change that continuously reshapes the present (*ibid*). Based on the songs of the Mizo women composers and glancing through their backgrounds, ‘songs’ or ‘set of words set to music’ reflect the lives they lived. Their songs mirrored the traditions also portraying the position of women of

their time. The songs of Thailungi, Pi Hmuaki, Lianchhiari, Laltheri, Darpawngi and Chhawntangnu indicate the different social bases in their communities at a given time in which they lived. An overview of the songs of these women composers' talks of the traditional characteristics - Thailungi's songs is seen through the exchanges she made with her brother in songs; the songs are simple but serve as an important repertoire in expressing herself. The recurring themes in Pi Hmuaki's songs are of nature, where she is a mediator between nature and culture whereas in Lianchhiari's songs, a desire to be with her lover can be seen and an incident in one of her song texts recalls a woman's sexuality in a culturally perceived sex role. Laltheri's songs are lamentations for her deceased lover Chalthanga. Also, she challenges the authoritative figures in her life through her songs, creating a new cultural tradition in the Sailo clan which is a crossover into opposite gender domains. Darpawngi's songs can be analyzed in three varied themes, her songs of anger, songs of lamentations for her son, and *Thlek* songs that appear to be a life affirming song as singers would tilt their head in rhythm to the song. Part of her songs shows Darpawngi's gain for power in both domestic and public domains. Individual recognition as a woman musician is seen in Chhawntangnu's songs; her songs mostly talk of the societal exchanges made on her being a gifted song composer and singer, a conscious desire for recognition of her image through her songs can be seen. The various themes in their songs addresses the women's identity at the cultural level, their originality equate their individuality but more so the songs provide a survival of much of musical traditions and cultural practices. Throughout the Mizo culture, women have always been represented as inferior beings in their culturally constructed society; Strom (1983) stated that "the position of women before the entrance of Christianity was poor. Restrictions of women on various grounds were due to the fact that the Mizo had a strong opinion that a man should have a manly character and a woman should have a womanly character." (25) Dealing with expressive behaviors and songs as a medium, women are the principal transmitters of their song traditions even though there seemed to be a common tendency to ignore their individualities. The status that they hold places them toward a domestic threshold as their labors almost constantly involve manual household chores. While working, they would sing songs and this becomes their main musical outlet, a coping strategy that mirrors their practicing traditions. And since the womenfolk were confined to the internal arrangements of familial structures; their expressions through songs dealt with the knitted intricacies of their culture when placed in comparison to men who had more connections to the external world. Most aspects of daily life that are accompanied by songs are the domain of women. Tales of women are shown through the song texts and it is almost

always women who use song to accompany life events, traditions and cultural practices. The above mentioned songstresses preserve musical traditions through the songs they sing and can be regarded to an extent, the keepers of musical lores. To conclude, Darpawngi sang of the fatality of life, how humans aged with time in comparison to the immortality of songs.

*Tum ang vuaiin hai ang tar na i,*

*Keimah Vanhnuaithang nu tlang tin sel,*

*Ka zai puan ang chul lovin. (Chhuanvawra Hmanlai leh tunlai Mizo Hlate 116)*

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## Chapter Four

### Mizo Women Composers: A Sociomusical history

To investigate the folksongs of women in Mizoram is to engage a coexistence of various aspects that have led a chronically concurrences over time. Music has always played a significant role in the social functions of the Mizos. Subject of women's musical role in Mizo society have generated an understanding towards the fabrication of their history. Despite the existing sociological and historical research, the documentation of the voices of women through songs is few and scattered. The chapter seeks to survey the role of women's folksongs in Mizoram however broader ethical dimensions are left for a branch of other specialists. The aim of the study is specifically on women's songs and its context. It seeks to determine the social positions of women through the songs they sing and attempt to seek their individualities in a cultural/musical setting, how their songs serves as a role in reflecting or protesting the various gender arrangements, ranging from male dominance to female separation. Albeit the scarcity on the writings of women in the past, sources that have been written for the purpose of colonial accounts have mentioned the stations that women were in wherein the position of women was portrayed as always passive and inferior to that of men but based on the oral traditions of lores and songs, women at the time did created themselves a space by voicing out their beliefs against the patriarchal orders. The study falls under the examination of a woman's social identity, from male authority to the biases women-folk faced at the time. Recollecting the Mizo women's past, oral traditions and cultural practices plays an important role and the songs that were sung and composed by the Mizo women are a good example as events and circumstances do not simply happen. To state Anthony Seeger's words:

“song texts deal with a limited number of topics and are performed almost exclusively in ritual- related activities. Singing is one of the means through which time, space and social processes are created and re-created. Songs are distinct from other verbal forms in that they alone are said to have extra-societal origins.” (Lomax 26)

According to Ortner, “Both men and women can and must be equally involved in projects of creativity and transcendence. Only then will women be seen as aligned with culture, in culture's ongoing dialectic with nature.” (86) The historical records of the Mizos showed that the familiar folk songs are songs of women or songs named after women. The

songs in study along with many other songs of women dealt with aspects of everyday life and the inner recesses of a woman's psychological perspectives. R. L. Thanmawia (2012) said that "men at that time did compose songs but it appeared that men did not like to disclose their names as composers due to the ethic of Mizo *Tlawmngaihna* (altruism). Also, one important factor being that disclosing their names might render them inferior to women in poetic art, since the names of the women songstresses were quite popular at the time" (38). Based on studies of previous chapters, music played a crucial role in the lives of the Mizos and folk songs may be regarded as one of the most popular forms in Mizo oral literature. Adding to its richness are the contributions of women composers where they can be considered to be a preserver of its musical traditions. With the songs of the women in study, the common thread that ties all of them together is the manifestation of songs as a medium of expression. Even though they partake in various social functions, their participations are limited as in comparison to men, they were nevertheless free to sing about every matter under the sun. Taking the position of women and their usage of songs as one entity, Laltluangliana Khiangte stated:

"Today some scholars, especially women theologians emphatically try to argue that the status of women in the Mizo society in the past was the most pathetic. However, when we look at the works of various women composers, it is safe to conclude that women had been free to express their views and they had their own share of status in the village". (viii)

Women were indeed free to express themselves but the freedom they have does not accord them the same social status as men. These selected women composers and others who are not included for the study to some extent challenged autocratic figures through their songs. This employment of 'song' offered them to play a dominant musical role in a predominantly male society. Laltluangliana balanced both the sociomusical arrangements of the sexes in his statement, an ideology requiring a specific anthropological analysis. The women in Mizo traditional society 'had their own share of status in the village' but theirs was a second class status (Ortner 68). Looking into the songs of Laltheri and Darpawngi, there is an element of anger and frustration towards the system that held their society together. Darpawngi Thinrim Zai (Songs of anger) is songs that were composed on account of her losing a kid (goat) to one of the chief's advisers. The kid rightfully belonged to Darpawngi but it was decided that it should go to the elderly adviser. Her song "*chhim tlang ka liam dawn e, khuangzanghin nu'n biahthu tum thing, laiah I tan love* (Lalsangzuali 67)" (the



history to this song tells of Darpawngi's plan to migrate from Thentlang to Sialhau due to the injustices carried out on her). Laltheri was vengeful and wished for her son to take revenge on his father's unfair death. While rocking the baby to sleep, she would sing to him, "*lungduh lakah hraite han chawi ila, kara thlak leh a riang tur hi ka ngai ngam love, sawngka lerah Pa lo hraite ka awi, ka lungdiah Chalthanga a riang ngei e.* (41)" (The song talks of her son, the way she would rock him to sleep out on her porch and her wish to parent him with a loving father). She would tell her son in jest if he was able to hold a dao and kill enemies. Sometimes she would coax her son if he was strong enough to carry the head of her enemies and would tell him to grow soon as she knew who her lover's killers were and that her son would avenge for his father's death. It is said that the messengers who killed Chalthanga were in fear for their lives upon hearing this and left the village. Both used song repertoire to personalize their displeasures in a confined gender structure affirming their second class status.

Coming into the locus of music and women, Koskoff (11) stated that music sound, like women and power, also carries the implication of intermediacy, in that it is used virtually everywhere to communicate with other humans, with nature, and with the supernatural. She further stated that music is not only a link between human and nonhuman domains, but also of these domains in that it is a human creation. Regarding the concept of social power cross-culturally, anthropologists have defined it as the ability of a person or group to influence others through various forms of control- over resources, such as food, labor, and information, or over access to the spiritual world. Thus, in outer oriented societies, where the group is dependent, for example, upon large game for an adequate food supply, and where males are responsible for the killing and distribution of game, males will be accorded power. In inner-oriented societies, where women and men hunt and distribute food more or less equally, or where both men and women have equal access to the spirit world, power is more likely to be shared and kept in balance (82). Robertson (Koskoff 225-226) mentioned that there are many ways in which music touches the lives of women in specific cultural settings. In the hands of humans, music and its adjunct behaviors can either limit or expand the social, ritual, and political access and awareness of women, men and children. She remarked, within each culturally defined power base we can look for intimidation, public shaming, role inversion, secrecy, and separatism, action by positive example, open deliberation, consensus, and attitudes toward change as indices of how social negotiation and decision making are instrumented. She stated that musical performance affords us a point of entry for

understanding how people achieve what they want within their own environment, how they act out their assumptions about each other, and how they challenge authority. R.L.Thanmawia said, “It was remarkable that the famous lyricists during the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century were all poetesses”. He questioned K. Zawla why most of the lyricists during that period were all women, the reason was that since the women of that time had a humble status in the family as well as in society, it was easier for the women to express their feelings in verse forms instead of speaking them out directly.”(38) The song texts in study are simple in content but they are used as a medium of expressions for the Mizo women composers in a predominantly male society.

Even though the songs of Thailungi are an exchange of words of the many incidents in her life, her songs made it possible for self-expressions to play a presiding musical role. Thailungi, was sold by her stepmother, and her life story is recorded in *Mizo Literature* as one of the oldest folk tales. There is no valid proof if Thailungi was a real person, but based on *Sakhming Chullo*, Thailungi’s father belonged to the Ralte clan, and he had one son and one daughter and remarried. The children’s stepmother was cruel and the songs of Thailungi are reflections of her relations to her stepmother. In various cultures worldwide, the life pattern of women may be quite different from that of men. Patricia K.Shehan (Koskoff 2014) stated that “since there is a basic division of social labor and social responsibility in the rural and traditional societies, women occupy distinctive roles in music- making. She explained that powerful folk song tradition offers an understanding of women’s roles in preserving cultural values, attitudes, and musical and artistic practices of a region. The creativity of unnamed women singers, chanters and lamenters carried a people’s heritage over the centuries through political and historical transition” (45). Their songs continue to articulate the reality of their existence, and as preservers of music, women preserve also the events of their culture. Thailungi’s songs belonged to the category of *Chai* songs, and the past of the Mizos since were not written can be known through the oral literature that existed. Thailungi’s songs speak for the plight of stepchildren during her time. Her brother Tlumtea, the fact that he was of the male sex, seemed to have a much better social condition when compared to Thailungi.

*Hrum sawmin hrualhrui ai ban*

*Ka ngir thiam mou dailungah (11)*

(The song states that even though her hands were roped, she could still stand atop the rocks even with that)

### Thailungi zai



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#### Illustration 4.1 Thailungi Zai

Doh is G. It is a simple quadruple. This is sung rapidly is a couplet like Pi Hmuaki Zai. There are ‘tie’ notes because of its irregularity in phrasings and it is sung lazily thus the presence of slur notes in the song.

Robertson in *Women and Music in cross-cultural perspective* (1987) mentions “In many cultures that purposefully use musical performance to coerce or control social status, ritual knowledge and power are believed to have belonged to women in a distant past. At some point in ancient memory, women aborted their power or were tricked into submission by competing males.” (228) While they were settling at Chawnghawih and Siallam, the first song with the knowledge of its composers or song bearing names was Pi Hmuaki’s songs.

There are various conclusions that relates to the life story of Pi Hmuaki, and one of the renowned reasons of her death was that she was buried alive as the community was afraid that she would have composed all songs and there would be no song left for the next generations to compose. The song texts of Pi Hmuaki are mainly compositions about everyday social activities and are spontaneously composed. It can also be regarded as an allegorical song as Pi Hmuaki used the theme of nature to express her emotions. She was laid out on her burial and sang:

*Nauva te u, nau haia te u,*

*Tha te te khan min vur ru*

(Pi Hmuaki in this song was pleading the bachelors to cover her up with care while burying her in the earth)

#### Pi Hmuaki zai



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#### Illustration 4.2 Pi Hmuaki Zai

**Doh is F#.** The tempo of the song remains at 92 beats per minute. It is of a simple quadruple and there are 4 beats between 2 big bars and some of the notes are even hold for 7 beats.

One day some men from another village asked the direction to the chief's house (her father's house). Without knowing that Lianchhiari was the chief's daughter, in passing, they teased her by commenting on her beauty. Being the daughter of the chief, she was provoked by the words of those men and she composed a song:

*Amin tluang peng min ti,  
Lian lai chhung keimahni.  
Cherbelah ningzu Kan dawn,  
Lianchhung Kan chi hrim e.*

*Kantawng a uang em ni?  
Tlangin lo ngai rawh u,  
Zova siahthing ril khi,  
A din chhung keimahni.*

*Ka nu maw Cherhlunchhung,  
Ka pa maw tluangzachhawn  
Kan kunghruiah min zawt,  
Sai rual e, kan si lo.*

(The song is an expression of the glory of Lianchhiari's family and its eminence)

### Lianchhiari zai



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#### Illustration 4.3 Lianchhiari Zai

Doh is G. The tune of Lianchhiari Zai is measured in a simple quadruple. There are 4 beats between the 2 big bars. The song of Lianchhiari has triplets which mean that in one beat, there are 3 notes evenly. The 1<sup>st</sup> beat comes on strong, the 2<sup>nd</sup> beat and the 4<sup>th</sup> beats are weak and the 3<sup>rd</sup> beat is medium.

According to her life story, she fell in love with a commoner, *Chawngfianga*, whom she could not marry due to the disloyalty of *Chawngfianga's palai* or negotiator. She composed of many songs that spoke of her unending love for *Chawngfianga*, one of her songs relates to her voice to break gender gap of that period. It would not be wrong to say that she was the first Mizo woman who responded to the disrespectful attitudes of men towards women in a song. We can also assume that she expressed her resistance against men's attitude by using her father's name. While the account on her relationship with a common man reveals her resistance on social hierarchy, in this context she used song and her social status as a means of her resistance against patriarchy (Hmingthanzuali 100).

When we look at the life of Laltheri, after the horrifying incident of her losing her lover Chalthanga, her brother Vanhnuailiana thought it was better off if they marry her off to Nikuala, a Zahau chief. Laltheri denied this proposal as her brother's intent was for an exchange of the safety against the Pawi clans. And her relatives no longer had the courage to force her against her will as they were afraid of the circumstances that had happened to her

before. This showed Laltheri's individuality, her sternness and her use of songs to express her state of mind. Later in her life, she married, at her own will, Dinmanga, a commoner. Laltheri's relatives no longer had a say regarding the incident, as Laltheri had created for herself an identity, that she was no longer under any obligations and exercising her underlying rights to choose her own fate. She was inherited to look after Belrawhmual, Darlawng, here she proved her administrative skills that she was even better than any other male- chiefs. Her brother Vanhnuailiana's son Dothiauva was a cruel chief and his subjects migrated to Darlawng, as Laltheri was benevolent and just. There is a song composed by one of the villagers who migrated to Laltheri's village on account of this:

*Siallamthangpa sakawl lungliana*

*Cheng kaulo Lalchawngpuii*

*Kei ka thlang zawk e.*

(The song talks of how he/she chose Laltheri (as the chief) instead of their cruel chief (Dothiauva)

One day, Laltheri's village was suddenly invaded by Hempua, an enemy from the south, everyone shouted 'enemies, enemies' and fled. At this, Dinmanga, Laltheri's husband, hearing the commotion, ran outside and he was shot by Hempua, on their front yard. Laltheri, hurried outside and when she came face to face with Hempua, she grabbed his hair and spat on his face thrice. "*Ral emaw tih nak alaiin Hempua zuk ni heu ho roh che a.*" (And to think it were real enemies, it is just good ol'Hempua) Of this incident Hempua said, "*Ben sawk sawk aiin a na.*"(It hurt more than getting slapped). Because of Laltheri's bravery, Hempua failed to take the head of Dinmanga as their raid reward. Laltheri is a portrayal of a courageous and brave Mizo woman, who created a space for herself against the Mizo patriarchal hierarchy. Carol. E. Robertson (Koskoff 225) explained that in the hands of humans, music and its adjunct behaviors can either limit or expand the social, ritual, and political access and awareness of women, men, and children. Musical performance affords us a point of entry for understanding how people achieve what they want within their own environment, how they act out their assumptions about each other, and how they challenge authority. Regarding Chalthanga's horrid death, Laltheri was filled with rage and vengeance. She knew that no one would have the courage to kill her brothers, who hired people to kill her lover. So, she sang in a song instead:

*Kei mi thattu thah thungloh Laldanga,*

*Kan pam erawh khuavel thansara kan zam tur chu*

(The song shows Laltheri's willingness to die for her lover. If she was the one they killed, news of her death would have spread more than the death of a commoner)

**Laltheri zai**



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**Illustration 4.4 Laltheri Zai**

Doh is Eb. The songs of Laltheri Zai is in a compound duple and there are 6 beats between the big bars. There are six 8<sup>th</sup> notes in a measure. The 1<sup>st</sup> beat is a strong beat and the 4<sup>th</sup> beat is a medium and the rest are weak beats.

Regarding the complexity of social hierarchy, another woman named Darpawngi also raised her resistance through her song in the late nineteenth century. She was known for her songs that reflected the tragic lives of women. Her life was miserable, as she was a *bawi* or bonded labour. Under one of her songs that was called 'Thinrim Zai' or 'Song of anger':

*Keimah Chhimtlanthangnu (x2)*  
*,Khuallian chalneng intai angin*  
*Dengpui ka tai dawn e'*

*'Chhimtlang ka liam dawn e (x2)*  
*Khuazanghin nu'n biathu tum thing.*



*Laiah in tan lo ve'(67)*

She composed this song to express the ill treatment she suffered from the village elders with regards to ownership of a goat, she was found guilty despite being innocent. This song explains how the chief and other authoritative figures oppressed commoners. In spite of the discrimination between the rich and the poor no one had ever dared to question the authority of the village administration, but among the commoners it was only Darpawngi who raised her voice for justice in the village court and against the authority of the village chief (Hmingthanzuali, 101). *Sakhming Chullo* stated the misery that she battled with throughout her life. After Thanglianpuia divorced her, she met Daipawla, who again divorced her and gave her a daughter named Lalremi. Living in a patriarchal society, she did not have the rights or the authority to keep her daughter. Regarding this situation, Darpawngi remarked, 'I guess my fate is to die at the chief's house, and when I am old, I will fail to please them as my body will fail me. And the children that I bore do not belong to me but to their father. If only I have children of my own. The only way for me to live in comfort is to sacrifice my dignity as a woman which is to carry an illegitimate child.' She then planned on getting a child she could call her own and thought to herself, 'If I could get Daipawla to give me another child, and since our first child was not out of wedlock, the second one could perhaps be mine.' So Darpawngi made advances towards Daipawla and he fell for her again, and on this occasion, she sang:

*Pukpui angin ka hmu thim ruai e*

*Lalrempa run ram ang ka fang leh*

*Kan nun puan ang hlui love.*

(Darpawngi sang of her experience with Daipawla, how her time with him is compared like a land they once travelled and enjoyed together)

She again was blessed with a daughter and named her Thlangtladiaii. Since her daughter was an out of wedlock child, they nicknamed her Laktei from the word (*falak*-illegitimate child). Daipawla again fought for his daughter and planned on taking her back. Darpawngi was furious at the thought and lied to him about the fact that Thlangtladiaii was not only his daughter as there was another man involved. She sang of her fight for possession of her daughter:

*Ka tap ruai sappui dai kawmah*

*Ka hrai puan ang ka chan a hneh chuan*

*Kawrpui zia tial feng nang e.*

(Darpawngi in songs cried for rights of ownership for her daughter)

Liannawna, a *Rahsipui* took pity on her and fought for her case. She finally won and kept her daughter as her own. But her daughter died at the age of ten leaving her in a position close to lunacy. When her next husband Chawngbawnga died and after countless difficult journeys endured. She remarried Daipawla on her daughter Lalremi's request and died in the year 1907 at Chhingchhip (Lalsangzuali Sailo 57-73).

### Darpawngi Lusun Zai

Doh is F

Rubato (Tempo is usually 40bpm)

{	d . d , d	d	d . d . d	t <sub>1</sub> , s <sub>1</sub>	s <sub>1</sub>	s <sub>1</sub> . d . d	d	d . d . d	}
{	<u>t<sub>1</sub> . l<sub>1</sub> . s<sub>1</sub></u>	s <sub>1</sub>	s <sub>1</sub> . t <sub>1</sub> . t <sub>1</sub>	l <sub>1</sub> . s <sub>1</sub>	t <sub>1</sub> . l <sub>1</sub>	s <sub>1</sub>	-	-	}
{	s <sub>1</sub> . t <sub>1</sub> . t <sub>1</sub>	l <sub>1</sub> . s <sub>1</sub>	t <sub>1</sub> . l <sub>1</sub> . s <sub>1</sub>	-	-	-	d . d . d	d	}
{	d . d . d	t <sub>1</sub> , s <sub>1</sub>	s <sub>1</sub>	s <sub>1</sub> . t <sub>1</sub> . t <sub>1</sub>	s <sub>1</sub>	t <sub>1</sub> . s <sub>1</sub> . s <sub>1</sub>	-	-	

#### Illustration 4.5 Darpawngi Lusun Zai

Doh is F. Simple Duple and there are 2 beats between the 2 big bars.

*Awmlai lengin tlang tin dung rawn zui,  
Vanduai runah se rang cham na e;  
Ka tuai chawnban a kai e.*

*Ka awihlai, ka puaklai ve kha,  
Lungrawn a liam zo ve zing phulah  
'Ka chun ka ngai' ti ve maw? (Thanmawia 266)  
(This song talks of her longing for her deceased child)*

When we look into the life of Chhawntangnu also known as Tualchepi, the songs that she sang and composed is a reflection of a woman free in expressing her thoughts. She lost her husband in the year 1935, and her longing for her husband made her compose songs all the more. While she was a bachelorette, she said, '*Hla phuah ka chak si a, ka zak bawk si.*' (I wanted to compose songs, but I am shy) (Lalsangzuali 102). Auerbach stated that "women mediate between song and lament forms and sentiments as they mediate generally between the living and the dead or the earthly and the spiritual." (Koskoff 36). She composed and sang a song which is in the tune of Saikuti for her deceased husband:

*Ka di zalna piallei tha cham chungah*

*An remthiam e Zokhaw valin*

*Phunlung sang tur e (108)*

(The song talks of her husband's tombstone and how the bachelors skillfully arranged the stones)

In the tonic solfa of Saikuti Hla, there are 6 beats between the big bars. This 6 barred song can be sung by blending the beat as that of 2 beats between the big bars. The tempo of the song depends upon the singer which is originally around 125 beats per minute or 6 beats in tonic solfa. The songs are sung at a low pitch giving it the character of a chant.

*In chawl tuining Zu ka lo rui e,*

*Ka kal thiamlo banah min kai rawh Chalmawi*

*I sumtual kokai a vei lawi e (102)*

(She sings of being intoxicated and her requests to be caught in the arm as the way was too steep)

One day, the chief, Thanmawia of their neighboring village Lungsai told Tualchepi to pay a fine for burning his land. She then set out with *Zu* and entered Chief Thanmawia's house with a song addressing him:

*I thaikawi bawkte ka lo hmu e,*

*Engtinnge a ngurpui leh Chhawntangnu*

*Kan intai mai zawng ka ring love.*

(Chhawntangnu sang that upon receiving the chief's letter, she came to see him and could not see how they could be in each other's way)

She handed him a glass (*saidawium*) of *Zu* and while doing so gyrated gently on his private parts and sat on him. Chief Thanmawia then said, '*Lei han chawitir chi a ni ta lo hle mai a, a ngurpui min han ti ngawt pawh a huatthlala lo em em mai si a*' (how can I let her pay a fine, she alone calling me (ngurpui- authority) make it hard for me to dislike her).

#### Illustration 4.6 Chhawntangnu Zai

##### Chhawntangnu zai



**Doh is D.** In the tonic solfa of Chhawntangnu Zai, the tempo of the song depends upon the singer which is originally around 57 beats per minute. There are 4 beats between the 2 big bars and is measured in a simple quadruple.

The songs of these selected women composers are transcribed so as to observe the procedure that is required of an ethnomusicological study. Bruno Nettl (ch. 10) pointed out that in ethnomusicology, fieldwork as a theoretical concept does not often appear as a subject to be discussed out of a broader context of research design. Ethnomusicologists and folklorists seem to need more practical information than anthropologists about techniques of recording, filming, videotaping, special problems of text-gathering. By undertaking fieldwork, the ethnomusicologist not only collects the data for research but also tries to understand the culture of societies and gets the first hand information of the music and people. Also, audio-visual tools are used for documenting information. The analysis of the music is made by transcribing the music. The western staff notation is used widely and sometimes additional symbols are introduced by the researcher to write down the music more accurately. The electro-acoustical devices such as the oscillograph, sonograph melograph and also personal computers are resorted to study the music objectively (Durga 2004). The illustrations that are introduced for the study uses the western staff notation for transcriptions of the selected songs. One or two songs accompany the tonic solfas, this is the result of each songs having the same tune or style of singing. Thailungi zai is regarded as one of the oldest songs in Chai Hla. There is no record of the style of singing of Pi Hmuaki. Chhuanvawra (2011) said that “Pi Hmuaki was not the person behind the songs composed; instead she composed songs which were in the style of singing of the Ngente clan. But he did not mention any of the Ngente songs prior to Pi Hmuaki Zai either. So, it is believed that the Ngente clans must have sung songs in the style of Pi Hmuaki Zai instead. The latter can hold a firmer belief as Pi Hmuaki composed or sang songs whilst she was a bachelorette” (34). Lianchhiari zai is sung in the tune of Lalvunga and Lianchia’s style of singing which originated before the Mizos crossed Tiau (94). Buizova’s style of singing is used by Laltheri and the songs that she composed came to be known as Laltheri zai (107). Darpawngi zai (*Mizo Hla Hlui*) is said to be different from other songs based on the fact that other composers did not compose a single song that are in the style and tune of Darpawngi. She herself composed songs that are in the style and tune of Saikuti’s songs. However, since no one could compose songs or did not compose songs at the time that are in the style and tune of Darpawngi’s, some claimed her to be the greatest composer and songstress amongst her

contemporaries. She created a new tune to Tlanglam Zai and this tune came to be known as Chhawnthangnu Zai. Mizo historian, Hrangthiauva said that Chhawnthangnu zai was also known as Hawrhzawk zai. It was called Hawrhzawk Zai because the style and tune of the songs after repeating the last line would again come to the second line and at this time, the note of the song would suddenly become higher and as such it was given its name (Chhuanvawra 174-175).

In “*Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?*” (1974) Ortner asserts:

women are being identified or symbolically associated with nature, as opposed to men, who are identified with culture. Since it is always culture’s project to subsume and transcend nature, if women were considered part of nature, then culture would find it “natural” to subordinate, not to say oppress, them. (73)

Reading the history of selected women composers in previous chapters and also to avoid redundancy, the study uses one or more songs at the least that can connect to the tenets of a woman’s sociomusical role enhancing their sociocultural positions. In a song of Thailungi:

*“Ka takin la zui na law,*

*Ka man sial sawm haw law neu”* (12)

(Thailungi said that she could not follow her brother and that her bride price -*price of amithun* would go to waste if she did)

The ‘*sial*’ in Thailungi’s song can represent her link to ‘nature’. When her brother Tlumtea requested her to go home with him, she said she could not as her bride price of *sial sawm* (ten mithuns) would go to waste. She was being logically subordinate and was in a way contented with the position that she was presently in. She felt privileged to be married into a prosperous family and having being bought for the price of ten mithuns, she declined her brother’s invitation, whom in the story is the person she longed for most. She identified her worth to nature, here, ten mithuns showing a ‘socially engendered conservatism and traditionalism of woman’s thinking’ (Ortner 85) under the patriarchal governance she was in.

Pi Hmuaki’s songs are mostly songs that have an affinity to ‘nature’. The presence of song imagery as well as the use of narrative devices can be seen. They can also be termed allegorical in the way Pi Hmuaki used nature imageries to describe emotions. There is no

evidence of dissent in her songs, they appear substantially pleasant and mellow. And based on her song, she seemed indifferent when she was to be buried alive. Ortnor pointed out, “the postulate that woman is viewed as closer to nature than man has several implications... if it is viewed simply as a middle position on a scale from culture down to nature, then it is still seen as lower than culture and thus accounts for the pan-cultural assumption that woman is lower than man in the order of things.” (86). A speculation in the songs of Pi Hmuaki shows a close comparison of herself with the elements of nature, her indifference and submission before she was buried alive might be a result of her acceptance as being one with nature, lower than culture which is manmade. In *Mizo Hla Hlui* (2012), songs that paralleled Pi Hmuaki’s emotions to nature are:

*Ngente thangkhuala di ka tian zanah,*

*Kawlngo thla kan inzap tam rawh se. (216)*

(Pi Hmuaki in her song expressed her wish for her lover who is a guest at Ngente village to enjoy his last night of his stay there by expressing himself like that of Kawlngo birds flapping their wings)

*Lelte lo kiu, awn thing lerah,*

*‘Thingpui lawn sang rem lang’ a ti e. (216)*

(The song talks of Lelte singing in the branches of a tree and Pi Hmuaki’s plea for the bird to climb higher)

*Khuangpui ri chur, Neihchawng chhun inah,*

*Pawnglam chhawn ang ka thlekpui mi u. (216)*

(Pi Hmuaki sings of the time she danced like a cricket to the sound of the beating drums at the chief’s house)

*An lal an fam, bellian pal ang tlar,*

*Hnuaitiang hawih changsial a ngui zo ve. (216)*

(The song talks of a deceased chief and arrangement of pots (given to deceased people as a form of condolence in Mizo society) aligned like that of fences, and how the whole village was mourning, even the *changsial* (mithun) was grieving)

*Luia lengngha sang zar a rui e,*

*An hai hlei, suanglai lian vel.*

(The song expresses how fishes swarm with intoxication in numbers)

*Bui bir angin a zal zuk thlak ila,*

*Khaw ruamah sial ang zu chhuak ila. (217)*

(The song says while she was being led to her grave, she requested the young men to lay her body like a rabbit to its burrows and her body to leap out like a mithun in a narrow valley)

Lianchhiari is an example of a woman whom Ortner defined as embodying a “relative subjectivity where men are classified as relative objectivity where males represent experiences of self, others, space, and time in individualistic, objective, and distant ways, while females represent experiences in relatively interpersonal, subjective, immediate ways.” (81) (quoting Carlson, p. 270). Lianchhiari sang of her humiliation in a song:

*Kan va tih luat tukah,*

*Lengin ka zir sual e*

*Ka pa vanhnuai thang tur*

*A than ni bang kir e (Lalsangzuali 22)*

The song talk of a time when Lianchhiari’s father Vanhnuaithanga decided to give a public feast. The community was in merriment. Lianchhiari and Chawngfianga too celebrated by spending the night together. This incident spread like wild fire and instead of her father’s *Khuangchawi* (festival), it set off a slander for the both of them. The intent of the *Khuangchawi* was to honor Vanhnuaithanga, everyone who came to witness the festival seemed aware of that. But the ‘personal’ of Lianchhiari became the more ‘public’ in its entirety. What was private for Lianchhiari bought humiliation for her father and herself to the extent that the people who were invited had to go home (*an mi kohte pawh an haw leh ta vek a p.22*). The ‘subjectivity’ that Ortner explained can be seen through Lianchhiari’s song, an act of pleasure transformed into an act of disregard.

When viewing women as closer to ‘nature’ than men, if women are read as a mediating element in the culture-nature relationship according to Ortner, “then it may account in part for the cultural tendency not merely to devalue woman but to circumscribe



and restrict her functions, since culture must maintain control over its (pragmatic and symbolic) mechanisms for the conversion of nature into culture.” (86) The misfortunes of Laltheri’s life revolved around a utility of a social construct made by men. Based on history, she was not allowed her freedom- her lover Chalthanga was killed as he was a commoner and with regards to his low status in a patriarchal hierarchy, he proved unfit to offer any political gains for the chief’s daughter. Laltheri was devastated as she could not do anything besides using her voice through her songs. She was caught in an affliction of an unethical structure. The ‘culture’ of man devalued her prerogative of being; she was a symbol for man’s subordination. Her song:

*Bawmzo ral mah dar ang chhai ngam lo,*

*Belzu kungah ka di Chalthang, chawngsai ang sat e. (39)*

(She sang of how her lover Chalthanga was mercilessly killed)

With Laltheri being read as a mediating element according to Ortner, Darpawngi can be associated with “an ambiguous status between culture and nature, it may help account for the fact that, in specific cultural ideologies and symbolizations, woman can occasionally be aligned with culture, and in any event is often assigned polarized and contradictory meanings within a single symbolic system.” (86). Her song:

*‘Mi zun ngailo, keimahni zun ngai,*

*A tap ruai ruai thin e, ni chhunah,*

*Nikungpa laldang a mawi love’ (Lalsangzuali 57)*

(Darpawngi sang this song on account of Lalbuta’s lonesome state, she told him it was not fine for a man to weep for her as he would for days after parting) This song placed her in a position of ‘intermediate’ between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ by sympathizing with him in a song when she was the victim all along (see ch.3) Buangtheuva, the chief of Darlawng while in preparation for *Khuangchawi* (festival), visited Nikhama, the chief of Khawbel and invited him. On the day of the festival, with dances and merriment, Darpawngi composed a song on how the chief and others danced beautifully. On hearing her song and acknowledging her skill as a composer, Nikhama invited Darpawngi to live and serve him (she was a bonded labor) and accepted his invitation, so she went. When they reached Khawbel, the villagers were stupefied and gossiped about her assuming interference. She sang:

*Khua tina chhiar min ti reng lo u*

*Saithuami pa'n tlangnuam nihliap min zar e,*

*Tuan kham kawltu ka chawi reng love.(58)*

Her status as a skillful singer and composer placed her in a position of 'intermediary', to assume this in Ortner's view, she was aligned with 'culture'- the chief being her patron but she still had to go through the stigmas of being a woman, a *bawih* (bonded labor) at that. Her rise to a favorable position appears contradictory within the well-defined Mizo cultural system.

Coming to Chhawnthangnu, 'biological determinism' that Ortner (83) postulated in understanding the universal secondary status of women can be connected. Reading through Chhawnthangnu's songs, her gift to spontaneously compose songs gained her admiration from others during her time. And she was often asked to compose songs on different occasions. A theme that related her as a mother in her songs can also be seen:

*Chunnu'n raltiangah ka thlir reng mai*

*Thingte zawn thliai I nun zir thiam ang*

*Ri tleng tleng an chawi e, zai sa e (104)*

(Chhawnthangnu taught her children the art of *bengbung* (Mizo indigenous instrument similar to a xylophone) and the song talks of a time when she could hear her children playing it and made her proud)

Also she would coax her children to be careful while they were outside playing:

*Chunnu'n raltiangah ka thlir reng mai*

*Hrinhniang ka chawi sumtuala leng tirte*

*Kha, ka tuai Thangdanga te hau lo u (104)*

(The song states how Chhawnthangnu was eyeing her children playing outside and would chide the other kids not to scold her children)

Ortner defined "woman's psyche" is appropriately molded to mothering functions by her own socialization and tending toward greater personalism and less mediated modes of

relating – making women appear to be rooted more directly and deeply in nature (83). Chhawnthangnu’s love for her children came natural to her and can be seen in Ortner’s work, where female appear more sentimental than male, making them more inclined to abstract ‘culture’ thoughts whereas women’s thoughts make them more connected to other individuals.

According to Koskoff,

“Recent studies of women’s folklore and culture have suggested that in many societies, women and men do appear to occupy separate expressive spheres, creating not necessarily two separate expressive and self-contained musical cultures, but rather two differentiated yet complementary and overlapping halves of culture.”(32)

The study as mentioned does not intent to be a history of the Mizo folksongs, they are based on conjectures that present the Mizo women composers as musical preservers and how the study of their songs can be associated as a study of a sociomusical history. Ortner’s *“Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?”* is intermittently used to depict the socio-cultural positions of Mizo women through these selected composers. Ortner’s take on nature/culture dichotomy when applied to the songs of these selected women, where manifestations of men’s dominance on the subordination of women fill public space- Mizo women composers created a niche, a space for themselves by using their voices, and sequentially considered the consistent devaluation they faced. Even though these women lived in different timelines and the theme and song texts entirely distinct, be that as it may, their songs played a pivotal function in determining their sociocultural dispositions in a sociomusical Mizo society. And the nature of women to be seen as aligned to man’s culture, they must be equally involved in projects of creativity and transcendence (Ortner 86), and Mizo women composers utilised their creativity through songs to make their mark in their own required time. ‘Differentiated yet complementary musical culture’ proves apt for a sociomusical Mizo history as well. Furthermore, the songs in study are not to culminate the position of women as wholly deplorable per se, but that they were secondary to men and can be asserted that they used their voices as an expressive outlet as they were the ‘other’ (Beauvoir “Chapter 1”) in a primarily male culture.

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## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

In locating the place of music in Mizo culture, the thesis has attempted to study the folksongs of selected Mizo women composers from a feminist ethnomusicological approach. In discerning the sociomusical role of Mizo women composers in Mizo history, womenfolk namely Thailungi, Pi Hmuaki, Lianchhiari, Laltheri, Darpawngi and Chhawntangnu were selected for the study. The objective of the study was to determine the social positions of women through the songs they sing and to seek their individualities in a cultural/musical setting, how their songs serve as a role in reflecting or protesting the various gender arrangements, ranging from male dominance to female separation. The study was intended to reason the significance of the contributions of women in the patriarchal societies of the Mizos through their songs and how their involvements in the musical traditions made them preservers. To conclude the study of women in music as stated by Bruno Nettl (1983):

“But it seems reasonable to believe that the great differences in musical style among the peoples of the world can in good measure be attributed to the way in which people relate to each other, and a major aspect of this relationship concerns gender” (*I’m a Stranger Here Myself: Women’s Music, Women in Music* ch.4 kindle ed.)

The second chapter of the thesis had the aim of exploring whether the study of ‘songs’ helps in reading the cultural practices of the Mizos. As ethnomusicology is a study of music in a culture, studying the folksongs of the Mizos parallels the study of their culture. With this stance, an ethnomusicological study on the songs of the Mizos from an academic aspect was attempted in this chapter. As mentioned in the study, various historians have probed and analysed on the origin and veracity of the Mizo folksongs and with the numerous discourses that are present, what is visible is that the music of the folk as stated by Bohlman (89) appears as a particularly appropriate symbol for past, present and future. Literature rarely discusses folk music by itself. Instead, folk music is compared and contrasted with other forms of cultural expression. Accompanying this justification, Timothy Rice (qtd in *How Musical is Man?*) captured ethnomusicological sensibility as:

“In this world of cruelty and exploitation...it is necessary to understand why a madrigal by Gesualdo or a Bach Passion, a *sitar* melody from India or a song

from Africa, Berg's *Wozzeck* or Britten's *War Requiem*, a Balinese *Gamelan* or a Cantonese opera, or a symphony by Mozart, Beethoven or Mahler may be profoundly necessary for human survival, quite apart from any merit they may have examples of creativity and technical progress. It is also necessary to explain why, under certain circumstances, a 'simple' folk song may have more human value than a 'complex' symphony." (214)

This implies the study of the music of all the world's peoples as a path to understanding human beings.

The third chapter was intended to show the Mizo women composers' contribution in the musical traditions of the Mizos and how they acted as musical preservers in a predominantly male society. The study was based on texts that recorded the songs as well as histories of these selected women composers, with the substance of each songs given. The chapter mentioned the adoption of Lomax's cantometrics study in order to present the correlation of song style and social structure and showed complementary role of both the sexes based on the coding book, implying an undifferentiated role in their subsistence task; the 'feminine touch and the voices' as Lomax stated can be seen to tread through in the Mizo women's arrangement of song-texts. The social reality of the Mizo women in study can also be identified as they were not forced to keep silent or inactive in their sociomusical participation and thereby using songs as an expressive outlet to show their actuality.

Philip V. Bohlman (1988) stated that "just as the origins of folk music range from a mythic past to the specificity of the present, so too do concepts of music embrace elements of the unreliabile and the real, the intangible and the tangible..in part, folk music is an aesthetic ideal; in part, it is a functional accompaniment to basic social activity. Folk music is both a product of the past and a process of the present and is essential to the commingling of stability and vitality, which together provide the substance and dynamism of oral tradition." (13)The oral traditions of the Mizos have been recreated and re-interpreted by various historians and scholars with a common aim- to preserve traditions. The studies or views presented by them may have differed slightly with time but the message they convey arises from the same objectives. Tradition is fashioned from both an authenticity that clings to the past and a process of change that continuously reshapes the present (ibid). Based on the songs of the Mizo women composers and glancing through their backgrounds, 'songs' or 'set of words set to music' reflect the lives they lived. Their songs mirrored the traditions also

portraying the position of women of their time. The songs of Thailungi, Pi Hmuaki, Lianchhiari, Laltheri, Darpawngi and Chhawnthangnu indicate the different social bases in their communities at a given time in which they lived. An overview of the songs of these women composers' talks of the traditional characteristics - Thailungi's songs is seen through the exchanges she made with her brother in songs; the songs are simple but serve as an important repertoire in expressing herself. The recurring themes in Pi Hmuaki's songs are of nature, where she is a mediator between nature and culture whereas in Lianchhiari's songs, a desire to be with her lover can be seen and an incident in one of her song texts recalls a woman's sexuality in a culturally perceived sex role. Laltheri's songs are lamentations for her deceased lover Chalthanga. Also, she challenges the authoritative figures in her life through her songs, creating a new cultural tradition in the Sailo clan which is a crossover into opposite gender domains. Darpawngi's songs can be analyzed in three varied themes, her songs of anger, songs of lamentations for her son, and *Thlek* songs that appear to be a life affirming song as singers would tilt their head in rhythm to the song. Part of her songs shows Darpawngi's gain for power in both domestic and public domains. Individual recognition as a woman musician is seen in Chhawnthangnu's songs; her songs mostly talk of the societal exchanges made on her being a gifted song composer and singer, a conscious desire for recognition of her image through her songs can be seen. The various themes in their songs addresses the women's identity at the cultural level, their originality equate their individuality but more so the songs provide a survival of much of musical traditions and cultural practices. Throughout the Mizo culture, women have always been represented as inferior beings in their culturally constructed society; Strom (1983) stated that "the position of women before the entrance of Christianity was poor. Restrictions of women on various grounds were due to the fact that the Mizo had a strong opinion that a man should have a manly character and a woman should have a womanly character." (25) Dealing with expressive behaviors and songs as a medium, women are the principal transmitters of their song traditions even though there seemed to be a common tendency to ignore their individualities. The status that they hold places them toward a domestic threshold as their labors almost constantly involve manual household chores. While working, they would sing songs and this becomes their main musical outlet, a coping strategy that mirrors their practicing traditions. And since the womenfolk were confined to the internal arrangements of familial structures; their expressions through songs dealt with the knitted intricacies of their culture when placed in comparison to men who had more connections to the external world. Most aspects of daily life that are accompanied by songs are the domain of women. Tales of women are shown



through the song texts and it is almost always women who use song to accompany life events, traditions and cultural practices. The above mentioned songstresses preserve musical traditions through the songs they sing and can be regarded to an extent, the keepers of musical lores. To conclude, Darpawngi sang of the fatality of life, how humans aged with time in comparison to the immortality of songs.

*Tum ang vuaiin hai ang tar na i,*

*Keimah Vanhnuaithang nu tlang tin sel,*

*Ka zai puan ang chul lovin.*(Chhuanvawra *Hmanlai leh tunlai Mizo Hlate* 116)

Based on studies of previous chapters, music played a crucial role in the lives of the Mizos and folk songs may be regarded as one of the most popular forms in Mizo oral literature. Adding to its richness are the contributions of women composers where they can be considered to be a preserver of its musical traditions. With the songs of the women in study, the common thread that ties all of them together is the manifestation of songs as a medium of expression. Even though they partake in various social functions, their participations are limited as in comparison to men, they were nevertheless free to sing about every matter. The fourth chapter used the method of transcriptions where the songs are transcribed into tonal solfas.

According to Koskoff in *A Feminist Ethnomusicology* (2014),

“Recent studies of women’s folklore and culture have suggested that in many societies, women and men do appear to occupy separate expressive spheres, creating not necessarily two separate expressive and self-contained musical cultures, but rather two differentiated yet complementary and overlapping halves of culture.”(32)

The study as mentioned does not intent to be a history of the Mizo folksongs, they are based on conjectures that present the Mizo women composers as musical preservers and how the study of their songs can be associated as a study of a sociomusical history. Ortner’s “*Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?*” is intermittently used to depict the socio-cultural positions of Mizo women through these selected composers. Ortner’s take on nature/culture dichotomy when applied to the songs of these selected women, where manifestations of men’s dominance on the subordination of women fill public space- Mizo women composers

created a niche, a space for themselves by using their voices, and sequentially considered the consistent devaluation they faced. Even though these women lived in different timelines and the theme and song texts entirely distinct, be that as it may, their songs played a pivotal function in determining their sociocultural dispositions in a sociomusical Mizo society. And the nature of women to be seen as aligned to man's culture, they must be equally involved in projects of creativity and transcendence (Ortner 86), and Mizo women composers utilised their creativity through songs to make their mark in their own required time. 'Differentiated yet complementary musical culture' proves apt for a sociomusical Mizo history as well. Furthermore, the songs in study are not to culminate the position of women as wholly deplorable per se, but that they were secondary to men and can be asserted that they used their voices as an expressive outlet as they were the 'other' (Beauvoir ch.1) in a primarily male culture.

This study has its limitations, the impediment being that there is no professional knowledge of the technicalities and skills of music study unanimously. In conducting research on the subject of ethnomusicology, Timothy Rice (ch.3) give a four main- activities explanation on fieldwork as: interviewing, participant observation, learning to sing, play and dance, documenting musical traditions, transcribing and analyzing music and intellectual property rights. Even though certain activities are required for an ethnomusicologist, the study however abided to its academic aspect. The songs of these selected women composers are transcribed so as to observe the procedure that is required of an ethnomusicological study by a learned musician. The fact that fieldwork is considered to be the "hallmark" of an ethnomusicological study (Nettl ch.10) the fieldwork for this study has been carried out partially at best. Concerning cantometrics that have been used for the study, with restricted knowledge of the coding book, it however attempted to highlight the correlations between song style and social structure. In a review of cantometrics project, Patrick E.Savage ( *Alan Lomax's Cantometrics Project: A Comprehensive Review* (2018) mentioned the methodological shortcomings of Lomax's work, with awareness at hand, they are adopted nonetheless and the findings based on this should not be read as evidence in speaking for the musical traditions of the Mizos principally.

Based on the study of the folk songs of Mizo women composers, what showed evidence of the role of the songstresses in the place of music in the Mizo culture is that they played a prominent proportion in preserving their musical traditions. With regard to the songs as a medium of expressions, women also defined a sociomusical history. Their articulation of

the reality of their existence through their songs is also an articulation in showing the events of their culture as well.

The findings of this paper provide further research relevant to the study of Mizo women composers and encourages further research in exploring the concepts of 'feminist ethnomusicology' in the similar context; to provide a remedial to a cultural generalization of women in a sociomusical setting. The issues that are raised in this study can contribute to a deeper understanding of the concerns of women who are making music; to examine if such work is present to expand a theoretical discourse so as to further enhance current literary studies.

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2. DEGREE : Ph.D.
3. DEPARTMENT : English
4. TITLE OF THESIS : A Feminist Ethnomusicological  
study of selected Mizo Women Composers
5. DATE OF ADMISSION : 30.07.2014

**APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

1. DRC : 16.10.2015
2. BOARD OF STUDIES :28.10.2015
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## **Other Relevant Information**

### **1) Conferences/Seminars attended:**

- i) Presented a paper titled, “Language in Culture; Language as Culture” at the Two Day International Seminar on Indigenous Languages and Culture: Its Preservation and Dissemination organised by Centre for Languages and Cultural Studies, Gauhati University on 21<sup>st</sup>& 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2018, Guwahati- 781014, Assam, India.
- ii) Presented a paper titled, “Study on Nuchhungi Renthlei’s Works; Mode of Presentation and Narration” at the National Seminar on Understanding Children’s Literature of Nuchhungi Renthlei: Approaches and Systems organized by Department of Mizo, Pachhunga University College on 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2018 at Sikulpui, Serkawn, Lunglei, Mizoram.

### **2) Published Work:**

- i) “Songs of Aikhiangi: An Art Intrinsic to Mizo Culture” published in Journal of MIELS Vol VI Issue I June 2019, Pages 70-79, ISSN 2348-1188.
- ii) “An Ambivalent Feminist- Tara Westover’s Educated: A Memoir” published in Journal of MIELS Vol VII Issue II December 2020, Pages 212, ISSN 2348-1188.

The thesis is based on a propositional interpretation with regards to the Mizo women and their songs, with the outcome of the study that cannot be all comprehensive nor definitive in its implications, however, the thesis attempts to focus on the sociomusical activity of the Mizo women within a predominantly patriarchal culture. The work focuses on selected women composers, namely- Pi Hmuaki, Thailungi, Lianchhiari, Laltheri, Darpawngi and Chhawntangnu. The present study is an attempt in this direction with the following objectives: to understand adjustments made by Mizo women composers to their culturally constituted environment; how they are preservers of a musical tradition.

In understanding ethnomusicology, what is relevant to its comprehension is that like any other academic field which is being created and recreated through research, writing and teaching of its practitioners, ethnomusicology also possess certain concepts, interpretations and applications. The discipline of ethnomusicology branched out of musicology because of the fervent want of many western musicologists to study non-western musics which exist with oral traditions and especially with the tribal and village communities of the non-western countries. Durga mentions in *Ethnomusicology, A study of Intercultural musicology* (2004) that it was a Dutch musicologist, Jaap Kunst, in 1950 who introduced the term 'ethnomusicology', though the discipline was already in existence in the name of comparative musicology from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The term 'comparative musicology' was used for the study of non-western musics as a separate branch of musicology, the first edition of Harvard dictionary defines it as 'the study of exotic music' as the musical cultures outside the European traditions (2). By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the term 'ethnomusicology' became more widespread; its scope, its methods as such, widened. It is understood as a scientific study of all the process and products of music making in different cultural contexts. Bruno Nettl in *The study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty one issues and concepts* (1983) stated that it is difficult to find a single, simple definition, to which most people in this field would subscribe, and thus, ethnomusicologists have been excessively concerned with defining themselves. Those who seek- or sought- to define ethnomusicology by the material that is contemplated have opted:

“Folk music, and music that used to be called ‘primitive’, that is, tribal, indigenous, or possibly ancient music.”

Those focusing on type of activity might choose:

“Comparative study (of musical systems and cultures), a basically musicological activity.” (Nettl, 1983, “Chapter 1”)

Also, Timothy Rice in *Ethnomusicology: A very short introduction* stated that “ethnomusicology is the study of why, and how, human beings are musical. A definition which positions ethnomusicology among the social sciences, humanities, and biological sciences dedicated to understanding the nature of the human species in all its biological, social, cultural, and artistic diversity. ‘Musical’, as explained by Rice, does not refer to musical talent or ability, rather, it refers to the capacity of humans to create, perform, organize cognitively, react physically and emotionally to, and interpret the meanings of humanly organized sounds. This definition assumes that all humans, not just those we call musicians, are musical to some degree and that musicality (the capacity to make and make sense of music) defines our humanity and provides one of the touchstones of human experience” (Rice, 2014 “Chapter 1”).

In conducting research on the subject of ethnomusicology, Rice (2014) disclosed a four main- activities explanation on fieldwork as: “interviewing, participant observation, learning to sing, play and dance, documenting musical traditions, transcribing and analyzing music and intellectual property rights” (Rice, 2014 “Chapter 3”). Fieldwork is a required practise for ethnomusicologists. By undertaking fieldwork, the ethnomusicologist not only collects the data for research but also tries to understand the culture of the other society and gets the first hand information of the music and people. For documenting information, an audio-visual tool is used. For the completion of this thesis, the fieldwork has been carried out in two periods, first during the mid- year of 2017, end of 2018 and May 2019 respectively. This was done by visiting C. Chhuanvawra, and R. Zokhuma whose records and informations are used reciprocally. The final period took place during the spring season in 2019 (May), a few places and districts that hold memories of the aforementioned songstresses were visited. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, places like Kanghmun ‘S’ which was the birthplace of Chhawngthangnu was visited, and 20 kms from Thenzawl, a visit to Zote ‘S’ took place where her tombstone has been erected. Although, the requirements of fieldwork for an ethnomusicologist calls for participation, observation and to live within the community, this work, as termed “ethnomusicological study” focuses on the multi-dimensional approach, where the study is not limited within the scholars of music and anthropology only but from a ‘literature’ branch of study. To justify the study, two broad aspects have developed in the field of ethnomusicology in India; the professional and the academic aspects. Scholars and researchers of other disciplines virtually research history, meaning and avenues of ethnic-aboriginal cultures. And from an academic aspect, the plight of Mizo women composers in

the past, and the remnants and records of their creative outputs are studied to show their position in the society therein. Musical study as a cultural phenomenon has been used in this research process.

As Durga (2004) described, “learning the music of a culture can be done under a guide during the field work. The western staff notation is used widely and sometimes additional symbols are introduced by the researcher to write down the music more accurately. This analysis of ‘music’ is made by transcribing the music. The transcription acts as a device for solving analytical problems and the ethnomusicologist selects the type of transcription to help the specific investigating problem such as comparison of section length in extended improvising, types of ornaments used by the performers during the performance of a specific recital, identification of rhythm and total variations in the performance” (12). The selected songs of the Mizos suggest that majority of the tune of the songs are sung lazily and regards to certain drawbacks, arranging them in the western staff notation proved difficult. The intellectual property rights goes to Benjamin Lalrinzuala, a Music school instructor, and standing (deputy) Bandmaster for Tuikual Temple Corp. for five years.

Cantometric experiment on Mizo folksongs is attempted for the thesis. Alan Lomax who is the developer of cantometrics, a method of song measurements, in *Folk Song, Style and Culture* (1968) said “it is method for systematically and holistically describing the general features of accompanied or unaccompanied song performances.” (34) Coming to the scene of the Mizo folksongs sung and composed by women in the study, it is difficult to locate the area of sex differentials in song leadership. But attempts are made with songs of the women in study- that are sung by various societies for record which have been archived by All India Radio, Aizawl.

From the above, the study attempts to study the place of music in a Mizo culture, how the women songstresses/composers contributed in preserving a musical tradition with a study of their sociomusical positions; how the articulation of the reality of Mizo women’s existence through their songs is also an articulation in showing the events of their culture.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The first chapter of the thesis introduces a general overview of the area from which the study will investigate the problems. The study is based on conjectures; as the information gathered to have knowledge regarding the timeframe of the folk songs of the Mizos is



fragmented and incomplete. Bohlman in *The study of Folk Music in the modern world* (1988) said that “nothing definite can be known about origins. He holds the view that many of our scholarly forbears were in search of just such origins. Bohlman intentionally deflected on giving a rigid definition of folk music, such definitions are never cross-culturally sound, and said the dynamic nature of folk music belies the stasis of definition”(2). It is an arduous task to document the original homeland of the Mizos, and so are its folk songs. The study does not intent to be a study of the history of the folksongs of Mizoram. It is merely an overture of how the songs composed by selected women composers allow us to trace certain practice of socio- cultural activities entailing the conditions of women.

The status of women, since the early time, cannot be drawn to a definite conclusion as aspects relating to their condition vary according to various frames of references. In her study of music and gender, Koskoff (2014) claimed herself to be a feminist but explained that “she is much more interested in the relationships between women (of all varieties) and men (of all varieties) than in espousing a particular case for either women or men. She is interested in why women and men have not achieved gender equality than in decrying the fact that they have not. For her, the word ‘feminism’ does not imply ‘for women only’ but rather, points to and exposes the obvious reality that it is women, after all, who are most often the unequal partners in power relations”(7). With regard to Koskoff’s statement, this study explores the possibilities of gender dichotomies through the songs that were sung and composed by the women folk amongst the Mizos. With developments and gradual progress in various fields, from the early twentieth century, the Mizo society with the advance of the printing press, writers began to take interest of their own historical past and record events based on oral traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. However, the records they kept have its own limitations as its sources are the shadows of the colonial records. Understanding from an additional perspective to recollect the Mizo women’s past, oral traditions and cultural practices plays an important role and the songs that were sung and composed by the Mizo women are a good example as events and circumstances do not simply happen; they are interpreted and created, and in each song repetition lies the possibility of reaffirmation, reinterpretation, and rebellion. In *Ethnomusicology and modern music history* (1991) Anthony Seeger stated that “song texts deal with a limited number of topics and are performed almost exclusively in ritual- related activities. Singing is one of the means through which time, space and social processes are created and re-created. Songs are distinct from other verbal forms in that they alone are said to have extra-societal origins”

(26). Despite the Mizo community following a patriarchal system and the women having lesser mobility than men, they have their own contributions, their own space to vocalize their beliefs and ideas against the customaries.

## **Chapter 2: The Place of Music in Mizo Culture**

When we look into the history of the Mizo folk songs, it is seen that a detailed record of songs is absent, even Mizo historians have little proof of its existence in written record and the little record that they have differs as the songs of the folk was passed down orally. K. Zawla (Thanmawia, *Mizo Hla Hlui*), one of the pioneers in recording Mizo history, in *Mizo Pi Pute leh an thlahte*, wrote, “Based on the hearsay of the folk, it is said that the Mizos did not possess any kind of songs while they were settling at the range of Lentlang and its upper borders and named it Lenchung”. He said that even though the folk people longed for a song and a dance, they could not, since they did not own any kind of songs. Since it is difficult to know the exact recording of the origin of the Mizos, it is as difficult to know the history and origin of their songs. But what can be known with certainty is when the Mizos settled at Chhinlung, they composed a song which they named *Thuthmun Zai*. While they were residing at Chhinlung, there was an epidemic, of illness and it took a majority of their lives, young and old. And due to their sufferings, these songs of mourning came into existence” (33). Chhuanvawra (*Mizo Hlate* 2011), also stated that, “since the records of the origin and history of the Mizo songs differed, as stated above, it is difficult to know which one is true and reliable, but whatever the records provide, we do know that the Mizo ancestors originated at Chhinlung, located at Awksa Ranges and the best way, he say, is to believe that the Mizo folk, would certainly have had songs even before settling at Chhinlung” (7).

The time when the Mizo folk people descended and crossed Tiau was believed to be around 1700 AD. Before the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the land was slowly infiltrated with mainland Indians, but the few remaining two hundred years of settlement in this area, a number of progresses took place; in religious field, in terms of village administration and community development. It was during this period that composition of a number of songs flourished. Women songwriters increased on the scene and songs bearing the names of women numbered. The oral narratives of the Mizos are inherently replete with segments of folk-ballads both in their form and content. They hold indication to the recreation and poignancy that the community had experienced throughout their migratory tribulations. The original creativity and artistry diminishes because of omissions and misrepresentations when

they are given written forms for simplification. Nonetheless, the prose versions in the layout of stories and tales that are confronted with narratives in folk songs are thematically interlinked. To know the place of music in a culture, the question of its origin too accessed the rationale and the human tendency of reasoning. There can only be tentative answers to the questions of the origin of all that is important and less too. Why is there a song, a song catering to distinctively different sentimentalities? Bohlman (1988) wrote that “not because he would posit a new theory with regards to folk music, but because he prefers to counter with an observation that necessitates abandonment of more circumspect approaches, said: the need to relate folk music to its beginnings persists as an essential and pervasive component of folk music theory. There are numerous theories and in relation to the nature of music, explicitly or implicitly, consist of truth claims in the form of metaphors that link music to other domains of human thought and among the most common metaphors explained by ethnomusicologists is that: music is a resource with psychological and social functions, it is a cultural form, a form of social behaviour. Aesthetic and textual concerns often presume an understanding of origins. The social constructs of folk music, too, originate in different ways, as do different repertoires and styles of performance practice. The persistent pursuit of origins belies the inability to “know anything definite.” Music is a text to be read and interpreted and a system of signs. Overall, music is art (Rice 829). These metaphors, which are based on theories discussed broadly in the social sciences, humanities, and philosophy, when taken together, illustrate the richness of music’s significance in human life. Creative activities are mainly studied through the finished products that have been created- art can be in the form of painting or sculpture, dance, a piece of music and literature. Each field has its own creator, a song-its composer, a novel-its author and so on, but these creations cannot stand alone on its own. There is always the question of how and why they were created in a particular given period of time. Another point in regard to this is that an individual cannot be its sole owner of the creation, what needs to be looked into is the social situation, and the context therein to have an understanding.

Taking the study of ‘songs’ independently from the rest of the work of arts, the approach is not to read the entire cultural practices of the Mizos through the mode of songs, but to study the cultural representations that can be read through the songs of the women folk, thereby using songs as a medium of expressions. Based on records, Vumson (*Zo History* n.d.) stated that “we can examine that the Mizos are agriculturists and the tribes that settled in central areas of the Zo territories had their staple food of maize, millet, sulphur beans, beans,

peas, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, melons and other crops that grow in colder region. These crops were grown as it was suitable to the cold and high altitude. In *chhim* (south) areas, which was hotter, and along deep river and stream valleys, rice was the staple food. Meat was scarce as was sugar and milk.”(12). As with the differences in their consumption, so does their habit. These differences certainly led to the distinctness on their style of compositions of songs as well. The cantometric research (see ch.3) stated that “the song styles of simple cultures differ in consistent ways from the song styles of technically more advanced societies. An extensive series of correlations revealed that: (i) many basic attributes of song style varied with the main subsistence activity of a culture; and (ii) certain factors of song performance were good indicators of the level of complexity of the main productive processes of a culture, especially of the organization of its work teams...that song is a kind of universal human behaviour and so is work. Every person in every culture throughout history has usually been involved in the everyday, year-round food- producing activities of his culture. He has belonged to some kind of work team or was being trained for membership in one” (121). Vumson (*Zo History* n.d.) stated that “songs are sung not only during feasts, but whenever there is a gathering. At the death of a child, the mother, the aunts, or the sisters recite, step by step, the child’s life story. Likewise, kneeling beside the deathbed, village women recall in song, composed at the instant, the story of the death as they saw it. Songs recorded the poor and rich, the loss of sons, brothers, daughters and sisters, and great hunts. And those who celebrated *khuangchawi* and all others who achieved something in life composed songs telling of their past, their success in war, the capture of slaves, and the loss of their loved ones. These songs recorded personal as well as community history” (14). For a people who have no writing, the recording of history has been possible only because these songs were sung repeatedly. Taking ‘song’ as a measure of culture, Lomax (1968) claimed that “when the human community sings, then, it seems to make many statements about the levels of complexity that strongly affect every aspect of its life-subsistence, stratification, government, leader differentiation, and general specificity. In performing a song, man reminds himself of the kind of community he comes from and its level of achievement. One function of song seems to be to reinforce the various levels of complexity that underlie all behaviour” (163).

Goswami in *Emergence of Ethnomusicology: As traced in Indian Perspective* (2014) said that “the cultural contacts with the English writers during the British rule in India paved a way for the emergence of intercultural musicology in India as the tenets of ethnomusicological methodology are found in their writings on Indian music. The tradition as

a multi-disciplinary approach opened a way for scholars that are related to varied disciplines” (503). With this stance, an ethnomusicological study on the songs of the Mizos from an academic aspect is attempted. As mentioned above, various historians have probed and analysed on the origin and veracity of the Mizo folksongs and with the numerous discourses that are present, what is visible is that the music of the folk as stated by Bohlman in *The study of Folk music in the modern world* (1988) appears as a “particularly appropriate symbol for past, present and future. Literature rarely discusses folk music by itself. Instead, folk music is compared and contrasted with other forms of cultural expression.”(89) Accompanying this justification, Timothy Rice (qtd in *How Musical is Man?*) captured ethnomusicological sensibility as:

“In this world of cruelty and exploitation...it is necessary to understand why a madrigal by Gesualdo or a Bach Passion, a *sitar* melody from India or a song from Africa, Berg’s *Wozzeck* or Britten’s *War Requiem*, a Balinese *Gamelan* or a Cantonese opera, or a symphony by Mozart, Beethoven or Mahler may be profoundly necessary for human survival, quite apart from any merit they may have examples of creativity and technical progress. It is also necessary to explain why, under certain circumstances, a ‘simple’ folk song may have more human value than a ‘complex’ symphony.” (214)

This implies the study of the music of all the world’s peoples as a path to understanding human beings.

### **Chapter 3: Mizo Women composers as preservers of a musical tradition**

According to Philip V. Bohlman (1988), “Oral tradition fosters both the creativity and the stability of folk music. So strong is the correlation of oral tradition with folk music that most definitions treat oral tradition as fundamental to folk music, if not its most salient feature.”(14) This chapter reasons the significance of the contributions of women in the patriarchal societies of the Mizos through their songs and how their involvements in the musical traditions make them preservers. A study of the status of Mizo women in the past show that the position that women holds in a society was not the same as what men enjoy. Their participation and involvement in various fields regarding their social, religious and economical position proves morally right as what their society and culture deemed right and true at the time. However, what can be seen is that they never did have much participation-politically, socially, and economically and their rights were limited. This can be

acknowledged when we study the works of the various women composers, they took to composing songs that reflect their identity. The status of women, since the early time, cannot be drawn to a definite conclusion however, as aspects relating to their condition varies according to various frames of reference.

In *Folk Song, Style and Culture* (1968) Lomax used cantometrics, a coined word which means “a measure of song or song as a measure, a method for systematically and holistically describing the general features of accompanied or unaccompanied song performances” (34). The coding book as proposed by Lomax and his team, defined the rating measurements used in the cantometric experiment. Coming to the scene of the Mizo folksongs sung and composed by women in the study, it is difficult to locate the area of sex differentials in song leadership. To use Lomax’s defence on coding parameters, “a non-professional coder can console himself with the thought that even if he has to omit some coding parameters, his ratings will still be valid for comparative purposes” (34). In the songs that are sung by various societies for record by the All India Radio, Aizawl, the songs that are sung are mainly started off by the male leader, women then joined in and in the Mizo folk song style, the women chants the song texts prior to its singing in unison. The measure of sex role amongst the Mizos can be of a collective vocalization in interlocked groups. Since there is an absence of the cantometric coding system for the study, the song style however is measured from non- professional parameters which are by listening to the tune of the song performance. The coding book consists of 37 style factors and out of these lines, line 1, 4, 5, 10, 17, 25 style factors have been taken up as an example to explain the general styles of the Mizo folksongs. The songs of the Mizos are mostly monodic instead of polyphonic in parts, and runs close to the measuring of the Mongolian scale. (Lomax 38, 44, 45, 48-49, 61-62, 67-68)

To incorporate Lomax’s cantometric code in the study is to “reflect the group-oriented communication and musical situations which can be differentiated in terms of the level of participation of those present since singing seems to be a community directed practice.” (15) In justifying the cause of this section of study, Lomax (1968) himself stated that “the coder should not attempt to be analytical over and above the outlines of the coding book, nor should there be an attempt to read into a given performance of what the performers really meant or really felt” (36). The Mizo songs in sample are sung by various societies, in the tradition of how songs were presented. Regarding the complementarity of songs, Lomax stated that “the arrangements between singers have rather to do with a more personal, face to

face relationship. The most important of these is the interaction of males and females and it is here, we discover that the cantometric profiles are most revealing. The feminine imprint turned up, however, far from any such sentimental setting- in the world of work, in the principal subsistence activity of a society. Among most gatherers, many incipients and the majority of cultivators, however, where women bring back most of the plant food into the village, do the cooking and mind the babies and the house, all of life has a somewhat feminine touch and the voices and bodies of women thread through the principal rituals. The fact is that relaxed, clear vocal performance and cohesive choruses are both more frequent in complementary societies. In complementarity, women are not forced to keep silent or inactive and where, therefore one would expect less tension, as represented in songs sung in tight voices and with strong nasality, is notably lower in those societies where women are responsible for fifty percent or more of the central subsistence task” (163-169). By listening to the songs that were sung, a suppositional location of the song performance indicates their relationship to the expressive arts and placing the production on the lines given in the coding book, the Mizos’ song performance, with concerns to male and female interaction, can be positioned to maintain a complementary role in their singing style, revealing an undifferentiated role in their subsistence task, the ‘feminine touch and the voices’ as Lomax stated can be seen to tread through in the Mizo women’s arrangement of song-texts. The partial use of the coding experiment reveals the complementarity of singing style and subsistence activities of the Mizos; but this does not reveal of what the performers, either male or female, really felt, as Lomax himself called for the coder to not be analytical over and above the outlines of the coding book. The sociomusical tradition as have been performed and recorded indeed presented the Mizos to obtain complementing roles of both the sexes when provisionally placed on Lomax’s coding experiment, evaluating the song performance (34) and hypothetically, the social reality of the Mizo women in study can also be identified as they were not forced to keep silent or inactive in their sociomusical participation and thereby using songs as an expressive outlet to show their actuality.

Coming into the scene of songs composed by women songstresses, Lalsangzuali Sailo (1995) compiled a collection of songs that are works of Mizo women songstresses and have divided them into two parts; one, in which she named, *Mizo Hmeichhia te leh Hla* (Mizo Women and Songs); two, *Chanchin Tha thlen hnua Mizo Hmeichhe chhuanawmte* (Honourable Mizo Women after the advent of the Gospel). In part 1, 19 chapters of women are mentioned, songs that are composed by them and songs bearing their names that are

written for them and others. In part 2 of the book, 17 chapters are mentioned. Also, a book on *Mizo Hla Hlui* (Mizo Folksongs) written by R.L.Thanmawia and *Hmanlai leh tunlai Mizo Hlate* (Mizo Songs) written by Chhuanvawra give an account of the history and background of each selected song and composers. The study is based on these texts and an analysis of the songs is attempted. As mentioned, the study of the Mizo folk songs of women as preservers of a musical tradition is based on three sources. Chhuanvawra (2011) in *Hmanlai leh tunlai Mizo Hlate* has given 20 chapters and divided the collected songs of the Mizos in chronological order. In the third chapter, titled '*Tiau chhak lama chhuak hlate*' (Songs composed before crossing) contains twenty sub categories and for the study, 2 songs are selected namely- Thailungi Zai and Pi Hmuaki Zai/Ngente Zai. And there are songs that were composed while the Mizos settled at Tiau and around its region. Here, C.Chhuanvawra has given 25 songs and the songs to be worked on- Lianchhiari zai, Laltheri zai, and Darpawngi zai belonged in the category. He stated that some of the songs that were composed after settling at Tiau region are much older than the songs that were composed before living at Tiau region. Since the songs are arranged according to its region and place, and not its time, they had to be included in the said category. In chapter 12, he explained the meaning of Puma zai and Tlanglam zai which after the year 1900, most of the tunes of the Mizo songs are either in Puma or Tlanglam zai tune; Chhawntangnu zai belonged in this chapter and song category. Here, Chhuanvawra (2011) included the songs of Thailungi in the category of songs that were composed before settling at Tiau and above its borders. R.L. Thanmawia (2012) on the other hand, included the songs of Thailungi in the section of Chai Hla.

The oral traditions of the Mizos have been recreated and re-interpreted by various historians and scholars with a common aim- to preserve traditions. The studies or views presented by them may have differed slightly with time but the message they convey arises from the same objectives. Bohlman (1988) stated that "Tradition is fashioned from both an authenticity that clings to the past and a process of change that continuously reshapes the present"(13). Based on the songs of the Mizo women composers and glancing through their backgrounds, 'songs' or 'set of words set to music' reflect the lives they lived. Their songs mirrored the traditions also portraying the position of women of their time. The songs of Thailungi, Pi Hmuaki, Lianchhiari, Laltheri, Darpawngi and Chhawntangnu indicate the different social bases in their communities at a given time in which they lived. An overview of the songs of these women composers' talks of the traditional characteristics - Thailungi's songs is seen through the exchanges she made with her brother in songs; the songs are simple



but serve as an important repertoire in expressing herself. The recurring themes in Pi Hmuaki's songs are of nature, where she is a mediator between nature and culture whereas in Lianchhiari's songs, a desire to be with her lover can be seen and an incident in one of her song texts recalls a woman's sexuality in a culturally perceived sex role. Laltheri's songs are lamentations for her deceased lover Chalthanga. Also, she challenges the authoritative figures in her life through her songs, creating a new cultural tradition in the Sailo clan which is a crossover into opposite gender domains. Darpawngi's songs can be analyzed in three varied themes, her songs of anger, songs of lamentations for her son, and *Thlek* songs that appear to be a life affirming song as singers would tilt their head in rhythm to the song. Part of her songs shows Darpawngi's gain for power in both domestic and public domains. Individual recognition as a woman musician is seen in Chhawntangnu's songs; her songs mostly talk of the societal exchanges made on her being a gifted song composer and singer, a conscious desire for recognition of her image through her songs can be seen. The various themes in their songs addresses the women's identity at the cultural level, their originality equate their individuality but more so the songs provide a survival of much of musical traditions and cultural practices. Throughout the Mizo culture, women have always been represented as inferior beings in their culturally constructed society; Strom (*Wind through the Bamboos* 1983) stated that "the position of women before the entrance of Christianity was poor. Restrictions of women on various grounds were due to the fact that the Mizo had a strong opinion that a man should have a manly character and a woman should have a womanly character." (25) Dealing with expressive behaviours and songs as a medium, women are the principal transmitters of their song traditions even though there seemed to be a common tendency to ignore their individualities. The status that they hold places them toward a domestic threshold as their labours almost constantly involve manual household chores. While working, they would sing songs and this becomes their main musical outlet, a coping strategy that mirrors their practicing traditions. And since the womenfolk were confined to the internal arrangements of familial structures; their expressions through songs dealt with the knitted intricacies of their culture when placed in comparison to men who had more connections to the external world. Most aspects of daily life that are accompanied by songs are the domain of women. Tales of women are shown through the song texts and it is almost always women who use song to accompany life events, traditions and cultural practices. The above mentioned songstresses preserve musical traditions through the songs they sing and can be regarded to an extent, the keepers of musical lores. To conclude, Darpawngi sang of the fatality of life, how humans aged with time in comparison to the immortality of songs.

*Tum ang vuaiin hai ang tar na i,*

*Keimah Vanhnuaithang nu tlang tin sel,*

*Ka zai puan ang chul lovin.*(Chhuanvawra Hmanlai leh tunlai Mizo Hlate 116)

#### **Chapter 4: Mizo Women Composers: A sociomusical history**

In “*Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?*” Ortner asserts:

women are being identified or symbolically associated with nature, as opposed to men, who are identified with culture. Since it is always culture’s project to subsume and transcend nature, if women were considered part of nature, then culture would find it “natural” to subordinate, not to say oppress, them. (73)

Reading the history of selected women composers in previous chapters and also to avoid redundancy, the study uses one or more songs at the least that can connect to the tenets of a woman’s sociomusical role enhancing their sociocultural positions. In a song of Thailungi:

*“Ka takin la zui na law,*

*Ka man sial sawm haw law neu”* (12)

(Thailungi said that she could not follow her brother and that her bride price -*price of a mithun* would go to waste if she did)

The ‘*sial*’ in Thailungi’s song can represent her link to ‘nature’. When her brother Tlumtea requested her to go home with him, she said she could not as her bride price of *sial sawm* (ten mithuns) would go to waste. She was being logically subordinate and was in a way contented with the position that she was presently in. She felt privileged to be married into a prosperous family and having being bought for the price of ten mithuns, she declined her brother’s invitation, whom in the story is the person she longed for most. She identified her worth to nature, here, ten mithuns showing a ‘socially engendered conservatism and traditionalism of woman’s thinking’ (Ortner 85) under the patriarchal governance she was in.

Pi Hmuaki’s songs are mostly songs that have an affinity to ‘nature’. The presence of song imagery as well as the use of narrative devices can be seen. They can also be termed allegorical in the way Pi Hmuaki used nature imageries to describe emotions. There is no

evidence of dissent in her songs, they appear substantially pleasant and mellow. And based on her song, she seemed indifferent when she was to be buried alive. Ortner (1974) pointed out, “the postulate that woman is viewed as closer to nature than man has several implications... if it is viewed simply as a middle position on a scale from culture down to nature, then it is still seen as lower than culture and thus accounts for the pan-cultural assumption that woman is lower than man in the order of things” (86). A speculation in the songs of Pi Hmuaki shows a close comparison of herself with the elements of nature, her indifference and submission before she was buried alive might be a result of her acceptance as being one with nature, lower than culture which is manmade. In *Mizo Hla Hlui* (2012), songs that paralleled Pi Hmuaki’s emotions to nature are:

*Ngente thangkhuala di ka tian zanah,*

*Kawlngo thla kan inzap tam rawh se. (216)*

(Pi Hmuaki in her song expressed her wish for her lover who is a guest at Ngente village to enjoy his last night of his stay there by exhibiting himself like that of Kawlngo birds flapping their wings)

*Lelte lo kiu, awn thing lerah,*

*‘Thingpui lawn sang rem lang’ a ti e. (216)*

(The song talks of Lelte singing in the branches of a tree and Pi Hmuaki’s plea for the bird to climb higher)

*Khuangpui ri chur, Neihchawng chhun inah,*

*Pawnglam chhawn ang ka thlekpui mi u. (216)*

(Pi Hmuaki sings of the time she danced like a cricket to the sound of the beating drums at the chief’s house)

*An lal an fam, bellian pal ang tlar,*

*Hnuaitiang hawih changsial a ngui zo ve. (216)*

(The song talks of a deceased chief and arrangement of pots (given to deceased people as a form of condolence in Mizo society) aligned like that of fences, and how the whole village was mourning, even the *changsial* (mithun) was grieving)

*Luia lengngha sang zar a rui e,*

*An hai hlei, suanglai lian vel.*

(The song expresses how fishes swarm with intoxication in numbers)

*Bui bir angin a zal zuk thlak ila,*

*Khaw ruamah sial ang zu chhuak ila.*

(The song says while she was being led to her grave, she requested the young men to lay her body like a rabbit to its burrows and her body to leap out like a mithun in a narrow valley)

Lianchhiari is an example of a woman whom Ortner (81) defined as embodying a ‘relative subjectivity’ where men are classified as ‘relative objectivity’ where males represent experiences of self, others, space, and time in individualistic, objective, and distant ways, while females represent experiences in relatively interpersonal, subjective, immediate ways” (quoting Carlson, p. 270). Based on history, Lianchhiari sang of her humiliation in a song:

*Kan va tih luat tukah,*

*Lengin ka zir sual e*

*Ka pa vanhnuai thang tur*

*A than ni bang kir e (22)*

The song talk of a time when Lianchhiari’s father Vanhnuaitanga decided to give a public feast. The community was in merriment. Lianchhiari and Chawngfianga too celebrated by spending the night together. This incident spread like wild fire and instead of her father’s *Khuangchawi* (festival), it set off a slander for the both of them. The intent of the *Khuangchawi* was to honour Vanhnuaitanga, everyone who came to witness the festival seemed aware of that. But the ‘personal’ of Lianchhiari became the more ‘public’ in its entirety. What was private for Lianchhiari bought humiliation for her father and herself to the extent that the people who were invited had to go home ‘*an mi kohte pawh an haw leh ta vek a*’ (Sakhming Chullo p.22). The ‘subjectivity’ that Ortner explained can be seen through Lianchhiari’s song, an act of pleasure transformed into an act of disregard.

When viewing women as closer to ‘nature’ than men, if women are read as a mediating element in the culture-nature relationship according to Ortner (1974), “then it may

account in part for the cultural tendency not merely to devalue woman but to circumscribe and restrict her functions, since culture must maintain control over its (pragmatic and symbolic) mechanisms for the conversion of nature into culture.”(86) The misfortunes of Laltheri’s life revolve around a utility of a social construct made by men. Based on history, she was not allowed her freedom- her lover Chalthanga was killed as he was a commoner and with regards to his low status in a patriarchal hierarchy, he proved unfit to offer any political exchange for the chief’s daughter. Laltheri was devastated as she could not do anything besides using her voice through her songs. She was caught in an affliction of an unethical structure. The ‘culture’ of man devalued her prerogative of being; she was a symbol for man’s subordination. Her song:

*Bawmzo ral mah dar ang chhai ngam lo,*

*Belzu kungah ka di Chalthang, chawngsai ang sat e. (39)*

(She sang of how her lover Chalthanga was mercilessly killed)

With Laltheri being read as a mediating element according to Ortner, Darpawngi can be associated with “an ambiguous status between culture and nature, it may help account for the fact that, in specific cultural ideologies and symbolizations, woman can occasionally be aligned with culture, and in any event is often assigned polarized and contradictory meanings within a single symbolic system.” 986). Her song:

*‘Mi zun ngailo, keimahni zun ngai,*

*A tap ruai ruai thin e, ni chhunah,*

*Nikungpa laldang a mawi love’ (Lalsangzuali, Sakhming Chullo 57)*

(Darpawngi sang this song on account of Lalbuta’s lonesome state, she told him it was not fine for a man to weep for her as he would for days after parting) This song placed her in a position of ‘intermediate’ between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ by sympathizing with him in a song when she was the victim all along (see ch.3) Buangtheuva, the chief of Darlawng while in preparation for *Khuangchawi* (festival), visited Nikhama, the chief of Khawbel and invited him. On the day of the festival, with dances and merriment, Darpawngi composed a song on how the chief and others danced beautifully. On hearing her song and acknowledging her skill as a composer perhaps, Nikhama invited Darpawngi to live and serve him (she was a

bonded labour) and accepted his invitation, so she went. When they reached Khawbel, the villagers were stupefied and gossiped about her assuming interference. She sang:

*Khua tina chhiar min ti reng lo u*

*Saithuami pa'n tlangnuam nihliap min zar e,*

*Tuan kham kawltu ka chawi reng love. (58)*

Her status as a skilful singer and composer placed her in a position of 'intermediary', to assume this in Ortner's view, she was aligned with 'culture' - the chief being her patron but she still had to go through the stigmas of being a woman, a *bawih* (bonded labour) at that. Her rise to a favourable position appears contradictory within the well-defined Mizo cultural system.

Coming to Chhawntangnu, 'biological determinism' (83) that Ortner postulated in understanding the universal secondary status of women can be connected. Reading through Chhawntangnu's songs, her gift to spontaneously compose songs gained her admiration from others during her time. And she was often asked to compose songs on different occasions. A theme that related her as a mother in her songs can also be seen:

*Chunnu'n raltiangah ka thlir reng mai*

*Thingte zawn thliai I nun zir thiam ang*

*Ri tleng tleng an chawi e, zai sa e (104)*

(Chhawntangnu taught her children the art of *bengbung* (Mizo indigenous instrument similar to a xylophone) and the song talks of a time when she could hear her children playing it and made her proud)

Also she would coax her children to be careful while they were outside playing:

*Chunnu'n raltiangah ka thlir reng mai*

*Hrinhniang ka chawi sumtuala leng tirte*

*Kha, ka tuai Thangdanga te hau lo u (104)*

(The song states how Chhawntangnu was eyeing her children playing outside and would chide the other kids not to scold her children)

Ortner defined “woman’s psyche”(86) is appropriately moulded to mothering functions by her own socialization and tending toward greater personalism and less mediated modes of relating – making women appear to be rooted more directly and deeply in nature. Chhawnthangnu’s love for her children came natural to her and can be seen in Ortner’s work, where female appear more sentimental than male, making them more inclined to abstract ‘culture’ thoughts whereas women’s thoughts make them more connected to other individuals.

According to Koskoff (2014),

“Recent studies of women’s folklore and culture have suggested that in many societies, women and men do appear to occupy separate expressive spheres, creating not necessarily two separate expressive and self-contained musical cultures, but rather two differentiated yet complementary and overlapping halves of culture.”(32)

The study as mentioned does not intent to be a history of the Mizo folksongs, they are based on conjectures that present the Mizo women composers as musical preservers and how the study of their songs can be associated as a study of a sociomusical history. Ortner’s “*Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?*” (1974) is intermittently used to depict the socio-cultural positions of Mizo women through these selected composers. Ortner’s take on nature/culture dichotomy when applied to the songs of these selected women, where manifestations of men’s dominance on the subordination of women fill public space- Mizo women composers created a niche, a space for themselves by using their voices, and sequentially considered the consistent devaluation they faced. Even though these women lived in different timelines and the theme and song texts entirely distinct, be that as it may, their songs played a pivotal function in determining their sociocultural dispositions in a sociomusical Mizo society. “And the nature of women to be seen as aligned to man’s culture, they must be equally involved in projects of creativity and transcendence” (Ortner 86), and Mizo women composers utilised their creativity through songs to make their mark in their own required time. “Differentiated yet complementary musical culture” (Koskoff 32) proves apt for a sociomusical Mizo history as well. Furthermore, the songs in study are not to culminate the position of women as wholly deplorable per se, but that they were secondary to men and can be asserted that they used their voices as an expressive outlet as they were the ‘other’ (Beauvoir, *Second Sex* “Chapter.1”) in a primarily male culture.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

To conclude the study of women in music stated by Bruno Nettl:

“But it seems reasonable to believe that the great differences in musical style among the peoples of the world can in good measure be attributed to the way in which people relate to each other, and a major aspect of this relationship concerns gender” (*I’m a Stranger Here Myself: Women’s Music, Women in Music* ch.4)

The second chapter of the thesis had the aim of exploring whether the study of ‘songs’ helps in reading the cultural practices of the Mizos. As ethnomusicology is a study of music in a culture, studying the folksongs of the Mizos parallels the study of their culture. With this stance, an ethnomusicological study on the songs of the Mizos from an academic aspect was attempted in this chapter. As mentioned in the study, various historians have probed and analysed on the origin and veracity of the Mizo folksongs and with the numerous discourses that are present, what is visible is that the music of the folk as stated by Bohlman (89) appears as a particularly appropriate symbol for past, present and future. Literature rarely discusses folk music by itself. Instead, folk music is compared and contrasted with other forms of cultural expression.

The third chapter intend to show the Mizo women composers’ contribution in the musical traditions of the Mizos and how they acted as musical preservers in a predominantly male society. The study was based on texts that recorded the songs as well as histories of these selected women composers, with the substance of each songs given. The chapter mentioned the adoption of Lomax’s cantometrics study in order to present the correlation of song style and social structure and showed complementary role of both the sexes based on the coding book, implying an undifferentiated role in their subsistence task; the ‘feminine touch and the voices’ as Lomax stated can be seen to tread through in the Mizo women’s arrangement of song-texts. The social reality of the Mizo women in study can also be identified as they were not forced to keep silent or inactive in their sociomusical participation and thereby using songs as an expressive outlet to show their actuality. Based on the songs of the Mizo women composers and glancing through their backgrounds, ‘songs’ or ‘set of words set to music’ reflect the lives they lived. Their songs mirrored the traditions also portraying the position of women of their time. The songs of Thailungi, Pi Hmuaki, Lianchhiari, Laltheri, Darpawngi and Chhawntangnu indicate the different social bases in their



communities at a given time in which they lived. Tales of women are shown through the song texts and it is almost always women who use song to accompany life events, traditions and cultural practices. These songstresses preserve musical traditions through the songs they sing and can be regarded to an extent, the keepers of musical lores.

Based on studies of previous chapters, music played a crucial role in the lives of the Mizos and folk songs may be regarded as one of the most popular forms in Mizo oral literature. Adding to its richness are the contributions of women composers where they can be considered to be a preserver of its musical traditions. With the songs of the women in study, the common thread that ties all of them together is the manifestation of songs as a medium of expression. Even though they partake in various social functions, their participations are limited as in comparison to men, they were nevertheless free to sing about every matter. The fourth chapter also used the method of transcriptions where the songs are transcribed into tonic solfas.

This study has its limitations, the impediment being that there is no professional knowledge of the technicalities and skills of music study unanimously. In conducting research on the subject of ethnomusicology, Rice (ch.3) give a four main- activities explanation on fieldwork as: interviewing, participant observation, learning to sing, play and dance, documenting musical traditions, transcribing and analyzing music and intellectual property rights. Even though certain activities are required for an ethnomusicologist, the study however abided to its academic aspect. The songs of these selected women composers are transcribed so as to observe the procedure that is required of an ethnomusicological study by a learned musician. The fact that fieldwork is considered to be the “hallmark” of an ethnomusicological study (Nettl ch.10) the fieldwork for this study has been carried out partially at best. Concerning cantometrics that have been used for the study, with restricted knowledge of the coding book, it however attempted to highlight the correlations between song style and social structure. Patrick E. Savage (2018) in a review of cantometrics project mentioned the methodological shortcomings of Lomax’s work, with awareness at hand, they are adopted nonetheless and the findings based on this should not be read as evidence in speaking for the musical traditions of the Mizos principally.

With a study of the folk songs of Mizo women composers, what showed evidence of the role of the songstresses in the place of music in the Mizo culture is that they played a prominent proportion in preserving their musical traditions. With regard to the songs as a

medium of expressions, women also defined a sociomusical history. Their articulation of the reality of their existence through their songs is also an articulation in showing the events of their culture as well.

The findings of this paper provide further research relevant to the study of Mizo women composers and encourages further research in exploring the concepts of 'feminist ethnomusicology' in the similar context; to provide a remedial to a cultural generalization of women in a sociomusical setting. The issues that are raised in this study can contribute to a deeper understanding of the concerns of women who are making music; to examine if such work is present to expand a theoretical discourse so as to further enhance current literary studies.

## APPENDIX A

## SONGS

Thailungi:

*Thailungi, Thailungi*

*I tiangthirte lo nghak la*

*I hlantaite lo nghak la (Lalsangzuali 10)*

The substance of the song states that Thailungi's stepmother called Thailungi and offered her to take *tuibur* (nicotine water) and *em* (basket) with her. Thailungi knowing that her stepmother did not love her as her own replied:

*Chhaktiang khi chen ka thlen chuan,*

*Tiangthir a tha bo ngai lo,*

*Hlantai a tha bo ngai lo (11)*

Thailungi replied her mother by stating that upon reaching north, *tiang thir* (stick, in the song context) and baskets would readily be available there too. Instead of stopping for her stepmother, she walked on with the Pawi merchant. On reaching the Pawi village, they rested and did not untangle her from her bondage. Thailungi was embarrassed in which she sang:

*Hrumsawmin hrual hrui ai ban e,*

*Ka ngir thiam o*

*Ka ngir thiam o dailungah (11)*

(The song says that even though her hands were roped, she could still stand atop the rocks even with that)

*Raltea, he pu Liana'n*

*Ka chawnbanah ai kai e*

*Ka chawnbanah ai kai e (11)*

(Thailungi was adopted by Pu Liana who belonged to the Ralte clan and the song above mentions how Pu Liana Ralte took her in, taking care of her)

*U hralh, U hralh*

*Muallai zawla thian te kawirit;*

*Kap keh phawng phawng.*

(The song says that Tlumtea was teased and taunted by his friends for selling his sister and unknowingly played *kawi kah*<sup>1</sup> with his friends out in the field)

*He u, hawng awh, kal he ling,*

*Na pa vangkhua zawng he ling*

*Na pa vangkhua zawng he ling (12)*

(The song explains Tlumtea's invitation to his sister to go back to their father's place)

But since Thailungi was married, she parted him with a gift- a dagger and a cloth instead, singing she would not go as he wished:

*Ka takin la zui na law,*

*Ka man sial sawm haw law Neu*

*Ka man sial sawm haw law Neu (12)*

(Thailungi said that she could not follow her brother and that her bride price -*price of amithun* would go to waste if she did)

*Hnamchem pha tak pa pia a,*

*Na nu lu tan nang ka ti*

*Na nu lu tan nang ka ti (12)*

(Thailungi told her brother, with the dagger being offered to him, he should take their stepmother's head)

*Puan num pha tak ka pia a,*

---

<sup>1</sup>Popular game played by children and adult alike with jungle fruit bean.

*Na nu lu chun nang ka ti*

*Na nu lu chun nang ka ti (12)*

(Also, Thailungi gave her brother a black cloth and with that she requested her brother to cover their stepmother's head)

Pi Hmuaki:

*Thingtluruma, Zawsiala chhuah leh*

*Sobal ka chhum, thaltui ang nghak rawh (Lalsangzuali 4)*

(Pi Hmuaki was boiling yam and asked Thingtluruma and Zawsiala why they were out and invited them to have it with her) .Upon mentioning their names in her song, they hurried home and told the men folk of the incident. They then dug her grave and buried her alive. Based on the hearsay of the folk people, Pi Hmuaki cajoled her buriers to slowly cover her:

*Nauvate u, nau haia te u,*

*Tha te te khan mi han chhilh rawh u (4)*

(Pi Hmuaki pleaded the young men to cover her with caution)

R.L. Thanmawia (2012) mentioned 14 songs of Pi Hmuaki-

1. *Ka Ngente khua, khua nun nuama kha,*

*Thla ka fam hman ki nghilh rua lo ve.*

(The song talks of Pi Hmuaki's village Ngente, how she enjoys the place and that she will never forget it until she dies)

2. *Ngente thangkuala di ka tian zanah,*

*Kawlngo thla kan inzap tam rawh se.*

(Pi Hmuaki in her song expressed her wish for her lover who is a guest at Ngente village to enjoy the last night of his stay there by exhibiting himself like that of Kawlngo birds flapping their wings)

3. *Ngente tualpui chhuahtlang lam rawn a,*

*Lungrual taka tuanlai ing e.*

(The songs talks of how they lived in harmony at her Ngente village)

4. *Neihchawng an zu val an ki rui leh,*

*Kan hai hi a zai tin kan chhiar e.*

(The song talks of how their intoxication with *zu* made them sing non-stop)

5. *Lelte lo kiu, awn thing lerah,*

*'Thingpui lawn sang rem lang' a ti e.*

(The song talks of Lelte singing in the branches of a tree and Pi Hmuaki's plea for the bird to climb higher)

6. *Khuangpui ri chur, Neihchawng chhun inah,*

*Pawnglam chhawn ang ka thlekpu mi u.*

(Pi Hmuaki sings of the time she danced like a cricket to the sound of the beating drums at the chief's house)

7. *An lal an fam, bellian pal ang tlar,*

*Hnuaitiang hawih changsial a ngui zo ve.*

(The song talks of their deceased chief and pots (given to deceased people as a form of condolence in Mizo society) aligned like that of fences, and how the whole village was mourning, even the *changsial* (mithun) was grieving)

8. *Luia lengngha sang zar a rui e,*

*An hai hlei, suanglai lian vel.*

(The song expresses how fishes swarm with intoxication in numbers)

9. *Lo kir leh la, bawngva Chaltuaia,*

*Ka tawng umtui angka chhir leh e*

(Pi Hmuaki pleaded Chaltuaia to come back and that she has taken back her words and closed it like a lid to a bottle)

10. *Chhun thih inphal, tiandar inphal chuan,*

*A rugin rairah kan vui ngei ang.*

(Pi Hmuaki sings that if (they) allow them to die, the lonesome people will be left indignant)

11. *Thingtluruma, Zawlsiala chhuah leh,*

*Sobal ka chhum, thaltui ang nghak rawh.*

(Same as in page 25)

12. *Ka tak fam se, ka zai fam lo se,*

*Thlangkawr mi lal chungah chuang rawh se.*

(The songs talks of a wish for her songs not to be forgotten, this song as said by Lalsangzuali (7) might not be a song of Pi Hmuaki as this song also comes under Saikuti's songs)

13. *Bui bir angin a zal zuk thlak ila,*

*Khaw ruamah sial ang zu chhuak ila.*

(The song says while she was being led to her grave, she requested the young men to lay her body like a rabbit to its burrows and her body to leap like a mithun in a narrow valley)

14. *Nauvate u, nauhaia te u,*

*Tha te te khan mi hai chhilh rawh u.*

(Same as in page 25)

*Lelte kiuin khawmual a awi e,*

*Lungrun erawh khiang a awi sual e* (Lalsangzuali 6)

(While the lelte bird is lulling the village with its sweet song, the lover has made a blunder for getting married too soon)

*Lelte lo kiu awnthing in lerah,*

*Thingpui lenbuang awi tang ti e* (6)

(The song talks of the Lelte bird lulling the tree on which it perched)

*Ngente chhuahtlang aw kan lamrawnah,*

*Lungrual tea tuanlai ngai ing e* (6)

(Same as the song in page 25)

All her songs are in couplets. And there was one incident where Pi Hmuaki composed and sang a song for her drunken courter:

*Chawltui ningzu Vala'n ka ruih leh,*

*Ka haih leiah zaitin ka chhiar e*(6)

(Pi Hmuaki addressed her courter on why he was drunk)

*A mi in piang Thangurpui in piang,*

*Thangtawna pa tluk in piang lo ve* (Chhuanvawra 2011)

(Pi Hmuaki praised the Ngente chief and it talks of how there is no other chief like Thangtawna's father).

Lianchhiari:

Pu C. Chhuanvawra (94-96) mentioned 12 songs that belonged to Lianchhiari, below are two of her songs:

*Kan va tih luat tukah,*

*Lengin ka zir sual e,*

*Ka pa Vanhnuaithanga,*

*A than ni bang kir e.*

(This song talks of Lianchhiari's intimacy with her lover and how it has brought defamation to her father's reputation)

*Hmawng ang I pem tur hian*

*Hrui ang min zawt lo ve,*

*Kei chuan phal lem ing maw*

*Tuaitir ka lungdi e.*

(Lianchhiari sings of the incident when Chawngfianga left her village without informing her and if she knew of this she would not have allowed him so)

*Kan ram lovah Bungpui a thuam luai e,*

*Hmingtha Chawngfianga chuan;*

*Thlangva lam zir na ngai e.*(Sakhming Chullo1995)

(The song talks of Chawngfianga's skill on cutting down a huge tree)

*Kan va tih luattukah,*

*Lengi'n ka zir sual e!*



*Ka pa, Vanhnuaithang tur.*

*A than ni bang kir e.*

(Same as in page 28)

Chawngfianga who was now married with another woman on learning that it was their middle man who disrupted his fate with Lianchhiari, with deep remorse sang-

*Kan palai maw lei ang a sual a?*

*Lungruni buan ang ka pawm loh chu.*

(Chawngfianga sang of his fate with Lianchhiari and it was because of their evil-tongued middleman)

Laltheri:

In *Mizo Hla Hlui*, there are at least 24 songs of Laltheri, below are 5 songs:

*Bawmzo ral mah dar ang chhai ngam lo,*

*Belzu kungah ka di Chalthang, chawngsai ang sat e.*

(She sang about how her lover Chalthanga was killed)

*Kei mi thattu thah thung loh Laldanga,*

*Ka fam erawh khuavel thansar ah a zam tur chu.*

(The song shows Laltheri's willingness to die for her lover. If she was the one they killed, news of her death would have spread more than the death of a commoner)

*Ka nemte puan ka chawi lo vang ka nu,*

*Ka di thangdanga zalna mah, chhimhlei tualdaiah.*

(Laltheri refused to clothe herself and told her mother that she would not do so when the body of her lover lay buried in the ground)

*Chhunrawl lovin thla ka fam lo vang ka nu,*

*Suihlunglengin Sailo ngurpui fam lo awl na e.*

(She told her mother that she would not die of hunger and the account of her missing her lover would lead her to her death instead)

*Bilhpuan khumin Ruallung zodai ka vel,*

*Vangkhaw dungsei Chaldanga tual len nan ka ti e.*

(Laltheri roamed about Ruallung without any attire on as she was grieving for her lover)

*Lungduh lakah hraite han chawi ila*

*Kara thlak leh a riang tur hi ka ngai ngam love*

*Sawngka lerah Pa lo hraite ka awi*

*Ka lungdiah Chalthanga a riang ngei e. (Chhuanvawra2011)*

(The song talks of her son and the way she would rock him to sleep out on her porch and her wish to parent him with a loving father)

Darpawngi:

*Ri tleng tlenga Darngo kal nan a tha e,*

*Chawngtui hmingthang Mingo valin*

*Thirin lei sang an dawh e. (Chhuanvawra2011)*

(Darpawngi sang of the steel bridge that has been erected by the Britishers and how it served a good design for reaching Darngo)

*Mi zun ngai lo, keimahni zun ngai,*

*A tap ruai ruai thin e, ni chhunah,*

*Nikhumpa laldang a mawi lo ve. (Thanmawia1998)*

(Darpawngi sang this song on account of Lalbuta's lonesome state, she told him it was not fine for a man to weep for her as he would for days after parting)

Darpawngi's son died at the age of three. To vent out her anguish and sorrows she would compose and sing songs and the songs came to be titled as *Darpawngi Lusun Zai-*

*Awmlai lengin tlang tin dung rawn zui,*

*Vanduai run ah ser ang cham na e;*

*Ka tuai chawnban a kai e.*

*Ka awihlai, ka puaklai ve kha,*

*Lungrawn a liam zo ve zing phulah;*

*'Ka chun ka ngai' ti ve maw?*

*Bawihbangpui, hai ang lo thang la,*

*I lenrualte'n sumtual kokaiah;*

*Kawilen dar ang an chhai e.*

*Sialkhaw bawar emaw pau thei lo,*

*Thangril laiah ka hraibung dawntuai;*

*Fam dairial maw a chan le!(Thanmawia1998)*

(The gist of the song states Darpawngi's loneliness after the death of her son, asking if he misses her and that if he were alive, he would have played with his peers too)

*Tum ang vuai e, hai ang tar na,*

*Keimah Vanhnuaithangi tlang tin sel,*

*Ka zai puan ang chul lovin.(57)*

(She sang of the fatality of life, how humans aged with time in comparison to the immortality of songs)

*Pukpui angin ka hmu thim ruai e*

*Lalrempa run ram ang ka fang leh*

*Kan nun puan ang hlui love. (Sakhming Chullo 1995)*

(Darpawngi sang of her experience with Daipawla, how her time with him is compared to a land they once travelled and enjoyed together)

*Ka tap ruai sappui dai kawmah*

*Ka hrai puan ang ka chan a hneh chuan*

*Kawrpui zia tial feng nang e.*

(Darpawngi in the song cried for rights of ownership for her daughter)

Chhawnthangnu:

R. L. Thanmawia (1998) mentioned 41 songs of Chhawnthangnu. Below are 3 songs:

*A tarna reng reng a sang mang e,*

*Chhawnthangnu darkhai leng thing lenbuangah,*

*Ka phak lo mi u, mi lo hlan rawh.*

(The song talks of the nicotine jar being placed too high and her demand to a certain someone to fetch it for her)

*In chawltui ningzu ka lo rui e,*

*Ka kal thiamlo banah min kai rawh Thangngo,*

*In sumtual kokai a vei lawi e.*

(She sings of being intoxicated and her requests to be caught in the arms as the way was too steep)

*Kan sumtual kokai a vei lawi lo,*

*Sul ang min tum lo reng e, pathlawi vala'n,*

*A ngur laldang mah a kai thiam e (302-304).*

(Here she sings of the path to her house not being too steep for the divorced man as even the chief can easily walk here too)

*Limnghatte lo pianna changtui lian,*

*Chhawnthangnu leh sakawl mim ang an piang e*

*A ziate puan ang a dang love. (Sakhming Chullo1995)*

(Like fishes in the sea, Chhawnthangnu and a tiger are born alike like corn in a cob, their stripes are no different)

Once, she went to Chhiphir and stayed at Chalmawia's house. They were drinking *Zu* (alcohol) at the time, and she was intoxicated and could not walk properly. She sang of this incident as:

*In chawl tuining Zu ka lo rui e,*

*Ka kal thiamlo banah min kai rawh Chalmawi*

*I sumtual kokai a vei lawi e.*

(Same as the song mentioned above in page 32)

This phrase, '*sumtual kokai a vei lawi e*' (the compound of your house is too steep) became a common usage that it spread all over Zoram at the time.

One day, the chief, Thanmawia of their neighbouring village Lungsai told Tualchepi to pay a fine for burning his land. She then set out with *Zu* and entered Chief Thanmawia's house with a song addressing him:

*I thaikawi bawkte ka lo hmu e,*

*Engtinng e a ngurpui leh Chhawnthangnu*

*Kan intai mai zawng ka ring love.*

(Chhawnthangnu sang of a song upon receiving the chief's letter and could not see how they could be in each other's way)

*Chhawnthangnu vai leng a haw thei lo*

*Puk khaw zopui cheng khaw tual nuam inkarah*

*Chhawngthangnu lal len e, lal len e.*

(Chhawngthangnu sings of how she was treated like a ruler whilst her stay at Pukpui, and their hospitality make it hard for her to leave)

APPENDIX B  
TRANSCRIPTIONS

**Thailungi zai**



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**Illustration 4.1 “Thailungi Zai”**

Doh is G. It is a simple quadruple. This is sung much more rapidly than the previous songs mentioned and is a couplet like Pi Hmuaki Zai. There are ‘tie’ notes because of its irregularity in phrasings and it is sung lazily thus the presence of slur notes in the song.

### Pi Hmuaki zai



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#### Illustration 4.2 “Pi Hmuaki Zai”

**Doh is F#.** The tempo of the song remains at 92 beats per minute. It is of a simple quadruple and there are 4 beats between 2 big bars and some of the notes are even hold for 7 beats.



### Lianchhiari zai



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#### Illustration 4.3 “Lianchhiari Zai”

Doh is G. The tune of Lianchhiari Zai is measured in a simple quadruple. There are 4 beats between the 2 big bars. The song of Lianchhiari has triplets which mean that in one beat, there are 3 notes evenly. The 1<sup>st</sup> beat comes on strong, the 2<sup>nd</sup> beat and the 4<sup>th</sup> beats are weak and the 3<sup>rd</sup> beat is medium.

**Laltheri zai**

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**Illustration 4.4 “Laltheri Zai”**

Doh is Eb. The songs of Laltheri Zai is in a compound duple and there are 6 beats between the big bars. There are six 8<sup>th</sup> notes in a measure. The 1<sup>st</sup> beat is a strong beat and the 4<sup>th</sup> beat is a medium and the rest are weak beats.

## Darpawngi Lusun Zai

Doh is F

Rubato (Tempo is usually 40bpm)

{ |d . d , d |d |d . d . d |t<sub>1</sub> s<sub>1</sub> |s<sub>1</sub> |s<sub>1</sub> . d . d |d |d . d . d }

{ |t<sub>1</sub> . l<sub>1</sub> . s<sub>1</sub> |s<sub>1</sub> |s<sub>1</sub> . t<sub>1</sub> . t<sub>1</sub> |l<sub>1</sub> . s<sub>1</sub> |t<sub>1</sub> . l<sub>1</sub> |s<sub>1</sub> |- |- }

{ |s<sub>1</sub> . t<sub>1</sub> . t<sub>1</sub> |l<sub>1</sub> . s<sub>1</sub> |t<sub>1</sub> . l<sub>1</sub> . s<sub>1</sub> |- |- |- |d . d . d |d }

{ |d . d . d |t<sub>1</sub> . s<sub>1</sub> |s<sub>1</sub> |s<sub>1</sub> . t<sub>1</sub> . t<sub>1</sub> |s<sub>1</sub> |t<sub>1</sub> . s<sub>1</sub> . s<sub>1</sub> |- |- ||

**Illustration 4.5 “Darpawngi Lusun Zai”**

Doh is F. Simple Duple and there are 2 beats between the 2 big bars.

## Chhawnthangnu zai



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### Illustration 4.6 “Chhawnthangnu Zai”

**Doh is D.** In the tonic solfa of Chhawnthangnu Zai, the tempo of the song depends upon the singer which is originally around 57 beats per minute. There are 4 beats between the 2 big bars and is measured in a simple quadruple.

## APPENDIX C

## CANTOMETRICS EXPERIMENT

The coding book consists of 37 Lines and out of these lines, line 1, 4, 5, 10, 17, 25 style factors have been taken up as an example to explain the general styles of the Mizo folksongs. The songs of the Mizos are mostly monodic instead of polyphonic in parts, and runs close to the measuring of the Mongolian scale.

(Note: in Line 1, 13 coding points (39-40) have been given for the social organization of the singing group, and studying each and every definition, what resemble the Mizo folksongs in general is the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> coding points. Monophony, Heterophony, Polyphony and Unison are given under Line 4. And the Mizo Songs seemed to fit in to the category of Heterophony. It is symbolized as H in the coding book. Each voice sings the same melody in a slightly different manner. The variation is usually rhythmic, with some voices lagging behind, others pushing forward, or with some voices more rhythmically active than others. There may be some melodic individuality, but it is only temporary and usually inconsistent. Line 5 is to code the tonal blend of a group; the songs of the Mizos seemingly belonged to the minimal blend which is symbolized as b. Here, singers make no attempt to match one another in tone. Individual voices stand out. The effect is harsh and often noisy. Line 10 codes the use of words (to nonsense), songs of the Mizos lies between 'words still dominant' and 'about half the text being repeated.' Line 17 codes the phrase length, most Mizo songs are written in couplets, and the phrases are mostly phrases of average length spanning from 5-9 seconds. Line 25 is the precise degree of volume and the songs of the Mizo people are often sung in mid-volume.) (Lomax 38, 44, 45, 48-49, 61-62, 67-68)

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