

**SOCIO - CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE ZOUS OF MANIPUR
FROM PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD TO 1956**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

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COLONIAL PERIOD TO 1956

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Socio-Cultural History of the Zous of Manipur from Pre-Colonial Period to 1956**” submitted by THANGSUANHANG in fulfillment of Doctor of Philosophy in History is an original work and has not been submitted elsewhere for other degree.

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

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.A.M		Arthington Aborigine Mission
A.B.M		American Baptist Mission
A.B.M.U	-	America Baptist Mission Union
I.B.P.M	-	Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission
J.C.A	-	Jou Christian Association
J.N.C	-	Jou National Council
M.C.C	-	Manipur Christian Convention
M.I.L		Major Indian Language
M.V.A.H.A.A		Manipur Village Authorities Hill Areas Act
N.E.I.G.M	-	North East India General Mission
S.D.O	-	Sub-Divisional Officer
S.T	-	Scheduled Tribe
T.K.M.P	-	Thadou-Kuki Pioneer Mission
U.M.J.O	-	United Manipur Jou Organization

Chapter 1

Introduction

The thesis extensively delves into the socio-cultural history of the Zous of Manipur and their contributions to the history of Manipur, focusing on the period from the traditional era to the emergence of external influences on this society. To facilitate better understanding, the write-up began with a comprehensive explanation of the land, people, history of Manipur and the Zou community in this chapter.

Manipur (meaning the ‘land of gems or jewels’)¹ is located on the extreme northeastern border of India, lying north of the Tropic of Cancer between latitude 23° 50’ and 25° 41’ North and longitudes 92° 59’ and 94° 45’ East.² Manipur is bounded on the north by Nagaland, on the south, partly by Mizoram (India) and partly by the Chin State of Myanmar, on the west by the Cachar district of Assam, and on the east by the Sagaing Region of Myanmar.³ The state covers an area of 22,327 sq. km. The total boundary of the state is approximately 854 km, out of which 352 km is the international border between India and Myanmar.⁴ The state has two major physiographic regions: the river valley and a large surrounding mountainous area. The central valley, spreading over 1,843 sq. km, constituted 9 percent of the total area of the state. The valley runs north-south and lies at an elevation of 2,600 feet. Its main physical feature is Loktak Lake, which covers about 100 sq. km. It is the source of the Manipur River. The river flows southward through the valley into Myanmar. The hills covering 20,513 sq. km represented 91 percent of the state's total area. The hill ranges, connected by spurs and ridges, run generally north-south. The average elevation of the hills from the sea varies between 5000 feet and 6000 feet, although

¹ Naorem Sanajaoba, *Manipur: Past and Present*, Vol. I (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1988), 1 & 8-10.

² Vedaja Sanjembam, *Manipur: Geography and Regional Development* (New Delhi: Rajesh Publications, Third Edition 2017), 14.

³ Sanjenbam, *Manipur*, 14.

⁴ M.T. Laiba, *The Geography of Manipur* (Imphal: Author, 1988), 43.

the hills in the north rise above 9,500 feet.⁵ The climate is temperate in the valley and cold in the hills.

The state comprises sixteen districts. Of the sixteen districts, six are in the valley, and ten are in the hills. The districts in the valley are Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal, Bishnupur, Kakching and Jiribam. The hill districts are Churachandpur, Senapati, Tamenglong, Ukhrul, Chandel, Kangpokpi, Pherzawl, Noney, Kamjong and Tengnoupal.

1.1 The People:

According to the 2011 Census, the total population of Manipur was 2,855,794.⁶ The population of Manipur is a combination of different communities with different cultures and traditions, and speaking different languages. The entire community in the state is mainly composed of two categories - the tribals and the non-tribals

The tribal population was 11,67,422, as per the Census 2011⁷ constituted 40.86 percent of the total population. The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Modification) Order, 1956 of the Constitution of India recognized 29 tribes in Manipur. They are Aimol, Anal, Angami, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Hmar, Kabui, Kacha Naga, Koirao, Koirang, Kom, Lamgang, Any Mizo (Lushai) tribes, Maram, Maring, Mao, Monsang, Moyon, Paite, Purum, Ralte, Sema, Simte, Suhte, Tangkhul, Thadou, Vaiphei and Zou.⁸ Again, with the recognition of another four tribes, such as Tarao, Kharam, Pumei Naga, and any Kuki tribe by the Government of India as

⁵ Barbara A. Standley and Deryck O. Lodrick, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Manipur," last updated April 4, 2024. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Manipur>.

⁶ Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, *Manipur Population Census 2011 | Manipur Religion, Caste Data - Census 2011*. (Hereafter Manipur Census, 2011). URL: <https://www.censusindia.co.in/states/manipur>.

⁷ Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Census of India, A-11: *State Primary Census Abstract (PCA) for individual scheduled tribes, Manipur – 2011* (hereafter *Census, A-11, Manipur*) URL: <https://censusindia.gov.in/nada/index.php/catalog/42953/>

⁸ The Gazette of India (Extraordinary) Part II – Section 3, Ministry of Home Affairs, *The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists Modification) Order, 1956*, Part II-Manipur (New Delhi: Ministry of Law and Justice, 1956), 29/10/1956, 43-44. URL: <https://socialjustice.gov.in/public/ckeditor/upload/42431673325265.pdf>

published in the Gazette of India in January 2003,⁹ and Mate as published in the Gazette of India in January 2012,¹⁰ there are 34 recognized tribes in Manipur. Further, the tribals of Manipur can be divided into the Nagas, the Chin-Kuki-Mizo¹¹, and other smaller tribes.

The tribes who identified as Nagas in Manipur are Anal, Angami, Kabui, Kacha Naga, Lamgang, Maram, Maring, Mao, Monsang, Moyon, Pumei Naga, Sema, Tangkhul and Tarao. They predominantly inhabit the districts of Senapati, Tamenglong, Noney, Ukhrul, Kamjong, Tengnoupal and Chandel.

The tribes other than the Nagas are identified as the Non-Nagas or Chin-Kuki-Mizo. They have a closer affinity with the Chins of the Chin State in Myanmar and the Mizos of Mizoram. The Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes are Gangte, Hmar, Lushei, Mate, Paite, Ralte, Simte, Sukte, Thadou, Vaiphei and Zou. They are predominantly found in the Churachandpur, Pherzawl, Chandel, Tengnoupal and Kangpokpi districts in the state.

The non-tribals include the Meiteis, Muslims, Nepalese, Sikhs, Biharis, Malwaris, etc. Among the Meitei community, a group of people is categorized as Scheduled Caste. The Meiteis predominantly inhabit the valley districts - Imphal East, Imphal West, Bishnupur, Thoubal, Jiribam and Kakching. The Muslims, locally known as pangals, are mainly found in Mayang Imphal, Yairipok, Lilong, Thoubal, Kwakta, etc. The Nepalese, another community in Manipur, are primarily found in Kangpokpi district. They also inhabit small valleys in Mao, Maram, and Karong. The above points must not be misinterpreted because in post-colonial Manipur, regardless of which community has the largest population, different communities settle in each district, be it in the hills or the valley(s).

⁹ The Gazette of India, *The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 2002*, No.10 of 2003 (New Delhi: Ministry of Law and Justice, 2002), date 8/1/2003.

¹⁰ The Gazette of India, *The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Act 2011*, (New Delhi: Ministry of Law and Justice, 2012), date 9/1/2012.

¹¹ Chin-Kuki-Mizo refers to a group of kindred tribes, speaking the Tibeto-Burman language and inhabiting northeastern India, western Myanmar and southeastern Bangladesh. They are identified as Chin, Kuki or Mizo.

1.2 A Brief Political History of Manipur:

The beginning of the history of Manipur can be traced back to when Nongda Lairen Pakhangba established the Ningthouja dynasty that ruled over the kingdom of Kangla, probably in 33 AD.¹² From the 8th century till the ascension of Garib Niwaz, the kingdom had been ruled successively by thirty-six rulers.¹³ Some prominent rulers during the early period were Khuyoi Tompok, Taothingmang, Naothingkhong, Khongtekcha, Loiyamba, etc. The kingdom was expanded during the reign of Kyamba (1467-1508), Mungyamba (1562-1597), Khagemba (1597-1652), and Khunjaoba (1652-1666). Manipur attained the zenith of her glory during the reign of Garib Niwaz (1709-1748), and he was perhaps the greatest king of Manipur.¹⁴ In 1762, Bhagyachandra (aka Jai Singh) signed a treaty with the British to repel the Burmese invasion and many historians have referred to this year as the beginning of Manipur's modern history.¹⁵ Further communication was minimal until 1824, when the British were again requested to expel the Burmese. Before this, the Burmese king Bagyidaw sent an invasion army under the command of General Maha Bandula to attack Manipur.¹⁶ The Burmese defeated the king of Manipur, Marjit Singh, who then fled to Cachar. Thus, Manipur suffered under the oppressive rule of the Burmese from 1819 to 1826, and this period has often been referred to locally as *Chahi Taret Khuntakpa* (Seven Years Devastation).¹⁷ One-third of the population of Manipur accompanied Marjit Singh on his flight to Cachar.¹⁸

At this juncture, the three princes - Marjit, Chaurajit and Gambhir Singh appealed for British help. The British were alarmed by the growing influence of the Burmese in the region and agreed to help Gambhir Singh, a bold and aspiring soldier, to drive the Burmese out of Manipur. After careful preparation, Gambhir Singh and

¹² Gangmumei Kamei, *History of Manipur Vol. I: Pre-Colonial Period* (Imphal: National Publishing House, 3rd Edition 2011), 91.

¹³ Jyotimoy Roy, *History of Manipur* (Calcutta: East Light Book House, 1973), 22.

¹⁴ Kamei, *History of Manipur*, 238.

¹⁵ Jeyaseelan, *Impact of the Missionary Movement in Manipur* (New Delhi: Scholar Publishing House, 1996), 5.

¹⁶ Kamei, *History of Manipur*, 288.

¹⁷ Lal Dena, ed., *History of Modern Manipur (1762-1949)* (Imphal: Reliable Book Centre, Third Revised Edition 2012), 8.

¹⁸ Kamei, *History of Manipur*, 289.

his men started their campaign, and they marched towards Manipur and reached the western limit of the valley on 10 June 1825.¹⁹ By this time, the Burmese had evacuated the capital and encamped themselves at Andro. Gambhir Singh moved on to Andro but found the place evacuated. In the second campaign, the combined forces of Gambhir Singh and Captain Grant assaulted the Burmese positions, and as a result, the Burmese gradually evacuated the areas. Meanwhile, the First Anglo-Burmese War was concluded by the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. By this treaty, the Raja of Manipur was recognized, and Gambhir Singh formally became king of Manipur in June 1826.²⁰

The establishment of the office of the British Political Agent in 1835 marked the beginning of the consolidation of control over the tiny state.²¹ Though it was established to fulfill a limited objective, in later stages, this office became more and more powerful due to the internecine quarrel among the princes of Manipur, which allowed the political agent to be directly or indirectly involved in every state's domestic affairs.

The Anglo-Manipur War was concluded with the defeat of the Manipuri forces in the battle of Khongjom on 25 April 1891.²² As a result of the war, the Manipur Raja lost control over Manipur's administration. Major Maxwell became the Political Agent and Superintendent of Manipur, and it was administered under the supervision of the Chief Commissioner of Assam.²³ Manipur was not annexed but was put under Raja Churachand, whose position was subordinate to the Empress of British India. Under a new scheme of administration of the state, the President of the durbar was the Raja, and the Vice-President was an ICS officer from the Assam Provincial Civil Service. The President was given the charge of education, medical, and armed state police, and the Vice-President was given the hill tribes, finance and revenue. After an uprising of the Kuki hill tribes in 1917, a new system of

¹⁹ Dena, *History of Manipur*, 9.

²⁰ Jeyaseelan, *Impact of the Missionary Movement in Manipur*, 5.

²¹ Dena, *History of Manipur*, 31.

²² Dena, *History of Manipur*, 66.

²³ L. Ibungohal Singh, *Introduction to Manipur* (Imphal; Saraswati Printing Work, 1987), 35.

government was adopted; the region was divided into three subdivisions.²⁴ Thus, Manipur remained a colonial state until India attained independence on 15 August 1947.

After India's independence, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, the then-home minister, worked hard to integrate the princely states into the Indian Union. The Raja of Manipur, Bodhachandra Singh, signed the Instrument of Accession on 21 September 1949. Even though the political situation in Manipur was not very favourable, the Indian government officially declared Manipur a part of India on 15 October 1949.²⁵ Meanwhile, the Constituent Assembly of India finally passed the Constitution of India on 26 November 1949. It came into force on 26 January of the following year. Under the new Constitution, Manipur became a Part C state of India. The administration of the state was entrusted to the President of India, who carried out the administration through a Chief Commissioner appointed by him. By the Reorganization of North-East India Act 1971, Manipur became a full-fledged state on 21 January 1972.²⁶

1.3 Etymology and Challenges of the terms 'Zou,' 'Zo' or 'Zomi':

Confusion is created by the spelling and usage of the term 'Zou.' The Zou tribe in Manipur state initially used the term Jou to designate themselves, and the first church organization they established on 20 February 1954 was named Jou Christian Association (JCA).²⁷ The Government of India officially recognized the Zous as a Scheduled Tribe with the spelling 'Zou' in 1956.²⁸ Consequently, the term Jou was changed into Zou in 1958. It is seen that, sometimes, the terms 'Zou' and 'Zomi' are interchangeably used to denote the political and socio-religious organizations of the Zou tribe and the apex political organization of the Zou was

²⁴ Dena, *History of Manipur*, 132-133.

²⁵ Jeyaseelan, 7.

²⁶ Jeyaseelan, 7-8.

²⁷ Khaizakham, "Jou Christian Association Kipatna (The beginning of Jou Christian Association)," *Zomi Christian Church Tapidaw-40 (1954-1994) Souvenir*, ed. David K. Samte (Churachandpur: 1994), 27. Also see S. Semkhopau, ed. *Jougam-Thusuo* Vol. I, 1st Year, March 1954, 1.

²⁸ Ministry of Home Affairs, *Notification Order No. SRO 2477A, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes List (Modification) Order, 1956, Manipur, Sl. No. xvii* (New Delhi: Government of India, 29 October 1956).

called the United Zomi Organization (UZO).²⁹ But the term ‘Zomi’ is also a collective name for the Tedim-Chin of Myanmar, the Paite, and some other tribes of Manipur. There is also confusion in the spelling and usage of the terms Zou and Zo. The competing spellings of Zou or Zo in naming the Zou community are created by the different spelling systems adopted by the Zous in India and Myanmar (Burma). Though the two terms look different, it is only due to ‘o’ and ‘ou’ diphthongs, and both terms have the same sound words and meaning; therefore, they refer to the same people. For instance, the first complete version of the Holy Bible in the Zou language was published in 1983, entitled ‘The Holy Bible in Zo.’ To make the term more confusing, the Zou community in Myanmar identifies themselves as Zo, a generic term used to replace the term Chin-Kuki-Mizo in current academic and political discourse. Again, from 2007 onwards, the Zous began to shift from the term Zomi to Zou to denote the political and socio-religious organizations of the Zou tribe in India. It is to be noted that the variations in spelling and usage of the terms Zo, Zou, and Zomi imply the same people, on the one hand, and a generic term to refer to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo on the other.

1.4 Who are the Zous?

The early history of the Zous can be constructed based on evidence found in the accounts and documents of travelers, Christian missionaries, colonial ethnographers, local writers and oral sources.

The Zous and their areas of settlements have been recorded as Jo, Yau, Yo, Yoe, Zo, etc. The Zous belong to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo, a subfamily of the Tibeto-Burman group. The Zou traditions claim that they originated from an ancient progenitor, Pu Zo, which means ‘grandfather Zo or ancestor Zo,’ therefore, they believe and claim that they are the descendants of Pu Zo.³⁰

²⁹ Thangchinsuan, “United Zomi Organization Khangthu, 1954-2004,” *United Zomi Organization Golden Jubilee (1954-2004) Souvenir*, ed. Thangchinsuan (Churachandpur: United Zomi Organization, 2004), 3.

³⁰ Philip Thanglienmang, “A Descriptive Grammar of the Zo Language” (PhD Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2012), 7.

The traditional territorial base of the Zou chiefs was in the Northern Chin Hills.³¹ The first settlement of the Zous in the Chin Hills is believed to be Suih Mual, located somewhere between the present Saizang and Mualbem roads.³² After settling in Suihmual, the Zous moved to Cimnuai and then gradually to different areas and set up villages in the Chin Hills. In the nineteenth century, the Zous, led by the Manlun chiefs, fought against the Sukte chiefs for control of the Northern Chin Hills. Forgetting the help rendered to him by the most influential Zou chief Langza Manlun, Khan Thuam raided Zou villages such as Vanglai, Tungkua, Tualzang, Thangkhal, Tawtak, and Khuodai and subdued them.³³ Giersen also recorded that Kantum conquered these Yos villages in the Northern Chin Hills in about 1840.³⁴

Kam Hau, the son of Khan Thuam established a separate chiefdom based at Tedim and gradually established his overlordship in the Northern Chin Hills. The Zous raided Tedim twice and burnt it. Having suffered humiliation twice at the hands of the Zous, Kam Hau supported by his father Khan Thuam and other friends, was prepared to attack the Zou villages. However, the plan was dropped as a woman chief, Cing Gin of Kahgen promised Kam Hau that she would persuade the Zou chiefs to give one *khipi gui* (garland of big onyx beads) each to him.³⁵ The twenty-one Zou villages were Lomzang, Taakzang, Salzang, Khuanal, Phuntong, Ainah, Tualpi, Tonzang, Bawngthu, Sehken, Phaitu, Khianglam, Tangleu, Lungtah, Khamzang, Senam, Sialmawng, Khuomun, Gelmuol, Aisih and Vomsem. J.H. Cope also confirmed that twenty-one Zou chiefs submitted to Kam Hau.³⁶ Thirteen Zou

³¹ David Vumlallian Zou, "Glimpses of Zou Ethno-History," *United Zomi Organization Golden Jubilee (1954 – 2004) Souvenir*, ed. Thangchinsuan (Churachandpur: P. Tongthang Zou, 2004), 115.

³² P.S. Kham Do Nang, "Upto Date History of the Zo tribes" (HGP Thesis, Myanmar Institute of Theology, 1994), 132-133.

³³ Joseph Herbert. Cope ed. *Tedim Thu Kizakna Lai*, July 1937, 3. It is Baptist journal, edited and published by Joseph Herbert Cope since 1919.

³⁴ G.A. Grierson, ed., *Linguistic Survey of India, Volume III - Tibeto-Burman Family, Part III* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, Reprint 1967), 72. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.42221/page/n14/mode/1up?view=theater>. Also see Bertram S. Carey and H.C. Tuck, *The Chin Hills: A History of the People, Our dealing with them, their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of Their Country*, Vol. I (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Reprinted 2008), 118-119.

³⁵ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, *Zo Tulpi Hanghil Tangthu leh Khanggui Cieptena (History of the Zo Lineage Head, Hanghil and Record of his Genealogy)* (Kalaymyo: Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 2012), 59.

³⁶ Cope, 4.

chiefs refused to submit to him. However, with the help of the Zahau chief, Khuang Cheu of Rallang the Sukte chief forced them to submit to him.³⁷ The thirteen Zou villages were Bumzang, Mawngken, Tualmu, Gamngai, Vanglai, Tungkua, Tualzang, Theimual, Thangkhal, Tawtak, Beelpi, Khuodai and Lailui.³⁸ Thus, the Zous emerged as a subdued status in the Northern Chin Hills.

1.4.1 The Zous in Manipur:

The Zous are recognized as one of the Scheduled Tribes in Manipur. The Zou population in Manipur, as per the Census 2011, was 24,294.³⁹ In Myanmar, the Zous are recognized under Code No. 421, and their population in the country, as recorded in 2012, was 61,000.⁴⁰ They are located primarily in the Chin State and parts of the Kabaw valley in Myanmar. The Zou villages are located northeast of Tiddim township, Tonzang township, Kale-Kabaw Valley, etc.⁴¹

The Zous have their own traditional customary practices dealing with every aspect of social and individual life, such as crime, death, marriage, divorce, adultery, etc. These customary practices serve as a moral guide in social and individual life.⁴² These practices bind the chiefs, the councilors, and the common people. One of the unique customary practices of the Zous is the levirate system of marriage, which involves marrying the elder or younger deceased brother's widow.⁴³

The Zou village functions as an independent and highest political unit in which the chief (*hausa*) was the supreme administrative head of the village. He was assisted in the day-to-day administration by his *upa* (Council of Elders). The council comprised persons with wisdom, integrity, knowledge of customary laws, etc. The Zous showed loyalty to their chiefs during the pre-colonial and colonial periods.

³⁷ Cope, 4.

³⁸ T. Gin Khan Thang, and Pauneikhai Suantak, *Tributary Hill Polity: Chiefs and Overlords in Northern Hills Circa 1800-1948* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2015), 108.

³⁹ *Census of India: A-11*, 15.

⁴⁰ Academic Dictionary and Encyclopedia, (2024), s.v. "Zo (people)," <https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/248202>

⁴¹ Khamchinkhai, "Transition of Zou Society from Animism to Christianity: A Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Analysis" (MTh Thesis, Serampore College, 2004), 9.

⁴² Zou Zumpi, *Zou Custom Book (Zou Tawndan)* (Churachandpur: Goikhanman, Chinzaniang and Chingzaniang, Revised and Corrected, 2005), 19.

⁴³ H. Thangtungnung, *Tribal Customary Laws and Practices* (New Delhi: Maxford Books, 2015), 89.

In the archaic era, the Zous had no written records of their own and it was not until the early 1950s that such records began to appear with the advent of modern literate society. The establishment of the first organized Christian organization - the Jou Christian Association was possible due to the initiative taken by the newly English-educated Zou youths, namely T. Thonghang, Semkhopau and Kaizakham.⁴⁴ The first publication in the Zou dialect was a primer called *Jou Simpat Bu* by the Jou Christian Association in 1954. In the same year, the Association published *Jou Gam Thusuo*, a monthly newspaper.⁴⁵ The same Zou-educated youths residing in Imphal for their education also founded a socio-political organization for the Zous, named Jou National Council (JNC), on 23 May 1954 with S. Semkhopau as its President.⁴⁶ The name of the organization was later changed to the United Manipur Jou Organization (UMJO) in a meeting held at Tuaitengphai on 4 May 1956.⁴⁷

1.4.2 The Zou Clans:

Each Zou clan is believed to descend from an ancient eponymous progenitor called Pu Zo (grandfather Zo or progenitor Zo). The Zou patrilineal descent system is reckoned from the name of the eldest male or firstborn male of the clan. The Zou tribe is divided into numerous clans and sub-clans. Haochinthong listed them into 44 clans, namely Manlun, Mantuong, Mangson, Manvu, Matmang, Malneu, Mate (Mangte), Mulpi, Mimvah, Munluo, Ahgal (Milun), Baite, Beltou, Dopmul, Guizo, Hangvung, Hangthual, Hangpa, Hangluo, Holhang, Inpi, Kunhen, Kholon, Lamhau, Lawitho, Lienzaw, Naulah, Pape, Pangzang, Phaipi, Phiempfu, Samte, Suante, Suantah, Taithul, Thangman, Thangnoh, Thangnuai, Tawtah, Tungnung, Tungdim, Tunglut, Tungte and Vohmai.⁴⁸

As per *The Jou Custom book*, the following are the Zou clans in India: Ahgal, Baite, Dopmul, Guizo, Hangpa, Hangthuom, Hangvung, Hawlhang, Inpi, Phiempfu, Thangnuoi, Kholon, Kunhen, Lienzaw, Mangson, Manlun, Mantuong, Matmang,

⁴⁴ Zou, "Glimpses of Zou Ethno-History," 127,132.

⁴⁵ Philip Thanglienmang, "A Descriptive Grammar of the Zo Language," 7.

⁴⁶ Thangchinsuan, "United Zomi Organization," 1.

⁴⁷ Thangchinsuan, "United Zomi Organization," 2.

⁴⁸ Haochinthong, *Zou Sung Kivaihawmna (Administration Among the Zou Tribes)* (Lamka: M/S Express, 1988), 36.

Manvu, Mate, Mulpi, Munluo, Samte, Taithul, Tawtah, Thangman, Tungdim, Tungung and Tungte.⁴⁹

According to Chin Khan Suan, the following are the families of Zo clans: Ahgal, Amei, Baite, Guite, Guizo, Hanghal, Hangpa, Hangvung, Hanthuol, Haunung, Hawhang, Kunhen, Kholawn, Mate, Lienzaw, Milun, Manlun, Mantuong, Manvuh, Mangson, Matmang, Mulpi, Ngaite, Ngaman, Neuzaw, Neilut, Pape, Phiemphu, Samte, Suontah, Suonte, Suonkhup, Suosie, Taithul, Taitom, Tungdim, Tungnung, Tawtah, Tawmbing, Thangman and Zote.⁵⁰

Mate which was once included as one of the clans under the Zou tribe, is now a recognized Scheduled Tribe in Manipur.⁵¹ It reduced the number of clans of the Zous to 43.

1.4.3 Legacy of Anti-Colonial Rebellion – Zou Gal (1917 – 1919):

The uprising against British imperialism on the Indo-Burma frontier between 1917 and 1919 is recorded as the ‘Kuki Rising’ in official British colonial documents. To the Zous in Manipur, this war is known locally as Zou Gal, a war fought by the Zous against the mighty British power in the southern region of the present state of Manipur, which the colonial accounts referred to as the *Manhlun* country.⁵² The Zous of Manipur led by their chiefs, fought bravely against the British imperialist might, in what is popularly known as the Zou Gal. Though abortive, it was a bold attempt on the part of the Zous, thereby leaving a rich legacy in the history of Manipur.

⁴⁹ Vummang and Jamkhogin, *The Jou Custom Book (Tondan)* (Imphal: Nengjakham and Sianjahao, 1957), 1.

⁵⁰ Thanglienmang, “A Descriptive Grammar,” 74.

⁵¹ The Gazette of India, The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Act 2011.

⁵² British Library, London (BL), Asian and African Collections [formerly Oriental & India Office Collections (AAC)], Indian Office Records and Private Papers (IOR & PP) (hereafter BL, AAC, IOR & PP: Copy of a Confidential letter No. 89-W., dated the 14 Jan 1918, from the Hon’ble Mr. J.E. Webster, C.I.E., Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Shillong to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign and Political Dept., 2. The Zou inhabited areas in the southern hills of the present Manipur were referred as the ‘Manhlun (aka Manlun) country’ in colonial official documents because those areas were within the chiefdoms of the Manlun chiefs, who were the most influential and powerful among the Zous in those days.

A Zou folk song composed on the occasion of the war by Mangzathang Dopmul runs as follows:

*Tuizum Mang kang kiilbang hing khang
Zouta kuol zilbang liing e,
Pienna ka gamlei hi e! phal sing e!
Piengamlei le, I Zougam nuom laal ka naw
Sansii'n zel e!
Ngalliem vontawi ka laulou lai e.*⁵³

English Free Translation:

The Seafaring White imperialist coils like the 'kill' plant,
Tremors of an earthquake do quiver the Zou world,
'Tis the land of my birth: I shall not part with it!
Stain'd with blood is my Sword.
That has routed the adversaries of Zouland,
I shall yet fight with the wild Boar, injured.⁵⁴

The colonial documents have rarely mentioned the Zous' participation in this war. It appears that the Zous and the Thadous fought the war simultaneously, with the same cause in different areas under different leaders. In the series of historic meetings of the Zou chiefs at Behiang and Buhsau, no Thadou chiefs were present, and no Zou chiefs attended the meetings of the Thadou chiefs. In this connection, Khaikhotinthang Kipgen writes, "It is a fact that the Zous also fought against the British in the same year, but there was no link between the Thadous and the Zous either in men or in war material except in having a common enemy."⁵⁵

Here, the primary focus is on the Zou people's resistance against British imperialism in their inhabited areas in southern Manipur. Though the main cause for the rebellion was the suppressive administrative approach of the British towards the hill tribes, the recruitment of labour corps was the immediate cause. The Zous bluntly refused to send coolies. When the government attempted to force them to join the labour corps, it led to the outbreak of the Zou Gal in 1917.

⁵³ Editorial Board, "Zougal," in *Chinthu Zaila-X*, eds. T. Nehkhojang and M. Liensuonkap (Churachandpur: T. Lamkothawng, 2011), 24.

⁵⁴ Zou, "Zou Ethno-History," 121-122.

⁵⁵ Khaikhotinthang Kipgen, *The Thadou Kukis* (Imphal: Swaraj Printing Press, 1982), 32.

In a series of meetings organized by Goulun, chief of Hiangtam and Langzachin, chief of Behiang, the Zou chiefs resolved to oppose the government's order. As the Zou chiefs were expecting punitive measures against them, gayals were killed and an oath of allegiance was taken by partaking in the cooked livers and hearts of the gayals. They also took a pledge to fight together against the government, and punitive action would be meted out to any person collaborating with the government.

Information was passed on in all the Zou villages in the form of the traditional method of wrapping a piece of firewood together with a piece of big red chili, hard and soft bamboo strings, and half-burnt firewood. These material forms of the message had their literal meanings. The tactics and strategies employed against their enemies were *zouthau* (muzzleloader), *suongkhai thang* (stone traps), *sou* (pointed logs), *pumpi* (leather cannon), etc.

To punish the rebels, Cosgrave, the then Political Agent of Manipur, and Lieutenant Halliday moved with the armies further south by following the Chakpi River by the end of 1917. The Zou forces ambushed them at Tuibom, a place beyond Shuganoo (Sugnu). Cosgrave and his men were forced to retreat due to heavy casualties.⁵⁶

On 27 January 1918, while Captain Steadman and his men were on their way to attack Haika, they encountered one of the fiercest combined forces of the Zous and Mangvung-Haokip at Gotengkot. The encounter lasted for many hours. The Zou fighters fired *pumpi* against the advancing British troops.⁵⁷ The battle of Gotengkot is said to have been one of the most intense battles in the history of Zou Gal. Cosgrave was so disappointed with the situation that he even suggested aeroplanes to bring the rebels to subjugation.⁵⁸ To punish the Manhlun-Manchang (Manlun-Mantuong Zous) in the southern hills, a column with a Political Agent was sent in March 1918,

⁵⁶ L.W. Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles* (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Reprinted 1977), 213.

⁵⁷ Ginzakhai, "Collection of Biographical Sketches of Zou Gal-II: Pu Lunchin," in *A History of the Zou People*, eds. David Vumlallian Zou and S. Thangboi Zou (Churachandpur: United Zou Organization-India Publication, 2017), 274.

⁵⁸ Dena, *History of Manipur*, 129.

where 14 villages were burnt and paddy and cattle were destroyed after strong opposition but no casualties.⁵⁹

Buhsau is one of the oldest Zou villages in the southern region of Manipur. A fierce encounter took place at 'Bukshao Henthang' village on 16 March 1918, where one army named Sirman Khatri (Sepoy number 2234) was wounded, and another sepoy named Ambor Bhadur Chettri was shot, who succumbed to his injury after ten minutes. The chief of Buhsau, Henthang, and his men were killed, and even women and children were not spared. All the houses in the Buhsau village were burnt.⁶⁰

On 17 March 1891, two contingents of the British troops attacked Singngat. The advancing British troops did not encounter much opposition from the Zou fighters, except that one shot was fired against them. When the British forces arrived at Singngat, they found that Zou fighters had deserted the village, and then, they camped in it.⁶¹ The Zou fighters had retreated from Singngat to the Hiangtam fort.⁶² It is said that Singngat was burnt.

In the southern area, Hiangtam was the nerve centre where tactics of war and strategic policy were hatched. The Zou chiefs, including Goulun Manlun of Hiangtam and other Zou fighters, strongly defended the Hiangtam fort.

Local sources say that Cosgrave and his column marched towards Hiangtam on 18 March 1918. But before reaching the village, Cosgrave conveyed a message to the Zou fighters in Hiangtam fort that they should surrender or else their fort would be attacked with aeroplanes. Goulun, the chief of Hiangtam, responded to the message, *Vanleng a nang kap uleh aahgawchieng in kang na vat khe ding uhi* (If you attack with an aeroplane, we will knock it down with a hen's stick).⁶³ While the British forces were climbing up towards the village, the Zou fighters began firing at

⁵⁹ BL, AAC, IOR & PP: No. 2075-P. dated 27th March 1918, Telegram from the Chief Secretary to the Hon'ble Chief Commissioner of Assam, Shillong to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign and Political Dept., Simla, 567.

⁶⁰ Manipur State Archives, Imphal (hereafter MSA), 'Political Department,' Row-1: Section - 1/12: "Tour Diary of Political Agent," 3.

⁶¹ MSA, "Tour Diary of Political Agent," 5.

⁶² MSA, "Tour Diary of Political Agent," 5.

⁶³ Editorial Board, "Zougal," 22.

them from their bunker, where a sepoy named Harka Bahadur Chhetri was shot dead.⁶⁴ An exchange of fire ensued. It is called the Battle of Hiangtam. The Zous were strongly defending the fort, and they could not be dislodged from it until several shells from a seven-pounder mountain gun and bullets from magazine rifles were fired at close range. Cosgrave reported the battle of Hiangtam as follows:

The defense of Hengtam (Hiangtam) village was by far the most stubborn and well-organized fight I have seen the Manipur Kukis put up and there is every sign that our present foes, the Manhlun Manchong Kukis are a more formidable foe than the other Kukis with whom No.2 column has so far dealt. Our column had to fire some 1300 rounds of .303 (rifles) and Martini Henry ammunition.⁶⁵

The British troops marched to Tonjang on 21 March 1918 and reached the village without any opposition. Local sources have it that the Zous defended the village under the leadership of Lunzamang, Sumhau, Tankithang, Lamzakham, Selkithang, etc., but the village was burnt by the Zous themselves before the British troops arrived. Cosgrave and his men camped in the village that was deserted and ruined.⁶⁶

Operations of the column in the Zou areas in the south hills were conducted without opposition from the Zou fighters till 24 March 1918. In the operations, four rebel villages were burnt, two sepoys were killed, two others were injured, and one coolie lost his life. On the opposite side, two Zous were killed and many were wounded. Livestock, including 30 gayals and a large quantity of grain, were destroyed.⁶⁷

In the meantime, the government was determined to capture the rebels or bring them to submission. One column of 100 rifles was ordered from Pangmual

⁶⁴ MSA, "Tour Diary of Political Agent," 6.

⁶⁵ MSA, Imphal, "Tour Diary of Political Agent," 6.

⁶⁶ MSA, Imphal "Tour Diary of Political Agent," 8.

⁶⁷ BL, AAC, IOR & PP: Confidential letter No.2966-P., dated Shillong, the 3rd May 1918 from the Hon'ble Mr. J.E. Webster, C.I.E., Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Hon'ble Sir Hamilton Grant, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Foreign Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Dept, Simla, 1.

against the Zous in the south hills.⁶⁸ Gradually, the leaders of Zou Gal were captured or forced to surrender. In March 1918, Sawmlun, chief of Chungyang or Tunzan (aka Tonzang), was captured and his village was occupied and burnt.⁶⁹ A Zou village of Naoljang (aka Ngajjang) was burnt by a subedar in charge of the outpost on the Lushai Hills frontier at Bangmual (Pangmual) on 1 April 1918.⁷⁰

The final punitive measures were entrusted to the Control of the General Officer Commanding, Burma. The operation was launched in November 1918, but the rebellion in most of the hills had slowly subsided by this time. In the Zou country, villages such as Buhsau, Singngat, Hiangtam, Tonzang, Ngajjang, Munpi, Kholien Khailet, Simbu, Hita, Tuibum, Tuisom, Phaisat and Tahsat were defeated, burnt, or abandoned. The British government offered favourable terms to the Zou chiefs that if they surrendered before 1 November 1918, with their licensed guns and the house tax due from their respective villages, they would not be punished but would merely be detained in Imphal jail until the complete suppression of the rebellion.⁷¹ In response to the government's favourable terms, the leader of the Zou fighters and chief of Behiang, Langzachin, surrendered to the British government on 22 October 1918.⁷² Goulun Manlun, the chief of Hengtham (aka Hiangtam), was captured on 16 January 1919.⁷³ The Pangmual column also captured Lampum of Kweyvooom (aka Khuoivum), but no guns were seized from that village. The column also captured 16 guns from Munpui (aka Munpi) and four from Singat (aka

⁶⁸ Mizoram State Archive (hereafter MZSA), Aizawl, Pol.-85 (Book II), Serial No. 85, Carton Box-9: Hand written copy of letter No.85 G, Dated 25th May 1918 from Deputy Inspector General of Assam Rifles Shillong, 1.

⁶⁹ MZSA, Pol.-85 (Book II), Carton Box-9: Letter No. 700 G.A. dated Imphal, the 20th June 1918 from W.A. Cosgrave Esquire I.C.S., Political Agent, Manipur to the Superintendent, Lushai Hills, Aijal, 1.

⁷⁰ BL, AAC, IOR & PP: Confidential letter No.2966-P, 2.

⁷¹ BL, AAC, IOR & PP IOR/6933/1919: Political Department, Political Branch, No.6310P, dated Shillong, the 27th June 1919 - From the Hon'ble Mr. J.E. Webster, Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign and Political Department, Simla. 5.

⁷² MZSA, Carton Box No. 9, Sl.No.85, Book-II: Copy of Telegram No.416 -P dated 22nd October 1918 from the Political Agent, Imphal to The Commandant, 1st Lushai Hills Battalion, 1.

⁷³ BL, AAC, IOR & PP IOR/1783/1919: Assam Administrative Camp, No. 174-T, dated the 13th Feb. 1919. A letter from The Hon'ble Mr. J.E. Webster, C.I.E., Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Dept., Delhi, 1.

Singngat).⁷⁴ Langzachin Manlun, Goulun Manlun, and other Zou fighters, either captured or surrendered, were kept in detention for some days at Hiangtam. Later, they were sent to Imphal jail.⁷⁵ They had been in jail for months. In July 1919, some prisoners, including Goulun Manlun, were acquitted and released after serving jail sentences for a year in Imphal jail.⁷⁶

The Zou Gal, in particular, and the Kuki rebellion in general, had far-reaching consequences in the history of Manipur. As a result of the war, the hill areas of Manipur were for the first time, brought under the intensified political and administrative control of the British imperial power.⁷⁷

1.5 Statement of the Problem:

The Zous have been settling in their present settlements since the pre-colonial period. In the nineteenth century, the Zous, under the Manlun chiefs, were strong contenders for regional power in the Northern Chin Hills. There was a stiff struggle between the Zous and the Kam Hau Sukte to control the Northern Chin Hills, especially Tedim.⁷⁸ However, no detailed study of the socio-cultural history of Zous has ever been made.

The Zous have a rich heritage of customary practices, which they have developed and preserved over a long period. They are also unique in the sense of the name they bear and the culture they practice in reflection of the ancient Zo traditions. During the colonial period, the Zous were known for their resistance against the British government and the Maharaja of Manipur, which led to the outbreak of the Zou Gal in 1917.

Despite having such a rich culture and being daring enough to challenge British imperialism, little authentic research on the Zous of Manipur has been

⁷⁴ MZSA, Aizawl, Pol.-86 (Book III), Carton Box-9: Copy of wire No. 1885-T dated 18th Feb 1919 sent to the Superintendent, Falam, 1.

⁷⁵ Editorial Board, "Zougal," 24.

⁷⁶ MSA, Imphal Sl. No. 92, Row-4/Section-4, "Kuki Rebellion 1931": No. 6562P, date 7 July 1919-A Telegraph to the Chief Secretary, Shillong from the Political Agent, Manipur, 1.

⁷⁷ Dena, *History of Manipur*, 133.

⁷⁸ Cope, 4.

undertaken. The available written records are the general account of the Zous in the form of articles, booklets, souvenirs, and a few unpublished research works undertaken by theology students. Therefore, the study attempts to uncover the socio-cultural history of the Zous of Manipur from the pre-colonial period to 1956 and present a comprehensive historical account of the Zous of Manipur.

1.6 Review of Literature:

Though the life of the kings and important events in the palace in Manipur were recorded in Chronicles such as *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, *Ningthourol Lambuba*, etc., writings on the history of Manipur about the tribes in the hills started during the colonial period. The Zous, with no knowledge of the writing system, everything was passed orally from generation to generation. The early works on the history of the hill tribes of Manipur were done by colonial administrators. Concerning the Zous, the colonial writers made only passing references in their writings.

A History of the Zou People is edited by Dr. David Vumlallian Zou and Dr. S. Thangboi Zou and published in 2017 by the United Zou Organization-India, in commemoration of Zou Gal (Anglo-Zou War) Centenary 1917-1919. As it is a commemorative volume to honour the Zou fighters who took part in the Zou Gal, most of the articles contributed are related to Zou Gal, that includes the British's punitive measures, the Zous' resistance to the British troops, a series of encounters at different fronts, the impact of the war and even short biographies of all the Zou fighters. There is also a section in the volume where space for articles on a general history of Zous is given. The articles in this section touch on the origin, settlements, beliefs, etc., of the Zous. In this volume, the data used for writing most of the articles are collected from oral and archival sources.

A book titled *Zo Tulpi Hanghil Tangthu leh Khanggui Cieptehna (History of the Zo Lineage Head, Hanghil and Record of his Genealogy)* is edited by Mang Kho Lien and published by Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, an Association of the Hanghil family at Kalaymyo in Myanmar in 2012. The book traces the roots of the Zos in China and deals with their movement from China, to Tibet, to Burma, and thence to

the Chin Hills. A major part of the book is devoted to writing the history of Hanghil and his descendants, particularly giving a detailed genealogical account of the clans. It also deals with the Zou chiefs' struggle against the Sukte in the nineteenth century. Though not exhaustive, the book deals with the socio-cultural and religious life of the Zous in Myanmar. Khup Khan Mang's *History of Hanghil, Milun Family* (in Zou) is another book that deals with Hanghil and the Milun family, the offspring of Hangngul. The book also gives the genealogical accounts of Manlun, Mantuang, Mangson, Hangvung, and Matmang, who are the offspring of Hanghil. Out of the five offspring of Hanghil, the descendants of the eldest son, Manlun, became the most influential chief among the Zous. However, the book is confined only to one clan of the Zous.

T. Gin Khan Thang & Paoneikhai Suantak's *Tributary Hill Polity: Chiefs and Overlords in Northern Chin Hills, 1800-1948*, published by Mittal Publications, New Delhi, in 2015, sheds light on the century-old history of a hill-based polity in the borderland between the Indian states of Mizoram and Manipur with Burma. It deals with the struggle between the Zous and the Suktes in the second half of the nineteenth century. The book also touches on the Zou Gal (1917-1919), recorded in colonial documents as 'Kuki Rebellion,' where the main focus is the participation and surrender of the Zous in this rebellion in the southern and southeastern part of the present Manipur.

The *Tedim Thu Kizakna Lai* is a vernacular Baptist journal in Tedim, edited by Baptist missionary Joseph Herbert Cope and published in July and October 1937 in Tedim in the Chin Hills. It sheds light on the contest for control of the Northern Chin Hills, particularly Tedim, between the Zou chiefs and the Kamhau clans. This journal is highly informative as a record of events in general for most of the nineteenth century.

An Introduction to the Zou Tribes, an MA Dissertation by Holkhulun Lhungdim, is the first research work on the Zou tribe. It deals with the origin, domestic life, and the main occupation of the Zous in pre-colonial times.

P.S. Kham Do Nang, in his *Upto Date History of the Zo tribes*, presents a glimpse of the cultural and religious life of the Zou tribes in general. He also states why Zou is believed to be the heir of Zo's descendants. Moreover, he writes that the first settlement of the Zous is Suih Mual and also describes the dispersion of the Zo tribes from Cimnuai and then their migration to their present settlements in Manipur.

Regarding Zou society, culture, and religion, an important work is Mannuamching's *Zou Culture: Past and Present* (1999), in which the author writes about the cultures of the Zou before the coming of Christianity. The book deals with the marriage system, dress, feasts, disposal of the dead, etc., and also points out the changes in the cultures of the Zous with the advent of modernity and Christianity. In another book, *Zo Ngaina Leh Kamham Zahdan* (2016), Kai Khan Lien touches on the socio-cultural history of the Zous, focusing briefly on the household council, marriage, birth and naming of a child, festivals, feasts, traditional belief, burial system and journey of the soul to *misikhuo*. He also states that the Zous are the descendants of the progenitor Zo. He further states that the Zous in Myanmar are listed under Code No. 421, and in India, they are recognized as a Scheduled Tribe.

Transition of the Zou Society from Animism to Christianity: A Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Analysis, an M.Th Thesis, by Khamchinkhai deals with brief accounts of the origin, migration, dances, feasts, etc. of the Zou tribe. It emphasizes the religious aspect of the Zous, such as traditional religious belief, the formation of the Church organization, and also changes brought about by Christianity in the life of the Zous.

David Vumlallian Zou's article "Glimpses of Zou Ethno-History," in *United Zomi Organization Golden Jubilee (1954 – 2004) Souvenir*, edited by Thangchinsuan and published in 2004, is a concise ethnohistory of the Zous of Manipur. It is a brief historical account of the Zous reconstructed from documentary evidence, supplemented by oral sources. The author describes the contest between the Zous under the Manlun chief and the Sukte chief for controlling the northern Chin Hills in the nineteenth century, where the former was reduced to a subdued status. He also points out the demographic marginalization of the Zous on both sides of the Manipur

and Burma frontier by awarding sixteen Zou villages to Manipur like a trophy.⁷⁹ The author states that without direct contact with any Western Christian missions, the Zou Christian pioneers ceaselessly worked to form the first Christian organization in the mid-1950s. The article provides an account of how the evolution of the Zou community reflects elements of continuity and change.

The Chin Hills, Vol. I, by B.S. Carey and H.N. Tuck (reprinted 2008), trace the advent of the British administration in the Chin Hills and the Lushai Hills. It provides valuable information on the history of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo ethnic tribes who inhabited the Chin Hills in the late nineteenth century. The book briefly notes the Zous and presents them in a subdued status. It states that Khan Thuam and his son Kam Hau conquered all the Zou-inhabited areas. However, the book mentions that no Sukte chief is superior in birth to the Yo. It describes the tract of a country once occupied by the Zous: “The Yo tribe three generations back occupied the tract of the country now inhabited by the Kanhow (aka Kam Hau) clan of Soktes (Suktes), and many of the Kanhow villages are inhabited still by Yos whose tribal name has given way to that of “Kanhow.”⁸⁰ The authors also write, “... but the people called themselves by the name Yo, and those who belong to the ‘Manlun’ family consider that they have a right to be proud of their birth.”⁸¹ The Manlun chiefs are the most influential among the Zous.

B.S. Carey and H.N. Tuck’s *The Chin Hills* Vol. II (Reprinted 2008) is a Gazetteer of Villages and Road Reports in the Chin Hills in the late nineteenth century AD. It also lists the villages that are tributaries to Manipur and lie north of the Chin Hills. The book records fifteen Zou villages with 548 houses under Manipur⁸² and fourteen Zou villages⁸³ with 191 houses in the Chin Hills. The Zou villages in the Chin Hills are subordinated to Hauchinkhup, and therefore, they are listed as ‘Kanhow villages.’

⁷⁹ David, “Zou Ethno-History,” 116-117.

⁸⁰ Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills* I, 140.

⁸¹ Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills* I, 140.

⁸² Bertram S. Carey and H.C. Tuck, *The Chin Hills: A History of the People, Our dealing with them, their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of their Country*, Vol. II (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Reprinted 2008), cxx-cxxiv.

⁸³ Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills*, II, xx-xxi, xxiv-xxx.

Chinthu Zaila (Prose & Poetry), edited by M. Liensuonkap and T. Nehkhohang, was published in 2012. It is prescribed as a Zou MIL textbook for Class XI & XII by the Council of Higher Secondary Education, Manipur. The prose section of the book includes topics such as customary practices, disposal of the dead, inheritance, folk songs, feasts, festivals, etc., of the Zou tribe. Though the contributors do not deal in detail with the cultures of the Zous, it is a good source of information for writing the history of the Zou tribe. In another book *Chinthu Zaila (Zou Literature Reader-X)*, prescribed as a textbook for Class X by the Board of Secondary Education, Manipur, chapters on “Upadi (custom)”, “Kithoina (sacrifices)” and “Zou Gal” are useful sources. In “Upadi,” James Khamchinsuan deals with the customary practices, focusing on the role and the privileges enjoyed by the members of *inndongta*. Kaikhohau’s “Kithoina” is about the various types of sacrifices performed by the early Zous to appease or drive away evil spirits.

Joseph Suantak, in his book, *Khulmi? Chhinlung Hurpi Khol Khul Khur Sinlung (Beyond Identity and Political Crisis)*, printed in 2012, has a bold attempt to study the *Khulmi* people: their cave-origin theory, migratory movement, settlement patterns, and their socio-cultural interactions with one another during the historical period by combining multi-disciplinary methods. He writes about the Zous's origin and the Zou family's lineage. He also mentions the migration of some of the Zous from the Chin Hills to the southern part of Manipur.

Ginzamang T. Zomi’s article, “Marriage Practices of the Zou tribe in Manipur – Continuity and Changes,” in *International Journal of Social Science Invention*, Vol. 3, Issue 10, October 2014, discusses the traditional marriage practices of the Zou tribe, which have been observed from time immemorial. He touches on the different aspects of Zou marriage - forms of marriage, bride price, customary bride’s expenditure, divorce, and so on. He concluded his article by stating that though Christianity brought changes in the Zou traditional marriage system, traditional customary practices such as bride price, marriage feast, etc., are still retained by the Zou tribe.

Thang Sut Mung, in his doctoral thesis, *A History of the Zo People*, investigates the social pattern and development of the Zou people. He traces the origin and also examines the settlements, customary practices, culture, and other aspects of the life of the Zous of Myanmar from pre-colonial times till the twentieth century. However, his study area is the Northern Chin State and parts of the Kabaw Valley in Myanmar. It is the first research work on the history of the Zous of Myanmar.

Johny Lalbiaklian, in his M. Phil Dissertation, *The Zou Customary Laws: Continuity and Changes*, studies the traditional social structure of the Zou society. He analyses the Zou customary laws and also points out that though Christianity brings changes in the religious life of the Zous, it does not have much effect on their customary laws. The study also mentions that, except for some minor changes, the customary laws continue to be followed by the Zous.

Tribal Customary Laws and Practices, written by H. Thangtungnung (2015), covers the various customary laws of the Kuki-Mizo-Zomi ethnic tribes like Paite, Thadou, Vaiphei, Hmar, Zou, etc. The book vividly reflects and discusses the customs and customary practices of these ethnic tribes. The author focuses on tribal society from the traditional background to modern adaptations and usages.

Prism of the Zo people is a book to commemorate the 60th Diamond Jubilee of Zomi Nam Ni, 2008. It was published by the Publication Board of the 60th Zomi Nam Ni Celebration Committee. The articles in this book are research-based write-ups of various scholars or are extracted from books and theses. It provides basic information on the history, culture, economy and politics of the Zomi.

The General Assembly, Presbyterian Church of India, published a book *History of the Presbyterian Church of India* in 2020. The book deals with the beginning and development of the Presbyterian Church of India, and the various activities undertaken by it over the years. It also discusses the beginning, growth and development of the various Church Synods under it. The chapter on the Zou Presbyterian Church Synod sheds light briefly on the beginning and spread of

Christianity among the Zous of Manipur. The book mentions that despite opposition to the new faith from the village chiefs, the untiring efforts of the native missionaries led to the spread of Christianity into the interior parts of the Zou-inhabited areas.

Vummang and Jamkhogin compiled *The Jou Custom Book (Tondan)*, which was published in 1957. In the booklet, the customary practices followed by the Zous in marriage, divorce, rape, murder, etc. and the punishments or fines imposed on the offenders are reduced in writing and compiled together.

Proceedings of the First Indo-Myanmar International Seminar on Zou Language, Literature, Culture and Custom, was edited by Aloysius T. Nehkhojang and published by Xavier Nengkhanlam and T. Lamkothawng in 2013. It is an edition of the articles presented by various resource persons in the 1st Indo-Myanmar International Seminar on “Zou Language, Literature, Culture and Custom” held at Moreh, Manipur on 15th and 16th May 2013. The resource persons touch on the culture and customs of the Zous in India and Myanmar and stress the importance of preserving them.

Thus, it is seen that the existing works of literature reviewed above concern the general aspects of the life of the Zous. However, an in-depth study of the social and cultural history of the Zous of Manipur has never been made objectively. Therefore, the study attempts to make an intensive study of the Socio-Cultural History of the Zous in Manipur.

1.7 Area of Study:

The study focused on the socio-cultural history of the Zous community in Manipur, covering the pre-colonial era up to 1956. Intensive research has been carried out in the Churachandpur and Chandel districts of Manipur, as most of the Zou villages are located in these areas.

1.8 Research Objectives:

- To trace the origin, migration and settlements of the Zous.
- To explore the socio-cultural life of the Zous.

- To study the Zou customary practices.
- To study the post-colonial Zou social and political life and its continuity to 1956.

1.9 Methodology:

This research employs an ethnohistorical and qualitative approach to examine the social and cultural history of the Zou tribe of Manipur. Due to the limited textual records of this small tribal society, where written sources emerged primarily in post-colonial times, the methodology draws upon a diverse range of sources — primary, secondary and oral sources.

The ethnohistorical framework allows for the integration of anthropological methods with historical inquiry, particularly valuable when studying indigenous communities with strong oral traditions. Primary sources include dissertations and doctoral theses - both secular and theological, and also colonial official documents, collected from the governmental and non-governmental archives. Conducting a socio-cultural historical study on such a small (Zous) society, where written records emerged only in post-colonial times, has proven challenging due to limited sources. In fact, Colonial ethnographers hardly touched upon this community. In some exceptional cases, but unlike the Thadou, Lushais and other major Chin tribes, there are no specific colonial ethnographical works on the Zou people. This challenge intensified as the research timeframe does not extend beyond 1956.

To bridge this gap, oral historical sources were gathered through unstructured, open-ended purposive interviews. These interviews were conducted with respondents from various professional and personal backgrounds, such as (retired) government servants, religious leaders, village chiefs, and leaders of civil societies like the United Zou Organization, the Zou Literature Society, etc. To achieve greater objectivity and a holistic understanding of the ethnohistory of Zou society, physical and telephonic interviews were conducted with resourceful individuals inhabiting the Chin State and Sagaing Region in Myanmar, as well as with members of the Zous residing in the USA.

Secondary sources, including books (published or unpublished), journals, booklets, souvenirs, etc., were utilized in this research. Websites were also accessed as per the availability of sources.

Like other hill tribes of Northeast India, the Zou community embraced aspects of modernity through education and other social transformations that began with the advent of Christianity in the 1940s. However, these changes manifested gradually over subsequent decades, as the Zous remained steadfast, content, and proud of their indigenous culture and beliefs.

In examining the equilibrium of change and continuity in the Zou society and culture from archaic until the 1950s, the research reveals a predominance of continuity over change - a distinctive characteristic of Zou history. Had the area of the study of this research been extended a few decades beyond the 1950s, it would have offered greater advantages in documenting the socio-cultural and political changes of the Zous.

The qualitative methodology employed in this study prioritizes depth of cultural understanding over quantitative metrics, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of cultural persistence and gradual transformation. The primary focus of this research work is twofold: to document how extensively the Zous preserved their indigenous socio-cultural practices and to analyze the beginning of their transition from traditional systems to Christianity and modernity.

1.10 Chapterization:

Chapter 1: Introduction

The first chapter introduces the land and the people of Manipur. It also highlights a brief political history of Manipur. This chapter clarified the etymology and challenges of the terms 'Zou,' 'Zo' or 'Zomi' and also introduces the Zous of Manipur. It also briefly deals with Zou Gal, the anti-colonial rebellion of the Zous. Statement of the problem, review of literature, area of study, research objectives, methodology, and chapterization are also included in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Origin, Migration and Settlements

The second chapter traces the origin of the Zous and also shows how they are referred to in recorded sources. It deals with the migration of the Zous from China to Tibet, thence to Burma, and finally to their present settlements in Manipur. The chapter also shows the early and the present settlements of the Zous.

Chapter 3: Traditional Social Structure and Customary Practices

This chapter discusses the family structure, clan, and village structure of the Zou society. It examines the social practices of the Zous, such as *inndongta*, social visits, courtship, and the marriage system. It also deals with death, funerary practices, and the ceremonies connected with death.

Chapter 4: Indigenous Culture and Festivals

Chapter 4 deals with inheritance, pregnancy, birth, the naming of a child and the ceremonies associated with a newborn child. It examines *pu zukhol*, *sawm* and the traditional method of division of meat. This chapter also discusses festivals, feasts, dances, folksongs, dresses, ornaments, musical instruments, hunting, *zu* and society, and economic activities of the Zous.

Chapter 5: Chiefs and the Traditional Administrative System

This chapter discusses the Zou chieftaincy system and the powers, functions and privileges of the Zou chiefs during traditional times. It also discusses the traditional village administration, *lawm*, the village court, customary laws and settlements of cases, and the chief's relationship with his neighbouring villages. Changes in the administration of the hill areas are also examined in this chapter.

Chapter 6: Traditional Belief System and the Advent of Christianity

The sixth chapter shows the traditional religious beliefs and sacrifices of the Zous in their pre-Christian period. It also traces the beginning of the Christian

Mission and its activities in Manipur and discusses the spread of Christianity among the Zous.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The last chapter summarizes the whole thesis and draws a comprehensive conclusion.



Fig.1.1 Goulun Manlun, Second in command of Zou Gal, 1917-1919.
Courtesy: M. Thangchinmang s/o Goulun Manlun.



Fig.1.2 On Chin of Ngajang (a Zou fighter during Zou Gal).
Courtesy: Dr. S. Thangboi Zou.



Fig. 1.3. *Pumpi* (Leather Cannon) used against British forces in Zou Gal.
 Courtesy: Tribal Museum, Zo-Gam Art & Cultural Development Association,
 Thangzam Road, Hill Town, Churachandpur, Manipur.



Fig.1.4. Zou Gal Cemetery, Behiang village.
 Photo: Thangsuanhang.

Chapter 2

Origin, Migration and Settlements

2.1 Introduction:

The different community in the world has a representation of the appearance of society and community. However, the accounts of human origins differed widely across cultures around the world. The Zou tradition, too has theories of origin that have been kept in various ways, such as incantations, folklores, and traditional songs. For the Zous with no writing system, a rich oral tradition is the most reliable means of transmitting past events and collective memories through time. The names of ancestors are recited in *pusa* worship and at the burial of a deceased man, and the songs and folklore are sung and repeatedly told during festivals and feasts over the generations. In this way, the collective memories of the myths of the origin of progenitor *Zo*, *khul* theory, etc., are handed from generation to generation.

2.2 Origin of the Zou:

The origin of the Zous is shrouded in almost complete mystery. Zou/Zo means ‘highland,’ ‘finished,’ or ‘accomplished.’ According to legendary tradition, the Zous were descendants of Progenitor *Zo* and their place of origin is *Khul*. Lately, some scholars have held the view that they are the descendants of Manasseh. Some popular theories of the origin of the Zous are as follows:

2.2.1 Progenitor *Zo* Origin Theory:

There are diverse views regarding the origin of the term ‘Zou.’ Some people like Thang Tuan, a Tedim-Chin historian, presume that the term is derived from the ‘zo part of the mountain,’ on a mountain ridge covered with green forest where a settlement called Balzang was founded by the Yos under Hanghil.¹ However, the term ‘Zou’ is believed to have originated from time immemorial, long before the

¹ Thang Tuan, *Khamtung Mite Tangthu*, quoted in Sing Khaw Khai, “The Zo People and Their Culture,” *Prism of the Zo People*, ed. Publication Board (Churachandpur: Zomi Namni Celebration Committee, 2008), 276.

recorded date. According to the Zou oral tradition, Zo is the name of an ancient progenitor from whom the Zous claim to have originated and have retained his name to identify them from time immemorial until today. Some of the local writers of Mizoram and the Chin State of Myanmar also trace the ancestors of the Chin race to an eponymous ancestor named Zo. Therefore, the term ‘Zou’ conveys the universal character of its existence in history.²

As stated above, the Zou tradition claims that the name Zou originated from an ancient progenitor, Pu Zo, and therefore, they believe and claim that they are the descendants of Zo.³ Pu Zo seems to be a legendary figure rather than a historical one. A comparative study of the genealogies of the various Zou clans handed down orally since time immemorial shows that each clan traces its origin to Zo. To substantiate the above claim, genealogies of the five major clans of the Zous such as Manlun, Dopmul-Suontah, Phiamphu, Tungdim, and Samte are given in Appendices A, B, C, D, and E respectively. The five major clans trace their genealogical lineage to progenitor Zo. It is also the same in the case of other clans. T. Gougin, a Zou writer, states that the name Zou was born out of a man known as Zo.⁴

Some of the local writers of Mizoram and the Chin State of Myanmar believed in the origin of the Chin race to an eponymous ancestor named Zo. A Mizo writer, V.Lunghnema traces the origin of the Hmar tribe to an ancestor called Zo.⁵ Similarly, among the Tedim-Chins, Vum Kho Hau in his foreword to a chronicle, *The Genealogy of the Zo (Chin) Race of Burma* writes, “Wherever they lived, they called themselves variously as Zo, Asho, Jo, etc.”⁶ In the same book, the author, K.A. Khupzathang, also records all the lineal descendants of the Chin to a person

² T. Gin Khan Thang, and Pauneikhai Suantak, *Tributary Hill Polity: Chiefs and Overlords in Northern Hills Circa 1800-1948* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2015), 45.

³ Philip Thanglienmang, “A Descriptive Grammar of the Zo Language” (PhD Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2012), 7.

⁴ T. Gougin, *History of Zomi* (Churachandpur: Zomi Press, 1986), 7.

⁵ V.Lunghnema, *Hmar Genealogy* (Imphal: Author, 1977), 1-5.

⁶ Thang and Suantak, *Tributary Hill Polity*, 43.

named Zo.⁷ C. Chawngkunga also traces the genealogy of the Chawngthu clan, Suangkop clan, Tawm Ging (Tawmbing) clan, etc., to an ancestor Zo.⁸

Based on the above views, it is likely that the claim made by the Zous about their origin has a logical sense of historical rationality. It is also further proved by the fact that Zous, one of the ethnic tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo, has been retaining the term Zou to identify them since time immemorial till today.

2.2.2 *Khul* Origin Theory:

According to this theory, *khul* is the original home of all the ethnic tribes of Chin-Kuki-Mizo. These tribes have a tradition of origin from the bowels of the earth or a cave. The name of the cave differs depending on the dialects used by the various tribes. The name of the cave is called variously as *Khul*, *Sinlung*, or *Chhinlung*. The Zou tradition has it that their original habitat is a cave called *khul*, which is also known to the Paites, Gangtes, Vaipheis, etc. This theory is supported by folklore and traditional songs. The Zous have *lapi*,⁹ which describes the place of their subterranean origin of *khul* and how they came out of it and began to settle in the overground world. Manlun, one of the ruling clans of the Zous, has *khul* as its identity in its *lapi*. An extract from the Manlun *lapi* goes as follows:

*Ka pien masang a mi singta aw, a pieng nai mi um lo e,
A pieng nai lah mi um lo e, luntawi khang tembang kileh ing,
Tungchieng vangkhua sat ing ee.*¹⁰

Free translation:

I was the first person born before no one was born,
No one was born, as I grandiosely prospered in generations,
I started to inhabit the upper world.

⁷ K.A. Khupzathang, *The Genealogy of the Chin Race of Burma*, 1973, quoted in T. Gin Khan Thang and Paoneikhai Suantak, *Tributary Hill Polity: Chiefs and Overlords in Northern Hills Circa 1800-1948* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2015), 46.

⁸ C. Chawngkunga, *Genealogical Tree of Mizo* (Aizawl: Art & Culture Dept., 1996), 96A & B, 273-281, 284-286.

⁹ *Lapi* is a Zou traditional song which can be sung only on funeral occasion with attention and admiration. Every clan in the Zou society has its own *lapi*.

¹⁰ Chhinlunthang and Peter Lianlunthang, "Zou/Zo: A Preserver of Pu Zo Identity," in *A History of the Zou People*, eds. David Vumlallian Zou and S.Thangboi Zou (Churachandpur: United Zou Organization Publication, 2017), 132.

*Mimbang pienchil nuoi lenkhul hong, luntawi taang kamkei hi'ng e.
Sielsiel ta lei nuoi lenkhul ah, lun min suon ding um lou e.*¹¹

Free translation:

I opened the gate of the underworld; I am like a wounded wild boar.
Pondering in the underworld, there is no one to suppress me.

This *lapi* conveys that the Manlun and his people once dwelled in the *khul*, which is believed to be the original birthplace of all the Zo descendants. He led his people out of the cave and settled in the overground world.

Another old popular song also shows that the Zous are of *khul* origin. The song goes as:

*Eiteng khawlkhawm a tuom umlo,
Vannuoi chi peu khul a pieng;
Tun sung khat pan pieng hi ngeingei ee.*

Free translation:

We are all together, no strangers to each other,
Everyone under heaven is born from *khul*;
Surely born from the same mother.

*Tun sung khat pan pieng hi ngei ngei,
Suopi-sanggam laigui zom khawm te himel ee.*¹²

Free Translation:

Surely born from the same mother,
Kith and kin joined by navel cords, we are.

Though the Zous and other ethnic tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo believed that they originated from *khul*, nobody knows the exact location of *khul*. Gin Za Twang presumes that the location of *khul* might have been somewhere in Tibet, whereas Zou

¹¹ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, *Zo Tulpi Hanghil Tangthu leh Khanggui Cieptena (History of the Zo Lineage Head, Hanghil and Record of his Genealogy)* (Kalaymyo: Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 2012), 106.

¹² Thanglienmang, "A Descriptive Grammar," 34-35.

tradition points to the Chindwin area in Burma (present Myanmar).¹³ In line with Gin Za Twang's presumption, Zamzachin's understanding of the location of *khul* is also in Tibet.¹⁴ As to the location of *khul* in the Chindwin area, it is argued that the Zous were not cave dwellers in the Chindwin valley. Hence, there is no place called *khul* in the Chindwin Valley settlement.

William Shaw writes, "The hole in the earth called *khul* is said to be at the source of the 'Gun' river, which I find to be definitely identified with the Imphal River in the Manipur state, 'Gun' being the Thadou for the "Imphal River."¹⁵ However, locating *khul* at the source of the Gun river is totally unacceptable as the source of the Gun river is within the town of Imphal, and the forefathers of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo never settled in Imphal. Hence, the location of *khul* cannot be at the source of the Gun river.

William Shaw also records as:

Chongthu's party moved up to the *khul*. They found that it was covered with a stone and one of Chongthu's parties called Vangalpa lifted it. While he was able to do so only seven persons were able to get out and the stone was dropped and further attempts to raise it were in vain. The seven persons who thus emerged were Chongthu (Songthu), Vangalpa, the stone-lifter, Khupngam, the keeper of the dog, and four others. The names of the other four are not known but are said to include the progenitors of the Manipuri, the Naga, the foreigner, and the Burmese.¹⁶

This version is perhaps rather debatable, as some of the communities mentioned are rarely or never referenced in their legendary traditions as having emerged from *khul*.

The Mizos tradition claims *Chhinlung* as their mythical place of origin. A Mizo historian, Sangkima believed that the location of *Chhinlung* must be somewhere in

¹³ J. Gin Za Twang, *Zomi Inkuan Laibu (History of Zomi Family)* (Tedim: 1972), 5.

¹⁴ G. Zamzachin, *Paite Tanchin (Paite History)* (Imphal: Author, 1992), 3.

¹⁵ William Shaw, *Notes on the Thadou Kukis* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, Second Reprint 2019), 26.

¹⁶ Shaw, *Thadou Kukis*, 25.

Szechuan Province in southern China.¹⁷ However, Joseph Suantak argued that the traditional place *Chhinlung*, *Sinlung*, or *Khul* of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo and the Chinese names *Xinlong* and *Chinlung* are merely identical names. It has nothing to do with their ancestral homeland. He speculates that the location of *khul* may be somewhere within the eastern bank of the Brahmaputra in present-day Bangladesh and the western realm of Myanmar.¹⁸

Thus, confusion exists about the location of *Khul*, *Sinlung*, or *Chhinlung*. During their gradual movement from Tibet to the Chin Hills, our forefathers took to caves, pits, and holes which later descended in their memory as *khul*, *sinlung*, or *chhinlung*, according to the tongue of each ethnic tribe and as they passed through Tibet, China and Burma, the location of *khul*, *sinlung* or *chhinlung* could be speculated to be in Tibet, China and Burma. Such speculation of the varied locations exposed the vagueness of the *khul* theory. Therefore, *khul* theory is only a myth and cannot be accepted. In this connection, Z.Z. Lien writes, “Whatever may be the case, the word, *chhinlung* or *khul* as the other groups call it, was an imaginary homeland of the U-Now people in those far-off days.”¹⁹ He added, “It is impossible to admit the whole community in a small room of constant darkness.”²⁰

2.2.3 Israel Origin Theory:

The Israel origin theory is propounded by persons like Dr. Khuplam Lenthang, Z.D. Lalhnuna, T. Kamkhotuan, Chala, etc. According to this theory, all the ethnic tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo are the descendants of Manasseh (known to them as *Manmasi*), one of the lost tribes of Israel. This theory convinced some persons belonging to the Zou community, and as such, they also claimed that they were the descendants of Manasseh.

¹⁷ Sangkima, *Essays on the History of the Mizos* (Gauhati: Spectrum Publications, 2004), 47.

¹⁸ Joseph Suantak, *CHIN+KUKI+MIZO Genesis and Exodus: Unravelling the mystified lost-past of The unidentified Proto-Sino-Tibeto-Burma family* (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2012), 124.

¹⁹ Z. Z. Lien, *The U-Now People* (Churachandpur: Author, 1981), 19.

²⁰ Lien, *The U-Now People*, 19.

Tradition maintains that the early people of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo used to recite the word *Manmasi* whenever natural phenomena such as earthquakes, eclipses, and terrible storms occurred and also when they were about to bury the dead. This word was also said to be spelled out by the village priest during the ritual incantation in the olden days. Therefore, it is believed that *Manmasi* is a corrupted derivation of the Hebrew word *Manasseh*.

Joseph had two sons - Manasseh and Ephraim. After the lapse of several years, in 1030 B.C. Saul became the first anointed king of Israel. Saul was succeeded by King David. The kingdom of Israel reached its zenith during the reign of Solomon, the son and successor of David. After the death of King Solomon, the Kingdom of Israel broke into two parts—the Southern Kingdom called Judah, ruled by his son Rehoboam and the Northern Kingdom called Israel, ruled over by King Jeroboam. In 722 BC, the King of Assyria under Shalmaneser invaded the Israelites, and many of them were taken captives while the rest dispersed in all directions. When the Jewish state of Israel was born in May 1948, many Jews from around the world returned to their newly created state. However, none from the Manasseh tribe was found.

The proponents of this theory believe that in their dispersion, the lost tribes reached India, China, Burma, and Bangladesh. Further, they also believed that the lost tribes intermingled with other nations during their migrations and discarded their identity and culture. In line with this view, Judson, a missionary to Burma in 1853, wrote in his “My Visiting Countries of the World” that Luz, Chins, Kachins, Karens, and Siam of Thailand are precisely similar to the ten lost tribes of Israel.²¹ He also writes, “I want to declare this truth to the world” that every lifestyle and culture of these people are in close affinities with what the Bible has spoken about the ten lost tribes of Israel. Even from their biological appearances, there arises no case to be suspicious.²²

²¹ H.Thangtungnung, “Origin and Migration of the Zo People,” 17. URL: https://www.academia.edu/8764848/ORIGIN_AND_MIGRATION_OF_THE_ZO_PEOPLE .

²² Judson, *My Visiting Countries of the World*, 92, quoted in Z.D. Lalhnuna’s *Zofate Tobul leh Pathian Thu* (Traditions and Religion of the Zos) (Aizawl: Hnam Kawng Zawngtute, 2008), 143.

Shavel Israel²³ tells the story that Bnei Menashe²⁴ claim descent from one of the ten lost Tribes of Israel, who were sent into exile by the Assyrian king more than twenty-seven centuries ago, and “their ancestors wandered through Central Asia and the Far East for centuries, before settling in what is now North East India, along the border with Myanmar and Bangladesh.”²⁵ The authenticity of the Israel origin theory, as claimed by the proponents, is also proved by a genetic test conducted by the Central Forensic Institute, Calcutta, in 2005 that concluded that “While the masculine side of the tribes bears no links to Israel, the feminine side suggests a genetic profile with Middle Eastern people that may have arisen through inter-marriage.”²⁶

From the above points, it is easy to believe that people from the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group are the descendants of Manasseh and their place of origin is the present Israel. However, the Israeli origin theory cannot convince most people who belong to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group. Frequent utterances of *Manmasi* in ritual incantations cannot be taken as evidence to establish a Jewish connection. It can be argued that *Manmasi* may be a distortion of the Sanskrit word *Manusia*,²⁷ meaning ‘man,’ ‘mankind,’ or ‘people,’ based on the fact that even today, the Darlong clans of Tripura use *Manmasi* to denote ‘man,’ ‘people,’ or ‘mankind.’²⁸ B.Lalthangliana, a Mizo historian, writes that such a story is not heard in the history and culture of the Mizos. He further writes, “It is likely that the name is added intentionally by the Mizos who connect their identity with Israelites to achieve their goal.”²⁹

²³ It is a Jerusalem based NGO led by American Michael Freund that helps the “lost tribe” Jewish Communities immigrate to Israel.

²⁴ A community of Indian Jews from various Tibeto-Burmese ethnic groups from the border of India and Burma, who claim descent from one of the lost Tribes of Israel.

²⁵ Prabin Kalita, “Kukis in combat... far away from India's Northeast... for Israel, against Hamas,” *The Times of India*, October 2023, 1. URL: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/imphal/kukis-in-combat-far-away-from-indias-northeast-for-israel-against-hamas/articleshow/104408628.cms>.

²⁶ Yair Sheleg, “Bnei Menashe are descendants of ancient Israelites,” *Haaretz*, Israel daily, April 2000, quoted in H. Thangtungnung, “Origin and Migration of the Zo People.” URL: https://www.academia.edu/8764848/ORIGIN_AND_MIGRATION_OF_THE_ZO_PEOPLE.

²⁷ *Bhagavat Gita* (Gorakhpur: Gita Press, 1960), 49, 74, 93.

²⁸ Hranglien Songate, *Hmar Chanchin* (Imphal: Mao Press, 1956), 131.

²⁹ B. Lalthangliana, *India, Burma leh Bangladesh: A Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl: Remkung, Second Edition 2014), 37.

Recent genetic research also reveals that the theory is not valid. The Mitochondrial DNA of 288 persons from the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group from Manipur and Mizoram from India tested at the Jewish Genetic Technion Laboratory, Haifa, Israel, revealed that they are of Tibeto-Burman origin and not of the Israelites or Jews.³⁰

Besides, there are no authentic records that show that the Jews moved into Southeast Asia, except that they were confined and sinicized in China. The Chinese Records, according to Fitz Gerald, mentions that the Jews who established their settlement at *Kai-feng-fu*, the capital of Honan in the valley of the Yellow River, are believed to have come here when it was the capital of China under the Sung dynasty, in the tenth and eleventh centuries.³¹ The record further mentions that: “Up to the middle of the nineteenth century, the Kai-feng Jews, though poor and diminishing, had kept their religion and had a synagogue with a resident Rabbi who could read Hebrew. After the death of this old man, the community disintegrated, the synagogue became a ruin, and the Jews of K’ai Feng Fu merged into the Chinese population. They have lost their identity and no longer form a separate community.”³² Rev. Marshal, Missionary of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, is of the view that the Jewish immigrants in China, who were chiefly settled at K’ai-fong in Honan, were so small in number that they have never been able to exert the slightest influence on their surroundings, but, on the contrary, have been so completely sinicized that they are now almost extinct.³³

Given the above counterarguments, the theory that the Zous, with its cognate tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group connection with the Jews may be treated as a myth. There is no specific evidence to support their migration from the Middle East to China, and thence to Myanmar and then to India. Genetic studies also did not find

³⁰ Zolentu, *The Fortnightly Magazine*, Volume II, Issue 13, Treasury Square, Aizawl, 8.

³¹ Charles Patrick Fitzgerald, *China: A Short Cultural History* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, Third Edition 1961), 9. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.211181/page/n33/mode/2up>

³² Fitzgerald, *China*, 9.

³³ Harry Ignatius Marshall, *The Karen People of Burma: A Study in Anthropology and Ethnology* (Columbus: The Ohio State University, 1922), 11.

URL: <https://archive.org/details/karenpeopleburm02marsgoog/page/n31/mode/1up?view=theater>

any linkage with the Jews. Therefore, the Israel origin theory is not convincing for the origin of the Zous.

2.3 The Zous in Written Records:

The early Zous were recorded in the accounts and documents of travelers, Christian Missionaries, colonial ethnographers, and local scholars. However, they were recorded as *Jo*, *Yau*, *Yo*, *Yoe*, etc. The variation in the writing of the term Zou may be due to the style, convenience, and pronunciation of the writers.³⁴ Perhaps it may also be due to the unfamiliarity of the term 'Zou' by these writers and recorders.

The earliest record of the Zous was made by Fan-Cho, a military Secretary to the Chinese Governor of Tong and a diplomat of the Tang dynasty of China. The facts about Chindwin (Mi-no-chian) were largely collected from native informants, the pro-to Burman, particularly Liang K'o, while the Chinese staff were under close siege in Hanoi by Nan-chao and Dai forces in 62 AD.³⁵ Fan-Cho mentioned in 862 AD a kingdom in Chindwin valley whose princes and kings were called Zo or Shou or Zhou.³⁶

Another recorded reference to the Zous was made by a Roman Catholic Missionary, Reverend Father Vencentious Sangermano,³⁷ who resided at Ava and Rangoon from 1783 to 1806. In his widely circulated book, *A Description of The Burmese Empire*, Sangermano wrote about the Zous in the early nineteenth century AD as:

To the east of the Chien mountains between 20° 30' and 21° 30' north latitude, is a petty nation called Jo. They are supposed to have been Chien. These Jo generally pass for necromancers and sorcerers; and are for this

³⁴ Khamchinkhai, "Transition of Zou Society from Animism to Christianity: A Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Analysis" (MTh Thesis, Serampore College, 2004), 5.

³⁵ G.H. Luse, *Phases of Pre-Pagan Burma: Languages and History*, Vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 77-78.

³⁶ Fan Chi'o, "Man Shu: Book of Southern Barbarians," *South East Asia Program Data Paper 44*, trans. Gordon H. Luse, and ed. G.P. Oey (New York: Cornell University, 1961), 90.

³⁷ Father Sangermano was an Italian missionary sent to Burma in 1782. He resided at Ava and Rangoon from 1783 till his departure to Italy. He wrote his memoir in Latin, half of which was written while he was in Rangoon and Ava, and the other half was completed after his return to Europe. The manuscript was translated into English and published for the Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland.

reason feared by the Burmese, who dare not ill-treat them for fear of their revenging them by some enchantment.³⁸

From time immemorial, the Zous have been identifying themselves by this name and this fact has been recorded by Father Sangermano. In the above context, Sangermano might be referring to the Zous and, at the same time, to the group of people who came to be known as the Chin-Kuki-Mizo.

In his Report upon the Eastern Frontier of the British Territories, R.B. Pemberton referred to the Zous, where he made sketches of the Zou settlement. Pemberton writes as:

The next river of any magnitude is that which under the name of Yooma Khyuong flows from north to south through the Jo country, or that level track that lies between the Dunghii hills, on the right bank of the Irrawatee, and the eastern foot of the Yooma mountains; the sources of this stream to about 22°30' latitude.³⁹

Captain Henry Yule of the Bengal Engineers was sent by Lord Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855. In his *A Narrative of the Mission to the Court of Ava* (1855), Henry recorded the Zou people as follows:

Of the Yo or Yau country as lying along the river of that name, between the barren Tangyi hills that line the Irawadi, opposite Pagan and the base of the Aracan Yoma-doung.... The Yaus are great traders and are the chief peddlers and carriers of northern Burma.⁴⁰

Reverend Howard Malcom (1799-1879), an American Missionary, traveled extensively, covering countries in South-Eastern Asia. He was sent as the deputy and representative of the American Missionary Societies to examine the various modes of operation in different missions, to compare the claims of proposed new stations, and to comfort, encourage, and strengthen the missionaries in their arduous work. While

³⁸ Father Sangermano, *A Description of The Burmese Empire*; compiled chiefly from Burmese Documents, Trans. William Tandy (Rangoon: Susil Gupta, 4th Edition 1924), 43.

URL: <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.148406/page/n81/mode/1up>

³⁹ R.B. Pemberton, *The Eastern Frontier of India* (Delhi: Mittal Publications, Reprinted 1979), 9.

URL: <https://archive.org/details/dli.ernet.234452/page/9/mode/1up?view=theater>

⁴⁰ Henry Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission to the Court of Ava in 1855* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1858), 279. URL: https://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/Yule-Mission_to_Ava.pdf.

submitting the extent and character of the missionary field in and adjacent to the Burman Empire in 1839, Malcolm writes the Jo or Yo district as:

The Yaws are on the lower waters of the Kyendween, not far from Ava. The district is sometimes called Yo or Jo. The language is essentially Burman, but spoken with a dialect intelligible only to themselves. They are agricultural and pastoral people, enjoying a country of extreme salubrity and fruitfulness. They manufacture sugar, and export it to other parts of the empire, and often resort to it for trade.⁴¹

Dr. Emile Forchhammer was a professor of Pali at the Government High School in Rangoon in 1884. In his essay titled *The Jardine Prize*, Forchhammer wrote the sources and development of Burmese law from the era of the first introduction of Indian Law to the time of the British occupation of Pegu. Forchhammer was an early writer on the Chin Culture who emphasized the religion and customs of the Chins. He recorded the fact that the Zo or Yo, or Yau inhabit areas between Assam and the Irrawaddy River. In connection with the settlement of the Zous, he states:

The original stocks from which the Chins in British Burma have separated occupy in large numbers the mountain tracts extending from Assam to Yunnan. They are there subdivided into 36 clans, called zo.⁴²

G.A. Grierson makes a passing reference to the Yo or Zo in the *Linguistic Survey of India*, where he states:

Chin is a Burmese word used to denote the various hill tribes living in the country between Burma and the provinces of Assam and Bengal. It is written and dialectically pronounced as Khyang. The name is not used by the tribes themselves, who used titles such as Zo or Yo and Sho.⁴³

⁴¹ Howard Malcom, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia, embracing Hindustan, Malaya, Siam and China: With notices of Numerous Missionary Stations and a full account of the Burman Empire*, Vol. II (New Delhi: Asian Education Services, Reprint 2004), 240-241.

URL: <https://archive.org/details/travelsinsouthea02howa/page/240/mode/2up?view=theater>

⁴² Emile Forchhammer, *The Jardine Prize: An Essay on the sources and development of Burmese Law from the era of the first introduction of Indian Law to the time of the British occupation of Pegu* (Rangoon: Government Press, 1885), 9.

⁴³ G.A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. III. Part III (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, Reprint 1967), 2.

URL: <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.42221/page/n14/mode/1up?view=theater>

Bertram S. Carey, Assistant Commissioner of Burma and Political Officer, Chin Hills, and H.N. Tuck, Extra Assistant Commissioner, Burma, and Assistant Political Officer, Chin Hills, deal with the history of the Chin Hills and its inhabitants in 1895. In this book, Carey and Tuck recorded that the Yo tribe, three generations back occupied the tract of country now inhabited by the Kanhow (aka Kam Hau) clan of the Soktes (aka Sukte), and many of the Kanhow villages are still inhabited by the Yos.⁴⁴ They also write: “But the people called themselves by the name Yo, and those who belong to the 'Manlun' family consider that they have a right to be proud of their birth.”⁴⁵ The Manlun chiefs are the most influential among the Zous.

The Foreign Department of British Burma recorded Zou as Yoe. The Fiscal Statistics of the Northern Chin Hills of 1892-1894 recorded that there were nineteen Zou villages with 630 households located in a tract between 60 and 90 miles north and northwest of Fort White.⁴⁶

Two Lushai missionaries, Hrangchhuaka and Dawnthawma, who served as Christian missionaries in the Zou-inhabited villages along the river valleys, gave their report about the Zou community in *Kristian*, a periodical published in Aizawl in 1926. They wrote about the Zous as:

*Phaipui bial Vuite ram chhaklam Meitei le Sukte ram in ri na Run dung vel hi ani deuh bera. Lushei ram a ang deuh va khaw hrang hrang tlem te te a, lal nei theuhva awm an ni a, an ram pawh a zau lo hle mai. An hnam pumpui in 'Zo' an ti deuh bera, an zinga an lal chi ber chu Manlun khi an ni.... An mawl em em mai, lehkhha thiam an awm lo; tun lawka pawh sawrkar an do kha in hria in ka ring a che u.*⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Bertram S. Carey and H.C. Tuck, *The Chin Hills: A History of the People, Our dealing with them, their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of Their Country*, Vol. I (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Reprinted 2008) 140.

⁴⁵ Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills* I, 140.

⁴⁶ National Archive of India (hereafter NAI), New Delhi, Foreign Department, Extl. A, October 1893, Nos. 33 – 34, dated Camp: Falam, 28 September 1892, quoted in David Vumlallian Zou, “Glimpses of Zou Ethno-History,” *United Zomi Organization Golden Jubilee (1954 – 2004) Souvenir*, ed. Thangchinsuan (Churchandpur: P. Tongthang Zou, 2004), 115.

⁴⁷ *Kristian*, Kum 7 na, Bu No. 6, June 1926. A Church periodical published in Aizawl.

Free translation:

The Zou country is located in the north of the Vuite tracts, between the lands of the Meitei and the Sukte along the valley of the Imphal river. Like the land of the Lushei, the people have their chiefs in their small villages and their country is not so large in area. The whole community identifies themselves by the name Zo. The ruling clan among them is the Manlun. They are ignorant and illiterate; I believe you may know that they fought against the government a few years back.

Sing Khaw Khai, a local scholar, also referred to the Zous in his book, and made remarks about the Zous:

While all the clans and families belonging to the tribes who call their chief *Topa* designated themselves with 'Yo' or 'Zo,' they, in turn, apply their common name to a particular clan. The Yos are the most unique in the sense of the name they bear and the culture they practice in reflection of the ancient Zo traditions.⁴⁸

He further states that the Yos existed in parallel with such significant tribes as Vaiphei, Thado, Guite, etc., before the emergence of the Sukte family in the Tedim area.⁴⁹

One point to be noted here is that all the families affiliated with Zou did not share their ancestry. As such, the term 'Zou' is a collective appellation of varied families of people from *khul*, *sinlung*, or *chhinlung*. From all the above statements, it may be assumed that the name Zou originated from ancient progenitor Zo and the ancient Zo royal line of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo is handed down through the Manlun family and to the present Zou tribe.

2.4 Migration and Settlements:

Migration has been present since the dawn of human history and continues in the present and on to the future. Migration can be internal or international, voluntary or forced, temporary or permanent, etc. While voluntary migration, whether internal or external, is undertaken in search of better economic opportunities or housing,

⁴⁸ Sing Khaw Khai, *Zo People and Their Culture: A historical, cultural study and critical analysis of Zo and its ethnic tribes* (Lamka: Khampü Hatzaw, 1995), 22-23.

⁴⁹ Khai, *Zo People and Their Culture*, 23.

forced migrations usually involve people who have been expelled by governments during war or other political upheavals or who have been forcibly transported as slaves or prisoners.⁵⁰ Migration is a move beyond the same political jurisdiction, involving a change of residence, either as emigration, a move from a particular location, or as immigration, a move to another.⁵¹

The push and pull theory of migration was coined by Ernest Ravenstein in the nineteenth century. This theory states that migration is driven by a set of push factors such as poverty, unemployment, landlessness, political repression, low social status, etc., operating from the region or country of origin and pull factors such as land to settle and farm, good environmental and living conditions, etc., operating from the place or country of destination.⁵²

In Everett S. Lee's version of the Push and Pull factors, there is also a set of 'intervening obstacles' such as physical distance, cost of making the journey, cultural barriers, political obstacles, etc., which have to be overcome and personal factors also play a role in Lee's theory of migration where different people will react differently to various combinations of pushes and pulls, according to their economic status, life-stage, and personality.⁵³

The Zous movement from China to Burma and thence to the Chin Hills is supposed to be driven by a combination of push factors such as poverty, political repression, frequent raids, etc., and pull factors such as attraction by greener pasture, free from oppression, better hunting ground, etc.

⁵⁰ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (September 27, 2023), s.v. "human migration," accessed October 27, 2023, URL: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/human-migration>

⁵¹ Paul L. Knox and Sallie A. Marston, "Places and Regions in Global Context: Human Geography," in *Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*, ed. Daniel Kaveney (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Reprinted 1999), 127.

⁵² Russell King, "Theories and Typologies of Migration: An Overview and a Primer," in *Willy Brandt Series of Working Papers in International Migration and Ethnic Relations*, ed. Erica Righar (Malmo: Malmo Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare, 2012), 13.

⁵³ Everett S. Lee, "A Theory of Migration," *Demography* 3, no. 1 (1966), 50-51. URL: <https://emigratecaportuguesa.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/1966-a-theory-of-migration.pdf>.

During the migration phase from China to Burma, the Zous belonging to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo family of the Tibeto-Burman group may be understood as moving along with other tribes of this family. Probably, the Zous and other ethnic tribes continuously moved across the best jhum plots to adapt to the cycles of shifting cultivation. The Tibeto-Burman group was known as the Ch'iang tribes. The earliest Chinese records of the latter half of the second millennium BC also referred to them as the Ch'iang.⁵⁴ It is believed that the cruelty of Emperor Ch'in Shih Huang might have pushed the Ch'iang tribes towards the south. However, the earliest home of the Tibeto-Burman family is not definitely known. Sangkima believed it must have been somewhere in the Szechuan Province in southern China.⁵⁵ Hall believes that somewhere between the Gobi Desert and Northeast Tibet, possibly Kansu was the earliest home of the Tibeto-Burman family.⁵⁶ So, Southern China and the eastern perimeter between Kansu and Burma may be considered the early home of Zous and the other tribes in Northeast India.

Enriquez states that the Mongolian races, who occupied South-East Asia and North-East India migrated from China to Burma in three main waves.⁵⁷ The Mon-Khmer (Talaing, Palung, En Riang, Ma, Pale, Khais, and Annimite), including Khasis, were grouped in the first wave. The Tibeto-Burman, which comprises Pyu-Burmese-Kachin, Kuki-Chin, and Lolo was put in the second wave. The third wave was the Tai-Chinese, which included Shan, Siamese and Karen.

It is believed that Chin-Kuki-Mizo people passed through the Himalayan Mountains in their southern movement from China. While moving towards Tibet, the Tibeto-Burman groups split and subdivided into several groups. They followed different routes; one group reached Tibet in the north, where some of them stayed behind, while others continued to move on until they reached Burma in three

⁵⁴ Thang Sut Mung, "A History of the Zo People" (PhD, University of Mandalay, 2019), 17.

⁵⁵ Sangkima, *History of the Mizos*, 47.

⁵⁶ D.G.E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia* (London: MacMillan & Company Ltd., 1955), 123.

⁵⁷ Sheikhoahao, Kipgen. *Political and Economic History of the Kukis of Manipur* (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2015), 50.

waves.⁵⁸ These people were the Chin-Kuki-Mizo and the Pyu-Burmes-Kachin groups.

Scholars believe that the Chin-Kuki-Mizo family of the Tibeto-Burman groups made a further advance and tracked into Burma through Hukaung Valley, along the Chindwin basin, and Kabaw Valley.⁵⁹ They were further believed to have migrated along the Chindwin basin and Irrawaddy River till they reached the shores as far as the Bay of Bengal. After that, the Chin-Kuki-Mizo were believed to have returned to the North and scattered along the mountains on either side of the Indo-Myanmar frontier.

Due to a lack of scientific evidence, there is no consensus among scholars as to the date of their migration to Burma. K. Zawla states that the Zo people arrived in the Chindwin Valley in the 8th century.⁶⁰ While Luce puts the probable date of entry of Chin-Kuki-Mizo into Myanmar in the middle of the eighth century,⁶¹ Lehman believes that their entry was shortly after the beginning of the Christian era.⁶² B. Lalthangliana, a local historian, agreed that the eighth century would be the possible arrival in the Chindwin valley.⁶³ Vumson suggests that the Chin-Kuki-Mizo might have come to the area between the Chindwin and the Irrawaddy rivers before the eighth century, possibly at the beginning of the Christian era.⁶⁴ Vum Kho Hau states that a section of the Zos (Chins) who had migrated into Myanmar from the Tibetan plateau almost in a straight line down to the South were to be found from Somra Hill Tracts down to Cape Negrais. However, Harvey believed that many immigrants might have settled in Burma before the Christian era.⁶⁵ Therefore, from the different

⁵⁸ T.S.Gangte, *The Kukis of Manipur: A Historical Analysis*. (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, Reprinted 2012), 18.

⁵⁹ Kipgen, *History of the Kukis*, 52.

⁶⁰ K. Zawla, *Mizo Pi Pu te Ieh an Thlahte Chanchin* (Aizawl: Goshen Press, 5th Edition 1989), 14.

⁶¹ Khup Za Go, "The Pre-Modern History of the Zo People," *Prism of the Zo People*, ed. Publication Board (Lamka: Thawnsau Printing Press, 2008), 153.

⁶² F.K. Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society* (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1980), 12-13.

⁶³ B. Lalthangliana, *History of the Mizo in Burma* (Aizawl: R.L. Rina Zawlbuk Agencies, 1977), 37.

⁶⁴ Vumson, *Zo History* (Aizawl: Author, 1986), 39.

⁶⁵ G.E. Harvey, *History of Burma* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, Reprint 2000), 4. URL: <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.32059/page/n39/mode/2up?view=theater>

dates given by different writers, the Chin-Kuki-Mizo was supposed to enter Burma before the end of the eighth century.

When the Burmese reached the plains of central Burma in the ninth century, the Chins were already in the Chindwin Valley. The Burma inscriptions of King Kyanzittha and other kings during the peak of the Pagan dynasty made references to the Chin settlement in the Chindwin valley. The earliest Pagan Inscription put the Burman in the upper Burma roughly in the middle of the ninth century.⁶⁶ Therefore, it is possible that the Chin settlement in the Chindwin Valley began in the eighth century.

2.4.1 Khampat Settlements:

Khampat in the Kabaw valley of present Myanmar (Burma) is claimed to be the first town of the Zo (Chin-Kuki-Mizo) race. Khampat was historically associated with the Zou settlement, and McCulloh mentioned the Khampat chief which might be taken as an early reference to a Zou chief.⁶⁷ The settlement at Khampat is believed to have lasted for about two centuries. The dispersal from Khampat is said to be due to famine and the invasion of a stronger enemy, possibly the Shans. Vumson also states that Khampat was abandoned due to the tyranny of a cruel chief and great famine.⁶⁸ As to the date of their migration from the Kalay-Kabaw plains to the Chin Hills, Vum Kho Hau put in about 1374.⁶⁹

2.4.2 Settlements in the Northern Chin Hills:

After leaving Khampat, the Zous and other ethnic tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo family moved toward the southwest, later known as the Chin Hills. It is believed that they lived at a place called Ciimnuai in the Chin Hills for eight generations.⁷⁰ Gradually, they went out in search of new land and set up new villages around Ciimnuai. As they established new villages and settled down, the names of

⁶⁶ Thang Sut Mung, "History of the Zo People," 16.

⁶⁷ David Vumlallian Zou, "The Pasts of a Fringe Community: Ethno-history and Fluid Identity of the Zou in Manipur," *Indian Historical Review* 36, no.2 (2009): 211, doi: 10.1177/037698360903600202.

⁶⁸ Vumson, 12.

⁶⁹ Mung, "History of the Zo People," 18.

⁷⁰ Thang and Suantak, 41.

the villages became the names of some of these tribes. According to Thang Tuan, the Yos were originally from Cimnuai, from which Hang Hil, with his brother Mi Lun, founded a settlement at Balzang between the present Tedim town and Saizang village.⁷¹ However, the Zou tradition claims that Suih Mual was their first settlement in the Chin Hills. P.S. Kham Do Nang also writes that after leaving Kale Palace, the Zous first arrived at Leisanmual, and then they moved to Kenedy Peak, and later they founded Suih Mual village.⁷² The village was situated somewhere between Sai Zang and Mual Bem road. He further states that the location of Suih Mual can be seen now as the 'old place of the British airport during the Second World War.' Suih Mual as the first dwelling place of the Zous is proven by the following traditional incantation of the Zous:

*Suih Mual a pu dia to, pa dia to,
Sial tawh dia to, taang tawh dia to,
Chidam ka ngetna hi, ludam ka ngetna hi;
Tuga tam ka ngetna hi, heiga tam ka ngetna hi;
Mimza ka ngetna hi, taangza ka ngetna hi.
Chidam ei pie'n, ludam ei pie'n;
Tu ga tam ei pien, heiga tam ei pie'n
Mimza ei khie'n, taangza ei khie'n,
Tanu tam tapa tam ei pie'n.*⁷³

Free Translation:

Suih Mual, where grandfather first dwelt, my father first dwelt,
Dwelt with gayal, dwelt with millet.
Praying for health
Praying for more hoes, praying for more axes;
Praying for abundant barley, praying for abundant millet.
Make me healthy
Shower with abundant barley, shower with abundant millet,
Bless with many sons and many daughters.

The above Zou traditional incantations show that the establishment of Suih Mual preceded that of Chimnuai. The Chimnuai village was founded under the leadership of Samte in the same year. It is said to have been a centre for the dispersion of the various tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group.

⁷¹ Khai, *Zo People and Their Culture*, 22-23.

⁷² P.S. Kham Do Nang, "Upto Date History of the Zo tribes" (HGP Thesis, Myanmar Institute of Theology), 1994), 132.

⁷³ Nang, "Upto Date History," 132-133.

After settling for many years in various villages in the Chin Hills, the Zous and other Chin-Kuki-Mizo ethnic tribes began to disperse to different places due to certain reasons such as wars, inter-tribal raids, search for better agricultural land for cultivation, and so on. It is to be noted that they were engaged in fighting among themselves for the supremacy of their clans or tribes. During the nineteenth century, inter-tribal and sometimes even inter-clan raids for honor and revenge were frequent among the Chin-Kuki-Mizo ethnic tribes in the Chin Hills, leading to the enslaving of the captives.⁷⁴ It was also considered profitable as the captives they carried off could be exchanged for guns, sulphur, lead, and iron.⁷⁵ Famine is another factor that pushed the Zous out of their settlements. One such natural calamity, locally known as *Singpi Tam*, occurred at Khuang Nung during the 1850s.⁷⁶ It affected the inhabitants so much that the village had to be abandoned. The constant warfare among themselves forced the Lushais and their cognate clans to migrate further to the west and cross the Tiau river to the Lushai Hills, sometimes between 1700 and 1730 AD.⁷⁷ Some sections of the group, like Biates, Halams, etc., proceeded further into Tripura till they reached Cachar.

The Zous had the Northern Chin Hills as their traditional territorial base. They were strong contenders for regional power and were contemporary to the Suktes, Sailos, Guites, and Thados. There was a power struggle between the Zou chiefs and the Sukte chiefs for controlling the Northern Chin Hills in the nineteenth Century. In the pre-colonial period, the early Zous' settlements in the Northern Chin Hills were Suih Mual, Cimnuai, Bal Zang, Geltui, Khuang Nung, Geel Zang, etc. Later, several Zou villages came into existence. In the areas between the Lawizang and Suangkuang mountains, twenty-one Zou villages existed. Without any resistance, these villages were brought under Kam Hau's chieftdom through the

⁷⁴ Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills* I, 129-131.

⁷⁵ Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills* I, 133.

⁷⁶ David Vumlallian Zou, "Glimpses of Zou Ethno-History," *United Zomi Organization Golden Jubilee (1954 – 2004) Souvenir*, ed. Thangchinsuan (Churachandpur: P. Tongthang Zou, 2004), 119.

⁷⁷ V.L. Siama, *Mizo History* (Aizawl: Lengchhawn Press, Reprint 1991), 23.

diplomacy of a Zou woman chief, Cing Gin of Kahgen.⁷⁸ Further, thirteen Zou villages were attacked and captured by Kam Hau and his forces.⁷⁹

With the establishment of the Sukte chiefdom in the Northern Chin Hills, some Zou chiefs quietly submitted to the Sukte rule under Khan Thuam and his son Kam Hau. Other Zou chiefs did not like to remain under it, so they moved to areas out of the Suktes' reach and established new settlements.⁸⁰ These people belonged mostly to the Manlun and Phiamphu clans of the Zous. They made their settlements at Chai Zel, Sial Lup, Khua Kung, and Mu Khua villages. Further, the Zou chiefs in Thangkhal, Bumzang, Zozang, Tualmu, Gamngai, Geelzang and Phaitu villages, who had initially submitted to Kam Hau chose to move out of his jurisdiction. They settled at Zoupi, Lung Pi, Tegnupal, Kawvang, Nahit, Kathung, Khua Mun, Samtal, Beel Lei and Ngai villages between 1843 and 1850.⁸¹ They belonged to the Mate, Suantak, Milun, Tungdim, Tungnung, Mimvah, Phiamphu and Lianzaw clans.

In 1843, Mang Khaw Kam and his group left Khua Dai village and set up Buksau village.⁸² Langza and his group left Khuang Nung and founded Lung Chin village,⁸³ and subsequently, Behiang village was set up under the leadership of Zakam Manlun.⁸⁴ Another group led by Goulun set up Hiangtam village. Langkai and Langkam led another group and moved in sequence to Nungsai and finally to Aina.⁸⁵ Kham Do Nang states that many of the Zous who accompanied Khan Thuam in his raid of Manipur in 1855 stayed without returning to the Chin Hills.⁸⁶ In 1862, Manipur raided the Zous area up to Khianglaam in the Chin Hills, and they captured some of the Zous belonging to the Taithul, Milun, and Phiamphu clans.⁸⁷ They were taken to Manipur and provided settlement in Kumbi and its surrounding areas. Alexander Mackenzie also recorded that in 1877-78, over 2000 persons of Yos and

⁷⁸ Thang, and Suantak, 107-108.

⁷⁹ Thang, and Suantak, 108.

⁸⁰ Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills I*, 119.

⁸¹ P.S. Kham Do Nang, *Zo Khang Taang Thu leh Khang Sim Na* (Yangon: Author, 1997), 43-44.

⁸² Kham Do Nang, *Zo Khang Taang Thu leh Khang Sim Na*, 38.

⁸³ Nang, "Upto date History," 57-58.

⁸⁴ M. Thangchinmang interviewed by Thangsuanhang, D.Phailien, September 18, 2019.

⁸⁵ Joseph Suantak, *Khulmi? Chhinlung Hurpi Khol Khul Khur Sinlung: Beyond Identity and Political Crises* (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2012), 179.

⁸⁶ Nang, *Zo Khang Taang Thu*, 45.

⁸⁷ Nang, *Zo Khang Taang Thu*, 45.

Nwites migrated to Manipur territory, where they settled down on lands assigned to them by the Maharaja in the neighborhood of Moirang.⁸⁸

The traditional Zou settlements were based in the Northern Chin Hills. As per Official statistics of 1893, there were nineteen Zou villages with 630 households, located in a tract lying between 60 and 90 miles north and north-west of Fort White.⁸⁹ These villages were paying taxes to the British administration in the Northern Chin Hills of Burma till 28 September 1892. The names of these nineteen villages were Tuitum, Nabu, Kwunki (Khuangkhai), Tuidam, Chenglam (Khienglam), Mulam, Vanglai, Loibual, Savum, Yimwell, Buksau, Tunzang (Tonzang), Tunka (Tungkua), Tunvum, Hawbon, Chilpi, Beltung, and Narlzan (Ngalzang).⁹⁰

2.4.3 Zou Settlements in Southeastern and Southern Manipur:

Over the years, in the search for new agricultural lands and better living conditions, new villages were set up in different places in their settlement areas, either by abandoning some old villages or splitting off some of the existing Zou villages. In post-independence India, from the perspective of administrative division, most of the Zou settlements are located in the Churachandpur and Chandel districts and are also scattered across other districts of Manipur state.

It is reported that there are 99 villages under the chiefship of the Zous in Manipur. The number of villages under the Zou chiefship in the Churachandpur district is 84; that of the Chandel district is 12; in the Pherzawl district, it is 1, and the number of Zou villages in the Tengnoupal district is 3. These are the villages completely inhabited by the Zous. Besides, there are some localities in the bigger villages or towns that are inhabited by them. These localities are Thingkangphai, Simveng, Lailam Veng, Tuibuang, Kanan Veng, and Bible Hills in Churachandpur town. Moreh, the Indo-Myanmar town is also partially inhabited by them.

⁸⁸ Alexander Mackenzie, *North-East Frontier of India* (Delhi: Mittal Publication, Reproduced in 2016), 171.

⁸⁹ NAI, Foreign Department, Extl. A, October 1893, Nos. 80- 88, dated Falam, 28 September 1892.

⁹⁰ NAI, Nos. 80-88.

2.5 Conclusion:

The early Zous did not know written records, and therefore, an oral tradition was the most reliable means of transmitting past events. Tradition has it that the Zous are the descendants of Progenitor *Zo*, and their place of origin is *khul*. Some persons hold the view that they are the descendants of Manasseh. However, in the absence of solid pieces of evidence to support the claims, these theories are merely myths and are not convincing theories for the origin of the Zous. Therefore, the origin of the Zous is still shrouded in almost complete mystery.

In the historical sources, the Zous were recorded as Jo, Yau, Yo, Yoe, Zo, etc. The accounts and documents of the travelers, the Christian missionaries, the colonial ethnographers and local scholars made passing references to the settlements of the Zous. It may be assumed that the name Zou originated from the ancient progenitor *Zo*, and the ancient *Zo* royal line of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo is handed down through the Manlun family and to the present Zou tribe.

It is a fact that the population has moved from the earliest times to the present due to causes such as wars, famine, drought, collecting food, and so on. The Zous belong to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo linguistic family of the Tibeto-Burman group. Therefore, it is believed that due to the reasons mentioned above, the Zous along with other ethnic tribes, moved from Southern China reached Burma at the end of the eighth century.

After their settlement at Khampat, the Zous fanned out to the Chin Hills, and it was here that the Zous under the Manlun chiefs emerged as strong contenders for regional power in the Northern Chin Hills. However, the Zou chiefs were reduced to a subdued status by the Suktes under Khan Thuam and his son Kam Hau. While some Zou chiefs remained in the Chin Hills, some were reluctant to remain under the Sukte rule and chose to move out of the Sukte jurisdiction. Over time, to accommodate the rising populations and the search for new agricultural lands, the Zous expanded their villages or set up new villages in their areas. Under this complex process of migration, settlement, change and continuity of human society, from a geopolitical

perspective, the Zous are scattered in the southeastern and southern parts of the Manipur state. Thus, the Zou became a transnational community.



Fig. 2.1 Behiang village.
Photo: Thangsuanhang



Fig.2.2 Lungtah (Myanmar).
Courtesy: M. Thangchinmang

Chapter 3

Traditional Social Structure and Customary Practices

3.1 Introduction:

The term 'society' is derived from the Latin word 'socius,' which means companionship or friendship. Morris Ginsberg states, "A society is a collection of individuals united by certain relations or modes of behavior which mark them off from others who do not enter into these relations or who differ from them in behaviour."¹

Family is the basic unit of society. A society consists of several families. Within a family, there are several members. A Zou family includes the parents, their children, adopted children, and old parents. The Zou society is based on a patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal family system. The father is the head of the family, and his decision is final. The law of inheritance is based on descent through the father's clan. The *tulpi* is the head of each clan.² He is the eldest male in the patrilineal line of the clan. However, over the years, each clan is subdivided into sub-clans, and each sub-clan begins to have its own head.

The knowledge of pedigrees and respect for birth is common and strictly preserved among the Zous, and every person addresses another person in strict accordance with the genealogical tree. The Zou society also has a peculiar system of family structure, which is interlinked in some ways or another by the institution of *inndongta*.³ It is a kind of household council. The *inndongta* plays an important role in crucial matters of every household and its dealings with others in society.

The Zou villages are established in different areas or locations, and each village is under a chief, usually the eldest male in the clan. A bigger village usually had many houses and a large population. In the village administration, the village

¹ C.N. Shankar Rao, *Sociology: Principles of Sociology with an Introduction to Social Thought* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company, Reprint 2013), 103.

² Chingjatong, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Churachandpur, September 18, 2018.

³ M.Henkholun, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, M. Khawlmual village, March 10, 2018.

chief occupies the highest position in society. Next to the chief are the members of the council of elders; then, at the lowest is the common people. Marriage practices are regulated by arranged marriage, in which the first preference is matrilineal cross-cousin marriage, and cases of divorce are decided based on Zou customary norms.

3.2 Family Structure

The family is the most important social institution and a unit of society. In the context of the Zou society, the family is the oldest, smallest, and most important unit. Generally, a Zou household consists of a husband, wife, children, and adopted children, all related by blood and marriage.⁴ The old parents may also be living with them. The father is the head of the family and he controls other family members. Traditionally, certain rights are enjoyed by the family's eldest son (or primogeniture). The eldest son is highly respected by the younger son (s) and daughter(s).⁵

The Zous practice either a joint or a nuclear type of family. It is a joint family in the sense that the old folks or parents usually live with their children and grandchildren. Sometimes, a widower, divorcee and widow will return to the parental family. The joint family breaks up to form a nuclear family when the younger sons enter into marital life and set up new homesteads, leaving their old parents.⁶ The family also gives their daughters in marriage to another family. It is customary that the family's eldest son is left with the parents by the married sons and daughters of the family.

It is not a custom to address their parents by their names. Likewise, husband and wife never addressed each other by name. Generally, they are addressed by using the pet name of their first child, referring to them as 'the father or mother of so and so.' It is considered disrespectful for the children to address their parents by name.

⁴ Sheikho hao Kipgen, *Political and Economic History of the Kukis of Manipur* (Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2015) 79.

⁵ M. Suankhanmang, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Zomi Colony, September 20, 2019.

⁶ Kipgen, *History of the Kukis*, 80.

3.2.1 *Pa* (father):

The father is a bonafide patriarch with absolute authority over his family, and the traditional ancestry continues through him.⁷ He is addressed as *pa* by his children and *pu* by his grandchildren. While the father wields absolute authority in the family, he also has certain duties and responsibilities towards the family.

The father is the head of the family, so he is loved and respected by his family members. Carey and Tuck rightly state: “It is a custom for no man in the North to eat the liver of any animal whilst his father is alive as it is deemed disrespectful to do so.”⁸ All members of the family respect his orders. The advice and consent of the father is sought in all matters relating to each individual in the family. As the sole authority in the family, his decisions concerning the family and its relations with other households are usually carried out promptly. The father's authority does not end in his own family and extends even to his children, who live in a separate house.

The father's important duty and responsibility is to impart training to his elder sons. They are to be taught the art and techniques of cropping, hunting animals, constructing houses, etc. The father grooms his sons to be responsible persons in the family and society.⁹ His children learn the customs and culture of their tribe from him. It is the father's responsibility to see that his family lives together peacefully.

The economic affairs of the family mainly depend upon the head of the family. The father has to provide food to his family. The father should be hardworking and intelligent to earn a respectable position in society. An inefficient father cannot handle his family's affairs, which often leads to its breakup.

⁷ Langsun D. Mate, *The Mate Tribe* (Tezpur: The Mate Anthropological Society, 1997), 27.

⁸ Bertram S. Carey and H.C. Tuck, *The Chin Hills: A History of the People, Our dealing with them, their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of Their Country*, Vol. I (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Reprinted 2008), 203.

⁹ Gouchinhang Dopmul, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Tamu, March 27, 2018.

3.2.2 Nu (mother):

In the Zou family, the mother is known as the *intehpi*, which means ‘female head of the house.’ The position of the mother in the family is next to that of the father. She has to take up almost all the household affairs, such as getting up early in the morning and doing all the household chores, to nurture and care for each family member. She has to look after the children, weave cloths for the entire members of the family, wash and mend clothes, teach the art of weaving to her daughters, brew *zupi* (rice beer) and *zukha* (hooch) and *zuha* (fermented rice) for her husband.¹⁰ Cleaning the house, husking rice, cooking food, feeding poultry and pigs, fetching water in bamboo tubes from a distant village spring or river or brook, drying green tobacco leaves, carrying tools, carrying firewood from the jungle for fuel, etc. are the daily activities of the mother. It is to be noted that the daily activities of a Zou woman are similar to those of a Lushai woman. J. Shakespeare states:

A Lushai woman has to rise up early, fill her basket with empty bamboo tubes, and trudge off before daylight down to the spring, which is generally some way down the hill having conveyed her basketful to the house, she has to set to work cleaning the rice for a day. The breakfast of rice has to be cooked after the meal, the real work of the day begins.¹¹

Apart from the responsibilities mentioned above, she takes part in digging the agricultural land, sowing the seed, weeding the field, harvesting the paddy, and carrying the paddy in a basket from the agricultural land all the way home. She would be seen bending over her loom or doing household chores when she is not engaged in such tasks. M. Horam writes that the lady of the house is the last to retire at night and the first to rise long before the crack of dawn.¹² It is also quite relevant in the context of the Zou woman.

In a family with grandchildren, the mother has to take care of all the grandchildren. She is responsible for maintaining a cordial relationship between her *mou* (daughter-in-law) and *tanu* (daughter). She can also perform the household

¹⁰ Lunzachin Samte, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Tuikhal (Myanmar), March 23, 2018.

¹¹ J. Shakespear, *The Lushai-Kuki Clan* (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Reprinted 1988), 16-17.

¹² M. Horam, *Naga Polity* (New Delhi: Sunmarg Publishers & Distributors, 2016), 60.

ritual called *pusa* (spirit of ancestor). The mother invoked the ancestral spirits and sprinkled a gourd cup of *zu* (rice beer) over pieces of cooked meat and rice placed at the *sutpi* (central pillar of the house) of the house.¹³

3.2.3 *Upa* (Eldest brother):

The eldest male in a family is called *upa* or ‘eldest brother.’ The eldest brother is highly regarded and respected by other family members. His position in the family is next to the father and mother. He would be the head of the family after his father’s death. Customarily, the eldest male gets the right of inheritance and is expected to share some portions of the property with his younger brothers. He is consulted in any major decision taken by his younger brothers living in a separate house.¹⁴

The *upa* is entrusted with full responsibility and obligations to the family. During the lifetime of his parents, he assisted them in all matters that concerned the family. He remains with his parents in the house and takes great care of them during their old age. After the death of the father, the whole responsibility of the head of the family rests upon his shoulders. The welfare and peaceful atmosphere of the family heavily depend upon him.¹⁵ Sometimes, a happy family breaks up after the father’s death due to the eldest brother’s inefficiency. The eldest son has to make all necessary arrangements for his younger brothers’ marriage and bears all the expenditures incurred in it. He helps his younger brothers to set up separate houses and provide them with the necessary assets. He also has to send off his sister(s) in marriage and bear the price of articles to be taken by his married sisters to their husbands’ houses.¹⁶

In the event of the death of any of his brothers who live in a separate house, he must take care of the family of the deceased. If the widow of his deceased brother

¹³ Lunzachin, interview.

¹⁴ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, *Zo Tulpi Hanghil Tangthu leh Khanggui Cieptena (History of the Zo Lineage Head, Hanghil and Record of his Genealogy)* (Kalaymyo: Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 2012), 80.

¹⁵ Paukhojam Manlun, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Churachandpur, September 21, 2019.

¹⁶ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, *Zo Tulpi Hanghil Tangthu leh Khanggui Cieptena*, 80.

dies or marries another person or returns to her natal home, the eldest brother has to take care of their children.¹⁷

3.2.4 Nauzaw (Younger brother):

The younger brother (s) is expected to remain under the control of the parents and the eldest brother. The main tasks of the younger brothers are to help the parents in the agricultural land or at home. When they reach a marriageable age, they marry and leave their parental home to set up separate homes. The eldest brother helps his younger brothers construct new houses and provides them with all the necessary movable and immovable properties. However, if the father is still alive, all these arrangements will be made under his supervision. The younger brothers are not to build their houses at a higher level than the eldest brother. It is done as a mark of respect to the eldest brother. Even after living in a separate village or house, the younger brothers maintain close ties with their parents or eldest brother and consult them in all important matters. Once they live in a separate house, the younger brothers are prohibited from rejoining the parental home without shedding blood, such as killing pigs, cows, etc.¹⁸ The early Zous believed that the younger brothers' ignorance of such practices would bring misfortune to the family.¹⁹

3.2.5 Tanu (Daughter):

In a family, a daughter plays an important part in looking after the house. Usually, the daughters get training under their mother for the responsibilities, which would soon fall to their share as mothers when they get married. The daughters assist their mother in cleaning the house, washing clothes, pounding and husking rice, cooking food, weaving, collecting firewood in the jungle, chopping wood, fetching water, and other domestic work in and around the house. The elder daughters

¹⁷ Lunchinthang Phiamphu, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Churachandpur, April 18, 2018.

¹⁸ Mannuamching, "Impact of Christianity on Zou Culture," *Tapidaw-50 Golden Jubilee Souvenir (1954-2004) of Evangelical Lutheran Christian Church* eds. T.C. Tungnung et al. (Churachandpur: Golden Jubilee Souvenir Board, 2004), 58-59.

¹⁹ Lunchinthang, interview.

participate in the *lawm* or ‘corporate labour,’ a group in which all the able-bodied men and women of a village join and work in rotation in a different field.²⁰

The daughters enjoy considerable freedom. There is no restriction in mingling with boys of their age. They are allowed to participate freely in singing and dancing during festivals. The young girls usually play games with their friends in the evening and look after the babies.

3.2.6 Wife of the Eldest Son:

The position of the wife of the eldest son is next to the mother in the Zou family. She is addressed as ‘*mou*’ (a term used to refer to the elder brother's wife) by the younger children, and she is highly regarded and respected in the family. She is equally duty-bound as the mother in all matters in the family. In the mother's absence or demise, the household affairs responsibility fell into her hands.

She entered her husband's house from another family. Due to the importance of the position of eldest daughter-in-law, parents are cautious while choosing the wife-to-be of their eldest son. A girl born with loose character and without moral sense is not accepted as their daughter-in-law. The girl who joined the family as the eldest daughter-in-law must undergo the ordeal of proving her worth and loyalty. Hard work, patience, politeness, sincerity, circumspect behaviour, and fertility ensure her security, respect, and affection from all the family members.²¹

3.3 The Clan:

The traditional family of the Zou is a well-knit unit. In the olden days, the size of the family was small and sometimes proved ineffective in wars, raids, and headhunting. Several families would unite on a particular basis for an effective hunt or defense from external aggressions. Any clan can be traced back to a single family, which has multiplied into numerous families and has managed to stay connected. The

²⁰ Khamchinkhai, “Transition of Zou Society from Animism to Christianity: A Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Analysis” (MTh Thesis, Serampore College, 2004), 56.

²¹ Ginneihching, “The History and Culture of the Simte Tribe in Manipur” (PhD Thesis, Manipur University, 2012), 55.

Zous are divided into forty-four clans,²² each of which is divided into several sub-clans. So, clan or kinship is a continuation of the family unit, usually on the paternal side, commonly bearing the same surname and with a common ancestor. In a Zou village, everybody belongs to one clan or the other. An individual has found it difficult to exist without belonging to a group with whom he would share his joys and sorrows.²³

The members of the clans have many duties towards each other at the time of marriage, harvests, death, etc. The clan members usually help in planning the feasts and festivities for the marriage of any person within the same clan. They will also help in reaping the crops during harvest. In the event of the death of any member, the clan members always lend a helping hand to bury and erect a memorial stone for the same. If someone's house is damaged due to natural calamities, his clan members will help him rebuild a new house for him. If the harvest is poor due to crop failure, the members of his clan give grain to his family.

3.3.1 *Tulpi*:

The head of each clan among the Zous is called a *tulpi*. He is both the head and the priest of the clan. In every social and family matter, his clan members always consult him. The *tulpi* is the eldest surviving male in the patrilineal line of the clan. He is called *tulpi* because when an animal is slaughtered, he uses a spike of a sharpened bamboo piece called *tul* to pierce the animal to death. He is also called *hai tawi* (literally, *hai* means a gourd dipper, and *tawi* means hold) because he uses a half-scoop gourd to dip water to pour on the animal to be slaughtered.

There is no specified qualification to occupy the office of *tulpi*, except that he should be the eldest surviving male in the patrilineal of the clan. In the event of his death, the office is occupied by his eldest male line, or if he has no son, it passes on to his brother, and so on. The position and status of the *tulpi* is hereditary.

²² Haochinthong, *Zou Sung Kivaihawmna (Administration Among the Zou Tribes)* (Lamka: M/S Express, 1988), 36.

²³ Suankhanmang, interview.

Over time, each clan is subdivided into sub-clans, and each sub-clan begins to have its own clan head. There are three conditions in which a sub-clan can have its *tulpi*.²⁴ Firstly, if the head of a clan fails to fulfill his obligations towards members of the sub-clan for three generations, they are free to have their head separately. The eldest patrilineal of the sub-clan becomes the *tulpi*; second, the members of the sub-clan can arrange a feast and offer a pot of *zu* in the house of the head of the clan and ask his consent to have their head separately; third, if the *tulpi* feels that he is no longer able to fulfill his obligations towards members of the sub-clan, he can ask them to have their head for their sub-clan. It is to be noted that the eldest surviving male of each sub-clan can be a new *tulpi*.

The early Zous were worshippers of a household deity and the worship of it could be initiated only by the *tulpi*. On such occasions, it was the duty of the *tulpi* to sprinkle a gourd cup of *zupi* with a ritual incantation on the animal to be slaughtered, and then he pierced it to death with a spike of sharpened bamboo. Unless the *tulpi* permitted the head of a particular family to perform on his behalf, worshipping *pusa* was impossible without him. In the absence of the *tulpi*, ritual incantation could be performed by a younger male, next in the patrilineal line of the clan to him, provided the *tulpi* entrusted him to perform the task on his behalf by giving him *zuha* (fermented rice). The man mixed the fermented rice with water and sprinkled the mixture over the animal to be slaughtered. Important matters relating to family affairs also could not be decided in his absence. When a family within his clan was to kill four-footed animals like a cow, gayal, etc., he had to perform a ritual of incantation, sprinkle a gourd-cup of *zu* over the animal, and pierce it to die with a spike of a sharpened bamboo piece.²⁵ In the case of a pig or fowl, he performed sprinkling and killing at the base of the central pillar of the house called a *sutpi*.²⁶ Disposal of the dead body of any of his clan members was not permitted unless he sprinkled a gourd cup of *zu* over the dead body.²⁷ *Ton* (feast of boasting) by his clan members could not be performed without the prior approval of the *tulpi*. If a person

²⁴ M. Lachinkhai, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Churachandpur, September, 22, 2019.

²⁵ Lunchinthang, interview.

²⁶ Selchinlang Mate, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Churachandpur, April 4, 2018.

²⁷ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 80.

within his clan committed suicide, the rope could be cut only by the *tulpi*. The priority given to the head of the clan is to show respect and importance in society, and it is also believed that he is the only person who can communicate with the people and the departed forefathers.

The *tulpi* is highly regarded, respected, and loved by all his clan members living in different villages. Being the head of the clan, he is entitled to certain privileges called *Lu le Mal* (head and thigh). When his clan's member kills wild animals like deer, elephants, etc., he is entitled to secure the head and the hind leg. He was also entitled to get the left hind leg of every animal killed on the occasion of worshipping *pusa* by every household of his clan.²⁸

The head of the clan has certain obligations towards his clan members. If any member within his clan commits offences and is liable to pay fines, he is obliged to bear a part of the fines to be paid.²⁹ He is also to take care of persons without parents or destitute or close relatives within his clan. One unique point to be noted here is that children without parents within the clan are provided a foster home by the *tulpi*. In the event of the death of any member of his clan, he has to console the bereaved family by killing an animal and offering a pot of rice beer, or *zubel*.³⁰

3.4 Village Structure of the Zou Society:

A village is a clustered human settlement or community, larger than a hamlet, with a population ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand. It is a small settlement usually found in rural settings. Although many patterns of village life have existed, the typical village is small, consisting of 6 to 40 families. Homes are situated together for sociability and defense, and the land surrounding the living quarters is framed. Some geographers specifically define a village as having between 500 and 2,500 inhabitants.³¹

²⁸ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture (Past & Present)* (Churachandpur: Co-Operative Press, 2000), 4.

²⁹ Lachinkhai, interview.

³⁰ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 4.

³¹ National Geographic, *Education*, "village." URL: <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/village/>, accessed 20 January 2019.

The early Zous were very particular about the place of their residence and had unique customs when choosing a site to establish a village for dwelling. A survey party was sent to look for a place that fulfilled such conditions as - holding a better defensive position, a flat hill ridge where plants grew in abundance, getting morning sunlight, flowing of river or brook nearby, slope of a hill, pleasant climate, availability of fertile cultivable land, shelter from storms, etc. When the party found such a place, they would sleep the night there and free a cock which they brought with them. If the cock did not crow one hour before dawn, it was taken as a bad omen. The party would leave the place immediately and look for another site. Otherwise, it was taken as a good omen that the place was suitable for establishing a village.³² Another belief and practice was with an egg. A small bit of the shell was removed at one end, and the egg was placed on three sticks under which a small fire was lit. If the egg burst, it was bad, but if the liquid came out and congealed on top like a cap and none of it trickled down to the sticks holding up the egg or to the ground, it was considered a good omen.³³ After completing this formality, the priest would perform a ritual with an egg to see if the place was infested with evil spirits or diseases.³⁴ Fully satisfied with the place's environment and climatic conditions, the Zou families would settle down and thus form a village. A village was often formed without any fixed number of houses, ranging from 10 to 50 and even more. The early Zous felt the need to live together in a cluster and establish a village where it was easy to defend against enemies, as there was constant tribal warfare in those days.³⁵

After the priest had confirmed that the selected site was healthy enough for settlement, plots for housing were distributed among the villagers. The chief was the first to choose the site to construct a house, followed by the *khawnbawl upa* (Council of Elders), the priest, the village crier, the village blacksmith, widows, and the common households.

³² Selchinlang, interview.

³³ William Shaw, *Notes on the Thadou Kukis* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, Second Reprint 2019), 83-84.

³⁴ M. Henkholun, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, M.Khawlmual, Mach 10, 2018.

³⁵ Gouchinhang, interview.

A clearing of trees, bushes, and shrubs followed the distribution of plots for housing to the villagers. After that, construction began, and when a new house was about to be occupied, the priest performed a sanctification ritual with an egg. The performance of this ritual was felt necessary to drive away the evil spirits, misfortune, and diseases in the newly constructed house.³⁶

A typical Zou village had two gates on its outskirts, which served as the entry and exit for the villagers. One of the gates was located at the village's main entrance, and the other was on the way to the agricultural lands. Fencings of wooden logs connected the two gates. Guards were posted at these gates during wars and epidemics. Visitors from epidemic-free areas were permitted into the village only after sprinkling them with water while uttering some magical words. In contrast, persons from epidemic-infested areas were prevented from entering the village.³⁷ At the centre of the village, there was a common ground called *tuol*. An altar was set up in the common ground of the village.³⁸ In the middle, an open space throughout the village served as a village street.

3.5 The Institution of *Inndongta* (Household Council):

The Zou society has a unique family structure system interlinked in some ways by the institution of *Inndongta*. The *inndongta* plays an important role in crucial matters of every household in its dealings with one another in society. For the smooth running of events such as marriage or burial, assignments are given to several relatives according to their positions in society. A household without this institution cannot function in society, and it is mandatory to have such an institution. Every household in a Zou village has its own *inndongta*. It links the whole society and unites the households of the village, especially in matters related to social activities.

To form an *inndongta*, a married man has to live in a separate house with his family. It is a practice that the parents or the eldest brother arrange an occasion for

³⁶ Langchinlien Mantuong, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Nangkateih, Myanmar, March 23, 2018.

³⁷ Holkhonun Lhungdim, "Introduction to the Zou Tribe" (MA Dissertation, Centre of Post-Graduate Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Imphal, 1980), 25-26.

³⁸ Gouchinhang, interview.

the younger brother to form his household council. An animal is killed and a feast is arranged, where all the family's relatives are invited to the feast. Except for the *bangkuo*, the names of persons to be inducted as members of the *inndongta* are declared in this feast, and a portion of the meat of the animal killed is given to each of them.

3.5.1 Members of the *Inndongta*:

The *Inndongta* has the following categories of members:

3.5.1.1 *Inntehpa*:

Inntehpa means 'owner of the house' or 'householder.' He is also the head of the household council.

3.5.1.2 *Bangkuo*:

He is the eldest male in the family. In the events of celebration or burial in the family, he has to contribute an animal and a *zubel*. On the marriage of a man under him, his share of contribution is one *gayal*.

3.5.1.3 *Pu*:

Pu is the maternal grandfather or maternal uncle. The share of the maternal grandfather or maternal uncle is *sa ngawng*.

3.5.1.4 *Zawl*:

Zawl is the householder's close and intimate friend and the spokesperson for the householder's *inndongta*. He is a non-clan member of the council. In the event of a celebration or burial, he acts on behalf of the family. On the day of the appointment to this responsibility, he is considered one of the family members and permitted to take *innsungsa* (sacred meat), which can be taken by persons belonging to the family only.³⁹ The duties of *zawl* are to assist the family on all important occasions, make decisions, and give information to all members of the household council and relatives of the householder. The *Zawl* has to contribute a *zubel* during the burial or celebration of the household family.

³⁹ Suankhanmang, interview.

3.5.1.5 *Sasem*:

Sasem means ‘cutting of meat’ and distributing the same by a person. He is not a clan member. He is responsible for cutting the meat of wild or domestic animals killed. On the day of taking this responsibility for such a duty, the *Sasem* is considered one of the family members and is allowed to take food with the family members of the householder. His primary duty is supervising the cutting and distribution of meat of wild or domesticated animals according to customary practices. In the event of celebration or sorrow in the family, his share of contribution is a *zobel*.

3.5.1.6 *Tanu* (Daughters):

Tanu are all married daughters or sisters of the householder or married females of the householder’s clan or sub-clans, including their spouse. The status of the *tanu* can be different. The first grade of a *tanu* is called the *tanubul* of the household. The *tanubul* is usually the eldest married daughter or the father’s sister of the householder. The other grades are *tanu nina* (second daughter), *tanu thumna* (third daughter), and *tanu guol* (all the married females of the householder’s clan or sub-clan). The *tanu* are not allowed to sit in the meeting of the *inndongta*. They have to do all the necessary work, including cooking and serving all the guests at the events of celebrations or burials in the family. The primary duty of *tanubul* is to assign work to other *tanu* and to ensure that they successfully carry it out.⁴⁰ The other *tanu* act as assistants to the *tanubul*. While the *tanubul* is usually from the eldest married female of the householder, the other *tanu* can be selected from married females from families of the householder’s clan. In the event of death in the family, all the *tanu* contribute one shawl each.⁴¹

⁴⁰ James Khamchinsuan, “Upadi,” in *Chinthu Zaila (Zou Literature Reader-X)*, eds. T.C. Tunngnung et al. (Churachandpur: Zou Literature Society, 2nd edition 2011), 3.

⁴¹ M.Suankhanmang, “Zou Custom (Zou Tawndan),” *Proceedings of the First Indo-Myanmar International Seminar on Zou Language, Literature, Culture and Custom*, ed. Aloysius T. Nehkhohjang (Churachandpur: Xavier Nengkhanlam and T. Lamkothawng, 2013), 60.

3.5.2 Role of the *Inndongta*:

The *inndongta* of a householder plays important roles in various events such as marriage, joy, death, loss, sorrow, and dispute within the family of a householder.⁴² The household council usually settles a dispute involving two or more persons. Issues such as misunderstanding in the family, problems with bride price, problems of marriage and divorce, etc., are the cases settled at the *inndongta* level. Though the opinion of the householder is respected, in most cases, the council's decision is binding. The householder can overrule the council's decisions, but he rarely does it because he knows that his household council always stands for him. A case that cannot be settled at the *inndongta* level is referred to the chief's court, or a person having grievances with the decisions of the *inndongta* may appeal to the village court.⁴³

3.5.3 Privileges of Members of *Inndongta*:

The members of the *inndongta* have certain privileges as a token of reward for their untiring services to the householder. Each is given a portion of the meat of wild or domestic animals killed by the householder. *Bangkuo* is given the head and the offal of the animal killed in the wild game, and one of the front legs of a domestic animal killed.⁴⁴ The share of the maternal grandfather or maternal uncle is *sa ngawng*. *Zawl* has the privilege of receiving meat called *sakhuoilu* - a piece of meat extracted from the two hind legs of the wild animal killed and half of the spine flesh of the domesticated animal killed. *Sasem* is given half of the chest of the wild animal and half of the spine flesh of a domesticated animal killed by the householder. The *tanu* does not get a share of the meat of animals killed in the chase. But when a domesticated animal is killed in any event in the family, *tanubul* is given the head and one hind leg, *tanu nina* gets another hind leg of the animal, and *tanu thumna* gets one of the fore legs. Every *tanu guol* receives one chunk of meat from a domestic animal killed.

⁴² Suankhanmang, interview.

⁴³ Lachinkhai, interview.

⁴⁴ Suankhanmang, "Zou Custom," 58.

3.6 Social Visit:

The social visit is a common practice among the Zous. The early part of the night, especially after the evening meal, is when a person usually visits his friends or relatives. A visitor is always welcome in every house. It is customary for a host to offer a seat to a visitor. At the time of departure, the host bid the visitor *mangpha* (sweet dream).

3.7 *Nungah Hel* (Courtship):

The Zous enjoy great liberty in their social life. Persons, irrespective of sex, are freely mixed in society. Courtship is common and freely followed in the Zou society. However, this social liberty does not lead them to sexual or immoral activity. It is mainly due to the cultural value they have on the virginity of the girl and the social disapproval of illegitimate children.⁴⁵

The young men usually set out to court girls at night after evening meals. The girls never left their homes and always stayed with their parents at home. The early hours of the night were spent working on the spinning cotton wheel, processing cotton yarn, or rolling the yarn into balls for future use. The boys who came to court helped in their work. One unique feature to be noted here is that the girl usually combed the hair of the boys who courted her. While combing if the girl allowed the boy to sit between her legs stretched apart, it indicated that the girl loved him. Conversely, if she leaned her knees against the back of the boy while combing his hair, it indicated that she disliked the boy. If the girl stretched her legs at length on one side of the boy, it showed that she neither loved nor disliked the boy.⁴⁶ Usually, a boy conveys his love for a girl through songs. The girl also responded to him in the same way.

It was believed that, in the past, even the demons also came to court girls at night. One legend goes as follows: One night, while a group of demons were preparing to court a girl in a village, a young demon asked the other demons to allow

⁴⁵ Khamchinkhai, "Transition of Zou Society," 69-70.

⁴⁶ Tualchin Neihisial, "History and Culture of the Zoumis" (PhD Thesis, Manipur University, 1993), 172.

him to go with them. However, he was not allowed by other demons for a simple reason: he might not be able to behave while courting the girl. After repeatedly pleading and promising to behave as they expected, he was finally allowed to join the group. When they were at the girl's house, they were offered tobacco. While the other demons took the tobacco, saying 'thank you' one after another without turning their head towards her, the young demon showed his face while taking the tobacco. The girl suddenly cried out loudly, and then, at once, the demons disappeared. Henceforth, the demons stopped courting girls in the villages, and no guest or stranger was ever entertained again without seeing their faces.⁴⁷

3.8 Marriage:

Marriage is a complex institution of every society that sanctions the relationships of a man and a woman, systematically binding them. It is established by human society to control and regulate the sexual lives of men and women. Marriage is a "rite of passage" whereby an unrelated man and woman begin their own family of procreation. Its purposes, functions, and forms may differ from society to society, but it is present everywhere as an institution.⁴⁸ Usually, the ceremony of solemnizing a marriage was done by the *tulpi* of the groom. He recited the genealogical line of descent one after another, incanting the blessing from God and the *pusa*. He took a leaf twig, dipped it into the water, and sprayed it upon the new couple. Then, he offered a sip of rice beer to the bride and the groom. After drinking the rice beer, the couple was declared to have been married as per the custom of the Zous.

Marriage among the Zous is solemnized and recognized by custom and society. It is considered an important institution in an individual's life for procreation and the continuance of a social unit. Marriage is performed not only for fulfilling their biological needs but also for social, cultural, and economic necessities. The early Zous generally observed one general standard so far as marriage is concerned. Marriage was taking place within their restricted local groups. The Zous chose to

⁴⁷ Nouzachin, interviewed by Khamchinkhai, Churachandpur, May 9th 2003, quoted in Khamchinkhai, "Transition of Zou Society," 70-71.

⁴⁸ T. Ginzamang Zomi, *An Introduction to Sociology* (Imphal: EduCare Publishers, 2014), 117.

marry outside their clan (clan exogamy) and within their tribes (tribe endogamy).⁴⁹ In some cases, there was no such kind of restriction unless the boy and girl were not too close, i.e., families or clan lineage. Parallel cousin marriage was not permitted.⁵⁰ Widow remarriage was allowed by custom, but it was rare. A man might go for a second wife in case of barrenness, infidelity, prolonged incurable sicknesses, physical disability, and adultery.⁵¹ The Zous practiced monogamy. Polygamy was severely criticized and considered unacceptable. Though the practice of polygamy was heard, it was very rare.⁵²

3.8.1 Traditional belief of *Aisaan* before marriage:

In the Zou society, there was a traditional belief in *Aisaan*, a kind of fate prediction or fortune prophecy.⁵³ Both boys and girls performed it before their marriage. They believed that it could predict whether their marriage would be a success or not. However, it is not known how far these predictions were true. Some of the common practices of *Aisaan* were: -

3.8.1.1 *Deituah Saan*

Deituah is a creeper with a tuber found in the jungle. Its tuber looks similar to a sweet potato. The Zou boys would dig out the tuber and hide it inside their pockets. At dusk, the boys would loiter within their village with the tuber inside their pockets while spelling out the following words:

*Deituah saana kawmpala ka lai leen,
Eideiloten keel lambang ei pel aw,
Eidei ta tawh dawn zu bang kituah ning e.*⁵⁴

Free translation:

I'm performing prediction with *deituah* while loitering in the village,

⁴⁹ T. Huatchinkam, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Sachih, March 8, 2018.

⁵⁰ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 14.

⁵¹ Johny Lalbiaklian, "The Zou Customary Laws: Continuity and Change" (M.Phil. Dissertation, North-Eastern Hills University, 1996), 67.

⁵² Lalbiaklian, "Zou Customary Laws," 60.

⁵³ S. Kaikhohau, *Note on Customary Laws*, Unpublished Notes (Churachandpur: 2003), 20-21.

⁵⁴ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 6.

One who dislikes me avoids me,
One who likes me I'll meet.

They threw the tuber at the person or animal, whoever they first met. If the person happened to be an unmarried girl, she would become his wife, or if the person was a married man or woman, he would be married to a girl from their clan, or if it happened to be a dog, his wife would be a girl who possessed an evil spirit. If it was a pig, his wife would be a lazy person. If he happened to stumble while loitering in the village, he would have an illegitimate child.⁵⁵

3.8.1.2 *Kumthei Saan*:

Kumthei is an insect that looks like a locust. *Kumthei saan* was performed both by boys and girls. *Kumthei* was usually caught in the field and was released to perform the prediction. While releasing the insect, the boy uttered the following words:

*Khawtuom tawh ka kiten ding le luigal ah tun in len,
tuolsung tawh ka kiten ding le kasah kahang ah tun in len,
tuale ka kitenna tung uah thubuai-labuai a um ding le luinang lah a tu
aw.*⁵⁶

Free translation: -

If I were to marry a girl from another village, fly beyond the river,
If I were to marry a girl within the village, fly in and around me,
And if our marriage happens to encounter problems, fly on the twigs of the
vine or creepers.

Similarly, a girl also said the following words while releasing the insect:

*Ka nungkia ding le hing kile kia inlen, ka geiah tu in,
Ka pasal gaal a a si ding le mupi'n van apan hing leng in kumthei hing
man hen.
Mi thanuom ding ahile tuana mun siengah na tu in.*⁵⁷

⁵⁵ T. Ginzamang Zomi, "Marriage Practices of the Zou Tribe in Manipur-Continuity and Change," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 3, no.10 (2014): 32.

URL: [http://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v3\(10\)/Version-2/E03102031037.pdf](http://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v3(10)/Version-2/E03102031037.pdf) .

⁵⁶ Kaikhohau, "Pasian Thu Lut masang Zogam Dinmun," *Zomi Christian Church Tapidaw 40, 1954 - 1994 Souvenir*, ed. David K. Samte (Churachandpur: 1994) 5.

⁵⁷ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 7.

Free translation: -

If I were to return (to my natal home), come back and sit beside me.
If my husband is going to die in war, let the eagle from heaven come down
and catch the insect,
If he is to be laborious, let it sit in a clean place.

3.8.1.3 *Sii Saan* (Sesame):

The girls in a village fried the sesame and pounded it with a mortar pestle. While pounding, they challenged the boys. The boys came secretly and grasped the pounded sesame. If any boy could be caught, he was released after being forced to drink a cup of water. After pounding, the sesame was molded into balls. For the boys, it was pierced in sharpened bamboo sticks, and for the girls, the balls were separately wrapped with a bamboo leaf. These balls were placed on a small swing basket hanging on the roof's edge above their beds. They uttered incantations like this:

*“Sii ka khai, sii ka khai e, Namsii sawlbang ka khai e.”*⁵⁸

Free translation: -

I hang sesame, I hang sesame, I hang it like a bunch of dry leaves.

*“Namsii sawlkhai zalmang a mat deilung tua le zangtawi laukha va tu aw,”*⁵⁹

Free translation: -

Hanging a bunch of sesame to reflect on my dream, let a dear partner's spirit sit on it.

Having uttered the incantation, they went to sleep. The following day, they went to check the sesame balls. It was a bad omen if any of the sesame balls were missing. It was believed that the person who hung the ball would die before getting married. If the sesame ball were dry, her boyfriend would die. If the ball cracked,

⁵⁸ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 7-8.

⁵⁹ Kaikhohau, “Pasian Thu Lut,” 6.

they would not have any children. If nothing happened to the sesame ball, they were believed to lead happy married lives.⁶⁰

3.8.1.4 Bu Saan

During the season of sowing seed in the agricultural land, the young girl would select about twenty grains and remove the husks. She sowed these seeds in the field, saying: *Ka pasal neima ka inn ua kum ka umna lai ding ja hing pou aw* (Sprout several seedlings, which would be the same as the number of years I would be staying in my parents' house before getting married).

When the selected grains germinated, producing five stems, it meant that the girl who sowed the seed would get married after five years, and if it produced ten stems, it meant she would get married after ten years.

3.8.1.5 Mang Saan:

It was a common practice in the early days for the Zou boys and girls to rely on their dreams to predict their future marriage. Before sleeping, a boy or girl would tie a thread on his or her thumb and the big toe and recite the following words: *Ka pasal ding/zi ding pen in ka mang chieng hing phel in* (Let the person who would be my husband/ wife come in my dream and untie the thread). After this, the girl/boy went to sleep. Hence, the person who untied the thread in her/his dreams would ultimately become her husband or his wife.

3.8.2 Types of marriage:

The types of marriage prevalent among the early Zous are:

3.8.2.1 Arranged marriage:

Arranged marriage is the traditional way of marriage practiced by the early Zous. When a boy attained a marriageable age, the parents took the initiative to acquire a life partner for their son. It was the prerogative of the parents to select a girl

⁶⁰ Ginzamang, "Marriage Practices of the Zou Tribe," 32.

of their choice. The first preference was to marry his maternal cross-cousin, called, *neita*. It was a custom for the eldest son of a family to marry the *neita* and the eldest daughter to marry a son of any of her aunts.⁶¹ If the maternal uncle did not have a daughter, a girl from his mother's distant relative could also be chosen. But when a suitable *neita* matching their son was unavailable, the parents could choose a girl from a family within the village or neighbouring village.⁶²

When the parents of a boy were determined that their son should marry his *neita*, the parents initiated the marriage negotiation during the boy's and the girl's childhood.⁶³ One important point to be noted here is that when a daughter was born into a family, her aunt could claim that the baby girl could be her son's wife and that she should not be given to anybody else. Such a reservation was called *kikhau khi*, meaning that the 'girl had been engaged to a particular boy and that no one should set his eyes on her for marriage or love.'⁶⁴ However, the marriage ceremony was to occur after both had attained adulthood.

The practice of marrying *neita* was preferred to maintain the affinal bond that had been continued from generation to generation. It also signified the respect and deep-rooted love for maternal uncles. But there were also instances when a boy or a girl married someone from a completely different family. In such cases, the boy or the girl who married outside the family was accused of *siel khau sattan* (cutting off the gayal's rope), which meant 'cutting off the consanguineal relationship,' and was liable to fine one *sielpi*.⁶⁵

While finding a partner, the opinion of either the boy or the girl was rarely consulted. Once the marriage was settled, both the boy and girl could neither question nor object to the decisions of their families.

⁶¹ Holkhonun Lhungdim, "Social and Cultural Life of the Zou Tribe" (MA Dissertation, Centre of Post-Graduate Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Imphal, 1980), 5.

⁶² Ginzamang, "Marriage Practices of the Zou Tribe," 31-37.

⁶³ T. Kamchinkhup, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Sugnu, March 7, 2018.

⁶⁴ Kamchinkhup, interview.

⁶⁵ Ginneihching, 128-129.

3.8.2.2 *Zawlgai* (illegitimate pregnancy):

It is a type of marriage due to an illegitimate pregnancy, called *zawlgai*. Such a practice is considered the ugliest form of marriage.

3.8.2.3 *Zawltai* (Elopement):

An elopement is an act or instance of running off secretly to be married. It is a secret marriage in which a boy and a girl elope with mutual consent or love. This type of marriage is resorted to, first, when either the parents of the boy or girl, or both, oppose their marriage; second, when the boy and girl had a pre-marital relationship leading to pregnancy; last, when somebody stands on their way as an obstacle and tend to disrupt their relationship.⁶⁶

The procedure for settlement of *zawltai* is also the same as that of arranged marriage. But if the marriage can not be settled amicably even after several negotiations, the couple has to find some other means, like settling in another village or even going to the extent of ending their lives by committing suicide.⁶⁷

3.8.2.4 *Mouluo* (Levirate marriage):

Mouluo means the levirate system of marriage. It is a type of marriage in which the elder or the younger brother marries his deceased brother's wife. It is a unique customary practice of the Zous. Such a situation arises when a husband dies, leaving behind his wife and children, and the younger or elder brother marries his deceased brother's widow. In this type of marriage, a customary procedure for settling the bride's price was not followed. The widow's parent could either demand or exempt the payment of one *sielpi* from the new husband.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Henkholun, interview.

⁶⁷ Lungdim, "Social and Cultural Life," 5.

⁶⁸ Vummang and Jamkhogin, *The Jou Custom Book (Tondan)* (Imphal: Nengjakham and Sianjahao, 1957), 7.

3.8.2.5. Marriage by capture:

In this type of marriage, the girl is convinced to go out for some other purposes and is forcefully carried away by the boy with the help of his friends. Such incidents often result in the imposition of a heavy fine - *sielpi le salam* and one *sielpi*.

3.8.2.6 Re-marriage of widow:

Though the remarriage of a widow is not generally allowed, it happens under certain circumstances. The widow who wants to remarry shall disassociate herself physically and emotionally from her husband's clan and return to her natal clan. In doing so, she will forfeit the bridal articles and also cannot claim any share in her deceased husband's property. If she acts contrary to the customary formality, she is considered as committing adultery, which is objectionable to the members of the deceased husband's family. When a widow gets married on the above condition, a customary procedure for settlement of the bride price follows, and she can also take *Mou vaken* to her husband's house.⁶⁹

3.8.3 Mou Kham (Engagement):

The early Zous practiced a marriage engagement called *Mou Kham*. Two types of such engagement were *Zu-um tun* and *Neita kham*.⁷⁰

3.8.3.1 Zu-um tun:

The *zu-um tun* was an engagement by mutual agreement between the parents of the boy and the girl. It is a traditional customary practice in which the boy's parent paid a pot of rice beer, called *zu-um*, and a Zou traditional cloth called *thatanman* (labour price) to the girl's parents. If the boy broke the engagement, he was liable to pay a fine of one *siel*. In the girl's case, she had to return a pot of rice beer. Any person who caused the breakup of their engagement had to bear the expenditures incurred on rice, beer, and meat, as well as a fine of one *gayal*.

⁶⁹ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 13.

⁷⁰ Lalbiaklian, 66.

3.8.3.2 *Neita kham*:

Neita kham was the engagement of *neita* (maternal uncle's daughter), usually with a pot of rice beer by the boy's parent. It could also be made during the childhood of both the boy and the girl. There were instances where a girl was earmarked at her birth by her aunt to be her future daughter-in-law. But the marriage ceremony was to be taken after they attained the marriageable age. If the boy did not marry the girl after the engagement, a fine called *neitanman* of one *siel* would be paid to the girl's parent.⁷¹ If the girl violated the pot of rice beer had to be returned. A fine for third-party interference in the engagement was *zubel*, *salam*, and a *sielpi*.

3.8.4 *Mou Man* (Bride Price):

There is a traditional customary norm where the groom's family must pay the bride's parent certain things. It is called *Mou man*. *Mou* means 'bride' and *man* means 'price,' and hence *mou man* means 'bride price.' However, the bride price does not mean that a Zou daughter is sold by her parent as a commodity to acquire wealth. In the olden days when matrilineal cross-cousin marriage was a common practice, *mou man* was initiated to follow some discipline on the parties concerned and also to mean several ideals and values like compensating the family for parting a daughter, symbolizing a new relationship between the two families and perpetuating relationship already in existence between the two families.⁷² In the case of *mouluo*, the boy had to pay one *siel* to the widow's parent.⁷³ But the widow's parent could also exempt the boy from the payment. In the past, rearing animals was common among people living in the hills. Almost every family owned *siel*. It was the most highly prized animal, and a household's wealth was measured by the number of *siel* it owned. Thus, the bride price was counted in terms of *siel*.

Traditionally, the Zou bride price has to be paid in two parts. The first part is called *Manpi* or principal price, and the second is called *Mankaang* (subsidiary prices). The principal price was realized in terms of *siel*. Over time, *siel* became rare, and its price rose. It becomes too expensive and difficult for the common people to

⁷¹ Vummang and Jamkhogin, *The Jou Custom Book*, 13.

⁷² Lhungdim, "Social and Cultural Life," 7.

⁷³ Vummang and Jamkhogin, 7.

procure *siel* for the payment of the bride price. Thus, it becomes a common practice to accept buffalo, bull, or cow in place of *siel*.⁷⁴ While the payment of the subsidiary prices has to be made on the day of the settlement of bride prices, the full payment of the principal price is not allowed. The final payment of the principal price is to be made after the lapse of one or more decades, or even by the son after the death of his mother.

3.8.4.1 *Manpi* (Principal Price):

The principal price is to be paid to the bride's parent, where the members of the *inndongta* of both families are witnesses. The customary norm of *manpi* is five gayals (*sielpi*), out of which one gayal shall compulsorily be paid on the day of the marriage. Depending on the bride's parent, the principal price can be less than the usual customary norms.

3.8.4.2 *Mankaang* (Subsidiary Prices):

The subsidiary prices, such as *thatanman*, *bangkuo sum*, *pusum*, *zawl sum* and *sasem sum*, are compulsory and have to be paid on the day of the settlement of the bride prices. The subsidiary prices are as follows:

3.8.4.2.1 *Thatanman* (labour price):

It means 'labour price.' This share of the bride's price is given to the bride's mother. Unless the payment of *thatanman* is made, the bride cannot come under the whole responsibility of the groom's family in case of death or any other eventuality. Usually, a traditional cloth is given for *thatanman*.

3.8.4.2.2 *Bangkuo sum*:

Bangkuo means 'eldest male member in a family.' *Bangkuo sum* is a share of the bride price for the eldest brother of the bride's side.

⁷⁴ Chinzakhai Lianzaw, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Churachandpur, April 17, 2018.

3.8.4.2.3 *Pusum*:

The word *Pu* stands for ‘maternal grandfather,’ and *Sum* stands for ‘money.’ Thus, *pusum* means ‘the share of the maternal grandfather in the bride price.’ It is usually given to the maternal grandfather, but the maternal uncle can claim it in his absence or death. The share of a *Pu* in the bride price was Rs. 2/-.⁷⁵

3.8.4.2.4 *Sasem Sum*:

Sasem is usually a non-clan member of the *inndongta*, and *sum* means ‘money.’ *Sasem sum* is the share of the *sasem* in the bride price, and the amount of his share was Rs 2/-.

3.8.4.2.5. *Zawl Sum*:

Zawl sum is a share of *zawl* in the bride price, and the amount of his share was Rs 2/-.

3.8.4.2.6. *Sabengpuoman*:

Sabengpuoman is a charge of carrying the basket of meat. It is payable to the friend/friends of the bride, who carried the basket of meat from the house on the day of payment of the bride price.⁷⁶ It was usually an amount of Rs 2/- paid by the groom’s family.⁷⁷

3.8.4.2.7 *Min man*:

The person who gave the name of the bride at the time when she was born also has a share of the bride's price, known as *min man*, or the price of naming. It is given as a token of honour to the person who had christened the bride during her childhood. The Zos in Myanmar are practicing this custom. Usually, a Zou traditional shawl is given as a *min man*.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Vummang and Jamkhogin, 4.

⁷⁶ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 73.

⁷⁷ Vummang and Jamkhogin, 4.

⁷⁸ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 75.

3.8.4.2.8 *Lawm man*:

The word *lawm* means ‘friend.’ It refers to the friend of the bride. The number of friends varies from person to person. But usually, the customary norm is one friend. *Lawm man* does not form a separate subsidiary price and cannot be claimed customarily as a matter of right. The friend of the bride was usually paid Rs 2/-.

3.8.4.2.9 *U Kaan man*:

When a bride happens to be the younger sister of an unmarried girl, she is considered *u kaan*. The groom has to pay the *u kaan man*, a fine for choosing the younger sister to be his wife, superseding her elder sister (s). The elder sister seldom demands *u kaan man*, but it is usually paid to her before the negotiation of the marriage of her younger sister. The fine levy is usually one gayal or Zou traditional shawl or necklace of beads.⁷⁹

3.8.4.2.10 *Zawltuo man*:

It is a price payable to the person responsible for making all necessary arrangements so that the two persons can marry. *Zawl* meant ‘lovers,’ *tuo* meant ‘unite,’ and *man* meant ‘price.’ When an animal is killed, this person is given the lower jaw of the animal.⁸⁰

3.8.5 *Mou Vanken*:

The traditional customary practice is that the bride brings articles to the groom’s house. These articles are called *Mou Vanken*. These articles are regarded as compulsory. The following articles are brought compulsorily to the groom’s house by the bride.⁸¹

Sum ken - One gayal or money equivalent to its price.

⁷⁹ Zou Zumpi, *Zou Custom Book (Zou Tawndan)* (Churachandpur: Goikhanman, Chinzaniang and Chingzaniang, 2005), 16.

⁸⁰ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 77.

⁸¹ Vummang and Jamkhogin, 3.

<i>Phoipi</i>	-	A hand-woven cotton blanket.
<i>Puondum</i>	-	Traditional Zou shawl. The shawl used for covering the basket of meat called <i>sabengsin</i> can be counted as <i>mou vanken</i> .
<i>Seu</i>	-	A basket made of bamboo or cane. The basket used for carrying <i>tunsa</i> , which can be counted as <i>mou vanken</i> .
<i>Nam</i>	-	A plaited band of cane or bamboo used to carry a basket.
<i>Heipi</i>	-	An axe without a handle.
<i>Koite</i>	-	A sickle with a handle.
<i>Tuta</i>	-	A small hoe with a handle.
<i>Khiba</i>	-	A necklace
<i>Zubel ni</i>	-	Two clay pots of <i>zu</i> which the bride has to offer to the persons who welcomed her at the time of her arrival at the groom's house.
<i>Leelpi</i>	-	A basket made of cane or bamboo closely woven with a close-fitting conical lid. It is commonly used for storing clothes.
<i>Muui</i>	-	Spinning wheel.
<i>Tau</i>	-	Pair of bracelets.

In addition to the above items, the bride can also bring other articles to the groom's house. The quantity and quality of the articles depend upon the wishes of the bride's parent and the family's economic condition. However, the bride can bring these articles to the groom's house on some other days. These materials are not considered *mou vanken* and shall not be claimed in the event of divorce.⁸²

3.8.6 Procedures in the Marriage Process:

When a boy attained marriageable age, his parents called a meeting of the *inn dongta*, and the members were informed of their intention to acquire a life partner for their son. For the engagement that was made during the childhood of the boy and

⁸² Zumpi, 2005, 16.

the girl, the *inndongta* of both the boy and girl could directly negotiate once and proceed to the final settlement of the marriage. Otherwise, the boy's parents had to look for a girl suitable for their son. The parents' first choice was to approach his maternal uncles to determine whether a suitable *neita* matching the boy was available.

When the parents found a girl of their choice, the *inndongta* sent a message through a *patong* or messenger (who would be either their *sawl* or *sasem* of household council) to the girl's house to give prior information to them that they would be visiting them. In response to such information received, the girl's parents then summoned a meeting of their *inndongta* and deliberated upon the agenda.

The boy's *inndongta* visited the girl's house with a clay pot of liquor. When the members of both the councils of the boy and the girl were together, the *zawl* (of the boy's *inndongta*) asked whether the rice beer they brought could be served to the host family.⁸³ If the response was positive, the liquor was served and consumed together. Then he informed the host family that the purpose of their visit was to ask for the hand of the girl and requested the parents of the girl to give their daughter in marriage to their boy. If the girl's parents agreed to the proposal, they also offered a pot of *zu*, and both parties drank together, and further negotiations followed. If the marriage proposal were rejected, the girl's parent would make lame excuses such as that they had not contacted their daughter; their daughter was not of marriageable age, etc. As such, there would be no further negotiation. The girl's parent would also return the liquor pot to the boy's parent.⁸⁴ Even when the girl's parent accepted the marriage proposal, the matter was not settled in one go. Another date was fixed to resume the negotiation. It facilitated the consultation between the girl and her parents to ascertain her acceptance of the suitor and test the boy's patience and determination in suiting the girl. The *inndongta* of both families met again for a final settlement. If there was no objection from the girl's parents, the liquor brought by the boy's *inndongta* was served and consumed. It was confirmed that both the boy and the girl were engaged. This ceremony is called *zu-um tun*. Further, payment for *thatanman*

⁸³ Suankhanmang, interview.

⁸⁴ Kamchinkhup, interview.

was made at that meeting.⁸⁵ As there could be unforeseen bad events and third-party interference in the engagement, both parties put their efforts into holding the marriage ceremony as early as possible. The meeting, therefore, discussed the bride's price and fixed the marriage day.

On the day fixed for the marriage, close relatives of both parties assembled at the house of the bride. Taking a pot of liquor, the boy, together with his parent, went to the girl's house. They were accompanied by their *tulpi* and some members of the household council, such as *zawl*, *sasem* and *tanu*. On this occasion, the *inndongta* of both parties sat together and liquor was served by the *tanu* of the boy's side, followed by the payment of bride prices – principal and subsidiary prices by the *inndongta* of the boy. After the liquor of the girl's family was served, the girl's parents killed a domestic animal, preferably a pig. It is called *tunsatha*. The meat was cooked and feasted by both the members of the families and the general public in the evening. Sometimes, for certain reasons, the bride's price could not be paid on the day of the marriage. On such occasions, the obligatory killing of a domestic animal by the girl's parents was also not made.⁸⁶

The bride was led out of her natal house in the evening when the feast was over. Her bridesmaid accompanied her. At the gate, her family members, close relatives, and friends saw her off. The basket (*beng*) containing the meat portions, covered with a shawl, was carried out of the house by the *tanubul* of the bride. The bride also took all the articles set aside as *mou vanken*. On reaching their gate, the *tanubul* of the groom's *inndongta* received the basket. The marriage party took the bride to the groom's house. It is called *mola*.

On entering the groom's house, the *tulpi* (of the groom) sprinkled wine over the bride, and *aahnel* (a bundle of white cock feathers) was put around her neck. In the absence of the *tulpi*, the *bangkuo*, or eldest brother of the groom, could perform this act.⁸⁷ It was done as a sign of acceptance of the bride as a family member. The bride slept with her bridesmaid on the first night. Celebration, attended by relatives

⁸⁵ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 9-10.

⁸⁶ Chinzakhai, interview.

⁸⁷ Kamchinkhup, interview.

and friends within and outside the village, was held the next day. An animal was slaughtered for a feast, and liquor was served. A ritual meat called *sungsa*, which could be eaten only by family members, was given to the bride. After that, she could sleep together with her groom. On that occasion, the priest would take a mouthful of liquor that was sprayed on the couple and bless them, uttering:

*Hing dam thei ta un len,
Tate tawh hing khuosa un,
Nei le lam, siel le sum in hing vuh hen len,
Na dam kum uh hing sawt ta hen.
Na tusawnte un na sam kang uh hing mu hen len,
Na lawm le guol te sangin ma hing sawn zaw ta un.*

Free translation:

May ye enjoy good health,
Be ye surrounded by your children,
May riches be yours, with gayals and money
May you lead a long life.
May your grandchildren see your grey hair,
And may ye excel your friend in prosperity.⁸⁸

The *tanubul* scrutinized the articles that were brought by the bride and distributed some of them to the bridegroom's relatives in consultation with the groom's mother and his aunts. The *tanubul* also took the *sabengsiin* as her share to carry the basket of meat.⁸⁹

3.8.7 Ki Khenna (Divorce):

The Zou society strongly condemns divorce. Despite strong condemnation, it is more or less common in society. As the adage goes, *kamsunga lei le ha zong kipet* (Even the tongue and teeth bite each other inside the mouth), there are times when the husband and wife quarrel on minor issues, compelling the latter to return to her parents, and sometimes, it leads to the dissolution of the marriage. In case a quarrel occurs and the blame goes to the husband for committing adultery, the *inndongta* of

⁸⁸ M. Samuel Khamjakhup, "A Brief Research on Zou Culture," Unpublished typed copy, 1977, 4, quoted in Holkhonun Lhungdim, "Social and Cultural Life of the Zou Tribe," 8.

⁸⁹ Kamchinkhup, interview.

the husband goes with a pig of four fists measurement in size, a pot of rice beer, and one *siel* to the wife's parents.⁹⁰ The *inndongta* tendered an apology for the offense committed by the husband and promised that he will not repeat the same. If the wife's parents accept the apology, the husband is forgiven, and the *siel* they brought is also returned. The maternal parent returned their daughter to her husband, and a pig is given to feast on at home.⁹¹

Divorce can occur due to several reasons, like adultery, barrenness, infidelity, desertion, mental illness, etc., on the part of either the husband or wife. It can also occur with the mutual consent of the husband and wife. The following are the customary practices in Zou society regarding divorce.⁹²

3.8.7.1 *Khul*:

If a husband sought to divorce his wife at no fault, he is liable to pay *innpi sap* to the chief and arrange a *salam* in the chief's residence. He also has to pay the divorced wife a fine of *sielpi* as *khulman*. He has to return all the bridal properties that his wife brought as *mou vanken*.⁹³ In addition, he cannot reclaim the marriage payments he had made. If the wife is *sisan pal*, he has to pay the balance of her price, but if the wife is *sisan pallo*, he does not have to pay the balance.⁹⁴

3.8.7.2 *Man le*:

When a woman refuses to remain with her husband due to certain inevitable circumstances and returns her bride's price to her husband, she is considered to be divorcing her husband, and such a kind of divorce is called *man le*.⁹⁵ As she has initiated the divorce, she will forfeit all the properties she brought as *mou vanken* at

⁹⁰ Suankhanmang, interview.

⁹¹ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 11.

⁹² T. Gougin, *History of Zomi* (Churachandpur: Zomi Press, 1986), 40-41.

⁹³ Zumpi, 2005, 16.

⁹⁴ Zumpi, 2005, 16.

⁹⁵ Suankhanmang, interview.

the time of marriage. All the expenditure incurred on rice-beer and animals in her marriage cannot be reclaimed.⁹⁶

3.8.7.3 *Angkawm* (Adultery):

If a divorce occurs due to the husband having committed adultery or other reasons, he is liable to pay a fine of six *siel kengding*. Also, he is liable to pay *innpi sap* to the chief and also arrange *salam* in the chief's house. He has to return all the articles brought by his wife, and also cannot reclaim the marriage payments. In case the wife is *sisan pal*, he has to pay the balance of the marriage price, but if the wife is *sisan pallo*, he does not have to pay the balance.⁹⁷

On the other hand, if a wife divorces her husband with no fault on the part of her husband or divorce becomes inevitable on the grounds of the wife committing adultery, she has to refund the bride price paid by her husband. She will also forfeit all the properties brought as *mou vanken* at marriage. In addition, all the expenditure she incurred on rice-beer and animal(s) for her marriage cannot be reclaimed.

If a wife is divorced while pregnant or with a baby, the child will be in the custody of the mother for three years. The father will bear all the expenditure on the child during these years. After three years, he has to take back the child by giving one *siel* or an equivalent amount of money. If the baby meets any misfortune, including death, the mother cannot be blamed for it.⁹⁸

3.8.7.4 *Ki aahguol khen*:

If a divorce occurs due to mutual agreement and understanding between the wife and the husband, it is called *ki aahguol khen*. In such divorce cases, neither the husband nor the wife can claim anything, and no fines are imposed on them.

⁹⁶ Vummang and Jamkhogin, 5.

⁹⁷ Zumpi, 2005, 16.

⁹⁸ Zumpi, 2005, 16.

3.8.8 Ceremonies associated with Marriage:

3.8.8.1 *Tunsatha*:

Tunsatha is one of the most important components of the marriage practice of the Zous. It is an obligatory ceremony in which the bride's parents slaughter an animal on the day of the payment of a bride's price. *Tun* meant 'reach,' *sa* meant 'meat,' and *tha* meant 'slaughter.' The meat to be taken by the bride to the groom's house on that day is called *tunsa*. It is called so because the meat is to be feasted by the family and relatives of the groom.⁹⁹

Domesticated animals, usually pigs, not less than four fist measurements in size each, are killed and prepared for a feast by the bride's side. But the number of animals killed depends on the payment of the bride price. If a part of the principal price is still due, another animal will be killed when full payment is made. While the heads, shoulders, thighs, ribs, etc., of the animals killed are kept aside to be taken to the groom's house, the other portions of the animals are prepared for the general public.¹⁰⁰ On the occasion of *tunsatha*, an equal number of men from the *inn dongta* of the bride and groom sides are selected as witnesses to the marriage alliance, and they are to have a meal together. The meal consists of portions of animals killed, such as the liver, heart, intestine, etc. These portions are considered the most valuable parts of the meat, representing life-giving and being a source of love and affection. The selected men sit together, facing each other for the final settlement of the marriage. Before the meal, the bride's party proclaims the conditions relating to the bride's price and the marriage. Hearing these conditions, the groom's party expressed their approval, and the meal was eaten together.¹⁰¹ It is known as *sabaa nehna*. These men were responsible for any eventualities of the married couple in the future.

The *tunsatha* ceremony, prepared after the partial or complete payment of the bride price, is important in the Zou marriage system. It confirms the formal

⁹⁹ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 77.

¹⁰⁰ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 76.

¹⁰¹ Suankhanmang, interview.

admission of the bride into the groom's family.¹⁰² When a married woman whose price is not yet paid dies, it is a custom to arrange immediate payment of her price, and the ceremony of *tunsatha* is also arranged before the burial.¹⁰³ In such an incident, the *tulpi* of the groom put the fat of the slaughtered pig over the head of the deceased wife, and he also sprinkled a mouthful of rice beer over the corpse, making formal admission of the dead woman into their clan. The spirit of a deceased wife who is not formally admitted into her husband's clan is believed to have hovered around their house because she is not sure whether the souls of her relatives or those of her husband's relatives will welcome her in the abode of the dead.¹⁰⁴

On the occasion of *tunsatha*, a certain share of meat is given to the groom's household council members. The details of the distribution of the meat share are given in 4.6.2.1.

3.8.8.2 *Sulle An*:

Sulle meant 'visiting a natal home,' and *An* meant 'food.' It refers to the food a married daughter brings to her husband's house. It is called *sulle* because a daughter married to another family comes to visit her natal home. A married daughter is not allowed to visit her natal home before the expiry of one month of her marriage. Even on her visit, she does not remain there for long, and she usually returns home with meat. A pig of not less than three fists in size is killed for feasting, and the daughter returns home with pork. Parents with poor economic conditions will let their daughters return home with a fowl and a pot of rice beer.¹⁰⁵

3.8.8.3 *Nua kawm*:

Nua means 'natal home,' and *kawm* means 'visit.' The bride's parents send words to their daughter, asking her to visit them. The couple pays a visit to her natal home, which is called *nua kawm*. A pig of four fists in size is killed. Some portions of the meat are kept aside for the couple to take home. It is called *Innlam suisa*

¹⁰² Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 76.

¹⁰³ Kamchinkhup, interview.

¹⁰⁴ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 76.

¹⁰⁵ Chinzakhai, interview.

(*Innlam* means ‘natal home,’ *sui* means ‘visit’ and *sa* means ‘flesh or meat.’ *Innlam Sui sa* means the ‘flesh of an animal brought from the natal house by the bride to the groom’s house. The other portions of the animal are prepared and feasted. After this, the couple returns home with the meat of the animal. In addition, the couple also brings cooked sticky rice, rice beer, fowl, etc. with them.¹⁰⁶

3.8.8.4 *Siel zune*h:

*Siel zune*h is a feast arranged on the day of the final payment of the bride price. On this occasion, *zu* is broached, and a pig is killed by the wife’s parents. All the relatives of both the husband and the wife are invited.

3.8.9 Marriages that were against Customary Practices:

Some marriages are against the Zou customary practices and are not favoured by society. They are:

3.8.9.1 *Minam dang suina*:

Generally, the early Zous selected their life partners within the Zou community. They never thought of establishing matrimonial ties with other communities. As the Zou people had the same habits, dialect, tastes, etc., parents always selected life partners for their sons from the Zou tribe only. But it did not mean that marriage with other communities was totally absent. A man who married a girl of another community repented and advised his brother /sister as *Mi nam dang zi nei pen kei a tawp hiel ta vai* (Let marrying a person of another community be the end with mine).

3.8.9.2 *Sanggam kitenna* (Parallel cousin marriage):

Sanggam is a term used to refer to either brother or sister, and *kitenna* means ‘marriage.’ Here *sanggam kitenna* means ‘parallel cousin marriage.’ Such a marriage often occurs in a village where almost all the householders from the same clan live together. Unlike *sengle kitenna*, parallel cousin marriage is not highly

¹⁰⁶ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 11.

disapproved.¹⁰⁷ But it brings inconveniences in family relationships and, in particular, the husband's position in the girl's family. There is also awkwardness in addressing them by the children of the family.¹⁰⁸ Firstly, in the Zou society, *pu* (maternal father or maternal uncle) is highly regarded and respected. The husband, who can otherwise occupy such a position in the event of the girl's marriage, has to accept the position of *tanu* (married daughter) or *mahpa* (daughter's husband) due to his marriage with his sister. Secondly, the children in the family feel awkward in addressing the couple. For instance, the husband can be both the *paneu* (paternal uncle) and the *gang* (husband of one's aunt), while the wife can be both the *nuneu* (wife of one's uncle) and *ni* (sister of one's father) for the children of the family.

3.8.9.3 *Sengle kitenna*:

Sengle means 'exchange of basket,' and *kitenna* means 'marriage.' Thus, *sengle kitenna* means 'marriage in exchange for a basket. When a man sends his aunt or sister to get married, basket containing meat, *sasengsiin* (cloth covering the meat of the basket), and *mou vanken* (articles of the bride) are also sent along with the bride to the groom's house on the day of the marriage. If a boy marries a girl from the family where his aunt or sister is given in marriage, the basket(s) of meat and *mou vanken* he sent would return to him. Such a marriage is called *sengle* or exchange of basket(s). It is considered *sienglo* or taboo.¹⁰⁹ Such practice is believed to bring misfortune, such as blindness, lameness, dumbness, mental illness, or even death to members of both families.

3.9 Death

In the traditional Zou society, when persons die, they are mourned by the whole village. Sometimes, death can be caused by drowning or an attack by wild animals in the jungle, where the corpse is not recovered. Such a case of death is called *sina-manna* by the early Zous. The literal meaning of *sina-manna* is 'death and loss.' When an animal meant for a mortuary feast or other purposes related to

¹⁰⁷ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 78-79.

¹⁰⁸ Henkholun, interview.

¹⁰⁹ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 79.

death is to be slaughtered, the clan priest or a person entrusted by him on his behalf will first perform incantation and spray water on the left side of the animal, and the animal is killed.¹¹⁰

In the olden days, when a person died, a gong was softly beaten, which was followed by the firing of two gunshots. On hearing the sound of a gong and the firing of gunshots, all the villagers rushed towards the house of the deceased person. The women and family members were wailing and crying over the body of the dead person. In the meantime, a pot of liquor was broached, and *sasem*, *zawl* and members of the deceased family sat together to ascertain the number of earthen pots of rice beer and animals that would be required during the funeral days.¹¹¹ They also fixed the day on which the burial was to take place. Messengers were sent to inform the near and dear ones living in different villages. It is called *sikou*.

As a rule, a dead body would be kept for three to seven days and even a month.¹¹² For a person who had performed *ton*, *mim-ai*, *sa-ai*, *gal-ai*, etc., in his lifetime, his dead body was kept for a month. For a person who had performed *sa-ai*, various kinds of earthen pots of liquor equal to the number of animals hunted by him during his lifetime were brewed. The day for burial was fixed on the day when these pots of liquor were ready for consumption. Keeping the dead body for a long time was also considered a sign of love.¹¹³

3.9.1 Type of Death:

Death can be of various types, and the burial method is also different depending on the nature of death.

3.9.1.1 Lamzuih:

It is a case of infant death. If a child dies before the completion of one year of age, it is considered *Lamzui a si*. The news of this type of death is not shared with all the villagers. The body of the baby, wrapped with cloth and put inside a pot covered

¹¹⁰ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 94.

¹¹¹ Kai Khan Lien, *Zo Ngaina leh Kamham Zahdan (Zo Culture and Usage of Language)* (Kalaymyo: Author, 2016), 27.

¹¹² Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 28-29.

¹¹³ Ginneiching, 180.

with cloth of any kind, is buried in a pit dug below the floor.¹¹⁴ The burial work is performed by the family members with the help of the members of the *inndongta*. The mortuary feast, usually prepared on the day of burial, is not arranged.

3.9.1.2 *Saa si* (Unnatural death):

When death is caused by *kenkia* (fall from a cliff), *tuikia a si* (drown), *singkung pan kia* (fall from a tree), *galtha* (killed by enemy), *satha* (killed by wild animals), *gui awh* (suicide by hanging), etc., it is called *saa si* or unnatural death. In such cases of death, the Zou traditional customary practices of procedures of burial can be followed after the *tulpi* or *sasem* has performed the necessary rite for bringing the corpse inside the house.

In the case of unnatural death, in which the corpse is untraceable, a bundle of thatch or a banana tree is cut to a desired length using it as the body and a dry gourd as the head, and then it is buried in place of the corpse.¹¹⁵ The Zou traditional rites and rituals of burial are followed. A mortuary feast is also prepared.

The corpse of a person who died due to any of the above-cited causes cannot be brought immediately inside his house. It rests at the main gate of the house. In the meantime, the *tanubul* (of the deceased family) fetched the leftover food in *vohkuong*¹¹⁶ with a half scoop of gourd and handed it over to the *tulpi*. The *tulpi* uttered an incantation and fed the food to the corpse. After that, the corpse was allowed to be brought inside his house. The rite was performed to avert the repetition of unnatural death in the family, in particular and in the village in general.¹¹⁷

For a person who died due to *gui awh* (suicide by hanging), only the *tulpi* or *sasem* of the deceased family can cut or untie the rope with which the deceased person is hanged. The procedures to be followed for bringing the corpse inside the house are the same as death caused by the unnatural death mentioned above.

¹¹⁴ Suankhanmang, interview.

¹¹⁵ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 95.

¹¹⁶ *Vohkuong* is a wooden plate of rectangular shape used for feeding food to the pigs.

¹¹⁷ Henkholun, interview.

3.9.1.3 *Si pangai* (Natural death):

Death that is not sudden and accidental is known as *si pangai* or natural death. Natural death is caused by old age and sickness. Sickness can be due to infectious or non-communicable diseases. Death caused by illness such as leprosy, cholera, etc., where the disease can be communicated to others, is buried on the day of death. Taking the corpse for burial is allowed only through the back door.¹¹⁸ For natural death caused by old age or normal sickness, the traditional rules and regulations are applied at the time of the funeral. In a family where a son died for the first time, the body is usually buried in a place behind the house.¹¹⁹ Traditional rice beer can be served. But no mortuary feast is allowed. Moreover, no song can be sung at the funeral.

3.9.2 Dehydration of the Dead Body:

Dehydration of the dead body is done to keep the body for a long time and to prevent it from decomposition. Once a person died, the *tanu* transferred the corpse from the bed to the floor, bathed it with clean water, then oiled the hair and dressed it carefully with the finest cloth. This ceremony was called *sibuol* (washing of the dead). The corpse was let to sit on a bamboo frame or a rough bamboo armchair called *pangli*. If a woman, she was adorned with fine clothing, necklaces, etc., and if the deceased was a man, he was decorated with Zou traditional attires of a white turban called *diel paa*, white cotton dress called *Zoupuon* and red shawl called *tangchin puon*. Besides, his gun, spear, dao, etc., were also put near him.¹²⁰ On the floor below the dead body was seated, and a hole was made through which the fluid discharged from the body of the deceased was drained to a pit beneath the house, dug for this purpose. Fireplaces were prepared on the sides of the corpse. After that, the process of dehydration of the body began. A dry pinewood was burnt, which dried the dead body with the heat of the fire. The *tanu* maintained a regular supply of firewood to dehydrate the corpse. It continued till the body of the deceased was totally dried up. It took weeks and even a month together. During this period, the

¹¹⁸ Suankhanmang, interview.

¹¹⁹ Kamchinkhup, interview.

¹²⁰ Lungdim, "Social and Cultural Life," 14.

tanu of the deceased person fended off the corpse from flies, rats, and other insects. After the process of dehydration was over, the *tanu* dressed the dried body for the final funeral.

During the period of dehydration of the dead body, people from within and outside the village came to console the bereaved family. Usually, the women sat beside the corpse, and the men and youngsters sat near the hearth, on the beds, and the *kuno* (elevated floor inside the house). The front verandah and *sumtawng* were used for sipping pots of liquor. Every night, traditional Zou songs and clan songs were sung with musical instruments like *tawm* (drum), *zam* (gong), *sielki* (gayal's horn), etc. Pots of rice beer were arranged and served. If the corpse was to be kept for many days or even a month, the married daughters of the family would keep vigil over the dead body on a rotational basis during the day, and other villagers would come together at night. Constant vigil of the dead body was done because it was believed that the spirits of the wild animals and enemies (men) killed by him during his lifetime would come to take revenge upon him.¹²¹ If the body was to be kept for a few days, the older men and women of the village attended to the dying man during the daytime, and the nights were meant for the youths.

3.9.2.1 *Si Antawi*:

During the period of mourning, the relatives of the deceased person and even every household in the village usually brought food for the bereaved family. It was called *si antawi*. It was done on a rotational basis, and each household intimated to the *zawl* of the deceased family the day for bringing food. The bereaved family and their *tanu* consumed the food.

3.9.3 Hoisting of Animal Flags or Banners on Funeral Days:

When a person in his lifetime killed *sapi*¹²² or performed a feast of millet, flags called *sa diel*, meaning 'animal flags,' were hoisted on bamboo poles. The type and number of animals killed or the number of feasts of millet performed by the deceased person could be known by the colour and number of flags hoisted on

¹²¹ Ginzagou Samte, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Lamka, May 17, 2018.

¹²² *Sapi* are famed wild and ferocious animals.

bamboo poles on funeral days. The types of animal flags were: i) *Sai diel* (elephant's flag) was a white flag about two feet wide and six feet long, ii) *Taw diel* (tiger's flag) was a red flag with two feet wide and four feet long, iii) *Sabung diel* (rhinoceros' flag) was a black flag with about two feet in wide and four feet long. iv) For *tang aih* performers, a bamboo mat was one foot wide and four feet long.

3.9.4 Headgear of the Dead Man on Funeral Days:

When a successful hunter died, a headgear of honour called *aagie sawm* (ten cock's tail-feathers/cock' plumes) and balls of thread trophy in different colours called *tupah* symbolizing general achievements were made for him. Depending on his achievement, decorative items were planted on his headgear. A person who captured an enemy was decorated with six inches of white goat hairs dyed red called *sawntel* on his headgear. Likewise, a person who killed a bison was decorated with a hornbill's wing feathers and a person who killed a hornbill was decorated with the longest wing feather of a hornbill. The killer of wild boar was decorated with two inches of red *sawntel* on his headgear.

3.9.5 Burial

A day before the burial, the priest and his assistants collected bamboo and prepared a matted bamboo frame or bier. It was called *lang*. As a rule, it was twisted anti-clockwise while tying the bier with bamboo cords.¹²³ There were two types of bier. One type was *langtung* (vertical bamboo bier), and the other was *langphei* (horizontal bamboo bier).¹²⁴ *Langtung* was meant for distinguished persons who performed various feasts in his lifetime. When *silap* was performed, the corpse was seated in an upright position. *Langphei* was meant for the common people, where the corpse was made to sleep on it when *silap* was performed. The priest sprayed a mouthful of water over the bier and uttered incantations. Then, it was covered with a shawl called *tangchin puon*.

¹²³ Suankhanmang, interview.

¹²⁴ Lien, *Zo Ngaina*, 29.

A twisted bamboo fastener of nine arm's length was also made. It was called *gunkhau* (*Gun* is the name of a 'river,' and *khau* means 'rope'). It was made of two bamboo cords twisted in an anti-clockwise direction. It is believed that the soul of a dead man needed *gunkhau* while crossing the Gun river on his way to the abode of the dead.

The day before the burial was also spent singing traditional songs called *lapi*. Usually, these songs could be sung only on the days of the funeral and strictly inside the deceased person's house.¹²⁵ Altogether, nine stanzas of *lapi* were sung. Of these, three stanzas were sung in a bass tone, and the other six were in a normal tone. In addition to *lapi*, singing songs like *siel la* (gayal's song), *taang la* (barley's song), etc., and consuming liquor and dancing continued till the following day.

On the morning of the day of burial, an animal meant for the funeral feast was slaughtered. The liver of the slain animal was cooked and then cut into pieces. Eight pieces were put on the right hand of the deceased and seven pieces on his left hand. It is called *sasintoi*, meaning 'holding animal liver.'¹²⁶ The family members and relatives of the deceased wept as they were about to part with the dead body. The body was removed from *pangli* and was dressed, and items to accompany him to the grave were collected. It was put on a bamboo bier, thereby keeping the corpse ready to be taken out of the house. As the dear and near ones were reluctant to part with the dead body, it was forcibly snatched from them. It was called *sibot* (forcible snatching of the dead). The bamboo bier was carried and put at the front verandah. While the corpse was taken out of the house, some older men shouted and fired their guns. Lamentation and funeral songs, accompanied by beating of *tawm* and *sielki*, were sung. Pots of liquor were put in the courtyard and served among the congregations. The drinking session was initiated by the beater of *tawm* and the beater of *sielki*, and congregations, one after another, followed it. Relatives and close friends carried the bier on their shoulders. The congregations sang eulogistic songs, beating drums and gong to praise the departed soul. If the deceased was a distinguished person who had performed *sa-ai*, *taang-ai*, or *ton*, the pole bearers raised and swung the body

¹²⁵ Kamchinkhup, interview.

¹²⁶ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 31.

upwards to the sky and brought it down again.¹²⁷ This process of raising and bringing down the dead body is known as *silap*, which means ‘caused the dead to float in the air.’ It was repeated several times.

In the evening, while moving the corpse from the floored verandah to the floored porch, the congregations sang their respective clan’s funeral songs called *si pusuo la*. The *si pusuo la* of the Hangngul clan runs as:

*A milun lai hing pei ta e, thangvan tuonglam na dawn aw,
Thangvan tuonglam na dawn aw, luonhi tawh zinbang ha’ng e.*¹²⁸

Free Translation:

A great man is coming; welcome him on his way to heaven,
Welcome him on his way to heaven; I have sent him with tears.

Kiminsielna was also performed. *Kiminsielna* means ‘an act of utterance of words of pride.’ Singing and beating the drum and gayal’s horn could not be resumed unless this stage was completed. *Kiminsielna* was performed in which the spirits of the enemy and animals killed by the deceased were threatened so that they would not torment him on his journey to the abode of the dead. *Kiminsielna* was followed by the singing of *la gui* (traditional song).¹²⁹

After the performance of *kiminsielna*, the corpse was taken to the courtyard of the house. The head of the corpse was placed in such a way that the head turned towards his house. If the deceased man had celebrated a millet feast in his lifetime, millet seeds were sprayed on the courtyard. The deceased person’s clan song, *la khien* (song of separation), was sung. A relative recounted the number of animals killed by the deceased person during his lifetime. Then, the head of the deceased was turned towards the opposite side of his house. While the pole bearers carried the corpse on the bier, the congregations danced and sang *gal la-sa la* (victory songs over enemy and animal) in different tones in the courtyard. As the singing and beating of *tawm* (drum) was in progress, the near and dear ones of the deceased moved a step

¹²⁷ Lhungdim, “Social and Cultural Life,” 17.

¹²⁸ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 102.

¹²⁹ Kamchinkhup, interview.

backward and bowed to the dead body till the end of the song.¹³⁰ The congregations continued to dance several times, moving forward and backward, singing the various songs of the achievements of the dead person during his lifetime. While the dead body was taken to the graveyard, a song called *pei la* (song of departure) was sung.

At the graveyard, the corpse was unbound from the bier. Pieces of meat cut from the animal killed for the funeral feast were put on both hands of the deceased. A bravery song, *hanla* was sung over his dead body. The *tulpi* administered the last rites by teaching the clan genealogy to the deceased person. Starting from his ancestor Zo, he recited one by one the names of all the dead persons in that family.¹³¹ He also asked his ancestors' spirits to recognize and welcome the dead man into the abode of the dead. After reciting the clan genealogy, the *tulpi* broke a gourd cup over the dead man.¹³² The dead body was finally laid to rest in the grave. For elders and distinguished persons, a side room for putting the corpse was dug at the bottom. The dead body was accompanied by *gunkhau* and one gourd bottle of rice beer. Before the final burial, he was fed food and rice beer. In the case of a child, an egg was buried with the body, which would roll and lead the soul of the child to *misikhuo*.¹³³

The early Zous believed that the soul of a deceased person was met by the spirits of the dead persons of the different clans at the gate of the abode of the dead. Reciting the names of the forefathers at the gate of *misikhuo*, he/she was easily identified by the spirits of his/her clan members, and he/she was warmly welcomed in *misikhuo*. The meat on the right hand and the liquor brought by the spirit of the deceased were drunk and partaken of by them. The meat of the left-hand side was given to appease the *gulsamnu* on the way to the abode of the dead.

It is also believed that a human's soul could also be buried together with the dead person. Therefore, a bamboo stick was inserted into the graveyard. After the earth was filled, the priest incanted a spell, calling out the soul of any person who might be buried along with the dead person. As he called out the spirit, he pulled out

¹³⁰ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 102.

¹³¹ Thanglienmang, "A Descriptive Grammar," 129.

¹³² Lhungdim, "Social and Cultural Life," 17.

¹³³ Khamchinkhai, "Transition of Zou Society," 43.

the bamboo stick from the graveyard, and after that, gunshots were fired at the graveyard site.

3.9.6 *Handal ni*:

The next day after burial is called *handal ni*. It means ‘the day of prevention of visiting the graveyard.’¹³⁴ On this day, the grave of the dead person is not visited. As food and drinks are offered for the dead on this day, it is also called *si an thah ni* (day of offering food for the dead). The married daughters of the family contributed the animal for a feast and rice beer. The married daughters cook the head of the animal, and then the skull and rice beer are kept on the outskirts of the village.¹³⁵ It is meant for the spirits of the dead who attend the burial of the dead person.

It is believed that after burial, the spirit felt reluctant to go to *misikhuo* at once and kept hovering around the village.¹³⁶ As the spirit felt hungry and thirsty like the living, it used to frequent the house to eat and drink. Therefore, food and drinks were put on the downhill side of the family dining place and were replaced each morning and evening.

The customary practice of meat distribution on *handal ni* is given in 4.6.2.5.

3.9.7 *Han vil ni*:

The second day after burial is *han vil ni*. It means ‘day of visiting the graveyard.’ The womenfolk express love for the deceased and weep at the grave. They also sing the songs composed after the deceased person. Before returning home, they put items like a bottle of liquor, pieces of tobacco, a small gourd of nicotine water, and other edible things, and also planted a variety of flowers on the grave.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlana, 103.

¹³⁵ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlana, 103.

¹³⁶ Ginneiching, 153.

¹³⁷ Kamchinkhup, interview.

On reaching the deceased's house, a half pot of rice beer is broached and sipped together. Bamboo leaves are dipped in the pot of rice beer and sprayed all over the house. All the house pillars are rubbed and fanned with bamboo leaves.

3.9.8 Various kinds of liquor served during and after burial:

When a man died, the number of earthen pots of liquor prepared was equal to the number of animals he hunted during his lifetime. The various kinds of *zu* or 'liquor' were: *humpi zu* (lion's liquor), *khen zu* (separation liquor), *ngal zu* (wild boar liquor), *sabung zu* (rhinoceros liquor), *sai zu* (elephant liquor), *sakhi zu* (deer liquor), *siel zu* (gayal liquor), *taw zu* (tiger liquor), *vaphuol zu* (hornbill liquor), *vom zu* (bear liquor), etc.¹³⁸ As a rule, the eldest person in the village started the drinking session, followed by the other men, one after another.

3.9.9 Funeral Ceremonies:

As per customary practices, there are some ceremonies to be performed after the death of a person. They are:

3.9.9.1 Kosa:

Kosa is an important ritual feast prepared at the time of the death of a person. An animal of any kind, such as a gayal, buffalo, cow, or pig, is slaughtered by the family of the deceased person or any of his relatives or friends or collectively by the *tanu* for the feast.¹³⁹ *Kosa* is a feast mainly meant to feed the persons digging the grave. It is believed that the spirit of the animal that is slaughtered for the ritual feast accompanies the spirit of the dead person on his/her journey to the abode of the dead.

3.9.9.2 Pu suo ni:

It means the 'day of the appearance of the maternal grandfather.' It is an obligatory funeral feast performed by the material grandfather after the death of his grandson. It is customary that when a person dies, his maternal grandfather will bring

¹³⁸ Thanglienmang, 131.

¹³⁹ Henkholun, interview.

a pig to the bereaved family's house and prepare a feast. If the maternal grandfather is no more, it is performed by the maternal uncle, and if the maternal uncle is no more, it is performed by the nearest relative of the maternal grandfather. Usually, it is held on the next day after burial. But it can also be held on any other convenient day. The feast prepared is to show love for the deceased and to strengthen the relationship between the maternal grandfather and the family of his deceased grandson. If the deceased grandson is the last male issue related to him, the maternal grandfather is given any valued properties of the deceased person, such as a gun, spear, axe, gong, etc. It is called *melmu*. It is done as a remembrance of the departed grandson. A separate pot of rice beer was arranged for the maternal grandfather on this day. The clan heads of both families were invited. The *zawl* of each household council also did the distribution of rice beer. It is an important ceremony that marks the end of the relationship between the deceased's family and his maternal grandparents or uncle.

3.9.9.3 *Saa si ha lahna*

If a person met an accident that killed him instantaneously in the jungle, his spirit could not come back home and was wandering around. The spirit was usually brought back to his house in such a case. It is called *saa si ha lahna* (bringing back the spirit of a person dying an unnatural death). For this purpose, two close male relatives of the deceased man were selected. The two persons would go to the spot where the person died and call the spirit of the deceased person to return home. While returning home, the two persons rushed home and were welcomed with rice beer on the outskirts of the village. The evil spirits in the jungle were believed to follow them. After threatening them not to harm others, the spirit of the deceased person was brought inside the village.

3.9.9.4 *Innsiensuona* (Purification of the house):

After the burial, the priest performed the ceremony of purifying the house of evil spirits that might have been present in the house. He uttered incantations that would drive the evil spirit from the house.

3.10. Conclusion:

A Zou family is the basic unit, which includes the parents, their children, adopted children and the old parents. The father is the head and final authority in the family. The law of inheritance is based on descent through the father's clan.

The knowledge of pedigrees and respect for birth is common and strictly preserved among the Zous, and every person addresses another person in strict accordance with the genealogical tree. Traditionally, the Zous are divided into forty-four clans, and each of these clans is subdivided into several sub-clans. The head of each clan among the Zous is called *tulpi*, the eldest male in the patrilineal line of the clan. The *tulpi* acted as the clan priest of his respective clan. The worship of *pusa* and rituals with it was not possible without him. However, with the advent of Christianity, the worship of *pusa* was gradually discarded and the importance of *tulpi* for this rite was decreasing day by day.

The social life of the Zous was very simple, and persons, irrespective of sex, were freely mixed in the society. Courtship was common and freely followed in the Zou society. However, in the village administration, the village chief occupied the highest position in the society.

The Zous practice either a joint or a nuclear type of family. It is a joint family because the old folks, or parents, usually live with their children and grandchildren. The joint family breaks up to form a nuclear family when the younger sons enter into marital life, have children, and set up new homesteads, leaving their old parents.

The Zou family structure is interlinked in some ways by the institution of *inndongta*. The *inndongta* plays an important role in crucial matters of every household in its dealings with one another in society. The household council is characterized by obligations and reciprocal obligations that are manifested in ceremonies connected with marriages, births, or deaths.

The Zous were very particular about the place of their residence. In pre-colonial times, a place that fulfilled such conditions as holding a better defensive

position, a flat hill ridge where plants grew in abundance, getting morning sunlight, flowing of river or brook nearby, the slope of a hill, etc., were chosen for settlement. The colonial and post-colonial periods witnessed a change in their settlement sites. A site suitable for wet cultivation was one of the criteria for selecting their settlement locations.

The most common marriage practice was arranged marriages in which the first preference was matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. Marriage was strictly regulated by customary practices. A unique customary practice of the Zous was *mouluo*, a marriage in which the elder or the younger brother married his deceased brother's wife. Over the years, some minor changes began to be seen in marriage practices. The marriage that was once solemnized by the *tulpi* was now done at the altar of the church by a minister of the church. The marriage practice - *mouluo* was gradually surrendered. Animals such as cows, oxen, or buffaloes are gradually accepted as the principal bride price in place of *siel* as it became too expensive and difficult for common people to procure. Some of the subsidiary bride prices began to be paid in cash.

Death could be of various types. The disposal of the dead depended on the nature of the dead. The dead body of a distinguished person was dehydrated and then kept for days, sometimes even for a month. But an ordinary person was buried in two to three days. The practice of dehydration of the body was gradually disassociated from customary practices because it was found to be time-consuming and unhygienic. The abandonment of the traditional system of disposal of the dead, where the clan priest and the village priest played significant roles, hoisting of animal flags and headgear of the dead man on funeral days had its beginning during the period under study.



Fig.3.1 *Haikheh* (half scoop of gourd).
Courtesy: M. Thangchinmang.



Fig.3.2 Zou Couple.
Courtesy: T. Zamlunmang Zou.



Fig.3.3 *Siel* (Gayal)



Fig.3.4 *Sumtong* (Husking place).
Courtesy: M. Thangchinmang.



Fig.3.5 *Leelpi* (basket made of cane or bamboo)
Courtesy: M. Kamlianlal Zou



Fig. 3.6 *Muui* (cotton spinning wheel).
Courtesy: M. Kamlianlal Zou

Chapter 4

Indigenous Culture and Festivals

4.1 Introduction:

Culture is one of the most essential elements and essences in the life of any group of people. It is a unique possession of man. It is a way of life for a group of people—the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols they accept, and these are passed along through communication and imitation from one generation to the next. Indigenous culture refers to those practices that enrich the lives of the group's members. It may be music and dancing and other ways that bring people together. Edward B. Tylor, a famous English anthropologist, defined culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”¹

The Zous are a group of people with a distinct culture of their own, and an attempt would be made to give an account of their indigenous culture and festivals in the pre-colonial period and point out changes, if any, over the years till 1956.

4.2 Inheritance:

In the Zou society, it is customary that the eldest son, legitimate or illegitimate in a family, is the rightful heir and gets the right to inherit the father's property.² After the father's death, the authority over the entire property passes into the hands of the eldest son. Property includes gongs, guns, animals, land, and other valuable articles owned by the parent. The eldest son is expected to share the inherited property with his younger(s).³ Usually, daughters do not inherit their

¹ Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom* Vol. I (New York: John Murray, Reprinted 1920), 1

² Kai Khan Lien, *Zo Ngaina Leh Kamham Zahdan (Zo Culture and Usage of Language)* (Kalaymyo: Author, 2016), 13. Also see Zou Zumpi, *Zou Custom Book*, 2005, 20.

³ Mannuamching, “Gouluodan (Law of Inheritance),” in *Chinthu-Zaila (Prose and Poetry)*, eds. M. Liensuonkap and T. Nehkhojang (Churachandpur: Zou Literature Society Publications, Second Edition 2012), 66.

father's property.⁴ However, they can receive valuable articles like necklaces, baskets, looms, etc.

There are certain conditions in which the younger brother, uncle, or nearest male relative can claim the right of inheritance. If a man dies without a son, his property will become the property of his wife and daughters (s). After the marriage of all the daughters and the death of the widow of the deceased eldest brother, the property would pass into the hands of the younger brother. It is not customary to claim the house or property of a family by driving away the widow and daughter (s) of a deceased husband from their house. If the dead husband has no brother to inherit the property, the right is passed on to his uncle. If the deceased husband does not have an uncle, the male relative nearest to the deceased husband can claim the property.⁵

The eldest son in the family is entrusted with full responsibility and obligations to the family. He remains with his parent in the house and takes great care of them during their old age till their death. When the parents die, the eldest son has to perform their funeral ceremonies. After the death of the father, the whole responsibility of the head of the family rests upon his shoulders. It is his responsibility to look into problems faced by his sisters and brothers. He is expected to share some portions of the property with his younger brothers and sisters. He makes all the necessary arrangements for his younger brothers' marriage and bears all the expenditures incurred in it. He helps his married younger brothers to set up separate houses and provides them with the necessary property. He is bound to send off his sister(s) in marriage. His duty is to bear the price of articles to be taken by his married sisters to their husbands' houses. In the event of the death of any of his brothers who are in a separate house, it is his duty to look after the family of his deceased brother. If the widow of his dead brother dies or marries another person or returns to her natal, it is his duty to look after their children.

⁴ Langchinlien Mantuong, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Nangkateih, Myanmar, March 23, 2018.

⁵ Mannuamching, "Gouluodan," 66.

A younger brother who inherited the property of his heirless deceased elder brother has to send off the latter's daughter(s) in marriage and look after the widow when she can not look after herself. Similarly, a male relative who gets the right of inheritance has obligations and responsibilities towards the family.

4.3 Pregnancy, Birth and Naming of a Child:

The early Zous had superstitious beliefs that all kinds of misfortune could happen to a woman and the child during pregnancy and also after childbirth. There were certain activities that the husband and the wife had to restrain from during this period. The Zous believed that the diet of a woman during her pregnancy had some adverse effect on the child. The husband of a pregnant woman should not attend to the dressing and cleaning of the intestine of an animal killed during the pregnancy of his wife. It could bring misfortune or even death to the pregnant woman. A pregnant woman was not to touch eggs, for it was believed that she might experience difficulty in delivering her child. They also had a belief that marshes or salt springs were the abode of evil spirits, and if a pregnant woman went to such places, it might lead to the abortion of the fetus. If a mother ate eggplant during her pregnancy, the newborn child was believed to have a black spot on its buttocks.

In a Zou family, the birth of a male or female child was an auspicious occasion. They regarded a pregnant woman could die due to childbirth or normally deliver a child.⁶ Hence, they brewed pots of rice beer and kept them ready to be offered to men who came to console the bereaved family in the event of the death of the pregnant woman in childbirth or to those women who were attending her on the day of delivery of her child and other persons who came to greet the child.⁷ When a pregnant woman was expecting a child, the local women helped her. The birth of twin babies of different sexes was not welcomed as there was a belief that it brought ill health to one of the two children.

As soon as the child was born, its umbilical cord was cut with a fresh and sharpened bamboo split, and a temporary name was given, which might be changed

⁶ T. Kamchinkhup, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Sugnu, March 7, 2018.

⁷ Langchinlien, interview.

later. It was believed that if a child was not given a name immediately after its birth, the devils claimed the child as theirs and gave the name first, resulting in the shortness of life of the child. Thus, soon after the child was born, the grandparents or the father or whoever helped in the delivery say, “Here do I proclaim that I have cut the naval cord of my grandchild or child; no one else has the right to cut.”⁸

The pots of liquor kept for this special occasion were unsealed and distilled in a gourd scoop and then given to the mother. It is customary that when a child is born, the maternal grandparents or uncle have to greet the child by bringing a rooster. A feast was arranged by killing the rooster and other hens or cocks contributed by the close relatives of the family. It is to be noted that the rooster that the grandparents brought had to be killed and cooked. Otherwise, it was believed that it could bring sickness to the newly born child.⁹ The chicken was boiled, and the meat and soup were given to the mother. The soup and meat of the chicken were believed to give her strength and help her in a quick recovery. Some feathers of the hen were burnt, and the ash was given to the mother.¹⁰ The women who helped the pregnant mother deliver the child and others who came to greet the child were also invited to the feast. Rice beer was offered to them. It was called *nau zu* or ‘wine of the child.’ However, brave hunters did not want to drink *nau zu* because they believed it would bring them bad luck in their hunting expedition. In case the mother died in childbirth, rice beer was offered to persons who came to console the bereaved family. It was called *si zu* or ‘wine of the dead.’ The young men and women were prohibited from drinking *si zu* as it was believed it would bring them misfortune. Within a few days, the child’s ears were bored with a porcupine quill or hairpin, and after it was about a month old, its head was shaved and kept so for the first few years of its life.¹¹

In the naming ceremony, called *nau phuoivuni*, the *tulpi*, paternal and maternal grandparents, and close relatives were invited. The *tulpi* chanted an

⁸ T.S.Gangte, *The Kukis of Manipur: A Historical Analysis* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, Reprinted 2012), 98.

⁹ Enkthoang Mate, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, M. Khaukual village, March 10, 2018.

¹⁰ Khup Khan Mang Mangson, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Tuikhal (Myanmar), March 23, 2018.

¹¹ Bertram S. Carey and H.C. Tuck, *The Chin Hills: A History of the People, Our dealing with them, their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of Their Country*, Vol. I (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Reprinted 2008), 191.

incantation and sprayed a mouthful of rice beer on the hens or cocks to be killed. He also sprinkled the rice beer on the mother and the child. On this occasion, the maternal parents / maternal uncle brought a fowl that was cooked and given to the mother. A naming feast was arranged, and rice beer was sipped together. Usually, this ceremony was performed within two to seven days after its birth. If the child was to be named after either the maternal grandfather or grandmother, pieces of dry meat were taken to the maternal parents' house and offered to them, demanding earmarking of either a cow or gayal to be gifted to the child.¹²

The ceremony of *aahnel vuhna* (putting feathers of fowl) was an occasion in which the parents took their first newborn son to the house of the maternal parents or uncle to seek their blessings. A necklace-like thread ring was made with feathers of a fowl tied to it with threads. It is called *aahnel*. The maternal grandfather put the *aahnel* around the neck of his grandchild with chanted words to ward off evil spirits from bringing misfortune upon the child and also blessed the child.¹³ The maternal grandfather blessed his grandson by saying,

*Natu suon nata suon pha henlen,
Saipi, zangsiel kaap inlen,
Buhle baal hau in sotpi hingdam in.*¹⁴

Free translation:

Let your sons and grandsons multiply,
May you shoot a big elephant, wild bison,
Have sufficient food and vegetables and lead a happy and long life.

The maternal grandfather or uncle killed a pig, and the meat was cooked. A pot of rice beer was also broached and sipped together. Sticky rice with delicious pork curry was prepared and eaten together. While returning home, the child and his parents were often presented with sticky cooked rice and some portions of the meat

¹² Mangson, interview.

¹³ M.Henkhonun, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, M. Khawlmual village, March 10, 2018.

¹⁴ Kamchinkhup, interview.

to be taken to their house. The ceremony of *aahnel vuhna* could be performed any time after the naming ceremony.¹⁵

The naming system of a newborn child among the Zous is interesting. There are some peculiarities in naming a newborn child. In naming a child, the respect for birth and the knowledge of pedigrees is strictly followed. Names are composed generally of two or three syllables; the first syllable of the child's name takes the second or last syllable of the name of the name giver. It is customary that when the first son of the eldest brother is born in a family, the paternal grandfather has the right to name the newborn child. On the other hand, the first-born daughter in the family is named after her grandmother. The maternal grandparents of the child named the third and the fourth children. The fifth and subsequent children are named after the paternal kinsmen, or they may as well be named after others close to the family. The same procedures are followed when naming children of the second and subsequent brothers in the family. Twin males or females are named after the same person.¹⁶

According to the Zou traditional naming system, when a first son is born in a family, he is named after his paternal grandfather's name, called *mintap*. The child's grandfather is asked to suggest a name for the child. For example, if the name of the child's grandfather consists of two syllables - *Lianthang*, the child's name begins with the word *Thang*, which is the second syllable of the grandfather's name and is named *Thangzalian*. Thus, the first syllable of the child's name is the second syllable of the name of the name giver or grandfather. Similarly, if the name of the name giver is of three syllables as *Liankhanpau*, the child is named *Pauliankap*. The child's name begins with *Pau*, the last syllable of the name of the name-giver, *Liankhanpau*.

In the naming system, due importance is given to naming the first son because it is through him that a person's genealogy is reckoned.¹⁷ The system is so strong that even after many generations, the genealogy of a person belonging to a

¹⁵ Thangkholien Manlun, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Hiangtam Village, September 24, 2019.

¹⁶ Kamchinkhup, interview.

¹⁷ Lien, *Zo Ngaina*, 14.

particular lineage can be easily established. The advantage of the naming system is that the order of seniority among the brothers in a family can be established. While naming the child, the name's first syllable takes the name-giver's last syllable, and the second or/and third syllables reflect the name-giver's greatness, fame, strength, and status. For instance, if the name giver (in this case, the grandfather) is a brave hunter, his fame as a brave hunter will be reflected in the second and third syllables of his grandson's name as *Zakap*, which means 'killing hundreds of animals.'¹⁸ Similarly, a person who had performed 'ton feast,' will put 'Tung nung' (above others) in the second and third syllables of his grandson's name and so on. However, words are carefully chosen to avoid overstating or exaggerating the accomplishment of the person after whom the child is named, and it is believed that such a name can be unlucky for the child.¹⁹

4.3.1 Nau-Aitahna:

It is an occasion when the maternal grandparents took a pot of rice beer and an animal, preferably a pig, to the grandchildren's house to shower their blessing. Sesame and the seeds of the bean were cooked together. The maternal grandfather fed his grandchildren with cooked sesame, beans, and meat. On this occasion, the grandfather let his grandsons sit before him, sprayed a mouthful of liquor on their heads, swayed the tail of the animal killed on their bodies, and gave his blessing to them. It is an occasion where the maternal grandfather could bless his grandsons.²⁰

4.4 Pu Zukhol (Offering of Liquor to Maternal Grandfather):

Pu zukhol is one of the customary practices of the Zous. *Pu zukhol* is an offering of a maternal grandfather or maternal uncle with traditionally brewed rice beer by the grandson. *Pu* means 'maternal grandfather,' and *zukhol* means 'offering of rice beer.' *Pu zukhol* might be simply an occasion on which pots of rice beer are taken to the maternal grandfather or uncle's house and serve the beer to him. However, the reason behind the ritual ceremony is the most important. It is done to

¹⁸ Lien, *Zo Ngaina*, 14 -15.

¹⁹ Thang Sut Mung, "A History of the Zo People," (PhD Thesis, University of Mandalay. 2019), 99.

²⁰ Lien, *Zo Ngaina*, 15.

express love and respect for the maternal grandfather and to seek his blessings. The respect accorded to the maternal grandfather by the grandchildren in a Zou family can be evidenced by an adage that is common among the Zous: *Pute leh lamsah kipel theilo* (Maternal grandfather and the upward side of the road cannot be avoided). The date for *pu zukholh* is usually fixed in consultation with the maternal grandparents. Big pots of rice beer were brewed for a month or two and kept ready for the occasion.

On the appointed date, the grandson, his wife, and children visited the maternal grandfather's or maternal uncle's house with pots of rice beer. The grandfather killed a pig or a gayal. If the grandfather could not afford to kill an animal, he killed a rooster. The grandfather prepared sticky rice with meat curry for his grandson, wife, and children. On some occasions, they sipped together only rice beer.

There is no specific day or month for the performance of *pu zukhol*, and it can be done at a time that is considered convenient for both the maternal grandfather and the grandson. A day in autumn, when people recess from their jhum cultivation, is considered the best time. There is no fixed number of times for a grandson to perform *pu zukhol* to the maternal grandfather.²¹

4.5 Sawm (Bachelor's Dormitory):

The existence of the bachelor's dormitory system is one of the most similar characteristics of the tribal communities in North-East India. It is a place where all the young men of the village sleep together at night. It is used as a center of learning for all kinds of knowledge that are available to them. According to Gangte, the young boys learn everything they will require in society, from cutting jokes to taking responsibility.²²

The bachelor's dormitory is known by different names in different tribal societies in North-East India. The dormitory is called *nokpanti* by the Garos of

²¹ Paukhojam Manlun, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Churachandpur, September 21, 2019.

²² Gangte, 133.

Meghalaya, the Abors of Arunachal Pradesh called it *nosup* and the Angamis and Lothas called it *kichuki* and *jambo*, respectively.²³ The Hmars of Manipur called it *buonzawl*,²⁴ the Tangkhuls called it *longshim*,²⁵ and the Mizo called it *zawlbuk*.²⁶ The Zous called it *sawm*.²⁷ It is also called *sawm-haam*.²⁸

The word *sawm* means a bachelor's dormitory system and *haam* is a room where *sawm*'s inmates sleep. *Haam* was usually an extension at a space above the porch of the front room of the village chief's house or others' houses. The walls and floor of the *haam* were made of either split bamboo or wooden planks. The number of dormitories varied from village to village, depending on their size. Generally, each village had one dormitory attached to the chief's house. A village of a bigger size had more than one dormitory. In such a village, the young men were free to choose any house belonging to the members of the council of elders or a house of well-to-do family in the village.²⁹ For *sawm*, a Zou village was divided into the upper and lower or northern and southern sections. The chief controlled the entire bachelor's dormitories in the village. Boys below the age of fifteen years in the village were required to collect firewood in the forest during the daytime, and these woods were burnt at night to give light and warmth all night at *haam*.

A bachelor's dormitory was necessitated by the prevailing conditions of the time in history. The village's defence was given prime importance at the time, characterized by inter-tribe fights and intra-tribe feuds. The chief was the commander of the village. To keep his village safe from enemies, the chief mobilized all young men of the village and put them together under one roof. They were prepared to be ready for any attack by enemies. Weapons like flint-locked guns,

²³ Thenkhogin Haokip and Ngamkholen Haokip, "Som: The Thadou-Kuki Dormitory System," *Socio-Economic and Governance in North Eastern Region of India, Proceedings of the National Seminar*, Department of Political Science, Mizoram University, eds. Jagadish K. Patnaik, Jangkhongam Dounel and Ayangbam Shyamkishor, 11th – 12th March 2014, 369-378.

²⁴ V. Sharma, *The Hmars of Manipur: An Anthropological Exploration* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1992), 30.

²⁵ R.W. Valui, *Hundreds of Years of Education in Manipur (1896-1996)* (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2012), 176.

²⁶ Sangkima, *Essays on the History of the Mizos* (Gauhati: Spectrum Publications, 2004), 130.

²⁷ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture (Past & Present)* (Churachandpur: Co-Operative Printing Press, 2000), 19.

²⁸ Selchinlang Mate, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Churachandpur, April 4, 2018.

²⁹ T. Huatchinkam, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Sachih, March 8, 2018.

bows, daos, spears, and shields were kept in the *sawm* at their disposal. They were also ready to repulse attacks by wild beasts that came to feed on their domestic animals. The service of the *sawm* members was also required during the fire outbreak and when a person faced unnatural death.³⁰

The admission of young boys into the dormitory was usually permitted when a boy reached the stage of puberty. However, it is difficult to determine admission to the dormitory based on this age because puberty varies from person to person. Thus, the criteria adopted for admission into *sawm* differed from village to village and within the same village. In some *sawm*, any young boy with pubic hairs was admitted, while in other *sawm*, a boy who could go out alone for hunting either in the nighttime or very early in the morning and returned with a game was given admission. Once a boy was admitted, he was bound to follow the rules of the *sawm*. An inmate willing to get married would do so with the permission of the *sawm upa*.³¹

Young men aged fifteen to thirty years or older were sent to the *sawm*. Usually, all men meet at the dormitory for their pastime. On most ordinary evenings, the inmates of *sawm* would cut jokes, tell stories, share their life experiences, romantic lives, and so on. One or more persons, usually the eldest among the inmates, were appointed as the *sawm* leaders and they were called *sawm upa*.³² The *sawm upa* guided and led the young boys in the dormitory. They narrated stories, legends, and myths. The boys were also taught the customary practices of the society. In the *sawm*, the younger boys learned suitable lessons from the history and biography of brave men, stories of adventure, and even romance. The *sawm* members were taught the craft of making bamboo or cane. The bachelor's dormitory also served as a place for social education. The young boys were under strict discipline and were taught good manners, politeness, and decent behavior with courtesy. The *sawm* also undertook various philanthropic activities. The inmates were readily available to lend helping hands to widows or family(s) unable to work in agricultural

³⁰ Kamkhanthang Samte, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Zou Bethel village, March 9, 2018.

³¹ Chingjatong, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Churachandpur, September 18, 2018.

³² Enkthothang, interview.

lands due to sickness or misfortune.³³ It is called *sawm tha kuon*. Carrying a sick person to the nearest health centre or a dead body to the cemetery or any other village was undertaken by the members of the dormitory.³⁴ An important activity of *sawm* was *lawm* (literally, it means ‘corporate labour youth organization’). A unique system of *lawm* was working in the agricultural fields of each member day by day in rotation. Under one *lawm*, there could be one or more than one *sawm*.³⁵ Every *sawm* also could have its own separate *lawm*.

Feasts called *sawm voh neh* (feast of pork), *sawm aah ne* (feast of chicken), and *sawm va neh* (feast of birds) were the much eagerly awaited feasts by members of the *sawm*. The date for such feasts was not fixed. But it was usually held after harvesting. For *sawm voh neh*, a pig was reared and grown by entrusting a family by the *sawm* members. Games and competitions among the boys accompanied the feast within the same *sawm* or between the different *sawm*. The day was spent in merry-making and games. Pots of rice beer brewed especially for this occasion were served. While the younger generations were busy making fun, the elders spent the day sipping the rice beer. As for *sawm aah neh*, each dormitory member contributed one fowl and was reared and grown. On the day of the feast of *sawm aah neh*, the fowls were killed and cooked, and the house’s owner, where the *sawm* was attached, contributed a pot of rice beer. After sipping the rice beer, the *sawm* members consumed the chicken together. In *sawm va neh*, birds shot by the inmates of the *sawm* were dried and put together in a basket. At the end of the year, all the birds were cut and cooked.

The bachelor’s dormitory practice of the Zous had its distinctive features. Unlike the usual practices of the neighbouring tribal communities, the Zous had no separate building called a bachelor’s dormitory house. The *sawm* was attached to the chief’s house, which was an extension of the front room of the village chief’s house. Secondly, the number of *sawm* in the village was not defined. The number of *sawm* depended on the size of the village and varied from village to village.

³³ Langchinlien, interview.

³⁴ Gouchinhang Dopmul, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Tamu, March 27, 2018.

³⁵ Huatchinkam, interview.

The institution of *sawm* served useful purposes for villagers during the pre-colonial period. It acted as the backbone of the early Zou villages. However, it began to decline gradually in the late nineteenth century and subsequently extinct. The British defeated the Manipuris in the Anglo-Manipuri War of 1891 and subsequently administered the state indirectly through a Political Agent.³⁶ The colonial government placed the entire hill administration in the hands of the Vice President of the Manipur Durbar.³⁷ The colonial government's strict measures for any village or tribe indulging in an act of aggression towards the other villages within the British territory improved the law-and-order situation in the hills. The colonial government's strict measures against the villages or tribes on the one hand, and the advent of Christianity and the introduction of modern schools on the other, were responsible for the decline and subsequent extinction of the bachelor's dormitory.

4.6 Traditional Method of Division of Meat:

Meat plays a crucial role in Zou customs. A pig is the most important animal slaughtered on all social occasions for public consumption. The Zous has an age-old method of cutting and dividing the meat of animals killed in a game or animals killed for a feast on different social occasions and ceremonies. On social occasions when a householder kills animal (s) for a feast, or even when he traps or kills a wild animal in a game, some portions of the meat are set aside to be given to certain categories of his relatives and friends. As per the occasion, the method of cutting and distribution of the meat of animals, whether domestic or wild, is different. The categories of relatives are obliged to arrange a pot of rice beer every time they receive their share of meat.³⁸ The distribution of shares of meat and the reciprocal act ensures a stronger bond relationship between the householder and the meat receivers.

³⁶ Lal Dena, ed., *History of Modern Manipur (1762-1949)* (Imphal: Reliable Book Centre, Third Revised Edition 2012), 74.

³⁷ Dena, *History of Manipur*, 81.

³⁸ M.Suankhanmang, "Zou Custom (Zou Tawndan)," *Proceedings of the First Indo-Myanmar International Seminar on Zou Language, Literature, Culture and Custom*, ed. Aloysius T. Nehkhohjang (Churachandpur: Xavier Nengkhanlam and T. Lamkothawng, 2013), 58-59.

4.6.1 Relationship of a Householder with the Category of Persons receiving Meat:

The relationship between the householder and the category of persons receiving meat and the customary obligation on the part of the latter towards the former is as under:

4.6.1.1 *Pu*:

Pu refers to the mother's father or brother or brother's son. In Zou custom, *pu* is held in such high regard and respect that there is an adage, *Pu le lamsah, tu le lamhang* (meaning - Maternal grandfather and upward side of the road, *tu*³⁹ and downward side of the road). It is also believed that the maternal grandfather's blessing upon the *tute* brings success in their life. Even an unsuccessful hunter seeks the blessing of his maternal grandfather. As per customary practice, *pute* or the maternal kin were prohibited from eating meat inside the houses of their *tute*. It is considered taboo. However, they could eat at *kemtung* (the floored porch) or the house's ground porch. Disregard of such practices brought sickness to the household of the grandchildren. On the death of any member of the householder's family, the *pu* condoled the bereaved family by arranging a pot of rice beer and an animal for a feast on the next day after burial.

4.6.1.2 *Sungpa*:

It refers to the father-in-law or brother-in-law of the householder.

4.6.1.3 *Bangkuo*:

Bangkuo's obligations and the privileges he enjoyed are given in 3.4.1.2.

4.6.1.4 *Zawl*:

The duty, obligations, and privileges of *zawl* are given in 3.4.1.4.

4.6.1.5 *Sasem*:

For *sasem*, it is given at 3.4.1.5.

4.6.1.6 *Hausa*:

Hausa is the chief of the village.

³⁹ The family of married daughters was called either *tu* (*tute* in plural) or *tanu*.

4.6.1.7 *Tanu*:

Details about *tanu* are given in 3.4.1.6.

4.6.2 The Distribution of Meat on Different Occasions is given below:

4.6.2.1 Animal killed on the occasion of *Tunsatha*:

On the occasion of *tunsatha*, the bride's parents killed animals, and the portions of the meat of the animals are set aside and carried by the bride to the groom's house. This meat is called *tunsa*. The meat is distributed to the members of *inn dongta* and the relatives of the groom in the following ways:

<i>Tanubul</i>	-	<i>Salu le sa mal khat</i> (The head and one hind leg).
<i>Sasem</i>	-	<i>Sa kawng kimkhat</i> (Half of the waist or loin).
<i>Zawl</i>	-	<i>Sa kawng kimkhat</i> (Half of the waist or loin).
<i>Tanu nina</i>	-	<i>Sa lieng khat</i> (One foreleg).
<i>Tanu guol</i>	-	<i>Saba khat</i> (One chunk of meat each).

4.6.2.2 Domestic animal:

<i>Bangkuo</i>	-	<i>Sa lieng khat</i> .
<i>Pu</i>	-	<i>Sa ngawng</i> (the neck)
<i>Sungte</i>	-	<i>Sa kawng</i> (waist or loin).
<i>Zawl</i>	-	<i>A ngumsa phalkhat</i> (Half of the meat on the spine).
<i>Sasem</i>	-	<i>A ngumsa phalkhat</i> (Half of the meat on the spine).
<i>Tanubul</i>	-	<i>Sa lu le sa mal khat</i> .
<i>Tanu nina</i>	-	<i>Sa mal khat</i> (one hind leg)
<i>Tanu thumna</i>	-	<i>Sa lieng khat</i> .
<i>Tanu guol</i>	-	<i>Saba khat</i> .

4.6.2.3 Hunted or Trapped Animals:

A hunter must give the neck of the animal hunted or trapped to his *pu*, who may be either his maternal grandfather or maternal uncle. On failure to give him, the latter can demand one *gayal* in place of the neck of each wild animal killed.⁴⁰ The distribution of meat is in the following manner:

<i>Bangkuo</i>	-	<i>Sa lu le sa sungsa</i> (The head and its offal).
<i>Pu</i>	-	<i>Sa ngawng.</i>
<i>Sungpa</i>	-	<i>Sa kawng.</i>
<i>Sasem</i>	-	<i>Sa awm phal khat</i> (Half of the meat of the lower abdomen).
<i>Zawl</i>	-	<i>Sa khuoilu.</i> ⁴¹
<i>Thauneipa</i> ⁴²	-	<i>Sa mal khat.</i>
<i>Samulman</i> ⁴³	-	<i>Sa mal khat.</i>
<i>Hausa</i>	-	<i>Sa lieng khat.</i>

4.6.2.4 Animal killed in *Ton* feast:

<i>Pu</i>	-	<i>Sa ngawng.</i>
<i>Sungpa</i>	-	<i>Sa kawng.</i>
<i>Zawl</i>	-	<i>Sa mal khat.</i>
<i>Sasem</i>	-	<i>Sa mal khat.</i>
Every householder	-	<i>Saba khat.</i>

4.6.2.5 Animal killed on *Handal ni*:⁴⁴

<i>Pu</i>	-	<i>Sa ngawng.</i>
<i>Sungte</i>	-	<i>Sa kawng.</i>

⁴⁰ Selchinlang, interview.

⁴¹ *Sa khuoilu* is a meat extracted from a portion between the hind legs of a slaughtered animal.

⁴² Portion of meat given for hiring gun by the hunter.

⁴³ In a hunting game, if a person shoot an animal at first instance and can not kill it, the second person who shoot and kill the injured animal is called *Samulman*.

⁴⁴ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, *Zo Tulpi Hanghil Tangthu leh Khanggui Cieptena (History of the Zo Lineage Head, Hanghil and Record of his Genealogy)* (Kalaymyo: Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 2012), 103.

4.7 Festivals and Feasts:

The festivals provided relief from their daily tedious work in agricultural fields. They are the best means of amusement and were celebrated with great enthusiasm. These festivals and feasts were hosted by a family or a group of friends, and observed by a few persons or the whole community. Thus, the Zou indigenous festivals and feasts were events of prayers to their ancestral god for the purification of the forests and soil, dedication of the seeds, good rainfall, good harvest, thanksgiving, success in war and hunting, etc. Some of the prominent festivals and feasts of the Zous were: -

4.7.1 *Khuodou Pawi*:

Khuodou Pawi was the biggest annual festival of the early Zous. It was celebrated twice in a year. The word *khuo* means ‘village’ or ‘villagers,’ *dou* is ‘support’ or ‘guard,’ and *pawi* means ‘festival.’ Thus, *khuodou pawi* means ‘festival to support the village.’ *Khuodou pawi* was of two types, namely *kumkhen khuodou* and *ginua khuodou*.⁴⁵ The words chanted by the clan priest in *kumkhen khuodou* differed from those of *ginua khuodou*. While *kumkhen khuodou* was associated with prayers for the fertility of the soil and a good harvest, *ginua khuodou* was associated with thanksgiving to the *pusa*.⁴⁶ It is to be noted that both *kumkhen khuodou* and *ginua khuodou* were festivals observed by the whole community in the village, where drinking and feasting were held at the *khawng*, which means ‘center.’ Members of every clan in the village used the house of their respective clan priests as a center for drinking rice beer and feasting. But over time, it was observed by the whole community at the village chief’s house.

4.7.1.1 *Kumkhen Khuodou*:

Kumkhen khuodou (where *kumkhen* means ‘New Year’) is hosting the villagers in the New Year. It was usually held after the sowing season in April every year. The *kumkhen khuodou* is known variously as *loupawi khuodou*, *khal khuodou*,

⁴⁵ Lien, *Zo Ngaina*, 16.

⁴⁶ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 64.

lousielpieh khuodou, and *luoikhai khuodou*. *Loupawi khuodou* (*lou* means ‘agricultural field’ and *pawi* means ‘sowing seeds’) is a festival of sowing seeds. *Khal khuodou* means ‘hosting the villagers in the spring season.’ The meaning of *lousielpieh* is ‘offering of gayals to the agricultural field’ (Literally *lou* means ‘agricultural field, *siel* means ‘gayal,’ and *pieh* means ‘offering’). It is an offering of gayals to ancestral gods. The literal meaning of *luoikhai khuodou* is the ‘festival of swinging,’ where *luoi* is ‘swing,’ *khai* is ‘suspension or hang.’ It is called so because swinging on a suspension swing of a creeper plant is a part of this festival. The festival usually lasted for three days.

In the morning of the first day, the village priest fired a gunshot and then started to drive out the evil spirits from the village, “*You all devils in this village, go away right now, for your time has gone, for your month is ended and the year as well. You can’t stay in this village anymore.*”⁴⁷ At the same time, the villagers were busy driving out the devils from their respective homes. They shouted aloud at the top of their voice, reciting the spells to frighten the devils in their house. In the meantime, some persons were beating drums, gayal horns, and small gongs at *khuomuol*. They also lit fires and later left them at that spot.⁴⁸

After that, the villagers visited the graveyard. They opened the bone repositories of their respective family members in the graveyard. They cleaned and oiled the skulls and bones of their deceased family members. Sweet and loving words were uttered, and songs of lamentation were sung. They also spoke to the skulls to seek their blessings and narrate their problems; after that, they were fed food and drinks. Then, the skulls and bones were put back in their respective places. A typical song⁴⁹ that is sung in the graveyard is given below:

*Si le hing aw, law zatam aw,
Kumkhen lenkhuong ging na za hi’am aw?
Kumkhen lenkhuong ging na za a’leh,
Seino kei tongsuo na za hi’am aw?*

⁴⁷ Philip Thanglienmang, “A Descriptive Grammar of the Zo Language” (PhD Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2012), 118.

⁴⁸ Thangchinsuan, “Khuodou Pawi,” *Khangluite Thangthu (Folklore)*, comp. Thangchinsuan Mate (Churachandpur: Thangkhal Baptist Church, 2021), 193.

⁴⁹ Thanglienmang, “A Descriptive Grammar,” 119-120.

Free translation:

The dead and the living, all that I can call,
Do you hear the sound of drums to mark the end of the year?
If you can hear the sound of the drums that marks the end of the year,
Do you hear my young voice?

Kumkhen ningtuinou ki dawn e:
Kawi le Von Nieng ngai ing aw e, ngai ing aw e.
Kawi le von Nieng vang ka'ng ngai man,
Sahduong loubang tul ing aw e.

Free translation:

Drinking year-ending sweet wine,
Beloved and child Nieng, I miss you so much, I miss you so much.
Beloved and child Nieng because of my love thee,
I feel drained and grief-stricken due to the melancholy strain like an
abandoned field.

To celebrate the festival, families of the same descent in the village came together at the house of their respective clan heads. They contributed pots of liquor and pigs. The pig was slaughtered, and the meat was cooked for a feast.

On the morning of the second day, the areas within the village and its surroundings and the road between the village and *khuomuol* were cleaned and repaired. The womenfolk collected pinewood in the nearby jungle. The children were engaged in a collection of dry sticks/twigs.

After lunch, the members of various clans gathered in the houses of their respective clan priests. Pots of rice beer were brought to the house of every clan priest. Before the pot was taken to the clan priest, the lady who brewed the beer recited an incantation, opened the pot, and sipped a mouthful of beer. It is called *zu-phit*.⁵⁰ Then, the pot was taken by a person called *zu puopa* (carrier of pot) to the house of the clan priest. Customarily, there were certain norms to be followed in the sipping and the distribution of rice beer. The style of sipping was that a piece of stick was inserted as a measuring rod, and a full gourd scoop of water was poured into the

⁵⁰ An act of incantation using liquor.

pot of beer, and whoever sipped the beer was to do so without ceasing until his level was finished. The distribution method was that each person was privileged to get a share of a beer full of *sielki*.⁵¹ The first privilege was given to either the *tulpi* or the eldest male of the patrilineal line. The person who got the first privilege uttered secret words while inserting bamboo pipes into the different pots of rice beer, one after another. After that, he offered his share of drinks to one prominent person to sip the beer. The next privilege was given to the carrier of the pot of rice beer. The third privilege was given to the lady in charge of the center. Another privilege was a share of drinks returned by the lady in charge of the center to the lady who brewed the beer. Lastly, all the married men and women were given a share of the ordinary people.

The day was spent singing and dancing, continuing throughout the night till the next morning. The youngsters visited each other and shared their meals and drinks. While the senior men and the women were busy singing and sipping rice beer, the young boys and the girls enjoyed themselves swinging back and forth in the swing. Swinging was considered important due to the belief that each year when it was performed, there was a good harvest of beans.⁵²

During the festival, prayers and offerings were made at a designated place called *khuomuol*. It was made for the spirits that inhabited places, objects, and agricultural fields. It was performed by the senior clan priests who represented each of the clans in the village. The priests took a pig, a red cock, a pot of rice beer other sacrificial items with them to *khuomuol*. They were accompanied by some assistants. The seniormost clan priest usually led the ritual process. The clan priests of each clan uttered incantations during prayers and offered gifts to the spirits. Prayers for good health, favourable weather, rich harvest, and success in wild game and so on, were made to the spirits. Offering gifts included clay images of gayals, gongs, beads, and pots. With ritual incantations, clay images of 100 gayals, a gong, ten necklaces, and two pots that contained a few drops of rice beer inside and a piece of straw fixed on it were offered to *pusa*, chanting, “*Ka pusa ka pasa, ka nei kalam tawh hing kuon*

⁵¹ A gayal's horn that was hollowed out inside and used for drinking and distribution of rice beer.

⁵² Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 64.

ing, siel za tawh hing kuon ing, zam tawh hing kuon ing, khiba sawm tawh hing kuon ing.”⁵³ (The spirit of my ancestor, the spirit of my father, I come with whatever I have, I come with hundred gayals, I come with a gong, I come with ten garlands of beads). The sacrificial pig and red cock were cooked with millet grain. The spirits of agricultural tools were offered food and rice beer. At the end of the ritual, the priests and the assistants consumed the food and rice beer.

It was believed that touching or damaging the images caused sickness or ill health, so every person in the village was warned not to touch or damage the clay images. If anyone fell sick during the celebration, it was believed to have been caused by the unseen and uninvited guests - evil spirits. Therefore, every household in the village was asked to drop off their respective guests with a packet of food at the *khuomuol*. It was called *zinha* (seeing off the guests). The guests referred to here were the unseen and uninvited guests – evil spirits in the village.

4.7.1.1.1 Sawng beng:

Sawng beng is a hunting expedition organized on the third day of *kumkhen khuodo*. The word *sawng* means ‘retaliation,’ and *beng* means ‘to hunt.’ *Sawng beng* means ‘hunting of wild animals in retaliation.’ The hunting expedition was usually led by a man who had recently lost a beloved one. The traditional belief of the early Zous was that devils were responsible for the death of men. It was also believed that wild animals in the jungles were the pet animals of the devils. *Sawng-beng* intended to kill the pet animals of the devils to avenge the death of a beloved one. The leader of the party was considered the killer of any wild animal killed in such a hunting expedition, and even for small animals such as deer, porcupine, etc., the killer could give a feast of victory, called *sawng-ai* (celebration of successful retribution).

The animal killed in the hunting was taken to the house of the leader of the expedition. The slain animal was cut and sliced into pieces and was distributed among the members of the party. The head was given to the leader of the hunting

⁵³ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 65.

expedition. As per customary practice, the leader arranged a pot of liquor that was sipped with the members.

4.7.1.2 *Ginua khuodou*:

It is a post-harvest festival held after the harvesting season. It is held in the *vulpi* month of the Zou traditional calendar, corresponding to the English month of October. This festival is also known as *anlah paw*i (harvest festival). Unlike the *kumkhen khuodou*, the *ginua khuodou* is the most popular and enjoyable festival of the early Zous because the festival was observed after harvest when the food grains were stored in a barn constructed in the agricultural field.⁵⁴ This festival was celebrated as a thanksgiving of the villagers to their respective ancestral deity for his protection against the malevolent spirits and his blessing with a bountiful harvest. As this festival was held after the harvest, food and drinks were more abundant than in *kumkhen khuodou*, and as such, the celebration lasted for four days, sometimes even five days. Usually, *ginua khuodou* was celebrated with either pig or gayal.

The preparation for the festival began at the beginning of the year. The chief and the council of elders entrusted some households in the village to rear pigs. Months before the festival, pots of rice beer were brewed by every household in the village. Each *khawng* placed cups of rice beer at the village entrance, and the priests uttered words such as, “*Nang haw popo le tami zu hing ne ta in* “(If you come, do drink this liquor). It was made to prevent the evil spirits from entering the village.

On the first day, which was called *panpini*, the families of every clan gathered at the house of their respective clan heads. They contributed pigs and pots of liquor. The meat was cooked in a big pot. In the morning, one person from each household in the village cleared and repaired the lanes that led to *khuomuol*. A pot of liquor contributed by the village chief was brought to *khuomuol*. After that, some sticks were collected and burnt to emit smoke. When the smoke could be visible from a distance, guns were fired, and various musical instruments such as drum, *sielki*, *datang* (small gong), *phiit* (whistle), etc., were blown and beaten. In the

⁵⁴ Lien, *Zo Ngaina*, 17.

meantime, the *taangha-saha koupa*⁵⁵ sprayed a mouthful of liquor and shouted at the top of his voice, calling the spirits of millet and wild animals in other areas as,

Taangha hong, taangha hong, taangha hong.
*Saha hong, saha hong saha hong.*⁵⁶

Free translation:

Come, spirits of millet; come, spirits of millet; come, spirits of millet,
Come, spirits of animals; come, spirits of animals; come, spirits of animals.

He invited them to come towards the smoke and sound of gunfire. He invited the spirits of millet and that of the wild animals as - “*Ka meikhutna inn zuon in, na pu tuna ngaisa hi’ng, na pa tuna ngaisa hi’ng*” (Come towards my house emitting smoke, I have hosted your grandfather, I have hosted your father).⁵⁷

While calling and inviting these spirits, the *taangha-saha koupa* mentioned the names of the neighbouring villages one by one. For instance, if he wanted to call the spirits of millet and animals in Singngat areas, he would call them, *Singngat gama taangha hong...Singngat gama saha hong* (spirits of millet in Singngat areas, spirits of animals in Singngat areas). But he never mentioned the names of villages in whose area ferocious animals such as tigers, lions, cheetah, etc. were available. It is believed that by inviting them, the spirits of millets and those of the wild animals would come to his village, which would result in a bountiful harvest and success in the wild game. Then, all the participants sipped a mouthful of liquor, one after another. On their way towards the chief’s house, people danced, accompanied by the beating of musical instruments. A traditional Zou dance, called *phiitlam*, was performed at the chief’s house. The chief offered a pot of rice beer, and all adults sipped it.⁵⁸ After that, all persons with their tools returned to their respective homes. Agricultural tools such as *hei* (axe), *tu* (hoe), *tempong* (dao), *seu* (conical basket), etc., with ritual meat, were put on a rounded bamboo mat, and it was placed on the

⁵⁵ A senior person entrusted to call the spirits of millets and wild animals.

⁵⁶ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 65.

⁵⁷ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 65.

⁵⁸ Henkholun, interview.

foot of the main pillar of the house. It was considered as feeding the agricultural tools.

After lunch, the members of various clans gathered at their respective centers. The day was spent sipping rice beer and singing. Pots of liquor were brought to the house of every clan priest. The style of sipping and distribution of beer remained the same as in *kumkhen khuodo*. While inserting bamboo pipes into the pots of rice beer, one after another, the *tulpi* uttered the words, “*Ka pasien na tai aw, ka lungzai na tai aw, ka neh masangin in ki neh in, ka dawn masangin ki dawn in, chidam-ludamna ei pie in. Ka khuo siem na tai in, ka nipi na tai in, tung khuopi na tai, nuoi phapi na tai in.* (Be pleased my god, be pleased my lesser god, eat it before I do, drink it before I do, give me good health. Be pleased, the god of the village, be pleased, the sun, be pleased, the heaven above me, be pleased, the earth).⁵⁹ Having uttered these words and inserted bamboo pipes into the pots, he offered his share of drinks to a prominent clan member to sip the beer. The distribution of different shares of rice beer followed it. The last share of beer, *tang-zu* (public liquor), was opened to all, and sipping of the beer was allowed in order of seniority in age.⁶⁰

Typical songs sung during the festival are as follows:

*Kei lah ningneh taikhuo val chiem, ngai in khangthei lo taven maw lawm,
Khangthei lo in suonbel tui suong, taah la in heikawi taven maw lawm.*

Free translation:

As I was drinking the whole night, my friend, my love, must have been sleeping.
She must have got up in the morning and must have been very busy cooking food.

*Tukawl tawi kumkhuo I khenna, ningzu khum le aisa aw e,
Ningzu khum le aisa aw e a kum tam chiemlai lei aw e.*⁶¹

⁵⁹ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 66.

⁶⁰ Bruno M. Lunzapum, telephonic interview by Thangsuanhang, Chicago, June 10, 2022.

⁶¹ Thang Sut Mung (Assistant Lecturer), interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Kalay University, March 24, 2018.

Free translation:

As we are drinking a wonderful wine and eating juicy meat to mark the post-harvest season,
Let us try to enjoy the wonderful wine and the juicy meat for many more years.

The ceremony of hunting and releasing bees was an important event of the post-harvest festival. The venue of the event was either the village chief's residence or another person who volunteered to host the ceremony. Customarily, the ceremony was organized in the evening when there was no natural light. On the evening of the last day of the festival, all males gathered in the chief's house to discuss the hunting of bees. They were divided into three groups. One group of selected men would go to the nearby jungle to hunt bees and bring them home. The other group, called the welcoming party, consisted of almost all the villagers and would meet the hunting party on their return home at *khuomuol*. Another group, composed of elderly persons, was to wait for them at home.

Burning pine wood in their hands, the hunting party went to the jungle. They caught some bees and put them in a bag. The bag that contained the bees was put on a bamboo frame and covered with leaves. In connection with the hunting of the bees, a typical song runs as follows:

*Paam a vakhuoi phung ching kisa, tul lel dawn sau in nei ing e,
Tul lel dawn sau in nei e, ka lawm guol tawh tuol patpuon in huoi inge.*⁶²

Free translation:

Bees in the nearby place were boasting of their numbers. I take them
with a long pole,
I take them with a long pole, with my friends, we carry them in a piece
of cotton cloth.

The bamboo frame was carried towards the village. When the hunting party reached *Khuomuol*, only one gunshot was fired to signal their arrival to the villagers, and they waited for the second group to meet them.⁶³ On hearing the sound of the

⁶² Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 67.

⁶³ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 66.

gunshot, the second group took *zu ngau* (a dry gourd of liquor) with them and went to welcome the hunting party. While approaching *khuomuol*, people were dancing, singing, beating drums, and blowing musical instruments. Using the dry gourds, liquor was fed to the members of the hunting party. Traditional dance was performed, and in the meantime, the leader of the bee hunting party shouted *han la* and fired his gun from time to time.

On their way home, the men carrying the bee on a bamboo frame led the way, followed by women with bundles of burning pine wood sticks. All along the way home, all the women swung the burning pine wood down together at once and then swung up together. The others danced, sang, fired guns, beat drums, and blew musical instruments.

When the bag of bees arrived at the host's gate, the party waiting at home came out of the house and fired guns to welcome the bee-hunting party. An elderly man shouted, asking the hunting party outside the gate, "What do you bring"? The bee hunting party, in response, shouted, "We bring good health, wealth, sons and daughters." Then, the gate was opened, and all persons entered the host's house campus. Zou traditional dance, *phiit lam*, was performed, followed by another dance called *lamgui*. Then, the bag that contained the bees was opened, and the bees were released. After that, the women put their bundles of burning pine wood sticks together, and a bonfire was made. The host contributed an animal, either a pig or gayal, to be slaughtered for a feast and broached pots of rice beer. The whole night was spent singing, dancing, and drinking liquor. The songs in connection with the ceremony of bee hunting and releasing were:

*Vahkhuoi ka lah tong tam tah e, singta hing lel tam tah e,
Mi phung lunte'n hing el zong in vahkhuoi bel bang suong in e.*⁶⁴

Free translation:

I captured the honeybee of precipice, many wonder and, other people
talk about.
Though great people try to thwart it, I possess the honeycomb.

⁶⁴ Thanglienmang, "A Descriptive Grammar," 121.

Vahkhuoi bang kem sangdawn a sang singlet ah. Vai tunnu'n ningbel in a guol ve aw.
*Vai tunnu'n ningbel na guol ve aw, mengkel tang khau in na khi ve aw.*⁶⁵

Free translation:

Even though the beehive is above the floor on a tall tree,
the bee mother arranged their combs as pots of wine.
The bee mother arranged their combs as pots of wine, oh! She tied
with a goat rope.

The merry-making and enjoyment continued till the following day. According to the Zou traditional belief, when a person who once in a lifetime hosted such a bee hunting and releasing ceremony died, bees of various species attended the funeral and protected the corpse from insects and flies that hovered around it that night.⁶⁶

4.7.2 Ton (Feast of Boasting):

Ton is considered to be the most highly prized and rare feast. It can be performed by someone who has attained a high status and accomplished great societal achievements. *Ton* expressed sufficiency in crop harvest, richness, and attainment of the superior status of the performer in society. It is a feast of boasting. There are certain preconditions for a person to fulfill to perform this feast. The person should have already performed *tang-ai*, *gal-ai*, and *sa-ai*. There is no fixed date for the ceremony to be performed. It was usually held in September, just after the harvesting season. The ceremony usually lasted for five days. The first day is called *panpini*, the second is called *akheleni*, the third-day *zin hakhietni*, the fourth is called *biini*, and the fifth is *sienzu nehni*.

Three or four months before the commencement of the celebration, the prospective *ton* performer arranged a pot of *zupi* and invited members of his *inn dongta* and close relatives for a meeting at his house. While sipping the pot of

⁶⁵ Thanglienmang, "A Descriptive Grammar," 121.

⁶⁶ Enkthothang, interview.

zupi, he announced his intention of performing a *ton* feast. After that, preparation started for the grand feast. Traditional liquor - *zupi*, which would meet their requirement for the feast, was brewed in earthen pots by relatives and members of the *inndongta*. When the celebration was approaching, the *tanu* were engaged in cleaning the courtyard, preparing the place for slaughter, selecting the place for putting the pots of *zupi*, and so on. The *tanubul* monitored the preparation works and noted the materials required for the celebration. A few days before the grand celebration, the prospective *ton* performer convened another meeting to which his close relatives were invited. The host killed a pig and arranged a pot of *zupi*. After sipping and eating together, matter relating to contribution pots of *zupi* and animals, and the number of gayals – either a single gayal or a couple of gayals which the *ton* performer could slaughter was discussed. Once the number of gayals to be contributed was confirmed, two men, non-members of the *inndongta*, were selected and sent to collect wooden poles of a desired number and size and a long bamboo tree with twigs at its top in the jungle.⁶⁷ The wooden pole, *songlai*, was made of a tree called *sesing*. A branch of a *sesing* tree was cut at a length of twelve to fifteen feet, and it was designed in such a way that the top of the pole was a cap-like pointing upwards, its size reduced at the neck, and the middle portion was bigger than the other parts of the pole. If the celebration was to be the first or second time for the prospective *ton* performer, a single wooden would suffice. Two wooden poles were required to perform the *ton* for the third time. One of the poles had a short branch forking from the stem at the height of a loin level called *songka*. The short branch forking from the stem was pointing upwards at the end. If the *ton* performer was prepared to kill *sielkop* (a couple of gayals) in his second feast of boasting, a *songka* pole could be used. Apart from preparing *songlai*, firewood for cooking and bonfires was collected. A white cloth called *sielpuon* was also woven. On that day, a pot of liquor was broached and served. The singing of a song called *tonla* (song of the feast of boasting) also began. The two persons engaged in collecting the wooden poles were called *songteeh*. They were fed with food and drinks.

⁶⁷ Selchinlang Mate, “Zou Ton, Tang-Ai Dan leh Zou Minlote,” *United Zomi Organization Golden Jubilee (1954-2004) Souvenir*, ed. Thangchinsuan Mate (Churachandpur: P.Tongthang, 2004), 69.

On the day preceding the feast, the *tanu* were busy preparing for the big event on the next day. The *zawl* of the household's *inndongta* was busy making a rope for tying animals. The wooden pole of about 15 ft. long was erected in the courtyard. This pole was also called *tonmung*. A tall bamboo tree, called a *tonsawl*, was erected together with the *tonmung*.⁶⁸ When the *ton* feast was performed for the third time, a piece of pig fat (four inches long) was tied to the bamboo twigs. While the wooden pole displayed the festive event, the twigs on the *tonsawl*, with or without the pig fat, indicated the number of *ton* feasts performed.⁶⁹ For instance, if the *ton* feast was performed for the first or the second time, only twigs of bamboo, and if it was for the third time, twigs with pig fat, and so on. The wooden poles erected at the centre of the courtyard, called *song*, also indicated the number of *ton* feasts performed by the host.⁷⁰ On that day, pigs were slaughtered, and the offal and the meat were cooked separately. The offal such as the liver, small intestine, heart, etc., was called *dawisa* (ritual meat) and could be eaten only by members of the host's clan. Some portions of the meat were cut into pieces, and every man who had already performed a *ton* was given one chunk of meat.⁷¹ In the afternoon, a pot of *zupi* called *tonzu* was broached and sipped together. A small jar of liquor was placed near the main gate for the evil spirits.

The first day of the feast was called *panpini*. In the morning, two pigs were killed. Some boys tied a rope to the *gayal* in the morning at its shed beneath the house. The animal was pulled to and fro in its shed. It is called *siellawm* (making fun of *gayal*). After lunch, the *gayal* was driven out of its shed, and when it passed through a door called *sielkong*, a man fastened a rope on its neck. The animal was pulled around the *songlai* three times and tied to the wooden pole at the courtyard's center. The animal meant for the *ton* feast was called *tonsiel* (*gayal* for *ton* feast). All persons in the village gathered at the courtyard of the *ton* performer. The boys beat the animal till it was completely exhausted. They played with the animal by jumping over it. It was called *tonsiel nou* (playing with *gayal* for *ton* feast).

⁶⁸ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 68.

⁶⁹ Bruno, interview.

⁷⁰ Bruno, interview.

⁷¹ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 68.

In an attempt to pull it down, the animal was held at its horns, legs, and tail by the boys, and after that, when the legs were tied together, it fell to the ground. It was followed by the performance of three rounds of a traditional dance called *phiitlam*. Next, the *tulpi* sprinkled the water as he uttered words of incantation so that the animal was pierced to death instantaneously. He sprayed a mouthful of *zu* over the animal as he repeatedly uttered incantations two to three times and fed the animal with liquor. After that, he took a spear and pierced the animal. It was a customary practice that *gayal* meant for such occasions was not shot with a gun but pierced with a spear.

The *sasem* cut the belly, opened it, and its offal, such as the liver, stomach, intestine, kidney, etc., were extracted. The offal was covered with a traditional shawl to prevent it from direct sunlight and was taken to the *sutpi* inside the house of the *ton* performer. Then, two men were holding a shawl at its four edges over the carcass of the *gayal*. The family members of the *ton* performer put their heads into the empty bowel of the *gayal*, one after another. It was called *sielsunglut*. The village priest, with the lung in his hand, sprinkled the blood of the animal on the back of each member of the family who entered the empty bowel.

After the ritual ceremony, everybody attending the ceremony was given a chunk of meat called *tonsa* (meat of the feast of boasting). A pot of liquor was broached, and the distribution of *zupi* was entrusted to a person who had performed a *ton*. The details of the distribution of meat are given in **4.6.2.4**.

The rest of the day was spent drinking, singing, and performing Zou traditional dance, called *saguol keng khai* or *khawkhai laam*. In the evening, the *ton* performer slaughtered one boar and one sow. The rite of propitiation of *pusa* was performed, and ritual meat was placed at the foot of the central pillar of the house. Then, the *ton* performer called *tongpa* and his wife called *tongnu*, accompanied by two of the *tanu*, came out of their house. Both the *tongnu* and *tongpa* wore headgear on their head. While the headgear of the *tongnu* was decorated with hornbill plumes, that of the *tongpa* was decorated with *muha* (eagle's plume), *sawnkai* (white goat

hairs dyed red), *aahgie* (fowl's plume).⁷² He also wore a *sielpuon*, a white cloth woven for this occasion.

After that, a traditional dance was performed. Two men with one gong each in their hands were sitting on the *kemtung* (raised platform). They were sitting on opposite sides, facing each other. In between them, a group of men and women sat in line on the upper side of the platform, and the other group sat on the opposite side, facing toward them. The two groups alternately sang a traditional clan's song. The space in the centre was meant for dancing. Any man could participate, provided he could lead in singing his clan's song. In such a way, singing the various clans' songs, one after another, dancing and drinking continued throughout the night, and the first day passed off.

On the second day of the feast, called *akheleni*, close relatives of the *ton* performer brought animals and pots of *zu* for the celebration. The animals were slaughtered to feed the villagers and the guests from the neighboring villages. Certain kinds of *zu*, such as *tanu zu* (liquor contributed by the married daughters), *unau zu* (of clan's men), *pu zu* (of maternal father), etc., contributed by relatives of the *ton* performer were broached and served on that day. The pots were placed in order as *tanu zu*, *unau zu*, *pu zu*, and so on, and these pots of liquor were sipped one after another. As per customary practice, the *ton* performer slaughtered a pig and fed the men who had already performed a *ton* feast. Apart from drinking and singing, the exhibition of *khawkhai laam* was shown the whole day. With the sun's setting, *lampi suh* was performed and followed by *laam gui*. A bonfire was made around which all persons - men, women, boys, and girls were free to dance. The dancing spree continued throughout the night. At dawn, boys and girls sang a song as:

*Taikhua vah ding muol nunnuom valkhi dang sem,
I tun khuoibang hangva lawm, hangva lawm aw e.*

Free translation:

The dawn is breaking and the light has fallen on the hills,

⁷² Thangchinsuan, "Ton/Tong (Ton festival)," *Khanglui Tangthu (Folklore)*, comp. Thangchinsuan Mate (Churachandpur: Thangkhal Baptist Church, 2021), 208.

Our mother will be angry, my darling, will be angry, my darling.

*I tun khuoibang a han le lawm aw, nang masa'n,
Nang masa'n lai kithei aw, chi ni e, tun le zua aw e.*

Free translation:

If our mother gets angry, my darling, your hay days,
We will remind our mother and father to recall their hay days.

The third day is called *zin hakhietni* (day of seeing off the guest). Most of the guests who attended the celebration returned to their respective villages on that day. The host family broached a special pot of liquor called *bangkuobel* (the pot of liquor of the eldest male). All the heads of animals that were slaughtered during the celebration were prepared and cooked. All the *tanu*, were busy cleaning the house and its surroundings, washing the pots and wooden utensils, and putting all the materials and things in their proper places.⁷³ Skulls of the slaughtered animals were tied with bamboo strips and were put up on the front walls of the *ton* performer.

The fourth day is called *biini*. It was a day of rest for the family of the *ton* performer. No activity was allowed on that day. The fifth and last day of the feast is called *sienzu nehni*. On that day, sticky rice was cooked and eaten together by the family of the *ton* performer, his relatives, and the members of his household council.

4.7.2.1 Observation of Ziatang:

After the end of the *ton* feast, the couple had to observe *zia tang* (abstention) for three days.⁷⁴ Both of them had to be confined at home. Strangers, visitors, or guests were not entertained during these days. No food or drinks from outside were allowed to be taken by them.

⁷³ Mung, "A History of the Zo People," 112.

⁷⁴ Selchinlang, "Zou Ton, Tang-Ai Dan leh Zou Minlote," 72.

4.7.2.2 Various kinds of Wine served during the *Ton* feast:

Various kinds of liquor were brewed, broached, and consumed during the *ton* feast. The kinds of liquor were *zingzu tangzu*, *tonzu*, *lukhungzu*, *tanuzu* and *bangkuozu*. Out of these, the last four, *tangzu*, *tonzu*, *lukhungzu*, and *bangkuozu*, were specially brewed for this great event.

4.7.2.3 Songs composed and sung during the *Ton* feast are as follows:

*Sumtuol ka tonsawl aw e, zang huikhi'n na sem lo aw,
Zang huikhi'n na sem lo aw e, paallai na heu lo aw e.*⁷⁵

Free translation:

My bamboo tree in the courtyard, let not the wind blow over it,
Let not the wind blow over it, let not its leaves spoil.

*Sumtuol tonmung, a liimah e, vangla laizom ngai ing e,
Vangla laizom ngai ing e, tuoitum lianu ngai ing e.*

Translation as:

As I am watching the wooden pole in the courtyard, I missed my sibling, who
is far away,
I missed my sibling who is far away; I long for my youngest beautiful sister.

4.7.3 *Sa-ai* (Feast of Victory over Animals):

Sa-ai is a celebration performed by a brave hunter. The literal meaning of *sa-ai* is that *sa* means 'animal' and *ai* means 'celebration.' The *sa-ai* is to show the performer's bravery and declare his victory over the animals. There are certain wild animals that the early Zous called *sapi*. They are elephant, lion, rhinoceros, gaur, lion, tiger, cheetah and leopard. The Zous called wild animals such as tigers, cheetahs and leopards as *taw*.⁷⁶ These animals move so swiftly and fast that they are rarely seen or killed. Therefore, a hunter who kills such animals in a wild game is to celebrate compulsorily. As per Zou customary practice, the head of the animal killed

⁷⁵ Thang Suon Mung, *Zo/Chin Khang Tangthu A Tomkim Leh Zo Ngaina Bulpite* (Tonzang: Author, 2017), 20.

⁷⁶ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 82.

in the wild game is given to the clan head, and also a person intending to perform *sa-ai* would do so in the house of the clan head.⁷⁷

There was no fixed date for *sa-ai*. It was performed when a hunter bagged the wild animal. The feast of big wild game usually lasted for two days. The first day was called *panpi ni*, and the next day was called *khele ni*. As mentioned above, the head of the wild animal killed was given to the clan head, and it was put up on a wooden pole called a *song* erected in the clan head's courtyard for everyone to see.

On the first day of the celebration, a grand feast was arranged by slaughtering gayals. The clan head contributed an animal, usually a pig called *songsa*, which was also slain. Pots of *zu* were broached and served to the participants in the celebration. The day was spent dancing, singing, and sipping rice beer. While the men and women performed folk dances and sang folksongs in the host's courtyard, the older people sat on the house's porch and sipped pots of rice beer. The *sa-ai* performer in his hunting dress - a cap decorated with feathers of cock and horn bill on his head; a hunting bag hanging down on his left shoulder, inside which was a horn of gayal that contained extra gunpowder and a gun in his hand, danced at the centre of the dancing troupe.⁷⁸ Shouting at the top of his voice, he pronounced the *han la* and fired his gun in the air. Participants in the celebration, willing to proclaim *han la*, also did the same as the *sa-ai* performer. In the evening, with feathers on their caps, young men and women danced in a traditional dance, *phiitlaam*. Patriotic songs were sung, and heroic deeds were chanted throughout the night. The next day, singing and dancing activities continued until nightfall.

Among the wild animals mentioned above, bagging a tiger's head was considered a heroic deed, and its celebration and *han la* proclaimed on the occasion, was also distinct from that of other animals. The early Zous believed that unless the hunter performed a *taw-ai* celebration that declared his victory over the spirit of the tiger, when he died, the tiger would surely take revenge by exhuming his corpse from the grave and tearing it into pieces. Therefore, when a tiger was killed, it was

⁷⁷ Huatchinkam, interview.

⁷⁸ Kamchinkhup, interview.

celebrated, and its spirit was tempted so that it dared not come to visit the graveyard of the hunter.⁷⁹

4.7.4 *Tang-ai* (Feast of Millets):

Tang-ai means ‘celebration of a bountiful harvest of millet.’ A householder who could perform *tang-ai* was highly regarded and respected and attained high status in society. To perform *tang-ai*, a householder has to reap not less than one hundred *seu* (basket) of millet grains in a year.⁸⁰ One *seu* is equivalent to four tins. Millet was the staple food of the early Zous and the main crop they cultivated. The millet seeds are so tiny that it is not easy for a householder to reap one hundred baskets of millet. A sufficient workforce, suitable agricultural implements, a favourable climate, and large and fertile agricultural fields are essential to reap that much quantity. The first day of the feast is called *panpini*, the second day is *akheleni*, and the last is called *bangkuo* and *tanu vahni*.

Preparation for the millet feast had begun a month or two before the celebration. A person intending to perform such an event broached a small pot of wine and summoned his household members. While sipping the pot of liquor with them, he disclosed his intention of performing a feast of millet. The next step was to prepare for the big event. Pots of liquor were brewed. The host family brewed particular kinds of liquor such as *tangzu*, *lukhungzu*, *tangzazu*, etc. Animals to be slaughtered during the celebration also need to be ready. Persons within and outside the village were invited to participate in the feast.

On the morning of the first day, *panpini*, the *tang-ai* performer, slaughtered animals to feed the participants. He worshipped *pusa* and thanked his ancestral spirits for blessing him with a bumper harvest of millet. He also prayed to the ancestral spirits to continually bless him. In the meantime, the villagers gathered at *khuomuol*, where they collected firewood and burnt it to emit smoke. Beating *tawm* (drum), big gong, and the small gong, the people danced at *khuomuol*. After that, they danced towards their village. While dancing, the people sprayed millet seeds on the way. On

⁷⁹ Selchinlang, interview.

⁸⁰ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 85.

reaching the house of the *tang-ai* performer, millets were put on a bamboo mat and placed on top of the house. The host broached pots of *zu*. The day was spent performing traditional dances like *phiitlam*, *dailam*, etc., and sipping liquor. Special liquor called *taangza zu*, broached during *taang-ai*, could be consumed only by persons who had already performed *taang-ai*, but *laamzu* was opened for everybody participating in the feast.

In the evening, blowing whistles while dancing, the participants entered the house of the *tang-ai* performer. Cereal grains, such as maize, millet, rice, etc., inside the house were scattered on the floor by some young men. If the *tang-ai* performer reacted against their activity, they continued spraying the cereal grains; if he reacted otherwise, they silently stopped. The scattered cereal grains could be collected and owned only by the eldest married daughter of the host family.

After that, dancing a traditional dance called *laampi suh* followed. The participants of the feast drank *zu*, sang traditional songs, and danced the whole night. Unlike in the *ton* feast and *sa-ai* feast, where *zawl* and *sasem* were in charge of liquor, the participants in *tang-ai* were allowed to drink and sip the liquor as they wished without restriction.⁸¹

The second day of the feast is called *akheleni*. Pots of liquor were broached and served. People of all ages – young and old participated. They drank, sang, and danced. The *tanu* and relatives of the *tang-ai* performer composed songs. One of the songs composed and sung on this occasion is given below:

*Na than vangin khuoibang lip ing,
Na aih ningtui ka kinim, ka kidawn aw e.*

Free translation:

As you are famous, I am as active as a bee,
I scooped and drank the liquor of your feast.

*Na ai ningtui ka kinim ka kidawn aw e
Sumtuol dawkang tuibang a,ka nim ka kidawn aw e.*⁸²

⁸¹ Thang Suon Mung, *Zo/Chin Khang Tangthu*, 26.

⁸² Mung, *Zo/Chin Khang Tangthu*, 26.

Free translation:

I scooped and drank the liquor of your feast,
Like a trough of water in the courtyard, I scooped and drank it.

Late at night, all the married men and women left for home. Singing and dancing in circles was continued by the boys and girls. When the liquor in the pots lost its taste and strength, the boys and girls entered the house of the *tang-ai* performer, singing a song called *sunqlula*, which means ‘song of entry.’ Singing this song, they requested the host and hostess to offer them liquor. The hostess offered a pot of liquor. The pot of liquor was taken to the courtyard. Sipping liquor and dancing continued till the following day.

The last day of the feast is *bangkuo* and *tahnu vahni*, which means a ‘day of feeding the eldest male and the married daughters of the family.’ As they were the people working tirelessly during the feast, a special pot of liquor called *bangkuobel* was broached mainly for them by the host family. Apart from cleaning the house and its surroundings and washing the pots and wooden utensils, the *tanu* enjoyed sipping the special pot of liquor.

4.7.5 Gal-ai (Feast of Victory over the Enemy):

Gal-ai means ‘feast of victory over the enemy.’ It is an occasion where a man displays his valour by performing a feast. In the pre-colonial days, inter-tribal raids for honor and revenge were frequent, which led to the killing of the enemy and the enslaving of captives. Under such conditions, a brave man who had killed his enemy was most admired and highly respected. In a war, the brave warriors cut off the heads of the enemies whom they slew and took them home as trophies to prove their remarkable feat of bravery. The early Zous believed that if the victor failed to hold a feast of victory over the enemy, the spirit of the dead enemy would haunt them.⁸³

Oral tradition shows that the Zou were not head-hunters by birth, so head-hunting was not a rule for them. They would take heads and capture people if they were attacked or in their raids for revenge. The brave warriors cut only the heads of

⁸³ Kamchinkhup, interview.

the enemies (preferably men) they killed. The lives of the captive enemies were spared, and they served as the slaves of their respective captors. The enslaved people could buy their freedom after a certain period.⁸⁴

Gal-ai was a rare occasion in the Zou society. The ceremony was usually held at the house of the clan head of the *gal-ai* performer's family. When a brave warrior killed an enemy, he shouted at the top of his voice, singing a song called *hanla*, a song of bravery. The head of the enemy was brought to his family's clan head. When the enemy's head arrived at his house, the clan head sang a song called *hanlapi* aloud. The head of the enemy was put up on a tall pole. Animals such as gayals and pigs were slaughtered, and pots of rice beer were broached and served to all the invitees. All the participants in the festival feasted and drank. Different traditional dances were performed during this feast. The merriment continued throughout the night. As per Zou tradition, a person who could kill an enemy and perform a feast of victory over the enemy was admired, highly respected, and occupied a high status in society.⁸⁵

4.7.6 Sawng-ai:

The meaning of *sawng-ai* is a 'celebration of successful retribution.' *Sawng-ai* is a feast of victory performed by the leader of the *sawng-beng*, a hunting expedition organized on the third day of *kumkhen khuodo*. On the day fixed for the celebration, the leader slaughtered an animal and cooked. Pots of liquor were prepared and opened. The day was spent sipping and singing together, and the invitees feasted together in the evening. The person who performed such a feast attained high status in society.

4.7.7 Sielkhupsa:

Sielkhupsa is a feast arranged by the maternal grandfather on the occasion of gifting a gayal by his grandson. In *Sielkhupsa*, *siel* means 'gayal,' *khup* means 'paid'

⁸⁴ Thanglienmang, "A Descriptive Grammar," 127.

⁸⁵ Mung, "A History of the Zo People," 113.

and *sa* means ‘flesh.’ Gifting a female gayal to a maternal grandfather is called *sielkhup*. The reason behind gifting a female gayal is either to improve the living conditions of the grandfather’s household which might be in bad shape or as a normal gift of an animal.⁸⁶ The significance of *sielkhup* is an expression of love of the grandfather by his grandson, and also to seek his blessing.⁸⁷ In return, the grandfather slaughtered a pig, not less than four fists in size, and arranged a feast.⁸⁸ Other animals like cows, *siel*, etc. could also be slaughtered. All invitees were expected to feast on this occasion.

On the next day of gifting the gayal, all the relatives of the host brought pots of rice beer to the house of the grandfather. Out of the pots of rice beer, the best pot was selected and broached. It was meant for the *inndongta* of the grandson, known as *sielkhuppa* (giver of the gayal), and the grandfather, known as *sielsangpa* (receiver of the gayal). The distribution of the liquor was done by using *sielki*. A share of liquor was measured in gayal’s horn, called *hai*. The first person to get a share of the liquor was the one who inserted *zupeng* (bamboo pipe) into the pot. He was given two *hai* or two full gayal’s horns. After that, the brewer of the rice beer received the second share of one *hai*. The next share was for the clan priest of the *sielsangpa* and *sielkhuppa*, who drank one *hai* and two *hai* respectively. Another share of one *hai* was given to the *sasem* (of the host’s *inndongta*), followed by a share of two *hai* to the *sasem* (of the *sielkhuppa*’s *inndongta*). Both the *zawl* (of the *sielsangpa* and *sielkhuppa*’s *inndongta*) also got one *hai* and two *hai* respectively. After that, another four pots of rice beer were selected and the *sasem* of both the *inndongta* were entrusted to distribute the liquor to the invitees and guests. Sipping rice beer, singing and dancing were done, which continued throughout the night till the next morning. The next morning, the *sielsangpa* killed fowls and arranged a lunch for the guests.

Usually, a grandson was expected to be busy at the maternal grandfather’s house on the day of the feast. Unlike the other feasts, the *sielkhuppa* (or grandson) was exempted from work on that day and arrived only after the food was ready. Each

⁸⁶ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 85-86.

⁸⁷ Kamchinkhup, interview.

⁸⁸ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 86

of the relatives who contributed a pot of rice beer was given a chunk of meat. The maternal grandfather blessed the family of his grandson and presented a gift in cash, called *siel sumken*, and a shawl called *siel puon* to his grandson. The grandson was also given pieces of smoked pork and a *zungau* to be taken to his home. It is to be noted that a grandfather who received a gift of gayal from his grandson should compulsorily slaughter a pig and send him back with pieces of smoked pork at least three times.⁸⁹

4.8 Traditional Dances:

Dance is an integral part of the indigenous culture of the Zous. They have varied numbers of traditional dances. These dances are performed during joyful occasions, funeral functions, and recreational and religious ceremonies. The common traditional dances of the Zous include *saguol kengkhai lam*, *lapisuh lam*, *zangta lam*, *dailam*, and *saipikhupsu lam*.

4.8.1 Saguol Kengkhai Lam:

Saguol kengkhai lam is the most popular Zou traditional dance. It is also known as *phiit lam*. *Saguol* means ‘wild boar,’ *kengkhai* means ‘hanging leg,’ and *lam* means ‘dance.’ As the dance style is believed to have been taken from the dance of the wild boars, it is called *saguol kengkhai lam*. In this dance, the participants blow a kind of musical instrument made of small bamboo pipes known as *phiit*. This dance was performed at the residence of the hunter who killed wild animals like tigers, lions, elephants, wild boar, etc. It was also performed during *tang-ai*, *ton* and *sa-ai*. Both males and females could participate in this dance. While dancing, the dancers blow bamboo flutes to coincide with the dance steps in a circular formation.

4.8.2 Lapisuh Lam:

In *lapi suh*, two men with one *tawm* (drum) each in their own hands are sitting on a raised platform. One sat facing towards his friend and the other on the opposite side, facing towards him. In between them, a group of men and women sits

⁸⁹ Selchinlang, interview.

in line on the upper side of the platform, and the other group sits on the opposite side, facing towards them. One of the two groups is to start the traditional song, called *sannem la*, and the other group is to respond to them. The space in the centre is meant for dancing. The Zous have traditional songs of boasting of the wealth and bravery of the clans. The *lampi su lam* is a traditional Zou dance in which such songs can be sung. Any man can participate, provided he can lead in singing his clan's song.

4.8.3 Zangta Lam:

Zangta lam is one of the most popular dances of the Zous. Males and females performed it, and a male drummer led and directed the dance. The dance style is in a ring dance formation, with various types of songs composed on the spot. While dancing, the female dancers sing the songs alternately, responding to one another. This type of dance was performed when a man was successful in killing wild animals like lions, tigers, elephants, rhinoceros, etc. *Zangta lam* was also performed when a village successfully raided other villages.

4.8.4 Dailam:

This dance is performed by singing boastful songs while a boy and a girl dance in the middle of the dancing troupe. It was performed on the occasions of *tang-ai* and *sa-ai*. In a *dailam*, a couple dance in a circular formation where the other members are half-seated and sing while clapping their hands. The couple dances to the tune of the song. Rice beer was served by the host's *tanu* with a gayal horn or scooped gourd cup. Seven months before this occasion, pots of rice beer were brewed. These pots were opened on the celebration day and it was sucked with bamboo pipe, or they siphoned off to a large copper pot ready to be served by the *tanu* to the people who came for the celebration.

4.8.5 Saipikhupsu Lam:

Saipikhupsu lam is one of the popular dances of the Zous. It is performed in slow movements with gentle steps, accompanied by beating a drum and gong. Such dance was performed on joyful occasions.⁹⁰

4.9 Folksongs:

The Zous have traditional or composed folksongs typically characterized by the simplicity of melody. These songs are written by ordinary people or in the style of the common people. There are about forty types of traditional songs, depending on genre and theme.

4.9.1 Popular Folksongs:

The most commonly used songs are categorized as popular folk songs. The popular folksongs are *hanla*, *zangta la*, *tang-ai la*, *laleh* and *lapi*.

4.9.1.1 Hanla:

Hanla is a song commemorating victory over enemies or wild animals. It is sung either by a victorious hunter who killed wild and ferocious animals or a warrior who brought the head of an enemy in honour of himself, which reflected his brave deeds and the brave deeds of his father and forefathers at *khuomuol*. As a rule, *hanla* can be sung when a wild and ferocious animal is killed.

4.9.1.2 Zangta la:

The theme of *zangta la* is that the Zous are of the same origin, from Pu Zo, who is their progenitor and that they are the same people,

⁹⁰ Bruno, interview.

4.9.1.3 *Tang-ai la*:

Tang-ai la is usually composed and sung by the *tanu* and relatives of the performer of *tang-ai*. The song is about the abundance of food and drinks in their brother's house, who was the host during the feast.

4.9.1.4 *Laleh*:

Laleh is usually sung by boys and girls during the full moonlit nights while dancing in a circular formation and drinking rice beer. The song conveys the romance and joy of youth. Boys and girls sing joyfully, remembering their childhood and the happy times they spent together in their village in various festivals and feasts.

4.9.1.5 *Lapi*:

This song is sung only at a funeral ceremony. The song can neither be changed nor modified. One interesting fact about the Zous is that every clan has its *lapi* and is not allowed to sing on any occasion other than a funeral service. Generally, the song consists of nine stanzas, and the wording and tune of the original song can neither be changed nor modified. On the occasion of burial, the first three stanzas of the song are sung in a bass voice, and the other six stanzas are sung like normal songs.

4.9.2 Methods of Singing Folksongs:

The Zou folksongs are sung in unison by men and women in a dual-tone melody. A male lead singer as the drummer leads the group with a slight rising pitch, joined in chorus by the other male singers in tenor tones till the end of the song, and simultaneously, they are accompanied by the female singers in soprano tones.

4.10 Traditional Dress and Costumes:

Every Zou woman possessed the knowledge of weaving. Usually, clothes were made of cotton, called *pat*. It was spun into thread and woven by the women. Both men and women wore the clothes woven by the women. Men occasionally

wore a turban and were attired in long and loose shirts or a home-spun coat that reached the knee.⁹¹ This shirt or coat made of cotton was called *puontuol*. A twisted rope that served as a belt was tied around the waist. It is to be noted here that the *puontuol* served as a cloth and a pant. Other clothes and dresses worn by men included *dielkhai* (scarf), *puonlaisan* (men's shawl), *pounzal* (shawl), *tangchin puon* (gentleman's shawl), etc.⁹² *Puonlaisan* is usually worn on all occasions. The shawls are used to keep warm themselves in the cold season. On a hunting or raiding expedition, men wore a turban and a gun in their hands. A hunting bag hung down on his left shoulder; inside it was a horn of gayal containing extra gunpowder and his flint and tobacco in boxes carved out of solid pieces of wood with lids.

Zou women wore a kilt-shaped piece of coloured cloth, reaching from below the navel to halfway down the thigh, called *nih*. Above the *nih*, another cloth was tied around the chest that covered the breast, reaching down to the knee. This cloth was called *puonten*. One of the attractive Zou women's dresses was the *sakhi lukhu* (cap made of deer skin). The cap was made of deer skin in a 'V' shape without any mark of stitching, joining and pasting. Women wore *sakhi lukhu* while performing traditional dances on joyful occasions like *khuodou pawl*, *sa-ai*, *tang-ai*, etc.⁹³ Zou women also wore clothes and dresses such as *nihtom* (short skirt), *puondum* (women's shawl), *khephieu* (loin cloth), *nuong kawngga* (sea-shell belt), *sum kawngga* (belt of coin), etc.

Both men and women wore long hair, either plaited and tied on the front of the head or knotted over the nape of the neck. Women parted their hair in the middle, and the two portions were plaited together with a bunch of cotton thread. Women wore a garland of big onyx beads (*khibapi*), *Zou khi* (Zou beads), red beads around their necks, and earrings. Depending on the occasion, clothes and dresses were worn. During feasts and festivals, different attire was used. The chiefs wore dark blue clothes with red lines of particular patterns and plumes, which were made of the tail

⁹¹ Holkhonun Lhungdim, "Introduction to the Zou Tribe" (MA Dissertation, Centre of Post-Graduate Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Imphal, 1980), 16.

⁹² Thanglienmang, "A Descriptive Grammar," 88.

⁹³ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 19.

feathers of hornbills in their head knots.⁹⁴ Young girls wore a piece of black cloth and a rounded *nuong kawngga*, two to three in their waist.⁹⁵ Women used traditional colorful clothes and shawls. Men used headgear known as *tuuhpah*, which was made of the feathers of a hornbill. He also wore *aahgie* made of chicken plumes.

4.11 Ornaments:

The Zous were fond of ornaments. Both men and women wore ornaments. The common ornaments were *khiba* (beads), *Zou khi* (Zou beads), *khimu* (a kind of bead), *khibapi* (garland of big onyx beads), *bilba* (earrings), *tau* (bracelets), etc. Beads of various colours and designs were worn as necklaces. The female had their ears pierced at an early age and gradually enlarged the holes on the lobes. Women used large earrings. Both men and women wore white cornelian beads. Young girls often used brass cylindrical ornaments. They also wore bracelets. The young men preferred the teeth of a boar, tiger, or lion as necklaces and earrings.⁹⁶

4.12 Musical Instruments:

The Zous used different kinds of traditional musical instruments. The various musical instruments are *diengduang*, *lawiki*, *muolzam*, *hiemleu*, *kilawng*, *guosem*, *sielki*, *khuong*, *phiit*, *theile*, *zampi*, *daguol*, *datang*, *pengkul*, etc. The first ten instruments are local and were made by themselves by collecting and using the locally available materials in their surrounding hills and jungles. Instruments like *zampi*, *daguol*, *datang*, *pengkul*, etc., are said to have been imported from their neighbours like the Manipuris and the Burmese.⁹⁷ The musical instruments mentioned above are played or used on different occasions. The instruments commonly used are given as follows:

⁹⁴ Ginneihching, "The History and Culture of the Simte Tribe in Manipur" (PhD Thesis, Manipur University, 2012), 82.

⁹⁵ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 18.

⁹⁶ Ginneihching, 85.

⁹⁷ Gouchinhang, interview.

4.12.1 *Guosem*:

It is a mouth organ directly blown from the end of the mouthpiece fixed on a spherical hollow gourd. A bamboo pipe consisting of seven notes is fixed into the gourd. The *guosem* is similar to the bagpiper. This instrument is not blown on all occasions; thus, it is rarely blown or played. It is said that the sound produced by *guosem* is so melodious that the music attracts the devils, and if they cannot be driven back, it is likely to bring misfortune and even death.⁹⁸

4.12.2 *Sielki*:

Sielki is a musical instrument used in public gatherings such as the welcome of successful hunters and warriors, feasts, or mourning of the dead.⁹⁹ It is a gayal's horn that was hollowed out on the inside. It produced sound by hitting the outer surface with a stick. The *sielki* accompanied the rhythmic beating sound of the gong and the drum.

4.12.3 *Khuong*

Khuong is a very common and widely used instrument. A tree trunk is cut and hollowed into a cylindrical tube with two opening ends. The two end openings are covered by stretching the skin of a cow or gayal across it. The skin that covers both faces is then tied from end to end with a rope cut out from the skin of an animal. It is struck with a bare hand or a drumstick to produce sound. *Khuong* was used to sing at festivals and funeral functions.

4.12.4 *Phiit*:

Phiit is a set of whistles made of small bamboo pipes of three or four inches long. The whistles are of three different musical notes. It is usually used when *phiit lam* is performed. Poles of small bamboo are cut into pieces of a desired length. One end of the piece is cut slantingly while the other end is closed with the node. While

⁹⁸ Langchinlien, interview.

⁹⁹ Selchinlang, interview.

blowing at one end, it produces sound to harmonize with various notations of the songs. Four or five *phiit* are used by a dancing troop.

4.12.5 *Theile*:

Theile is a bamboo flute with six holes of different notes and a single blowhole at one end. Small bamboo is cut into the desired length. One end of the piece is open, while the other end is closed with a node. The blowhole is punctured at the end of the piece closed with a node. The other six holes are punctured on the piece at equal distances of a certain length. The flute is blown at the blowhole. It was played when the young men visited the women at night or sat in the jhum-house.

4.12.6 *Nah-mut*:

Nah-mut is a simple form of musical instrument. It consists of a folded leaf clapped between the lips, and the different positions of the lips and the tongues control the varieties of tune. Blowing the leaf by an expert produces a variety of tunes.

4.12.7 *Zampi*:

Zampi means ‘big gong.’ It is a disc-shaped circular gong bulging in the middle. It is made of copper or brass. *Zampi* is believed to be imported from the Burmese and the Manipuris.¹⁰⁰ The *Gun* river from Manipur flows down to the Zou inhabited areas. It is said that once the rising water of the *Gun* river carried down a big gong to the Zou areas. The Zous were struck with wonder when they saw the gong floating on the water. They believed that it might have belonged to the devil. They collected the gong and kept it for themselves. Due to its considerably large size, it has to be carried on a wooden or bamboo pole by two persons on their shoulders. The person at the rear carrying it at one pole has to hit the bulging point of the gong with a bare hand or stick, one end of which is fitted with a tightly interwoven ball of cloth or leather. *Zampi* has a grand and resonating sound. A single hit of it can be heard within and even beyond a village. It was used on special

¹⁰⁰ Thang Sut Mung, interview.

occasions like grand feasts, festivals, and on the death of a person. In a funeral ceremony, *zampi* was beaten while singing *lapi*.

4.12.8 *Dah-guol*:

Dah-guol is a plate-like small copper gong that does not bulge in the middle. Usually, the number of *da-hguol* is three, each having different musical tunes. When the three small gongs are hit alternately, they give a beautiful sound.

4.12.9 *Daatang*:

Daatang is a small gong made of copper or brass, and it bulges in the middle. It is used during celebrations and joyful occasions.

4.12.10 *Pengkul*:

A trumpet made of bamboo pipe and gayal's horn.

4.12.11 *Tingtang*:

It is a bow-like violin made up of a hollow gourd, bamboo bar, and cotton string.

4.13 Hunting:

Hunting was an exciting and adventurous game. Hunting provided a person with an opportunity to gain social status in society. It is also believed that the spirits of whatever animals were killed by the person in hunting and killed as *kosa* for the person when he died would be with him. A person who killed *sapi* (a famed animals) such as a lion, gaur, elephant, leopard, tiger, cheetah, etc., was regarded as a hero and occupied a respectable position in society. Hunting was a favourite pastime engagement of a Zou hunter. He took delight in hunting birds and animals in the jungle. The types of guns used were flintlock, muskets, and single and double-barreled guns.

In the olden days, the Zous hunted individually or in groups. Individual hunting was practiced in the morning and evening in the forest near the village. Group hunting was usually undertaken after harvest from March to May. In individual hunting, a person sets out with his gun and a bag containing a big knife, extra cartridges and bullets, and a short horn of gayal with gunpowder inside it. A group of persons undertook group hunting, which could take either one day or more than one day. In a group hunting that lasted for a week or, sometimes, even a month, the hunting party went to the deep jungle with sufficient gunpowder, cartridges, bullets, and other essential items like rations, clothes, nicotine, water, etc.

While wild animals such as deer, swine, bear, elephant, rhinoceros, etc., could be seen and easily killed, some animals like lions, elephants, leopards, tigers, cheetahs, etc., were so swift in their movement that they are rarely seen, and not easily killed. In a group hunting undertaken for such ferocious animals, the hunting party informed the villagers about its intention and also the areas for its expedition. The motive behind it was that such hunting was dangerous and could be accidental and could lead to grave injury and even death, so that the villagers could find them easily in any eventuality. It was also a hint to the villagers that if the hunting expedition was successful, they could get ready with pots of liquor to welcome the homecoming party on the outskirts of the village.

When a hunter or a group of hunters killed a wild animal such as a deer, tiger, bear gaur, elephant, rhinoceros, etc., and could not bring the animal, the hunter himself or messenger informed the villagers about it. Some older men from the village went to the forest with the hunter or the messenger. If the spot was nearby in the jungle, the carcass of big animals such as gaur, elephants, rhinoceros, etc., was cut and their offal was removed. The body was cut into large pieces and was brought home. Otherwise, the pieces of meat were dried by putting them near a big fire. In the case of famed animals like tigers, lions, leopards, or cheetahs, the animal was tied to a wooden pole and was carried by several men on their shoulders. When the hunting party was about to reach the outskirts of the village, they blank-fired their guns in the air and continued to come towards *khuomuol*. On hearing the sound of

the guns, all the villagers, including men, women, young and old, would come out to welcome the hunting party at *khuomuol*. The older men brought guns, and the women with a gourd bottle of liquor. When the party reached *khuomuol*, they put down the carcass of the animal on the ground. The hunter who killed the animal sat on the carcass with a loaded gun and chanted a song of self-acclamation, proclaiming his heroic deeds and citing at the top of his voice the names of his brave ancestors amid the crowd and blank-fired his gun in the air. This is called *hanla sa*. After that, he was fed liquor in a bottle of gourd, called *ngau*, by his wife and sisters. The performance of a traditional dance followed it. All the men with guns blank-fired their respective guns. Liquor was also fed to all the members of the hunting party.

Among the famed animals, tiger, lion, cheetah, and leopard are known for their swiftness and ferocity, and the rites and rituals differ from others. The early Zous believed that the tiger was the only famed animal that could take revenge on the hunter, and as such, it should compulsorily be tempted. The song of victory chanted on a tiger's killing was totally different from other famed animals.

In the olden days, a Zou hunter employed two methods of hunting animals and birds. They used spears, arrows, guns, snares and traps. Depending on the animals and birds, different types of snares and traps, called *thaang*, were designed and laid in the forest. The following were the different types of traps and snares employed.

- 1) *Betang thaang*: *Betang thaang* is a 'trap of bean seed' where *betang* means 'bean seed,' and *thaang* means 'trap.' It was employed to catch wildfowl in the forest.
- 2) *Mankhawng*: *Mankhawng* is one type of trap to catch rodents, birds, and small animals.
- 3) *Pial*: *Pial* is a trap of heavy logs for catching animals like bears, antlers, etc.
- 4) *Sou*: *Sou* is a trap of sharp, pointed bamboo strips devised for catching monkeys.
- 5) *Sakhi thaang*: *Sakhi* means 'deer' and *thaang* means 'trap.' Thus, *sakhi thaang* means 'deer's trap.' It is a trap employed mainly for catching deer.

6) *Sakuh thaang*: *Sakuh* means ‘porcupine.’ As the name indicates, it is a snare for entrapping a porcupine.

7) *Thau thaang*: *Thau* means ‘gun’ and *thaang* means ‘trap.’ In this type of trap, a gun is fixed in such a way that the animal passing by would let off the trigger, thereby shooting that animal to death.

When an animal was killed in hunting, either an individual or a group, the meat was distributed to *inndongta* members of the killer. Details of the share of meat are given in 4.6.2.3.

4.14 *Zu* and *Zou* Society:

Zu (wine or liquor) was the most popular and valued drink among the early Zous. It played a vital role in social, religious, and other occasions. The observance of every life-cycle ceremony could not take place without *zu*. The priest could not perform any rites or rituals in the absence of *zu*. No feast or festival could be held in the absence of *zu*. The importance of *zu* in the life of the Zous was proved by an adage, *Zou umna zu um, zu umna Zou um*, meaning ‘where there is Zou there is *zu*, where there is *zu* there is Zou.’ It also showed that *Zou* and *zu* were inseparable from each other. Lieutenant Macnabb correctly writes the importance of *Zu* in the Zou (or Chins) culture as:

No event is complete without liquor, and nothing is an offence when committed under the influence of liquor. Not to ply a visitor with liquor is considered the height of discourtesy, and the warmth of man’s reception is gauged by the number of pots of liquor broached for him.¹⁰¹

There were various names for *zu*. These *zu* were named after the material used for its preparation, after the person for whom it was prepared, or the occasion for which it was prepared. It was also named after the name of birds or animals. The various names of *zu* prepared by the Zous were: *taangzu* (millet beer), *mimzu* (barley beer), *zingzu* (morning beer), *tonzu* (feast of boasting beer), *tanuzu* (beer of married daughters), *puzu* (maternal grandfather’s beer), *sungzu* (father-in-law’s beer), *khenzu*

¹⁰¹ Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills I.*, 184.

(beer of separation), *humpizu* (lion's beer), *ngalzu* (wild boar's beer), *sabungzu* (rhinoceros's beer), *saizu* (deer's beer), *sakhizu* (deer's beer), *sazazu* (goral's beer), *sielzu* (gayal's beer), *tawzu* (tiger's beer), *vaphuolzu* (hornbill's beer), *vomzu* (bear's beer), *tangzu* (public beer), etc.

Maize, rice, millet, barley, and banana were the raw materials for making *zu*. Rice was the most commonly used raw material for making wine. Barley liquor called *mimzu* and millet wine called *taangzu* were prepared for particular persons or occasions.¹⁰² Generally, beer was prepared out of these raw materials. Making beer started by boiling the raw material in a big earthen pot until it was fully cooked. After that, the cooked material was removed from the pot and spread out in a shallow, broad basket to cool down. When it was cooled down, a cake of yeast, called *tol*, was crushed to a fine powder and spread over to set off the fermentation process. It was then packed inside a pot covered adequately with cloth and fastened with a rope. The pot was kept over a platform over the hearth or in the inner place of the house for fermentation. After about three to four months, it is ready for consumption.

Beer was sipped with a bamboo pipe or siphoned into a container/pot. For sipping, a siphon or a reed was inserted into the heart of the beer pot, and a level was set, marked with a stick known as *leng*. Usually, a drinking session was started either by the clan head or the eldest person of the village as per the occasion.¹⁰³ Sometimes, sipping was done in order of seniority in age or order of status in society. A person who started the drinking session sipped up to the set level and poured water into it to the level. In the case of siphoned beer, the pot was placed at a higher level than the container from which the beer was siphoned. One end of the tube was inserted into the heart of the beer pot, and the other end was put into a container or pot. Once the liquid was forced into the tube by suction, the flow from the beer pot to the container continued unaided. Then, it was served or fed using a scoop of gourd, gayal's horn, *ngau*, etc.

¹⁰² Thanglienmang, "A Descriptive Grammar," 92.

¹⁰³ Langchinlien, interview.

4.15 The importance of Tobacco:

In the olden days, tobacco was a part of life among the Zous. It was both chewed and smoked. Smoking tobacco was practiced by both men and women. The Zous smoke tobacco by either rolling the tobacco in a dry leaf or in a bamboo bowl. The women smoked not only for their pleasure but also for nicotine water called *tuibuh* to supply for the men. Men and women were fond of sipping nicotine water. This nicotine water was not swallowed but kept in the mouth for some time and spat out. Further, while working on the agricultural land, tobacco was smoked to drive away mosquitoes and other insects.¹⁰⁴

4.16 Economic Activities:

In the early days, the primary source of livelihood for the Zous was agriculture. Forests served as the source of food. The wealth of a Zou family was measured in terms of its annual harvest and the number of gayals it owned.

4.16.1 Jhum Cultivation:

Jhum cultivation (also called slash and burn) was the main occupation of the Zous. The site of agricultural lands was on the hill ranges, about two to three and sometimes even more than five kilometres from the village. Around December every year, a survey party was sent to look for suitable agricultural areas. Then the village priest would perform a ritual with a cock and also observe his dreams before finally selecting the site. Once the site was selected, the chief and his council of elders distributed a portion of the selected areas for cultivation to each household in the village.

After that, men and women in each household cleared and fell vegetation on their respective agricultural land. When the vegetation was completely dried, it was burnt in the evening till it was reduced to ashes. The ashes of the burnt vegetation

¹⁰⁴ Selchinlang, interview.

served as manure for the soil. Jhumland was usually burnt in March every year. Thick forests, though difficult to clear, produced higher yields. Timber logs that were not appropriately burnt were used as fencing or to divide the field into rectangular blocks to prevent soil erosion. Digging was done with pointed sticks, stones, hoes, and spades. Seeds of crops such as millets, brinjal, barley, rice, basil, chilies, ginger, maize, beans, sweet potato, yam arum, cucumber, etc., were sown according to the seasons. Tobacco and cotton were also sown for household use. In a week or two, the weeding in the agricultural lands started. Men and women removed weeds, bamboo shoots, trees, shrubs, creepers, and plants. Generally, three to four rounds of weeding were necessary in a season. The harvest season began in the last week of September and continued until October. Usually, a field hut was built at a convenient place to keep track of the field. It served as a temporary storehouse for the harvest of grains. The field was cultivated for about four to five years, and after that, another site was selected.

Grains such as rice, millet, maize, etc., were carried as far as five to ten kilometres to the village and put separately in a barn. Sometimes, the agricultural lands were so far from the village that some families stayed the whole year in their respective agricultural lands and visited their village only during important festivals and feasts.

In the colonial and post-colonial periods, wet cultivation began to be practiced in suitable places. It is believed that the idea of wet cultivation was known from the neighbouring communities. Henceforth, jhum and wet cultivations are the main occupations of the Zous.

4.17 Conclusion:

The Zous are a group of people with a distinct culture. It is customary that the eldest son, legitimate or illegitimate in a family, is the rightful heir and gets the right to inherit the father's property. Usually, daughters do not inherit their father's property.

The early Zous had superstitious beliefs that all kinds of misfortune could happen to a woman and the child during pregnancy and also after childbirth. There were certain activities that the husband and the wife had to restrain from during this period. Both of them strictly observed these activities. The birth of a male or female child was an auspicious occasion. A temporary name was given as soon as the child was born, which might be changed later. The naming system of a newborn child among the Zous has peculiarities. In naming a child, the respect for birth and the knowledge of pedigrees is strictly followed. Names are composed generally of two or three syllables; the first syllable of the child's name takes the second or last syllable of the name of the name giver. According to the Zou traditional naming system, when a first son is born in a family, he is named after his paternal grandfather's name. Over the decades, the superstitious belief associated with the birth of a child was gradually abandoned.

Pu zukhol, one of the customary practices of the Zous, is an offering of a maternal grandfather or maternal uncle with traditionally brewed rice beer by the grandson. It is done to express love and respect for the maternal grandfather and to seek his blessings.

The bachelor's dormitory practice of the Zous had its distinctive features. The Zous had no separate building called a dormitory house. It was attached to the chief's house, and also the number of *sawm* depended on the size of the village and varied from village to village. The institution of *sawm*, which served useful purposes for villagers and acted as the backbone of the early Zou villages during the pre-colonial period, began to decline in the late nineteenth century and subsequently became extinct. This was perhaps due to the colonial government's strict measures against any village or tribe indulging in an act of aggression towards other villages within the British territory that led to the improvement of the law-and-order situation in the hills in Manipur on one hand, and due to the advent of Christianity and introduction of modern school systems on the other.

The Zous have an age-old method of cutting and dividing the meat of animals killed in a game or animals killed for a feast on different social occasions and

ceremonies. The distribution of shares of meat and the reciprocal act ensures a stronger bond relationship between the householder and the meat receivers. This age-old customary practice does not change and is still intact even today.

The Zous indigenous festivals and feasts are events of prayer and thanksgiving to their ancestral god. After the Gospel reached the Zou inhabited areas, festivals began to fade and were gradually replaced by Christian festivals such as Christmas, New Year, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, etc.

The Zous have varied numbers of traditional dances and they are performed during joyful occasions, funeral functions, and recreational and religious ceremonies. With the spread of Christianity, dances performed on funeral and religious occasions ceased and they began to be performed on joyful and recreational ceremonies.

The Zous have traditional or composed folksongs. These folksongs are typically characterized by the simplicity of melody. There are about forty types of traditional songs, depending on genre and theme. The Zou folksongs are sung in unison by men and women in a dual-tone melody. Over the years, popular folksongs like *zangta la* and *laleh* have been sung on joyful occasions, but *hanla* and *lapi* sung at funeral functions lost their importance.

Christianity and modernization gave a new lifestyle to the Zous. The new lifestyle is a mixture of Western and traditional lifestyles. They progressively relinquished some of their indigenous attires and costumes and favoured western attire. The new lifestyle was reflected in their hairstyle, too. Other traditional and costumes such as *Puondum*, *puonlaisan*, *dielkhai*, *sakhi lukhu*, *khiba*, *bilba*, *tau*, are worn even today, depending on the ceremonies and occasions.

The Zous used various kinds of traditional musical instruments which were played or used on different occasions, such as joyful occasions, funeral functions, and recreational and religious ceremonies. After conversion to Christianity, musical instruments like *sielki*, *khuong*, *phiit*, *theile*, *zampi*, *daguol*, *datang*, *pengkul*, are played or used on occasions related to Christianity.

Hunting was an important pastime for the Zous. Hunting provided a person with an opportunity to gain social status in society. It is also believed that the spirits of whatever animals were killed by the person in hunting and killed as *kosa* for the person when he died would be with him. With the advent of Christianity, the concept of life after death has changed, and hunting and *kosa* have lost gradually their religious significance.

Zu (wine or liquor) was the most popular and valued drink among the early Zous. It played a vital role in social, religious, and other occasions. The observance of every life-cycle ceremony could not take place without *zu*. However, the Christian missionaries and the early converts did not allow the consumption of *zu* by church members. Therefore, it was replaced by tea in all customary practices, engagements, marriages, and so forth.

In the olden days, the primary source of livelihood for the Zous was agriculture. Jhum cultivation (also called slash and burn) was the main occupation of the Zous. Digging was done with pointed sticks, stones, hoes, and spades. Seeds of crops such as millets, brinjal, barley, rice, basil, chilies, ginger, maize, beans, sweet potato, yam arum, cucumber, etc., were sown according to the seasons. Tobacco and cotton were also sown for household use. In the colonial and post-colonial periods, jhum and wet cultivation became the main occupations of the Zous.

Thus, the Zous' habits, ideas, behavior, beliefs, values, etc., are reflected in their songs, festivals, dances, naming systems, dresses, and ornaments. They are peace-loving people, evidenced by the fact that they were not at war with their neighbouring villages unless provoked or attacked. Most of their feasts and festivals are deeply connected with the soil. Practices like singing, dancing, and feasting enriched their life and brought them together.



Fig.4.1 *Vaphual* (Hornbill), Source: The Wild Thorn Berrys Wiki: Asia, Birds, Animals. Courtesy: https://wildthornberrys.fandom.com/wiki/Great_Hornbill



Fig.4.2 Zou ladies husking rice.
Courtesy: T. Zamlunmang Zou.



Fig.4.3 *Phiitlaam* (Bamboo Flute Dance).
Photo: Thangsuanhang



Fig.4.4 *Zangta Laam*.
Courtesy: T. Zamlunmang Zou



Fig. 4.5 *Zampi* (Gong).
Courtesy: M. Thangchinmang.



Fig.4.6 *Taang* (Millet).
Courtesy: Ignatius Thang Sut Mung.



Fig. 4.7 Zou Woman carrying Bamboo Watertube.
Courtesy: T. Zamlunmang Zou.



Fig.4.8 *Ngau* (Dry Gourd Wine bottle).
Photo: Thangsuanhang

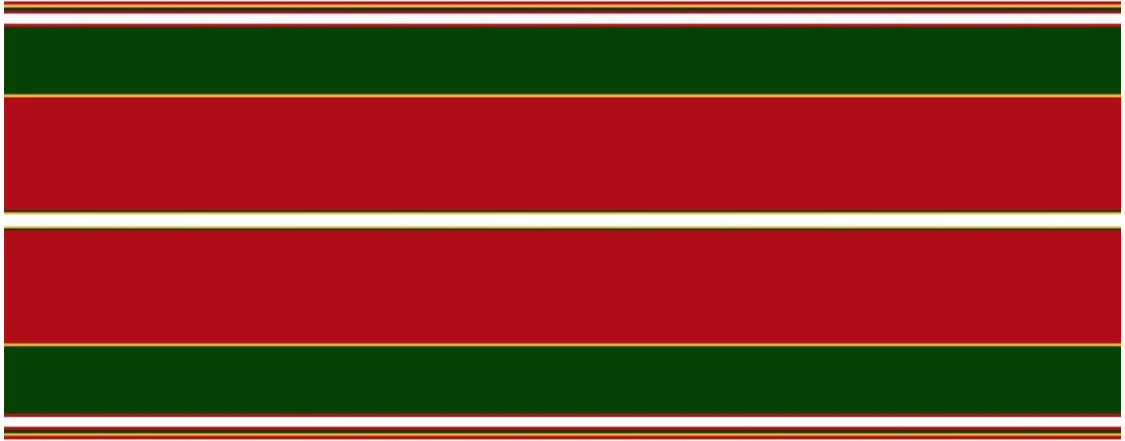


Fig.4.9 *Puonlaison* (Man's Shawl).
Courtesy: T. Zamlunmang Zou



Fig. 4.10 *Zou Puondum* (Woman's Shawl).
Courtesy: M. Kamlianlal Zou

Chapter 5

Chiefs and the Traditional Administrative System

5.1 Introduction:

The traditional Zou village was an independent political unit where the village administration was run by *hausa* (chief) and a team of persons collectively known as *khawnbawl upa* (council of elders). In theory, the chief was all-in-all; however, the Zou village administration had a democratic character. Maintenance of social practices and customary laws, administration of justice, etc., came under the village administration. While settling a different case of disputes, the chief and his elders made decisions based on traditional customary practices.¹ The administration system was the most effective way to maintain law and order in society. The main objective of the village administration was to ensure peace and tranquility, social justice, social harmony and cohesion among the people, as well as to work for the development of the village. The chief established an intimate relationship with other neighbouring villages.

5.2 Hausa (Chief):

The position of the *hausa* is hereditary. This position can only be occupied by the eldest son, unlike the Sailos of the Lusei clan, who went to the youngest son. The chief occupied a unique position in the village. He is the guardian of the Zou customs and practices and had absolute ownership of the entire village land. As he owns the land, the rivers, forests, woods, and all living beings dwelling in his land, belong to him.² Each year, the chief distributed several plots of land for each household, including the house site and land for cultivation.

The institution of chieftainship appears to have grown out of the collective needs of the people. However, it is difficult to state definitely when and how this

¹ M. Suankhanmang, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Zomi Colony, September 20, 2019.

² Mangkhosat Kipgen, *Christianity and Mizo Culture: The Encounter between Christianity and Zo Culture in Mizoram* (Jorhat: The Mizo Theological Conference, 1996), 58.

institution came into existence. It is to be noted that the early Zous were in the habit of moving and migrating frequently from one place to another in search of better cultivable land and suitable sites for settlement. Due to this reason, they were constantly at war with other tribes for the possession of such lands. Therefore, it is possible that they needed a centralized authority and competent men to protect the households and organize them against their adversaries in their struggle for existence. This responsibility ultimately devolved upon the eldest male by birth of the clans. Over time, the eldest member of each clan who raised a village unanimously became the chief.

The Zous are very particular about genealogy, and the hereditary succession of their chiefs is through the eldest male descent. The chiefs strictly adhere to the principle of primogeniture.³ Seniority by birth rather than physical strength and efficiency determines a person for a chieftainship. Thus, the senior member of the clan, who is highly respected and revered, becomes the village chief. After the chief's death, his eldest son inherited the father's position. In case the eldest son, because of being incompetent or mentally retarded is unable to succeed his father, the second eldest son succeed the latter. If the chief died without any male heir, the eldest younger brother of the chief would succeed him.⁴

The Zou tradition claims that their ancient progenitor is Zo or Zou, and all the *tulpi* are believed to have descended from him. It is also found that several sub-clans descended from a clan chief. Many of the clans maintain a separate clan genealogy tree, which remains a valid basis of legitimacy for the chiefs of each clan.⁵

It is customary for the eldest male to stay with the parents and inherit his father's position, while the younger male is to move out of his parental house with several households from the village and is allowed to set up his new village. It is to be noted that the eldest brother is the only person who can become a chief, and the

³ G.H.Damant, "Art. VIII.—Notes on the Locality and Population of the Tribes Dwelling between the Brahmaputra and Ningthi Rivers," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 12, no. 2 (1880): 239. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0035869X00017494>.

⁴ Sheikho hao Kipgen, *Political and Economic History of the Kukis of Manipur* (Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2015), 100-101.

⁵ Kipgen, *History of the Kukis*, 101.

younger brother can also become a chief with the consent of the chief, who is his eldest brother.

5.3 Powers and Functions of the Chief:

The Zou chief was the supreme head of the village, and his word was law within the jurisdiction of his chiefdom.⁶ The households of the village were bound by custom to obey him. However, the chief was not a despot but a paternal ruler over his villagers. Though there was sufficient room for the chief to become a despot and tyrant, such things were rare.⁷ He acted as the guardian and treated the villagers with equal love and affection. He was responsible for protecting the villagers from external aggression and danger. He helped the villagers in times of need and trouble. If his subjects disliked him or his system of administration, they could move to another village or another chief's land.

The chief was the head of the village administration and performed such a function in consultation with the council of elders. The chief's house was called *Innpi*, which served as the village court. He had to attend to cases that were brought to him. Cases were settled as per the traditional customs and practices of the Zous. The villagers were bound by custom to obey the verdict of the village court. Otherwise, they could be heavily punished or even expelled from the village. The chief summoned and presided over the village council meetings and was the dispenser of justice in his village. Cases like murder, theft, adultery, molestation, land disputes, etc., were settled by him with the help of his *upa*.⁸

In consultation with his *upa*, the chief allotted a plot of land for construction and land for cultivation to each family of the village. A newcomer in the village was also given a plot for a house and land for cultivation. A person willing to reside in the village sought the consent of the chief and the council. Anybody who migrated

⁶ T. Pumminthang, interviewed by Thangsuahang, Sachih village, March 7, 2018

⁷ T.S.Gangte, *The Kukis of Manipur: A Historical Analysis* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, Reprinted 2012), 127.

⁸ Nengkhenthang Samte, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Zabellei village, May 5, 2018.

from the village did the same, but the agricultural land and plot would revert to the chief.⁹

The chief was the commander of all able-bodied men of the village. He would gather all the able-bodied men in the village in times of war and lead them in defending his village from the attack of enemies. He took the command in raiding other villages to capture slaves and loot other economic assets.

A Zou chief enjoyed enormous power with certain privileges. But his powers were not unlimited, as any decision he made could not be against the customary practices of the Zous. Moreover, though he could be the final decision-maker in any matter relating to the village, his *upa* could not be ignored by him because they were very influential persons in the village. So, he had to respect the opinions and advice of his *upa*.¹⁰

If the chief became too oppressive in his domain, the householders could move away from the village. Although the chief had the power to confiscate their properties, he had no right to stop them from migrating to other villages. The nomadic habit of the tribe served as a check on such an oppressive chief. The power and strength of the chief depended on the number of houses in his village. Thus, to maintain his power, the chief had to think constantly about the welfare and development of the people in his village.¹¹

5.4 Privileges of the Chief:

Apart from the enormous power that the chief exercised, he also enjoys certain privileges, which are tributes paid by each household of the village as a show of loyalty to him and recognition of his ownership of the land. Traditional customs and practices sanction these privileges. The privileges enjoyed by the chief are mentioned below:

⁹ T.T.Haokip, "Kuki Polity with special reference to Village Administration" (M.Phil Dissertation, North-Eastern Hills University, 1991), 82.

¹⁰ Nengkhenthang, interview.

¹¹ Pumminthang, interview.

5.4.1 *Tangseu* (Annual Tax):

Tangseu is an annual payment of tax in kind paid to the chief after every harvest. This tax, usually paddy, was paid annually by every household in the village. As each household was allotted a plot of land for cultivation every year, every householder was to pay this tax to the chief. The chief was able to punish those who did not pay this tax. The paddy tax varied from village to village. Generally, every household was to pay one *seu* (basket) of paddy, equivalent to three tins. Certain persons in the village, such as the *upa*, widows, orphans, etc., were exempted from paying paddy tax. The chief could exempt householders who could not pay this tax due to poor harvests. A day was fixed for the submission of the *tangseu*. Every household brought their *tangseu* on a fixed day and submitted the same to the chief. All persons exempted from payment usually brought one *zubel* each to the chief's house to quench the thirst of their fellow villagers who came to submit their taxes. It was customary for the chief to offer traditional fermented liquor called *zu* to all those householders who came to submit the *tangseu*.¹²

5.4.2 *Salieng* (Meat Tax):

Salieng means 'fore limb of a four-footed animal.' It is a tribute or meat tax in the shape of the right foreleg of the wild animal killed or trapped, usually paid to the chief. The fore limb of the animal is cut out with the flesh up to the shoulder. The hunters make this payment to show gratitude to the chief for permitting them to hunt in the jungle, which fell within his jurisdiction. Traditionally, *salieng* included the forelimbs of certain wild animals such as deer, bears, tigers, lions, etc., but payment was not required for smaller animals. When a tiger is killed, the chief's share is the teeth, and for the elephant, his share is the tusks. Failure to pay *salieng* to the chief resulted in a fine or penalty upon the hunter.

5.4.3 *Innpi Sap* (Court Fee):

Innpi sap means 'court fee,' payable to the chief. As per Zou custom, the highest form of punishment awarded to an offended person is *sielpi le salam*, a punitive fine of one full-grown gayal, one pot of rice beer, and the killing of a four-

¹² Khup Khan Mang Mangson, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Tuikhal (Myanmar), March 23, 2018.

legged animal, preferably a medium-sized pig. The chief was privileged to get a court fee in the shape of the foreleg (*salieng*) of an animal killed in such a form of punishment.¹³ He was also privileged to get an *innpi sap* of a small earthen pot of rice beer to settle other minor cases.

5.4.4 Chikhuh Sia (Salt Spring Tax):

Chikhuh Siah (*chi*-salt, *khuh* – spring, and *siah*-tax) is a tax levied on salt spring. The chief receives a certain quantity of salt obtained by any villager from the salt spring within his jurisdiction. Generally, one-tenth of the produce is collected by the chief.¹⁴

5.4.5 Khuotha

Khuotha (*khuo* – village, *tha* –labour) is one-day free labour of all the able-bodied villagers rendered annually for the chief. This service is compulsory. The chief can avail such labour from the villagers to construct and repair his house, sow seeds, weed, and reap in his field.

5.4.6 Migration Tax:

It is a traditional practice that the chief can seize the property of any household that migrates from his village to another chief's village. Households willing to migrate to other villages have to pay a fine of one animal to their erstwhile chief.¹⁵

5.5 Traditional Village Administration:

The traditional village administrative system was based on their customs and practices. Each Zou village had its separate administrative unit, which functioned independently. The *hausa* could not function without the *khawnbawl upa*, and the chief's house was the administrative centre. While discharging his duties, the chief

¹³ Zou Zumpi, *Zou Custom Book (Zou Tawndan)* (Churachandpur: Goikhanman, Chinzaniang and Chingzaniang, 2005), 30.

¹⁴ Pumminthang, interview.

¹⁵ Arun T. Goswami, *Kuki Life and Lore*, Vol.1 (Halfong: North Cachar Hills District Council, 1985), 83.

cooperated with the council, consisting of a group of *upa* or elders. Thus, the *khawnbawl upa*, with the *hausa* at the apex, constituted the main decision-making body in the traditional village administration.¹⁶

5.5.1 *Khawnbawl Upa* (Council of Elders)

The *khawnbawl upa*, or council of elders, is instrumental in the day-to-day administration of the village, and they assist the chief in all matters relating to the activity of the village. The council comprises persons of wisdom, integrity, and knowledge of traditional customs and practices.¹⁷ The *upa* were appointed by the chief, and he could dismiss them at any time. The chief was free to appoint whoever he deemed fit, but usually, they were chosen from among the brave and representatives of the different clans living in the village.¹⁸ Further, the post of the council of elders was not hereditary. The number of *upa* varied from village to village depending upon the size of the village, but generally, two to three *upa* were appointed in each village. There was also no fixed term for the council.

The chief and the council of elders constituted the decision-making body concerning the village's affairs. The *hausa*, the head of the council, presided over every meeting. The chief's decision was final and binding in all matters, and the *upa* was only to advise the chief.

Traditionally, among the Zous, the responsibility and duty concerning the village were allotted clan-wise by the chief, and this practice was prevalent under the *Manlun* chiefship. The specific tasks given to each clan were: -

Manlun Clan	-	Chief
Suantah clan	-	Mantri
Samte	-	Village Crier
Lianzaw clan	-	Priest
Phiamphu clan	-	Blacksmith
Taithul Clan	-	Drum Maker

¹⁶ LUNCHINTHANG PHIAMPHU, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Churachandpur, April 18, 2018.

¹⁷ Gangte, 130.

¹⁸ Kipgen, *Christianity and Mizo Culture*, 59.

Such a hierarchy was strictly maintained among the Manlun chief. However, the clan-wise representative system was short-lived and was no longer practiced.¹⁹ Later, the chief appointed officials who would assist him in administering the village.

5.5.1.1 Powers and Privileges of the *Khawnbawl Upa*:

The *Khawnbawl Upa* played an important role in the traditional village administration. It served as the mouthpiece of the chief. Theoretically, absolute power was held by the chief, but in reality, he had to consult his *upa* in every matter relating to the village affairs. The *khawnbawl upa* also exercised the chief's power in the latter's absence.²⁰

The responsibilities of the council of elders were numerous, such as maintaining the village water supply, footpaths and constructing new paths and bridges across streams and rivers. They also assisted the chief in distributing land for cultivation, reception of the chief's ambassador from neighbouring villages, and visitors to the village. Agricultural land was distributed to each family annually by the chief with the assistance of the council of elders, who also fixed the date for the commencement of cultivation. Chiefs or ambassadors from neighbouring villages were received and attended by the chief and his council of elders.²¹ Whenever the chief visited another village for personal or political matters, one or more members of the council of elders accompanied him.²² The council fixed festival dates in consultation with the chief and the *siempu*. The elders fixed the day for hunting and fishing, during which all the able-bodied persons in the village were involved.²³

The council of elders played an important part in settling cases and disputes in the village. Various cases and disputes, such as theft, murder, divorce, rape, etc., were put forward before the chief to settle. All cases were discussed, and decisions were made by the chief and his council of elders. Cases were decided according to

¹⁹ S. Kaikhohau, *Suantah Suan le Hah Khangsutna (Genealogy of Suantah's Descendants)* (Lamka: Co-Operative Press, 1993), 3.

²⁰ Enkthothang Mate, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, M. Khaukual village, March 10, 2018.

²¹ Ginneihching, "The History and Culture of the Simte Tribe in Manipur" (PhD Thesis, Manipur University, 2012), 99.

²² M. Henkholun, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, M. Khawlmual village, March 10, 2018.

²³ Enkthothang, interview.

the customs and practices of the Zous, and the villagers were bound to obey the council's verdict. Otherwise, they could be heavily punished or even expelled from the village.²⁴

For any dispute, the complainant or appellant had to pay *innpi sap* of a pot of *zu*. The guilty one was usually punished with *salam*, i.e., a fine of *zubel* and an animal, preferably a pig. If the case was more serious, it was penalized with *sielpi le salam*, which would be fines of one *gayal*, *zubel*, and killing of a pig for a feast.²⁵ Usually, a pig was killed for *salam*, and the chief and the *khawnbawl upa* consumed it.

In return for the services rendered to the chief and the villagers, the *Khawnbawl Upa* enjoyed certain privileges. They were:

- exempted from the payment of *tangseu* paid to the chief.
- given priority in the selection of housing plots and agricultural land.
- exempted from *khuotha*.
- entitled to receive a share of the meat of an animal killed by a guilty person as a punishment or fine.

5.6 Village Officials:

Besides the *upa*, the chief appointed other persons to assist him in the village's day-to-day administration. They were the *tangsam* (village crier), the *siempu* (priest), and the *sie-kheng* (blacksmith). These persons were appointed for specific responsibilities. Unlike the *upa* and the *tangsam*, who had definite terms, the offices of *siempu* and *sie-kheng* were hereditary.²⁶

5.6.1 *Tangsam*:

The *tangsam*, appointed by the chief, is an important official in the traditional Zou village. In the words of Gangte, the *tangsam* was the council's spokesman and was in charge of information and broadcasting.²⁷ He will go around the village

²⁴ M. Lachinkhai, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Churachandpur, September, 22, 2019.

²⁵ Lunchinthang, interviewed

²⁶ Henkholun, interview.

²⁷ Gangte, 130.

mostly at night and proclaim the orders of the chief or the council to the general public. Besides, he also supervises all community labour such as repairing or constructing the chief's house, repairing roads, maintaining the water supply, etc. He can be asked to act as an emissary on behalf of the king, a negotiator, or a mediator.²⁸

The *tangsam* enjoyed certain privileges, such as exemption from *tangseu* and one-day free labour rendered annually for the chief. For his service, he received one basket of rice annually from every household in the village.²⁹

5.6.2. *Siempu*:

Siempu is a priest and a medicine man of the entire village. In former years, the priest was usually from the Lianzaw clan. Later, the *siempu* can be from any clan or family. Persons with a certain knowledge of the secret words of medicine are usually chosen to be *siempu*. The post of *siempu* is hereditary because the secret words of medicine are unknown to ordinary households, and the *siempu* only teaches these words to his sons and grandsons. It has been stated that to learn the secrets of medicine costs a lot of money and time. Thus, very few people bother to learn this knowledge.³⁰

In terms of power, the position of the priest is next to that of the chief. But this does not mean that the status of the *siempu* is more or less equal to that of the chief. It is to be noted that, according to customs in any gathering, wine was served in order of social position and seniority in age. The *siempu* was served liquor ahead of the chief of the village. It is evident that the *siempu* occupied a respectable position in the village.

Though the duty of the *siempu* was concerned mainly with religion, he also played an important part in the socio-political life of every household. The priest was in charge of the community's health. He attended the households during sickness and officiated social and religious ceremonies. Without the priest, the village could have

²⁸ Ginneihching, 101.

²⁹ Khamchinkhai, "Transition of Zou Society from Animism to Christianity: A Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Analysis" (MTh Thesis, Serampore College, 2004), 53.

³⁰ Ginneihching, 102.

no sacrifices or rituals. He was believed to tell certain sicknesses by touching the pulse of a person and the types of sacrifices to be offered to appease the evil spirits believed to cause sickness. He acted as a mediator between the people and the spirits that caused sickness. With his magical incantation, he was believed to cure various diseases and perform various rites and rituals in the village.

The *siempu* played an important part in the people's socio-cultural lives. When the chief and his *upa* could not easily solve complicated cases, it was usually referred to the priest. He decided cases through trial by ordeal.³¹ The priest decided the case by administering an oath to find the culprit. There were many ways of deciding cases, such as trial by ordeal. One way of determining such a case was letting the persons involved bite the tiger's tooth and swearing in the name of God that he was telling the truth. Any person refusing to do so was considered guilty. The other trials by ordeal involving two persons or parties that the priest administered were: *ai-tui dawn* (drinking the juice of the *ai* plant), *tuilut* (diving underwater), and drinking water from the barrel of a gun, biting a spear or a dao.³²

Another responsibility of the *siempu* was to offer sacrifices to appease the evil spirit. The *siempu* mediated between men and the evil spirits and offered animals to the various spirits. By offering sacrifice to the evil spirits, the Zous believed they would be spared and would not be disturbed.

The *siempu* enjoyed certain privileges in return for his service to the village community. He was given a cup of grain for every sacrifice he performed for any sick person in the village. The *siempu* also received one day of labour called *siemtha* each year from every household in the village. He was entitled to receive a portion of the meat of every four-footed animal killed in sacrifice.

³¹ Henkholun, interview.

³² Enkthothang, interview.

5.6.3 *Sie-Kheng* (Blacksmith):

Sie-kheng is the village blacksmith. The blacksmith was the only person who could manufacture or repair war weapons or agricultural tools. The *sie-kheng* neither owned land nor cultivated land. He lived on the remuneration given in return for the services he rendered to the village households. In return for his service, he was given one basket of rice (a share lesser than that of the chief) by every household annually.³³ He was also exempted from both annual payments of *tangseu* and compulsory labour.³⁴

5.7 *Lawm*:

Lawm was a corporate labour youth organization in the early Zou villages. The members worked together in the agricultural fields. Three types of *lawm* were formed in every village. Each organization was led by a leader called *lawm lamkai*, whom the members obeyed and respected.³⁵

The primary function of *lawm* was mainly concerned with the village's economic life. All the able-bodied persons, men and women, joined this organization and formed a group according to their age. Based on the age group of the members, three types of *lawm* were found in every village.

- a) Senior Labour Group – Senior boys and girls, and even newly married men, could become members of this group.
- b) Intermediate Labour Group – Junior unmarried boys and girls joined this group.
- c) Junior Labour Group - The members were young boys and girls aged 15 to 20.³⁶

According to the system of *lawm*, the number of labours, other than in his agricultural field, attended to by a *lawm* member would be credited to his name, and

³³ Khamchinkhai, "Transition of Zou Society," 4.

³⁴ Enkthothang, interview.

³⁵ Ginzagou Samte, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Churachandpur, May 5, 2018.

³⁶ Khamchinkhai, "Transition of Zou Society," 57.

the same number of labours he earned would be repaid by other members with labour.³⁷ In this way, the *lawm* members mutually assisted each other. A unique system of *Lawm* was to work in the agricultural field of each member in rotation. When they were in the corporate labour circles, the owner of the agricultural field they worked in provided food with rice beer. They often sang songs while working and eased their tiredness with humour.³⁸ Apart from working in the agricultural field, the youths also helped the poor, the sick, and widows who could not afford to hire certain persons to cultivate their fields.

Lawm could be hired by any householder or the chief of the village. In return, the person who engaged the *lawm* should arrange a feast and drinks for members of the organization. But the day for the arrangement of such a feast and drink should be the day itself or on a later day. Each labour group generally reared a pig and brewed pots of rice beer for feasting and drinking at the end of cultivation called *lawm juneh le lawm sialkai*.³⁹ This occasion was held in merriment; both men and women sang and danced together the whole night. Generally, it lasted for one or more days. This occasion was considered one of the greatest merriments for the youths.

Lawm was an organization that gave leadership training to the village's young people. It was an organization where the young ones learned a sense of duty and dignity of labour. Moreover, *lawm* also kept a village self-sufficient in matters of physical labour.

5.8 Village Council:

The chief, *khawnbawl upa*, *tangsam*, *siempu* and *sie-kheng*, constitute the village council. The chief is the head of the council. The chief's house acts as the courthouse. The chief's court, which can settle any case, is the most powerful body in the village.

³⁷ Enkthothang, interview.

³⁸ Henkhun Lhungdim, "Social and Cultural Life of the Zou Tribe" (MA Dissertation, Centre of Post Graduate Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Imphal, 1980), 55.

³⁹ It is an occasion of merriment of the labour youth group in a village, usually held at the end of cultivation in which the youths drank rice beer and feasted. The rice beer and the animals were brewed and reared for this occasion. Women and men sang and danced the whole night.

The council's meeting was presided over by the chief. The chief's court tried different cases. It tried cases ranging from petty to even criminal cases. While trying various cases, the council had to observe the traditional customs and practices, and any decision made was to be approved by the village's households. The villagers were bound by custom to obey the verdict of the council. Otherwise, they could be heavily punished or even expelled from the village.⁴⁰

The village council's duty was to distribute land to the villagers. The council discussed and reviewed all matters concerning the village and the villagers. In times of tribal warfare, the council chalked out strategies for future action plans.

5.9 *Thachiel*:

Thachiel is seeking assistance from a person from his neighbours, friends, relatives, and villagers when he can not complete his work due to sickness or other reasons. For example, a person who wants to construct a new house collects all the required materials from the forest, such as posts, thatches, bamboo, wooden planks, etc. After the collection, unfortunately, he can no longer continue to construct his house due to the reasons cited above. Therefore, in such a situation, the concerned person will fix a date and arrange a feast for the invitees, usually with pork or meat. The invitees will perform the work and, after completion, enjoy the feast and go back without any remuneration. There is no fixed work or purpose for which *thachiel* can be called. It can be tilling one's paddy field, demolishing an old house, constructing a new house, or reaping crops during harvest times.⁴¹

5.10 *Khuomuol*:

Khuomuol is built near the entrance of the village. It is important for the Zous because it is used for all political, religious, and social occasions. It is used as a resting place for all villagers or guests. During the days of headhunting, the heads of the enemies killed were kept at *khuomuol*. It is also a place for performing all sorts of

⁴⁰ Lachinkhai, interview.

⁴¹ Suankhanmang, interview.

rites.⁴² *Khuomuol* is a place where a hunter who killed a wild animal, like deer, tiger, bear, etc., is welcomed by the villagers. A successful hunter party tied the hunted animal to a wooden pole and brought the animals together on their shoulders. When they reached the *khuomuol*, they were received with applause by the people, and rice beer was offered to them. At *khuomuol*, the hunter chanted a song of self-acclamation, proclaiming his heroic deeds and citing at the top of his voice the names of his brave ancestors, and blank fired his gun in the air. This is called *hanla sa*.⁴³ The hunter and other persons well versed in the art also shouted and proclaimed the *hanla* in praise of the heroic hunter. It is a place for welcoming the guests or a point to see off guests or persons leaving the village. Thus, *khuomuol* serves as an important place for the village community.

5.11 Village Court, Customary Law and Settlements

Various cases, ranging from petty to criminal cases within the village, are brought to the village court at the chief's house for settlement. Usually, most cases are settled by household councils of the two parties based on mutual consent, and in some instances that the *inndongta* failed to solve are referred to the village court. The chief's house serves as the village court.⁴⁴ It is the final authority in resolving disputes in the early Zou villages. The jury consists of the chief as the chairman and other members, such as the council of Elders, village officials, etc. Various cases are tried and settlements are made based on traditional customs and practices.⁴⁵

In a sitting, the members of the village court make decisions, but the chief gives the final judgment. When a case is filed in the village court, a date and time for a hearing are fixed. Both parties are summoned to appear before the village court, and the witnesses on each side are interrogated. If the evidences given by the witnesses are found to be valid, punishment is awarded. When a case is difficult to

⁴² Gangte, 137.

⁴³ T. Kamchinkhup, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Sugnu, March 7, 2018.

⁴⁴ Lachinkhai, interview.

⁴⁵ Suankhanmang, interview.

resolve due to insufficient evidence, trial by ordeal is resorted to in the Zou community.⁴⁶

The nature of punishment or penalty imposed on the offender or culprit mainly involved fines in kind in the pre-colonial period. Later, it was either in cash or kind or both. Even in criminal offenses, the guilty person was awarded a penalty by way of fines, as there was no jail for the custody of the criminals. Payment of penalties in kind was primarily realized in *siel kengding* (live gayal), *sielpi* (full-grown gayal), and *sielquol* (young gayal). When *siel* (gayal) was unavailable, cow, ox, or buffalo was taken as equivalent to *siel*. Generally, the requirements for settling any dispute are *innpi sap*, *zubel*, *sielpi* and *salam*.⁴⁷ The highest form of punishment is *sielpi le salam* - fines of one gayal, a *zubel*, and the killing of a pig for a feast.⁴⁸ *Innpi sap* was usually a small pot of rice beer. Later, Rs 2/- cash payment is also accepted.

The traditional ways of settling different cases were as follows:

5.11.1 Cases related to Human Society:

When any offence against human beings is committed, the case is brought to the village court. The chief initiates the process for adjudication and settlement of the case. The chief summons the offender and the victim's family member to his house. The case is tried by the chief and his council of Elders. Accordingly, a fine is imposed depending on the magnitude of the offense committed by the offender.

5.11.1.1 Criminal Cases:

A person who causes death to another person will rush to the chief's house for his safety. It is a custom for the chief to protect the criminal who takes refuge in his house. The Zou chief and his *upa* try the case, and punishment is awarded

⁴⁶ Lhungdim, "Social and Cultural Life," 13.

⁴⁷ A punitive fine of one full-grown gayal and killing of a four-legged animal, preferably a medium-sized pig.

⁴⁸ Kamchinkhup, interview.

depending on the nature of the offense, unintentional or intentional, committed by the offender.⁴⁹

If a person, without any intention, causes death to another person, it is regarded as an accident (*khutkhiel-bankhiel*). Such unintentional murder is fined *Innpi sap*, a *zubel*, and one traditional Zou shawl to cover the corpse. The offender has to arrange *kosa* by killing one domesticated animal, preferably a pig. He shall seek a truce called *hiemkham* by offering *zubel* and arranging *salam* to the bereaved family. He also has to pay a fine of five *sielpi*.⁵⁰

If a person intentionally causes death to another person, it is called murder (*tuolthat*). Such a case is considered serious by the Zous, and the person committing such a crime is heavily fined. The culprit is fined *innpi sap*, a *zubel*, and one traditional Zou shawl to cover the corpse. He is also bound to tender an apology to the victim's family for his crime and also shall offer a *zubel* and kill an animal as *salam*, which is considered an act of truce. The culprit also has to kill a pig for *kosa*, and another pig for *innsiensuohna* (an act of cleansing the house).⁵¹ He also has to pay a fine of ten *siel kengding* to the victim's family.

If a person accidentally injures another person, he has to bear the expenses incurred in treating the injured person. But if the injured person died after receiving treatment for some months, the offender is obliged to fine as in the case of accidental killing of a person.⁵²

In a fight or physical assault, where there is unintentional bloodshed, the person who shed the first blood is considered an offender, and he is usually fined a *salam* and a *gayal*. He also has to bear the expenses incurred in treating the injured

⁴⁹ Suankhanmang, interview.

⁵⁰ Zumpi, 2005, 14.

⁵¹ Vummang and Jamkhogin, *The Jou Custom Book (Tondan)* (Imphal: Nengjakham and Sianjahao, 1957), 2.

⁵² Johny Lalbiaklian, "The Zou Customary Laws: Continuity and Change" (M.Phil. Dissertation, North-Eastern Hills University, 1996), 80.

person. On recovery of the injured person, the offender has to kill a pig as an act of reconciliation.⁵³

If a person intentionally causes injury to another person by using a knife, axe, or gun, it is considered attempted murder. The offender is fined *zubel* and *innpi sap*. He shall seek compromise with the victim's family with *zubel* and *salam*. He is also to bear the expenses of the injured person's medical treatment and pay a fine of five gayals. If the injured person dies, the offender has to arrange a funeral feast by killing a pig and also cover the dead body with a Zou traditional shawl. He is also to pay five gayals to the victim's family.⁵⁴

5.11.1.2 Suol (Rape):

In the Zou society, if a man attempts to spoil or spoil the chastity of a woman without her consent by using force or by threatening her with death or other means, it is called *suol*. For such a case, a complaint is brought to the village court, where the chief and his *upa* take the matter for settlement. The accused and the accuser are asked to appear before the village court, and the witnesses on each side are interrogated. If the evidence given by the complainant and her witnesses is correct, the accused is declared guilty of the crime, and punishment is awarded.⁵⁵ If the culprit fails in the rape, he has to pay fines of *innpi sap*, *zubel* and *salam* to the village court and one *siel* to the victim. In case the man is successful in the rape, he is bound to pay fines of *innpi sap*, *zubel*, and *salam*, and he also has to pay five *siel* to the victim.⁵⁶

If the victim gets pregnant, the child is to be looked after by the mother until the age of three years. It is the sole responsibility of the father to bear the expenditure incurred on the child during these years, and he also shall not blame the mother in the

⁵³ S. Khamzakhai, *Zou Pu le Pi Tawndan (The Customary Practices of the Zous)* (Imphal: Goodwill Press, 1985), 4.

⁵⁴ Zumpi, 2005, 14-15.

⁵⁵ Suankhanmang, interview.

⁵⁶ Haochinthong. *Zou Sung Kivaihawmna (Administration Among the Zou Tribes)* (Lamka: M/S Express, 1988), 41.

event of the death of the child. After the completion of three years, the father has to take the child into his custody after paying one *gayal* to the mother.⁵⁷

5.11.1.3 *Nawi mek* (Touching a Woman's Breast):

If a man touches the breast of any woman without her consent, then it is an offence, and he is bound to pay a fine of one *gayal*.⁵⁸

5.11.1.4 *Inn kibulu* (Intrusion into a Person's House):

If a person intrudes into another person's house and inflicts injury to the owner of the house or causes damage to the household property, the offender is liable to fine *innpi sap*, *zubel*, *salam*, and one *sielpi*. The offender also has to bear the expenses incurred in treating the injured person and repairing the damaged property.⁵⁹ If the victim dies, the offender is bound to pay *innpi sap* and a *zubel* to the chief, one traditional Zou shawl to cover the corpse. He is to offer *zubel* and *salam* as *hiemkham*, an act of seeking a truce with the victim's family. He shall also pay a fine of ten *siel kengding* to the victim's family.

5.11.1.5 *Guta-Lata* (Larceny):

Taking away the property of others without the knowledge and consent of the owner is considered theft. A person who committed such an act surrendered himself to the chief's house for safety. Otherwise, he could be beaten black and blue or even killed. If a thief is caught red-handed in the village, he is penalized. He is to restore the stolen items to the owner, or a fine to be paid by him will be calculated according to the value of the stolen items. Further, he is also fined a *zubel* and *salam*.⁶⁰ The chief and his *upa* can even banish the thief and his family from the village. However, if food crops are robbed due to poverty, the chief and his *upa* ask the person involved to swear in the name of God that he would rather die than steal again, and as such, he

⁵⁷ Vummang and Jamkhogin, 7.

⁵⁸ Lalbiaklian, 86.

⁵⁹ Lalbiaklian, 83.

⁶⁰ M.Suankhanmang, "Zou Custom (Zou Tawndan)," *Proceedings of the First Indo-Myanmar International Seminar on Zou Language, Literature, Culture and Custom*, ed. Aloysius T. Nehkhojang (Churachandpur: Xavier Nengkhanlam and T. Lamkhotong, 2013), 53.

is forgiven.⁶¹ Otherwise, he is forced to return the food grains and is liable to be fined a *zubel*.

5.11.1.6 *Mi zi laahsah* (Elopement with another's wife):

If a man elopes with the wife of another person, it is called *mi zi laahsah*, and the act of the man is considered an offence. The man is liable for a fine of *innpi sap* and one *siel kengding* and also has to refund the bride price and other expenditures concerning the marriage to the former husband.⁶² The man also has to arrange a feast of *salam* with a *zubel* and shall offer it to the first husband as a sign of tendering an apology for the atonement of the crime he committed, i.e., for breaking their marriage ties.

5.11.1.7 *Adultery (Angkawm)*:

If a man sleeps with a married woman, it is *angkawm* or adultery. The man who committed such an act is liable to pay a fine of one *siel kending*, *zubel* and *salam*. If the man wants to marry her, the customary practice of paying the bride's price is to be negotiated afresh with the woman's family. The woman is considered to be divorcing her former husband, and she has to refund the bride's price paid by her former husband. She will also forfeit all the properties she had brought at the time of the first marriage.

5.11.1.8 Cases related to Engagement (*Mou kham*)

Disputes arise when engagement is broken or violated by either of them or by a third party. If someone other than the persons engaged causes the breakup of *zu-um tun*, he has to return the expenditures incurred on rice beer. He is also fined one *gayal*.⁶³ If, after *neita kham*, the girl is not married by the boy, a fine called *neitanman* of one *gayal* is to be paid to the girl's parents.⁶⁴ If the girl violates the engagement, the girl's parent has to return the pot of rice beer and be fined one *siel*.

⁶¹ Vummang and Jamkhogin, 12.

⁶² Zumpi, 2005, 18.

⁶³ Ginzagou, interview.

⁶⁴ Vummang and Jamkhogin, 13.

A fine for the third party who has interfered in the engagement is *zubel*, *salam*, and a *sielpi*.⁶⁵

5.11.1.9 *Zawlgai* (Illegitimate Pregnancy):

When a man and woman sleep together without getting married, and the woman becomes pregnant, it is called *zawlgai* or illegitimate pregnancy. If the man is willing to marry the woman, the traditional procedure for marriage based on customary practices is followed. But when the man refuses to marry the woman, he will be fined *innpi sap*, *salam* and offer *zubel* and one *siel kengding*.⁶⁶

5.11.1.10 *Zawltai* (Elopement):

In such cases, *patong* (messengers) are sent by the boy's family with a clay pot of *zu* to the girl's family to tender an apology for eloping the girl with their son. If the girl's parents reject the apology or the man refuses to marry the girl, a fine of one *sielpi*, *salam* and *zubel* will be offered to the woman's family.⁶⁷

5.11.1.11 Cases related to *Ki Khenna* (Divorce):

Though the Zou society is against divorce, there are some instances in which divorce is inevitable. When such cases are brought to the village court, the chief and his *upa* settle them and ensure that customary procedures are performed. But if a wife is divorced while she is pregnant or with a baby, the child will be in the custody of the mother for three years.⁶⁸ The father will bear all the expenditure on the child during these years. After three years, he has to take back the child with one *siel* or an equivalent amount of money. If the baby meets any misfortune, including death, the mother can not be blamed for it.⁶⁹ The customary procedures to be performed due to divorce are: -

⁶⁵ Zumpi, 2005, 25.

⁶⁶ Lalbiaklian, 70.

⁶⁷ Suankhanmang, interview.

⁶⁸ Lalbiaklian, 67.

⁶⁹ Zumpi, 2005, 16.

5.11.1.11.1 *Khul*:

If a husband seeks to divorce his wife without fault, it is called *khul*. He is liable to pay *innpi sap* to the chief and arrange *salam* in the chief's residence. He also has to pay the divorced wife a fine of one *sielpi*. He has to return all the bridal properties she brought as *mou vanken*.⁷⁰ In addition, he can not reclaim the marriage payments he had made at the time of the marriage. If the wife is *sisan pal*, he has to pay the balance of her price, but if the wife is *sisan pallo*, he does not have to pay the balance.

5.11.1.11.2 *Man le*:

When a woman refuses to remain with her husband due to certain inevitable circumstances and returns her bride's price to her husband, she is considered to be divorcing her husband, and such a kind of divorce is called *man le*.⁷¹ As she has initiated the divorce, she will forfeit all the properties she brought as *mou vanken* at the time of marriage. The woman also can not reclaim all the expenditure incurred on rice-beer and animal (s) on her marriage.⁷²

5.11.1.11.3 *Angkawm* (Adultery):

If a divorce occurs due to the husband having committed adultery, he is liable to pay a fine of six *siel kengding*. He also has to pay *innpi sap* to the chief and arrange *salam* in the chief's house. He has to return all the articles that his wife brought as *mou vanken*. In addition, he can not reclaim the marriage payments he has made. If the wife is *sisan pal*, he has to pay the balance of her price, but if the wife is *sisan pallo*, he does not have to pay the balance.⁷³

In case divorce occurs on the grounds of the wife committing adultery, she has to refund the bride prices paid by her husband. She will forfeit all the properties

⁷⁰ Lalbiaklian, 67.

⁷¹ Suankhanmang, interview.

⁷² Vummang and Jamkhogin, 5.

⁷³ Zumpi, 2005, 16.

that she has brought as *mou vanken*. In addition to this, all the expenditure incurred on rice-beer and animal (s) for her marriage can not be reclaimed.⁷⁴

5.11.2 Cases Related to Animals:

If any person inflicts injury or causes death to a domestic animal, it is considered an offense. When such an offence is committed, the animal owner takes the case to the chief's house for settlement. On the other hand, when an animal causes injury or death to a person, the case is brought to the chief's court. The chief and his *upa* decide the case, and depending on the seriousness of the offence, a penalty or fine is imposed on the offender. But in the case of an animal that causes injury or death to a person, the animal's owner is held responsible for the offence, and the penalty or a fine is imposed upon him. The nature of the penalty is fines, either in cash, kind, or both.⁷⁵

If a person instigates another person to cause injury to a domesticated animal, it is called *michil a ganta suhliem* (Instigation of a person to inflict injury to a domesticated animal). The instigator is usually fined a *zubel*, *salam*, and bearing the expenses for the treatment of the animal.⁷⁶

If a person instigates another person to kill a domestic animal, it is regarded as *michil a ganta that* (Instigation of a person to cause death to a domestic animal). The instigator and the killer have to bear the cost of the animal by sharing the price equally.

If a person mistakes a domesticated animal as a wild animal and inflicts injury, such an offence is considered *innsa tunga khut-khiel* (Accidental injury to a domestic animal). The person has to tender an apology to the owner by offering *zubel*. If the domesticated animal dies, the offender and the owner have to share the

⁷⁴ Zumpi, 2005, 16.

⁷⁵ Kamchinkhup, interview.

⁷⁶ Lalbiaklian, 80.

animal's flesh equally. The offender will also pay half of the price of the animal to the owner of the animal.⁷⁷

If any person causes animals to fight and injures one of the two animals, it is taken as *ganta suhtuo* (Instigating animals to fight). It is the responsibility of the person to look after the wounded animal. He also shall seek forgiveness from the animal's owner. In case the animal dies as a result of fighting, the person is liable to a fine of a *zubel* and *salam*, and he has to pay cash equivalent to the value of the dead animal to its owner.⁷⁸

If a domesticated animal has injured a person, the animal's owner has to seek compromise with a *zubel*. He is liable to bear all the expenses incurred in treating the injured person. On recovery of the injured person, the owner shall kill one animal.⁷⁹ In case the victim dies, the animal shall be killed at a funeral feast called *kosa*. The owner of the animal is bound to pay a fine of five *siel* to the bereaved family, and it is also compulsory to cover the corpse with a Zou traditional shawl.⁸⁰

5.11.3 Miscellaneous Cases:

5.11.3.1 *Hamkhiel* (Calumny):

If a person is wrongly addressed or accused of possessing a demon or evil spirit, a slave or servant, thief or robber; speaking certain words when he or she actually does not, it is an offence. Fines of *innpi sap*, *zubel*, *salam*, and *sielpi* are imposed on the offender.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Vummang and Jamkhogin, 11.

⁷⁸ Zumpi, 2005, 23.

⁷⁹ Zumpi, 2005, 23-24.

⁸⁰ Haochinthong, 46.

⁸¹ Vummang and Jamkhogin, 10.

5.11.3.2 *Inn a mi si* (Death in Another's House):

If a guest or a traveler dies in the house of another person, it is considered that the house has been made unclean by a dead body, and the bereaved family of the deceased has to sanctify the house with a *zubel*, a dog, and a pig.⁸²

5.11.3.3 *Inn subuah* (Defilement of One's House):

If a man and woman engage in a sexual or immoral act in the house of another man's house, it is called *inn subuah* (defilement of one's house). The man is liable to pay a fine of one gayal.

5.11.4 Ordeals for Settlement of Civil and Criminal Cases:

As stated above, the chief and his elders settle all sorts of disputes in the village. However, some cases cannot be settled due to a lack of sufficient evidence. In such cases, each party claims that they are right. In such a situation, the village court resorts to trial by ordeal. The common types of ordeals are *kichiem* (swearing), *ai-tui dawn* (drinking the juice of the *ai* plant), and *tuilut* (diving underwater).

5.11.4.1 *Kichiem* (Swearing):

Kichiem, or swearing, is one of the ordeals of settling cases and is considered final. This type of ordeal is done in the presence of the *siempu* and the elders. Generally, the accused does the swearing, and if the case is decided in favour of him/her, the accuser will incur the court fee and all other expenses.⁸³ If both parties take the oath, the case is decided only after a few months. Swearing can be made verbally, stating that he will be a prey to a tiger; he will be drowned in water, enemies will kill him, etc. If the accused refuses to employ any of the above swearing, he will be declared the offender and considered guilty.⁸⁴

⁸² Khamzakhai, 10.

⁸³ Kamchinkhup, interview.

⁸⁴ Suankhanmang, interview.

5.11.4.2 *Ai tui dawn*:

Ai tui dawn is considered the most solemn of all the ordeals. Water is mixed with herbs called *ai* and poured into a dead man's skull or a gourd scoop. The mixture is filled with the teeth of the tiger and charcoal, representing natural, powerful, and harmful to human beings. The priest curses the mixture to disclose the truth in the dispute. Then, the priest asks both of them to drink the mixture. The person who lies will die on or before the fixed time.⁸⁵

5.11.4.3 *Tuilut* (Diving):

Tuilut, or diving underwater, is another ordeal that is resorted to settling disputes. In this type of ordeal, the priest will perform an incantation ritual with an egg on the bank of the river, and both parties will spell out an oath by standing about breast-deep in the water. Immediately after the oath-taking, the chief and the priest signal the two persons to immerse themselves in the water. The one who comes out first is the loser. In the event of a draw, both parties bear all the expenses for the ordeal.

5.12 Inter-Village Relations:

In human society, whether primitive or civilized, the people maintained certain sets of relationships among themselves. The village is usually an effective social group. Any non-member of this group may be treated as a friend or foe according to the established relationship.

In the pre-colonial era, the people were confined mainly to their village. Certain factors made them confined to their village. In those days, human wants were limited, probably because of the insular lifestyle. The constant hostility and war among the different tribes restricted their movement. Whatever might be the reason, inter-village relationships existed despite difficulties.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Ginzagou, interview.

⁸⁶ Khasim Ruivah, *Social Change Among the Nagas (Tangkhul)* (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1993), 201.

In the olden days, people migrated from one village to another. It is quite certain that at least some kind of relationship existed between the villages. This system enhanced the inter-mixture of clans within the village itself, and as a result, a closer inter-village relationship was brought about.⁸⁷

One of the important means of achieving closer inter-village relationships was the inter-marriage system between one village and another village. In the days of headhunting, marriage with a girl from another village was considered one of the most incredible feats for a man.⁸⁸ This matrimony allowed a man to enjoy considerable privileges and freedom in his village and his wife's parental village. It was a special privilege for him and his clan members, as well as for all the households in the village.

5.13 The Zou Chiefs and the British:

The Zou chiefs enjoyed absolute power within their respective chiefdoms. All members of the council of elders and village officials were appointed by him. When the British attempted to recruit coolies to serve as labour corps in France, the Zou chiefs felt that it was an encroachment in their chiefdoms and bluntly refused to send their men. It led to the outbreak of Zou Gal, which lasted from 1917 to 1919.

5.14 Attempts to Change in the Administration of the Hill Areas:

Over the years, attempts were made to bring changes in the administration of the hill areas in general and the administration of the villages in particular. The Zou Gal, 1917-1919, Manipur Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulations, 1947, and the Manipur Village Authorities in Hill Areas Act, 1956, were used to attempt to bring change in the hill areas.

5.14.1 The Zou Gal and the Hill Administration:

As a consequence of the Zou Gal, 1917-1919, the whole administration was reorganized. A scheme for better administration of the hill areas was introduced.

⁸⁷ Lunchinthang, interview.

⁸⁸ Lachinkhai, interview.

Under the new scheme, three new subdivisions were formed, which were to be placed under European Sub-Divisional Officers, who were directly accountable to the President of the Durbar. The new subdivisions were the southwest area, with headquarters at Songpi placed under B.C. Gasper, the northwest area with headquarters at Tamenglong under William Shaw, and the northeast area with headquarters at Ukhrul under L.L. Peters.⁸⁹ Thus, as a result of the Zou Gal, the hill areas were, for the first time, brought under the intensified political and administrative control of the British imperial power.⁹⁰

5.14.2 The Manipur Hill Peoples' (Administration) Regulations, 1947 and the Village Authority:

Chieftainship is hereditary in the hill areas of Manipur. The village chiefs, including the Zou chiefs, enjoy absolute powers within their respective chiefdoms. However, the Manipur Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation, 1947, provides for reducing many tribal chiefs of smaller villages, with less than 20 tax-paying houses, to unrecognized chiefs.⁹¹ Though this act was short-lived and was not implemented, it was an attempt to reduce the power of the village chiefs to merely nominated chiefs.

5.14.3 The MVAHAA, 1956 and the Village Authority:

The Government of Manipur passed an Act known as The Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act of 1956. According to this Act, a village chief remains the ex-officio chairman of the village authority, while all other members shall be elected from among the villagers.⁹² The other important village officials, like the village priest, the village crier, and the village blacksmith, are not given seats in the

⁸⁹ Lal Dena, ed., *History of Modern Manipur (1762-1949)* (Imphal: Reliable Book Centre, Third Revised Edition 2012), 132-133.

⁹⁰ Dena, *History of Manipur*, 133.

⁹¹ Ngamzahao Kipgen, "Land Laws, Ownership and Tribal Identity: The Manipur Experience," *Marginalities in India: Themes and Perspectives*, eds. Asmita Bhattacharya and Sudeep Basu (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2018), 118. Doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5215-6>.

⁹² Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, File No. 12(5) - J/II/55, 1955, (Judicial II Section), Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act, 1956, 36. URL: <https://indianculture.gov.in/archives/replacement-manipur-state-hill-peoples-administration-regulation-1947-fresh-regulation>.

village authority. These systems of election of the Authority members reduce to a great extent the powers of the village chief in administering the villages and in exercising control over his authority members. The authority members owe allegiance to their electorate rather than the village chief. On the other hand, control of the village authority is exercised by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate and is subject to the general supervision and control of the Deputy Commissioner. However, this act is also not implemented by the Government of Manipur.

5.15 Conclusion:

It is seen that the Zou chief enjoyed absolute power within his chiefdom. He occupied a unique position in the village. Though, in theory, the chief appeared despotic, in reality, he was a paternal chief over his villagers, and the Zou village administration was democratic in character. The chief acted as the guardian, treated the villagers with equal love and affection, and helped them in times of need and trouble. He was responsible for protecting the villagers from external aggression and danger. All the households of the village were bound by custom to obey him. While administering justice, the chief and other members of the village council were guided by the traditional Zou customary practices. The administration system was the most effective way to maintain law and order in society. It also ensured peace and tranquility, social justice, social harmony, and cohesion among the people.

The Zous had been loyal to their chiefs since the pre-colonial period. Under their chiefs, an attempt was made to oust the British imperialists from Manipur. It is known locally as Zou Gal (1917-1919). Though the attempt was not successful, it was a bold attempt on the part of the Zous, thereby leaving a rich legacy in the history of Manipur.

The Zou Gal resulted in the hill areas being brought up for the first time under the British imperial power's intensified political and administrative control. Attempts were also made by the then government to undermine the power and position of the village chief. The Manipur Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation, 1947, attempts to reduce many tribal chiefs, including the Zou chiefs, to

unrecognized chiefs. Subsequently, under the Manipur (Village Authority in Hill Areas) Act, 1956, an attempt was made to reduce the chief to an ex-officio chairman of the village authority. The sub-divisional magistrate exercised control over the village authorities, but ultimate control was with the commissioner. As the two Acts were not implemented due to certain reasons, there was a minor change in the administration of the Hill areas.

Chapter 6

Traditional Belief System and the Advent of Christianity

6.1 Introduction:

From time immemorial, the various ethnic groups of the world have certain beliefs that have shaped their way of life and these beliefs are loosely termed as ‘religion.’ Religion is defined as a personal set of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices.¹ Edward Burnett Tylor defined religion as a belief in the supernatural.² Each group of society in the world has a traditional method of subordinating them through occultism practices, rites, rituals, and ceremonies in accompaniment with offerings, prayer, or sacrifices to appease or to pacify them to enjoy a trouble-free life. The Zous do not have precise terms that may correspond to the English word ‘religion.’

The Zous believed in the existence of one Supreme Being. They addressed Him as *Pasien*. *Lungzai* was another god. It is to be noted here that the Zous did not worship any celestial bodies such as the moon, the sun, or the stars. The traditional and religious practices of the early Zous were *pusa biahna* (ancestor worship) and animism. Every household performed *pusa biahna*. The Zous were superstitious in their belief and believed that the spirits that inhabited the world possessed supernatural and divine powers. Therefore, the daily life of the Zou revolved around appeasing the spirits to avoid their wrath.

6.2 Belief in a Supreme Being:

Belief in the existence of one Supreme Being is central to the religion of the early Zous. He is believed to be the highest benevolent God. The Supreme Being is

¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica Company, *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “Religion,” accessed February 14, 2024. URL: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/religion#dictionary-entry-1>

² Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom* Vol. I (New York: John Murray, Reprinted 1920), 424.

addressed as *Pasien* (Holy Father) or *Tung Pasien* (Holy Father of the above). *Tung* means ‘above,’ denoting the abode of *Pasien*, who is believed to be high up in the sky. He is the creator of heaven, the earth and all living beings and non-living things. He is also believed to possess power over natural forces. For instance, when a violent storm blew or an earthquake occurred, the Zous would say, “*Ka Pasien uh, za ngai aw*” (Our God, be merciful). It was believed that *Pasien* is watching human beings from above and always upholds justice. They would say, *Pasien in theina* (God knows)’ when injustice was administered upon them.³ The Zous invoked *Pasien* on every important festival and social occasion.

The Zous also believed in the existence of another god called *Lungzai*. There is a belief that *Pasien* and *Lungzai* coexisted in inequality. For instance, while making offerings, the Zous usually uttered, “*Ka Pasien ka Lungzai na tai aw...*” (My God, my lesser god, be satisfied). In some cases, *Lungzai* was the spiritual form of *Pasien*.⁴ Some believed that *Lungzai* was an assistant of God, while others thought he was the brother of *Pasien*.⁵ There was yet another belief that *Lungzai* was the wife of *Pasien*, an equally powerful being who shared power with Him. Generally, *Lungzai*, with lesser power and might or a less powerful spirit, was regarded as the god of this world, and *Pasien* is the God of the above.⁶

Both *Pasien* and *Lungzai* were the judges of living beings during their lifetime. The traditional folktale of the Zous, called *Neinou* and *Nantal*, proved it, where a man named *Nantal* and a man-lion were engaged in a fierce fight over a girl called *Neino*. Both the Gods decided to help man, who always thanked them as givers of food and drink. The result was that the man-lion was defeated and killed.

Though *Pasien* and *Lungzai* were considered benevolent beings with little interest or influence in ordinary human life, the Zous always appeased them and did

³ Mangkhosat Kipgen, *Christianity and Mizo Culture: The Encounter between Christianity and Zo Culture in Mizoram* (Jorhat: The Mizo Theological Conference, 1996), 116.

⁴ Ginneihching, “The History and Culture of the Simte Tribe in Manipur” (PhD Thesis, Manipur University, 2012), 155.

⁵ Philip Thanglienmang, “A Descriptive Grammar of the Zo Language” (PhD Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2012), 111.

⁶ S. Prim Vaiphei, *The Vaiphei Tribe* (Imphal: Author, 1975), 23.

not forget them, even for a small function.⁷ They were invoked on all important festivals and social occasions. The Zous also invited them to drink rice and beer and eat meat at ritual functions.⁸

6.3 Ancestral Worship (*Pusa Biehna*):

Pusa biehna was the leading traditional religious practice of the Zous since time immemorial. It was a ritual of offering to *pusa* by every household of the Zous. In *pusa biehna*, *pu* means ‘forefathers,’ *sa* means ‘spirit,’ and *biehna* means ‘worship/sacrifice.’ Therefore, *pusa biehna* means ‘ancestral worship or sacrifice to the spirits of the forefathers.’ It was also called *pusa-pasa*, which means ‘the spirit of our forefathers and fathers.’ Every clan had its *pusa*, which was placated and appeased during the festivals of *khuodo paw*i, *ton*, *mim- ai*, *tang-ai*, etc. The central pillar, called *sutpi*, was used as an altar for offering food and drinks in every house. It is unknown exactly how the sacrifices of *pusa* originated. *Sa* was likely once the guardian spirit of the Zous’ ancestors. Later on, it was probably conceived and handed down from generation to generation as if it represented the personal spirits of the ancestors.⁹ There was no date or fixed time for this rite of offering.

Tradition believed that the *pusa* had the power of blessing or cursing. The prosperity and fortune of the individual or a family depended on whether the *pusa* was pleased with them. In the worship of ancestors, every household or clan invoked the spirits of the ancestors to shower great blessings in wealth, health, and good harvests to every household or clan. The *pusa* built up, protected, and cared for the family. If one neglected these sacrifices, the *pusa* would become angry and withdraw their protection.¹⁰ Withdrawal of protection could result in frequent illness and misfortune in the family.

It was believed that the spirits of the dead ancestors, in their human nature, continued to visit their families. The *tulpi* kept the ancestral spirits in good humour

⁷ Langchinlien Mantuong, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Nangkateih, Myanmar, March 23, 2018.

⁸ Khamchinkhai, “Transition of Zou Society from Animism to Christianity: A Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Analysis” (MTh Thesis, Serampore College, 2004), 32.

⁹ Ginneiching, 176.

¹⁰ Animesh Ray, *Mizoram* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1993), 100.

and he was the only person who could officiate in the rites and rituals of ancestral worship. In his absence, his wife could administer the rites and rituals. If a family was residing in a distant village, the clan priest could entrust a senior-most man of his clan of that village to administer the rites and rituals on his behalf. The clan priest appeased the spirits of his ancestors by reciting the personal names of the pedigrees of successive generations, one by one, while administering the rites and rituals of *pusa biehna*. After reciting each name, he poured a gourd scoop of water on the altar.¹¹ The clan priest should not miss any name while reciting the personal names of the pedigrees of successive generations.

When a person fell ill, suspected to be caused by *pusa*, a tube filled with water was placed at the foot of the central pillar, and the patient's hands were washed in that tube. A promise was made to the *pusa*, saying, “*Pusa, pasa bawl na hi le hing dam sah in, ka sialpi, ka bawngpi, ka vawhpi hing tha vang*” (If the spirits of grandfather and father are causing the illness, let it be cured, I would offer my full grown gayal, cow or pig). If the condition of the patient was better, one animal was slaughtered as a sacrificial animal. The sacrificial animals used for rites and rituals associated with worshipping *pusa* were gayal, buffalo, cow, pig and fowl. Any of these animals could be used depending on the patient's condition. However, cats and dogs were never killed for this sacrifice.¹² A wooden pole was not required to kill a pig or a fowl. Another object necessary for this rite was *zu*.

For killing big animals like gayal, buffalo, or cow as sacrificial animals, before starting the ritual process, a wooden pole of a *se sing* tree, called *song*, was erected in the courtyard. The animal was tied to the post, and a gourd full of rice beer was placed near it. The clan priest sprayed a mouthful of rice beer (if rice beer was not available, water could be used) three to four times on the sacrificial animal and uttered incantations called *phuisam*.

¹¹ Mannuamching, “Pulepate Biehna (Ancestors’ Worship),” in *Chinthu-Zaila (Prose & Poetry)*, eds. M. Liensuonkap and T. Nehkhojang (Churachandpur: Zou Literature Society, Second Edition 2012), 4.

¹² Kai Khan Lien, *Zo Ngaina Leh Kamham Zahdan (Zo Culture and Usage of Language)* (Kalaymyo: Author, 2016), 25.

On the day of ancestor worship, the family members in the house observed *ziatang*, by which they were forbidden to loiter. A leafy branch of a tree called *khiengsing* was put up in front of the house as a sign to let everyone know that the family was observing abstinence. Carey and Tuck also write this, “From time to time, a man sacrifices to his private household spirit, and when he does so, he closes his gate and sets up on it a green branch to let everyone know that they must leave him to commune with the spirit and not disturb him.”¹³

6.4 Spirits and Zou Society:

The early Zous believed that various kinds of supernatural spirits inhabited the world. While some spirits were benevolent, others were malevolent. The benevolent spirits blessed people with wealth, health and a rich harvest. The malevolent spirits were supposed to dwell in the thick forests, hills, mountains, trees, big rocks, streams, water, rivers, springs, forests, etc. It was believed that they were wicked and inimical to human beings. However, they would not harm a man unless provoked. When men unknowingly encroached upon the areas of their habitation, it made them angry, and they caused suffering, hardships, diseases, etc. Destructive natural forces, such as thunder, storms, earthquakes, lightning, epidemics, disease, famine, etc., were considered the manifestations of the wrath of the malevolent spirits. The Zous gave various names to these spirits, and they offered sacrifices to appease them. There were several myths and legends about mountain spirits and river spirits. They would harm travelers passing through their inhabited areas without appeasing them. Every village had a priest; his duty was to perform rites and rituals by chanting and offering sacrifices to appease the spirits.¹⁴

As the early Zous feared that the malevolent spirits would harm them if not appeased, they devoted much of their time and energy to propitiate them. However, they did not feel the need to appease the benevolent spirits. Some of the benevolent and malevolent spirits are as follows:

¹³ Bertram S. Carey and H.C. Tuck, *The Chin Hills: A History of the People, Our dealing with them, their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of Their Country*, Vol. I (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Reprinted 20 08), 199.

¹⁴ T. Kamchinkhup, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, Sugnu, March 7, 2018.

6.4.1 *Zinmang*:

Zinmang is an underworld spirit. It is malevolent or benevolent, depending on its appeasement.¹⁵ It was believed that underworld spirits ruled a very dark underworld kingdom. This wicked spirit was responsible for various types of illness, pestilence, plague, etc., causing suffering and death. To avoid its wrath, the spirit had to be appeased through incantations and offerings.

6.4.2 *Kau*:

Kau is a malevolent spirit. Certain persons possess it. This spirit is said to be of two kinds. One kind of *kau* is with a horn that can enter a person's body and has to stay forever. The other has no horn and can penetrate inside a person's body, but it cannot remain.¹⁶ *Kau* is also a greedy spirit that primarily attacked people who ate delicious food and wore beautiful clothes and ornaments. Once it entered inside a person's body, there were changes in the victim's personality. It changed the victim's voice, behaviour, and strength. Such attacks caused uneasiness, stomach aches and even death. The early Zous believed these evil spirits were present everywhere, and as such, before eating or drinking, they would drop or pour a little share of their food or drinks, saying – *kausiate pawt aw* (go away, evil spirits).¹⁷

The spirit could be released from a person's body either when it was appeased by fulfilling what it required or by threatening to kill it. The spirit was promised whatever it wished if it disclosed itself. The spirit was also threatened with a knife, a horn of deer, or covered the person with a fishing net. It was believed that if the victim were covered with a fishing net till death, the person who possessed the evil spirit would die, too. Sometimes, the evil spirit could not be released from the victim's body by such acts of appeasement and threat. Thus, the evil spirit killed the person.

It is believed that *kau* could be inherited from generation to generation. It is said that if a girl married a boy with such an evil spirit, she too would possess it once

¹⁵ Thanglienmang, "A Descriptive Grammar," 144.

¹⁶ Kamchinkhup, interview.

¹⁷ Khamchinkhai, "Transition of Zou society," 34.

she stepped into her husband's house. But if a boy married a girl with an evil spirit, he would get it only after a son was born.

6.4.3 *Gamkau*:

Gamkau means 'wild evil spirit.' *Gam* means 'wild' and *kau* means 'evil spirit.' The evil spirit was seen at night in a particular jungle area. A person who encountered such spirits could suffer severe illness. *Gamkau* used to charm a man and suck his blood. When a fire on the hillside was seen, it was believed that *Gamkau* was flying in search of food. The fire emitted by the evil spirit flying in the jungle was known as *kau-meide* (*mei de* – carrying fire).¹⁸

6.4.4 *Misau*:

Misau is a dangerous male spirit. It is said to be elastic in the body so that it can be tall or short as it wishes. When it appeared, it could be as tall as any tree nearby, and people who encountered it were frightened, and some even died out of shock. It is said to be very fond of sucking the blood of domestic fowls and used to hunt them at night in the village.¹⁹

6.4.5 *Pheisam*:

Pheisam is a spirit with one thigh only. *Phei* means 'thigh,' and *sam* means 'deficit.' Thus, *pheisam* means 'deficit of one thigh.' Though this spirit has only one leg, it does not lack physical strength. It can fly from one big tree to another. This spirit is said to fly at night. A trail of only one footprint left behind by it was usually seen on the sand bed of rivers. *Pheisam* is believed to have the power to control wild animals. Hunters were not successful unless this spirit permitted them. Hunters with friendly relations with *pheisam* could easily kill any wild animal.

This spirit was also reared at home.²⁰ It could appear to man as human beings or reveal themselves in dreams. It also had the power to make people rich or poor. A

¹⁸ Enkthothang Mate, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, M. Khaukual village, March 10, 2018.

¹⁹ M.Henkholun, interviewed by Thangsuanhang, M. Khawlmual village, March 10, 2018.

²⁰ Christopher Thongkhanthang Zou, "Zou Religious Tradition," *United Zomi Organization Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, ed. Thangchinsuan (Churachandpur: P. Tongthang Zou, 2004), 148.

person who worshipped it was blessed with wealth in the form of property, money, cattle, etc. But if the worship was stopped, *pheisam* became revengeful and withdrew all the blessings it had given to the worshipper, which could even cause the extinction of all his family members.²¹

6.4.6 *Thadam*:

The literal meaning of *thadam* is ‘spirit.’ They are the souls of dead people. The Zous believed that some souls of dead people did not go to heaven but remained on this earth. This spirit disturbed men in the village at night. It also threatened the people when they went to the jungle. They were heard like a man or woman weeping in the jungle.²² It is said that the *thadam* never disturbed a person who could not be frightened by it.

6.4.7 *Gulsamnu*

Gulsamnu is a female dragon or spirit. The *gulsamnu* guarded the narrow bridge between *misikhuo* and *pielgal*. This fiery spirit, with her tongues and swords, harassed the spirits of the dead, who had not killed even a deer during their lifetime. But the spirits who attained a unique position in their lifetime escaped such harassment.

6.4.8 *Siha*:

Siha is the ghost of a dead person that could be seen at night in either male or female forms. The word *si* means death, and *ha* means ghost. Hence, *siha* means ‘ghost of a dead person.’ After a dead body was buried, the spirit, having a body like that of a human being, could be seen at night.

²¹ Hemkhochon Chongloi, *Indoi: A Study of Primal Kuki Religious Symbolism in the Hermeneutical Framework of Mircea Eliade* (Delhi: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 137.

²² Kamchinkhup, interview.

6.4.9 Dawi:

Dawi means ‘demon/spirit.’ It can appear in a shape that resembles a human being. But these spirits are said to have had faces of various shapes and nails resembling wild animals' nails. Some of them have pointed faces, while others have curved faces. The Zous believed that these spirits kidnapped a person who had disappeared. In the early 1960s, one man belonging to the Zou community disappeared at Valpakawt, a place near Saikot.²³ It was believed that the demons kidnapped the man.

6.4.10 Khang:

Khang is a malevolent spirit. Human beings cannot see it. This evil spirit used to torment a person while in deep sleep.

6.4.11 Aw:

The term *aw* means ‘eclipse.’ The early Zous considered *aw* as a giant spirit dwelling in the heavens. They believed the giant spirit was swallowing the moon or the sun when the lunar or solar eclipses occurred. Drums were beaten, and horns were blown to frighten and drive away the giant spirit. People fired guns into the air and shouted at the top of their voices, threatening the spirit.

6.5 The Priests and the Clan Priest:

The *siempu* played an important part in the socio-political and religious life of the early Zous. In the Zou society, there were two types of priests. One was the clan priest, and the other was the village priest. The *tulpi* performed all the rituals and sacrifices connected with worshipping a household deity, *pusa*. The village priest was a medicine man of the entire village. In former years, the priest was usually from the *Lianzaw* clan. Later, the village priest could be from any clan or family. He occupied a respectable position in the village.

²³ Khamchinkhai, “Transition of Zou Society,” 36.

The village priest was in charge of the community's health. He attended the households during sickness and he officiated social and religious ceremonies.²⁴ It was believed that the priest could tell certain sicknesses by touching the pulse of a person and would prescribe the animal to be sacrificed to appease the evil spirits. The village priest usually depended on the directions he got through his dreams while sleeping at night. He would receive all the directions on what he should do, when and with what materials, and the kind of animal to be killed from the spirit who appeared in his dream. He also acted as a mediator between the people and the evil spirits. With his magical incantation, he was believed to cure various diseases and performed all sorts of rites and rituals in the village. By offering sacrifice to the evil spirits, the Zous believed they would be spared and would not be disturbed.

6.6 Kithoina (Sacrifices):

The early Zous practiced magic and witchcraft to appease or drive away evil spirits. They were also convinced that the spirits - benevolent or malevolent, that inhabited the world were superior and more powerful than human beings. They believed that malevolent spirits caused all kinds of illnesses and misfortunes. When they fell ill, they made sacrifices to appease the spirit that was supposed to cause the sickness. In the absence of modern medicines, it was their only means of getting cured. Laura Carson also writes that "their only religion was the sacrificing of animals to evil spirits; it is also their only system of medicine."²⁵ When they wanted to seek blessing, they also offered sacrifices to gain the favour of the spirit that could bestow upon them a blessing in a good harvest, wealth, health, etc. The sacrifices were called *kithoina*.

When a person fell ill or became insane, the only way out was to appease the particular malevolent spirit by offering sacrifices at a site in such places as hilltops, river banks, jungles, streams, etc., depending upon the nature of the illness. The sacrificial animal depended upon the sick person's condition. If the ill person's

²⁴ Kamchinkhup, interview.

²⁵ Laura Hardin Carson, *Pioneer Trails, Trials and Triumphs- Personal Memoirs of Life and Work as a Pioneer Missionary among the Chin Tribes of Burma*, Reprint (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1997), 161.

condition was not serious, small animals or birds, such as fowl, dogs, pigs, etc., were offered to appease the evil spirits. But if it was severe, big animals such as cows, buffalo, gayal, etc., were offered. The village priest uttered incantations and offered sacrifices to appease the evil spirit that was believed to cause the sickness. The village priest was assisted by some persons, called *tuanvaite* (assistants), whose duty was to help the priest cut and cook the ritual meat. An older man could also lead the sacrifice in sickness cases requiring urgent spirit propitiation.²⁶ Fermented rice beer was a mandatory drink in all sacrifices.

6.6.1 Types of Sacrifices:

The different types of sacrifice were:

6.6.1.1 *Siel Sunglut*:

It means ‘entry into the bowel of a sacrificial gayal.’ As this type of sacrifice was for the appeasement of the spirits of the forefathers and fathers, the clan priest would perform the ritual. The sacrificial gayal, chosen, should mandatorily be without a blemish.²⁷ Before starting the ritual, a post called a *song* was erected in the courtyard. An animal was tied to the post, and a gourd full of rice beer was put near it. The clan priest sprayed a mouthful of rice beer three to four times on the sacrificial animal and uttered incantations. After that, the animal was forced to lie down, and all its legs were firmly tied. A spear was thrust from its left side that pierced its heart and killed it. The animal’s belly was open; the offal was removed and was kept on a wooden plate. In any case, the patient should be protected from direct sunlight, and for this purpose, two men were to hold a Zou traditional shawl at its four edges to avoid direct sunlight on the patient. The animal’s blood was sprinkled on the patient’s back. Then, he put his head inside the empty abdomen of the animal. This type of sacrifice was called *siel sunglut*. In the meantime, the clan priest uttered incantations as:

²⁶ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, *Zo Tulpi Hanghil Tangthu leh Khanggui Cieptena (History of the Zo Lineage Head, Hanghil and Record of his Genealogy)* (Kalaymyo: Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 2012), 91.

²⁷ Henkholun, interview.

*Siel lung hing pie'ng ei, siel tuop hing pie'ng ei, siel sin hing pie'ng e.
Ka pusa ka pasa na tai ou, ka lungzai na tai ou, van khuopi na tai uo,
lei khuopi na tai ou, a sin, alung, a tuop ei pie kia uo; siel lung tawh
hing heh ing ei, sa lung tawh hing heh ing ei, sa tuop tawh hing heh ing
ei.*²⁸

Free Translation:

I am offering you gayal's heart, I am offering you gayal's lung, I am offering you gayal's liver. May the spirits of my forefathers and fathers be pleased, may my lesser god be pleased, may heaven be pleased, may the earth be pleased. Give me back the liver, the heart, the lung; I am exchanging with the gayal's heart, I am exchanging with animal's heart, I am exchanging with animal's lung.

While carrying the empty bowel carcass on the shoulder, the patient was taken under the shade of the shawl to the front verandah of the house. The empty bowel carcass was hung on the pillar and the patient was allowed to sit under it. In this ceremony, all the members of the patient's family were to be compulsorily present. The women not belonging to the patient's family were prohibited from attending this ritual.

After the ritual process was over, portions of the carcass, such as the neck, the spine, the head, the foreleg, etc., were sliced and kept aside for distribution as per customary practices. The portions of the slain animal, such as one spine bone, soft chest bone, and its offal – the lung, the heart, the kidney, the liver, the spleen, the intestines, etc., were sliced and cooked inside the patient's house. It is called *dawisa* (ritual meat). The meat could only be consumed inside the house by *zawl*, *sasem*, and relatives of the householder's clan. The remaining portions of the meat were cooked outside the house, and other relatives could eat them. When the meat cooked inside the house was ready, the clan priest sliced eight small pieces from the portions meant for *dawisa* and placed them along with a small quantity of cooked rice at the foot of the central pillar.²⁹ While pouring a scoop of water on it from time to time, the priest recounted the names of the dead ancestors and fathers, as well as the deceased members of the family. Incantations uttered in this rite differed from family to family

²⁸ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 89.

²⁹ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture (Past & Present)* (Churachandpur: Co-Operative Printing Press, 2000), 43.

because each family performing this type of sacrifice had to mention the name of its clan and recount the names of its dead ancestors, fathers, and deceased family members. After that, the meat cooked outside the house was ready to be eaten. The ritual meat was sliced, depending on the number of persons permitted to eat, and each person got one piece.

There were some restrictions regarding the ritual meat. Relatives of the householder's clan possessing *kau* (evil spirit) were prohibited from eating the meat.³⁰ Secondly, it was taboo for women and the eldest son of a family to eat the meat. Thirdly, the ritual meat was not allowed to be taken outside the house. People who eat it should wash their mouths before leaving the house.

On the day of ancestor worship, the family members in the house observed *ziatang*, in the sense that the family members were forbidden to go out of the house and visitors were not allowed.

6.6.1.2 Kimulvuna:

Sometimes, deceased relatives were seen in a dream in a deep sleep at night. If a person fell ill after seeing them, his spirit was believed to follow them to their abode. This rite was administered to such patients. It was a rite of calling back the spirit of the patient.

Before the beginning of the rite, the patient informed all his neighbours about his intention and invited them to be present on the occasion. An animal was slaughtered, and the meat was cooked. Pots of rice beer were also broached and sipped together. When the meat was ready, everyone in the house consumed it. The *tanu* cut the tail of the slain animal in tally with the number of members in the family. The clan priest officiated the ritual process. As a rule, this rite was to be administered only at night.

³⁰ Kaikhohau, "Pasian Thu Lut masang Zogam Dinmun," *Zomi Christian Church Tapidaw 40 Souvenir, 1954-1994*, ed. David K. Samte (Churachandpur: 1994), 8.

A shallow pit was dug for this rite, and a small bamboo tree called *gawpi* (the hardest bamboo plant) was erected near it. At the top of the bamboo, a bunch of cotton was tied with a rope. While putting the red rooster in and out of the pit, the priest uttered incantations and called the patient by his name. After that, the patient was taken inside the house, and the clan priest sprayed a mouthful of liquor on him and continued his incantations, calling the spirit of the patient, “*Hing pei tan na inlum hing zuon in, na lou lum hing zuonin, miten zu hem nang pie va, miten sa hem nang pie va.*” (Come towards your home, come towards your field, people may give you fake liquor, people may give you artificial meat). After uttering these incantations three to four times, the priest was prepared to kill the fowl. While holding the fowl in its neck and pulling at its tail, he uttered that if the patient was to recover, let the right leg be stretched. If the dying fowl stretched its right leg, it was a positive sign; otherwise, the ritual process had to be repeated.

While uttering incantations, the priest removed the feathers of the sacrificial fowl. A necklace-like thread ring was prepared with fowl feathers tied to it. It is called *aahnel*. The *aahnel* was put around the patient's neck. He was also fed with the same liquor that the priest sprayed on him. In this sacrifice, the family did not observe *ziatang*.

6.6.1.3 Zanolam Kithoina:

Cases of sickness, such as joint pain, bone or bone fracture, etc., were called *zanlam*. The animal used for this sacrifice was a dog. The priest performed the sacrifice by slaughtering a dog. After the ceremony, he collected the fire's ashes and the dog's bones and threw them into a nearby stream. It is believed that a person who stepped on the dog's bone would get the same sickness and require the same sacrifice.³¹

6.6.1.4 Baangtung Kithoina:

A person who suffered from pain in the chest and body, with coughing and sometimes vomiting blood, was called *baangtung*. The person was probably

³¹ T.Pumminthang, interviewed by Thangsuahang, Sachih village, March 7, 2018.

suffering from tuberculosis. The sacrificial objects for this type of sacrifice could be a fowl, dog, or pig that was available. The sacrificial animal was preferably a black dog.³² The priest performed the sacrifice and ritual by killing the animal. The animal's blood was mixed with powdered spices and was served to the patient.

6.6.1.5 *Gampi Kithoina*:

Gampi kithoina was performed for a person who suffered from headaches and a high fever accompanied by shivering.³³ From its symptoms, the case of sickness might be malaria. It was believed that the patient's soul was caught by an evil spirit and put him in the fire to torment him. The site selected for this sacrifice was *khuomuol*. Sacrificial objects usually used were a fowl or a pig. The priest took all the sacrificial objects with his assistants, and some close relatives of the patient went to *khuomuol*. The priest killed the pig, and his assistants cooked the meat. Clay images of fifty gayals, fifty coins and ten men and women were made and placed on a sacred platform called *maitaam*.³⁴ Other clay images included two axes, two daos, two necklaces, etc. The clay images were offered to the evil spirit in exchange for releasing the patient's soul. After the priest completed the ceremony, the ritual meat was eaten. As a rule, the leftover ritual meat was to be thrown away.

On their way home, the last person of the party brought branches of trees. On reaching home, the party knocked on the door and enquired whether the patient had arrived home. On getting a reply from the people inside the house that the patient had come home, the party put the branches of trees on both the posts of the house's main gate and entered the house. *Sawl bawh* (branches of trees) were attached at the gate of the patient's house as a sign of performing sacrifice and observance of taboo. Travelers were prohibited from entering the house during the observation of the taboo. Persons violating the observance of the taboo were liable to be fined. There

³² Go Cin Laang, "Zo Ngaina le Tatzie," *Proceedings of the First Indo-Myanmar International Seminar on Zou Language, Literature, Culture and Custom*, ed. Aloysius T. Nehkhajang (Churachandpur: Xavier Nengkhanlam and T. Lamkothawng, 2013), 65.

³³ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 45.

³⁴ Kaikhohau, "Pasian Thu Lut masang," 9.

were also some norms that the patient had to follow- the patient should avoid eating any meat and meeting people for three days. It was called *zia tang*.

6.6.1.6 Nuupi Kithoina:

This type of sacrifice was performed on a person suffering from chronic diseases and physical weakness, where the reason for such sickness was unknown. The offertory materials required for this sacrifice were *ui* (dog), *kanggui* (a long climbing plant), a small branch of *khiengsing* (needle tree), *khaamna* (leaves of *khaam* tree), *aisan* (turmeric), *sesing bawh* (branches of *sesing* tree), branches of *uilusin* tree, *suanvom* (inedible ginger family), etc. Branches of *sesing* trees and other trees with leafy parts were erected as posts, maintaining some distance between them around the house. A long *kangngui* fixed on one *sesing* branch was stretching to another *sesing* branch, forming a network of ring-like fencing around the house. A gate with two posts of *sesing* tree was prepared. Some pieces of bamboo-like small plants of a desired length were bound together above the gate, stretching from the top of one *sesing* post of the gate to the top of another post. On it, a bird's nest-like, called *vabu-zial*, made of *khaam* tree and *uilusin* tree was fixed. Herbs known locally as *suanzou*, *aisan*, *suanvom*, etc., were attached to it.³⁵ On top of the *vabu-zial*, the skull of the sacrificial animal was placed. On such a rite, the patient was seated before the priest. By uttering words of chants, the priest cut the throat of dog, and the streaming blood was collected. The blood was mixed with various herbs and served to the patient. This sacrifice was followed by seven days of abstention, with the patient abstaining mainly from eating meat.

6.6.1.7 Bumle Kithoina:

The word *bum* means 'witchcraft' or 'evil spell,' and *le* means 'rescission.' Therefore, *bumle* means 'rescission of evil spells.' *Bumle kithoina* meant the 'rite of rescission of evil spells.' Such evil spells were usually practiced on others by jealous persons. When a person was suspicious that the spirit of others or witchcraft entrapped his body, such a sacrifice was performed to purify/ward off the enchanting

³⁵ Pumminthang, interview.

spirit. Failure to do so might lead to madness or even death. Pieces of animal skin or hair were said to have been found in the stomach of a person suffering from this type of sickness.³⁶

As the evil spell was taken very seriously, the procedure of the sacrifice for it was also different. Unlike other sacrifices that any priest and his assistants could perform, the rite of rescission of evil spells required senior persons who were highly regarded and respected in society. Therefore, the priest and his assistants to perform this sacrifice were also selected carefully. Widowers were not allowed to participate in it.³⁷ While the priest was uttering incantations, neither looking at it nor talking was allowed. Tradition believed that incurable sickness might befall him if one spoke or looked at it.

The sacrificial materials used for this type of sacrifice were *vohpa meitan* (a boar without tail), *aa-lui san* (red rooster), *ui* (dog), *kel* (goat), *zu* (traditional rice beer), *khieng* tree, *tong sing*, *kanggui* (a long climbing plant), *namsau* (sword), *pumpeng* (a small bamboo-like plant) and wax images of two persons - one was meant for the priest and another for the person who administered the evil-spell. Wooden poles of *khieng* tree and *tong sing* were alternately erected as posts, maintaining some distance between them around the patient's house. On top of these posts, *kanggui* was stretched. A pit of a desired depth was dug.

To begin the rite, the priest uttered incantations on the red rooster and then cut the ears of the sacrificial animals. Next, while singing a sacred song, the priest softly put the two images together in the pit in such a way that both of them were fighting. He, then said, “*Nang zo ing ei, nang zo ing ei, nang gim ta chiei, gim ta chiei, nei ngap nai mah?*”³⁸ (You are defeated, you are defeated, you are exhausted, exhausted. Do you still underestimate me? He continued to threaten the spirit as, “*kei lam ah pang tam ei, nang lam ah koima pang ngam sih ei.*” (I have many on my side. No one dared to be on your side). His attendants were supposed to be on the priest's side. Meanwhile, the attendants stood in front of the priest. Each of the two

³⁶ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlana, 91.

³⁷ Pumminthang, interview.

³⁸ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlana, 91.

attendants was holding a sword and a rooster in their hands. The other attendants were carrying a dog, a goat, and a boar on their shoulders. The priest invited the spirit to eat the meat as, “*Ka zawl sa ne’n, zau sin*” (My friend eat the meat, do not be scared) and then threatened it by saying, “*Ka pu in na pu a zaw sa, ka pa in na pa a zaw sa, tu ni’n ken nang kang zou kia hi.*”³⁹ (My grandfather had beaten your grandfather, my father had beaten your father, and today I have beaten you again). After repeating three times the above invitational and threatening words, the priest at once shouted, pointing his finger on the wax image, “*Tuni nang kang zaw ni, nang le sakhanei na neinung ni gel ta hi. Ka pu in na pu a zaw sa, ka pa in na pa a zaw sa, tu ni’n ken nang kang zou kia hi*”⁴⁰ (Today is the day I defeat you, both you and the lower jaw of an animal are in a lower position. My grandfather defeated your grandfather, my father defeated your father, and today, I have defeated you again. Afterward, the priest and his assistants prepared to attack the image in the pit. The priest repeated the above words, and in the meantime, his assistants poured traditional rice beer in a *pumpeng*, and they drank it. Suddenly, the image was attacked and beaten using implements such as *tong sing*, sword, *khieng sing*, etc., by the priest and his assistants. The image was put together with the urinal bladder of the slain dog and buried in the pit.

After the completion of the rite, the sacrificial animals were slaughtered, and the head of the red rooster was cut off and put on the wall of the house. The meat was cooked and eaten together. Women were prohibited from eating the sacrificial meat. The next three to four days were observed as days of abstention. Leafy tree branches were attached to the *sutpi* in the front of the outer house as a sign that the family was observing abstinence.

6.6.1.8 Kausie Khieng Kho Kithoina:

This type of sacrifice was performed when a person’s illness was believed to be caused by an evil spirit called *kausie*. *Khieng* is the ‘name of a tree,’ and *kho* means ‘throw.’ It is a sacrifice in which the evil spirit was thrown with a piece of a

³⁹ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina 91.

⁴⁰ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 91.

khieng tree. The sacrificial animal used was either a pig or a dog.⁴¹ It was performed late at night.

For this sacrifice, a pit was dug, and a small quantity of food and a wax image of a human being were placed around it.⁴² A small *khieng* tree with a stump was cut to the desired length. The tree was cut partially so that the stump would easily be severed when thrown. The priest was dancing near the pit with the *khieng* tree in his hands while uttering words of incantations. In the incantations, the priest invited the evil spirits to dine on the food near the pit. While the priest was dancing, an insect entered the pit, and he threw the small *khieng* tree at it, thereby killing the insect. The stump was severed from the small tree and buried with the insect inside the pit. The other part of the tree was erected at a place not far from the pit.

6.6.1.9 Khawbawl Kithoina:

This sacrifice was performed for the whole village community every year during the month of April. It was a ritual to seek the blessing of the spirit, believed to possess the power to bless human beings with wealth, good health, and peace. The sacrificial animals were *vohtal*, measuring three wrists, a rooster, and a black fowl. The boar was slaughtered at *khuomuol*, and the two fowls were killed at the stream. The priest prepared the items to be offered. While uttering incantations, he offered the ritual meat to the spirit for bestowing upon them his blessings: good health, victory over enemies, wealth and prosperity. The meat of the sacrificial animals was cooked and eaten by the priest, his assistants, and others who accompanied them. After the ritual ceremony, the priest and his assistants returned home. On their way home, the priest and his attendants blocked the road leading to the village with branches of trees to prevent outsiders from entering their village. In the evening at dusk, the village crier announced restrictions to be complied with by the people in the village as, “*Tuni tah koima a lung thah a kihau, muinam haal, awsie suo leh innsunga ul um thei lo ding ahi. Tam thu mang louten a siatna a khatna a maw a*

⁴¹ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 47.

⁴² Pumminthang, interview.

*kipuah ding.*⁴³ (This evening nobody was allowed to quarrel, to cook/burn meat, to use curse/harsh words and engage in merry-making. Person not observing such restrictions would be responsible for any misfortune). Every person in the village strictly followed the restrictions.

The following day, the village crier announced that all able-bodied men should hunt in the jungle. As told, all able-bodied men went to the jungle during the daytime. While the abled men were away in the jungle, some persons at home prepared swings. They spent the whole day swinging in the swing. It was believed that the difficult times faced in the previous year could be forgotten by swinging in the swing. In the evening, the hunted animal (s) were cooked and eaten by all the villagers at the chief's house. The night was spent sipping traditional rice beer, gossiping, merry-making, etc.

6.6.1.10 *Loulut Kithoina:*

In the term *loulut*, *lou* means 'agricultural field,' and *lut* means 'placate.' Thus, *loulut kithoina* means a 'sacrifice to placate the evil spirit in an agricultural field.' The evil spirits were believed to dwell in the strange trees, pits, caves, brooks, or marshy places near the agricultural field. When a person who owned such a field fell sick, it was suspected that the soul of the field's owner was caught by these evil spirits. This sacrifice was performed to liberate the soul from the hands of the spirits. The sacrificial animal usually used was a fowl. However, a fowl and a pig were used if the patient's condition did not improve.⁴⁴

6.6.1.11. *Tuilut Kithoina:*

In the word *tuilut*, *tui* means 'water,' and *lut* means 'placate.' *Tuilut kithoina* means a 'sacrifice to placate the spirit living in the water.' In this type of sacrifice, the patient was believed to be caught by the water spirits living in the lake, stream, or brook. A brother-in-law or a son-in-law of the patient's household was sent to fetch the water in the jungle that was supposed to be inhabited by evil spirits. When the man who went silently reached the spot, he said, "*Ka dang taa e! tui hing dawn*

⁴³ Kaikhohau, "Pasian Thu Lut masang," 10-11.

⁴⁴ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 91.

vang”⁴⁵ (I feel thirsty! Let me drink the water) and filled the water in a tube of a small bamboo-like plant called *pumpeng*. To prevent the spirit from escaping, he covered the mouth of the tube firmly. On reaching home, the water was poured into a half scoop, and the bottom was burnt with fire. The priest and his assistants performed the sacrifice of *tuilut*. The sacrificial animals used in such cases of sickness were a fowl and a pig.

6.6.2 Zia Tang:

Zia tang means ‘abstention’ or ‘prohibition.’ Patients treated under the different rites were subjected to abstention or prohibition for specific days, and the number of days to be observed varied depending on the type of sacrifice. There were certain activities and foods that the priest advised the patient to stop or avoid. The patient under treatment should avoid eating meat and creeping vegetable plants.⁴⁶ Strangers, visitors, or guests should not be entertained during these days. He should not step out of the house. As a sign signaling the neighbors and visitors that they were forbidden to enter the house, a leafy tree branch was attached to the *sutpi* of the house. If a person (s) visited the patient during the days of abstention, the sacrifice had to be repeated. In such cases, the visitors should bear the cost of all the sacrificial objects.

6.7 Life after Death:

The Zous believed in the existence of life beyond the grave in the form of an invisible spirit, and as such, one’s journey continues even after one’s death on earth. They also believed in the existence of three afterworlds - *misikhuo* (village of the dead), *pielgal* (land beyond *piel* river), and *vangam* (heaven). After death, one’s spirit or soul goes to *misikhuo*. Beyond *misikhuo*, there is a place called *pielgal*. There is still another place called *vangam*. As men would have the same kind of life as before, they needed all the material they required when they were alive. Therefore, man’s life after death was conjectured as the continuation of worldly life. However,

⁴⁵ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 92.

⁴⁶ Mannuamching, *Zou Culture*, 49.

the final place of the dead differed according to one's status and achievements in one's lifetime.

6.7.1 Journey of the Soul:

When a man died, an animal was slaughtered for a funeral feast called *kosa*. A piece of meat was sliced from the slain animal, and the deceased person was made to hold that meat in his hands. When the body was about to be buried, the clan priest whispered in the ear of the deceased person, telling him the genealogy of his clan. After burial, a bamboo tube filled with traditionally brewed liquor was put on his grave. The priest prepared a rope of bamboo called *gunkhau*⁴⁷ that was nine times as long as an arm's length and put it in his coffin.⁴⁸

The Zous believed that a man's soul leaves the body at death and wanders in the vicinity of the village. After three months, the journey towards *vangam* (heaven) began. The soul of a man with all his belongings crossed the Gun river and reached a high mountain called *Teutevum*.⁴⁹ His soul rested for a while at this place, and the animal's spirits were tied to a tree. After *Teutevum*, the soul proceeded toward *misikhuo*. On his arrival at the outskirts of the *misikhuo*, he recited the clan genealogy as whispered by the clan priest at his grave. On hearing the song, the spirits of the deceased persons belonging to his clan could quickly identify him, and they all came out to welcome him at the gate of *misikhuo*. Here, the piece of meat and the bamboo tube of liquor he brought were partaken and sipped together. All the spirits of the deceased stayed together at this place.

The spirit of a child whose parents were still alive would cry, saying, "The parents of others have arrived, but my parent have not."⁵⁰ A child who died at an early age was buried with an egg. The child would follow the egg that rolled and led

⁴⁷ *Gunkhau* is a twisted bamboo fastener required by the soul of a dead man while crossing the Gun river, on his way to the abode of dead.

⁴⁸ Lien, *Zo Ngaina Leh Kamham Zahdan*, 30.

⁴⁹ *Teutevum* is an imaginary high mountain where the soul of a dead man is believed to take rest for a while after crossing the Gun river.

⁵⁰ Kaikhohau, "Pasian Thu Lut masang Zogam Dinmun," 17.

his soul to *misikhuo*. A bunch of millet was also placed at his grave so that the spirit of the child would eat them on his way to *misikhuo*.

To reach *pielgal*, the soul had to pass through a narrow bridge compulsorily. The bridge was said to be guarded by a female dragon or spirit called *gulsamnu*. The spirits of the commoners dared not cross the bridge for fear of her. *Vangam* was the final abode where all the souls of the good ones were expected to live through eternity. It is the most blissful place, and it is also called paradise.

6.7.2 *Misikhuo*:

It was believed that all the souls of the deceased, regardless of their deeds on earth, would pass through this village of death. This place was the abode of the departed souls of the commoners. In a folktale called *Khupching leh Ngambom*, the souls of Khupching and Ngambom met each other in this village. The spirits or souls who dwelled in *misikhuo* became human beings during the day and turned into skeletons at night. For the villagers, bamboo leaves were fish, grass blades were big trees, and caterpillars were wild animals. The spirits of the wild animals killed by a person during his lifetime and the animals slaughtered on the day of his burial would be with him at this place. The spirits of all persons killed or slaves captured by a man in his earthly life would become his servants in the spirit world.

6.7.3 *Pielgal*:

Piel is a 'river,' and *gal* means 'beyond.' Thus, *pielgal* means 'beyond the *piel* river.' It was located in a place beyond the *misikhuo*. *Pielgal* and *misikhuo* were divided by a gorge, and a narrow bridge connected the two places. A female dragon guarded the bridge and no one dared to cross from *misikhuo* to *pielgal* for fear of her. She was said to harass the spirits of the dead who did not kill even a deer during their lifetime. But the dragon did not dare to harass the spirits of persons who attained a unique position in their lifetime. A special position could be achieved by killing a hundred beasts of different species and harvesting not less than one hundred *seu*

(basket) of millet grains in a year.⁵¹ The Zous believed that the animals killed by a person in a chase during his lifetime guarded him from the dragon and helped him to cross the bridge. The first-born children who died in infancy and were buried without ceremony also escaped such harassment. The above groups of people were privileged to enter *pielgal*. The spirits of the persons who entered this place were expected to enjoy a supply of rice, meat, and liquor.

6.7.4 Vangam:

The literal meaning of *vangam* is ‘heaven.’ It was the topmost abode of the spirits and was considered a beautiful and joyous place. It was the final abode where all the good ones were expected to live through eternity. The early Zous believed that there were four layers of heaven. They were as follows:

6.7.4.1 Thangvan:

Thangvan was the name of the highest layer of heaven. It was the most blissful place and was also called paradise. In this layer, the spirits of the good ones were to take their final rest.

6.7.4.2 Lengvan:

It was the second layer of heaven. The spirit of a person killed by the sword of the enemy dwelled in this layer. The spirit of the slain one stayed here, waiting for revenge against his killers. *Lengvan* was also called *sasikhuo* (abode of the spirit of a person who died by unnatural death).

6.7.4.3 Vaivan:

It was the third layer of heaven. The spirit of a person with an evil spirit remained floating forever in this layer of heaven.

⁵¹ Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, 85.

6.7.4.4 Mimvan:

Mimvan was the fourth and lowest layer of heaven. It was thought that all animals and birds possessed souls. Therefore, the spirits of the dead animals and birds were believed to rest in the fourth layer of heaven.

6.8 Advent of Christian Mission in Manipur:

The first attempt to establish a mission station in the erstwhile princely state of Manipur was made by the American Baptist Mission in Burma (present Myanmar) in 1836.⁵² However, it was unsuccessful due to the opposition of the native government, which had accepted Vaishnavite Hinduism. It is to be remembered that the then Maharaja Charai Rongba issued a Royal Edict in 1707 A.D. by which Hinduism was introduced in Manipur and, later it became a state religion during the reign of Garib Niwaz (Pamheiba).⁵³ With the adoption of Hinduism as the state religion, orthodoxy and conservatism arose particularly among the native aristocrats, who began to observe every movement of the English people with suspicion. In disregard of the sentiments of these people, James Johnstone, the Political Agent of Manipur, made every arrangement for any missionary willing to work among the people of the state.⁵⁴ However, Christianity came to be established in Manipur only after several mission societies established a heavy network of Missionary activities in the Assam province.⁵⁵

6.8.1 Missionary Activities in Northern Manipur:

The missionary activity in northern Manipur was initiated by William Pettigrew, who arrived in Manipur on 6 January 1894.⁵⁶ Before he came to Manipur, he was already in Dhaka, working as a missionary under the Arthington Aborigines Mission (AAM).⁵⁷ The AAM did not object when Pettigrew reached Silchar on his

⁵² Jeyaseelan, *Impact of the Missionary Movement in Manipur* (New Delhi: Scholar Publishing House, 1996), 50.

⁵³ Khamchinkhai. "Transition of Zou society," 82.

⁵⁴ Lal Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism* (Shillong: Vendrame Institute, 1988), 31.

⁵⁵ Jeyaseelan, 51.

⁵⁶ Jeyaseelan, 53.

⁵⁷ Frederick S. Down, *The Mighty Works of God: A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches*

way to Manipur, where it was initially intended to take up pioneer mission work in the state. On 12 September 1892, Mr. Dalma, the secretary of the Arthington Mission, sent a letter asking permission from Major Maxwell, the Political Agent of the newly occupied Manipur state, to start missionary work among the Hindu Manipuris. Maxwell did not grant permission to enter Manipur for the Mission for two reasons. Firstly, Maxwell knew well that the Manipuris had embraced Hinduism, and so little impression could be made of them.⁵⁸ Secondly, the hill people were too wild to be dealt with in those days. Then, Pettigrew personally requested Mr. A. Porteous, acting political agent, as Maxwell, the political agent, was on furlough and convinced the acting political agent to grant him permission to enter the state and start a school at Imphal. The acting political agent permitted Pettigrew's entry into Manipur to work among the hill tribes. But after he arrived at Imphal, Pettigrew convinced himself that his call was to work among the Manipuris. Mr. A. Porteous granted him some plot of land to construct a mission compound, and a school called Pettigrew Lower Primary School was opened. Fearing conversion to Christianity, the Hindu Manipuris soon objected to the work of Pettigrew.

On his return from furlough, Maxwell noticed the new development and feared that trouble might arise if the activities of Pettigrew were not stopped. Further, the policy of British India towards the princely state was 'no interference' or 'strict neutrality,' and any departure from such policy would likely be seized upon by the Hindus in Bengal and elsewhere as a ground for an attack upon the government. Therefore, Maxwell issued an ultimatum to William Pettigrew that he should leave Imphal or stop his missionary activity.⁵⁹

Pettigrew was disappointed because the door for Missionary work in Manipur was closed. However, Major Maxwell suggested that he should work in the hill areas. In the meantime, Pettigrew completed a three-year tenure working in Manipur under the Arthington Mission. After completing his tenure, he applied for membership to the American Baptist Missionary Union (ABMU) in Assam and

in North East India - The Mission Period 1836-1950 (Gauhati: Lakshmi Printing Press, 1971), 75.

⁵⁸ K.M. Singh, *History of Christian Missions in Manipur and other Neighbouring States* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1991), 57-58.

⁵⁹ Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism*, 34.

proposed to the Union to take over the Manipur field. The Baptist Missionary Conference at Sibsagar in 1895 resolved to accept Pettigrew's proposal, and he was formally re-designated as a missionary to Manipur.⁶⁰

It is said that Pettigrew first approached a Thadou Kuki chief, Kamkholun Singson of Senvon village, and asked for permission to start his missionary work. But the chief of Senvon village denied him permission. It is also said that he visited Sanikapani, a Mao Naga, and sought his help to purchase land in the Mao area. The village authorities in the Mao area turned down Pettigrew's request to buy land and warned him not to remain in their area.⁶¹

On rejection by the chief of Senvon and the village authorities in the Mao area, Pettigrew searched for a new location for his missionary work. He visited various villages such as Paoyi, Shiroy, Khangkhui and Ukhrol. He selected Ukhrol as a place for his missionary activities. Pettigrew arrived at Hungphun (Ukhrol) on January 27, 1896, and started to work among the Tangkhul Nagas.⁶² Thus, Pettigrew worked among the Tangkhul tribe of Manipur at his own risk, a challenge he readily accepted.⁶³

6.8.2 Missionary Activities in Southern Manipur:

The missionary activities in southern Manipur operated from Aizawl. Rev. Watkin Roberts accompanied Dr. Peter Frazer and his wife, Mary Catherine, sailed for India and reached Aizawl in the Lushai Hills in October 1908.⁶⁴ The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Missionary Society sent Dr. Peter Frazer, his wife, and Rev. Watkin Roberts, who were independent missionaries. Dr. Frazer opened a medical clinic and appointed Roberts as his assistant. While working at the mission dispensary at Aizawl, Roberts also learned the Lushai language and began engaging in evangelistic work among the people. With the gift he received from Ms. Emily

⁶⁰ Jeyaseelan, 53.

⁶¹ Champhang Jajo, *Christian Life in a Tribal Context in Manipur* (Calcutta: Author, 1990), 21-22.

⁶² Lal Dena, *In Search of Identity: Hmars of North-East India* (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2008), 45.

⁶³ Kim Vaiphei, *The Coming of Christianity in Manipur* (Imphal: Joint Women's Programme, 1996), 6.

⁶⁴ Jeyaseelan, 84.

Davies, Rev. Roberts purchased over 104 copies of the Gospel of St. John for distribution in the Lushai Hills and its adjoining districts.⁶⁵ It is be noted that two Arthington Missionaries, Rev. F.W. Savidge and Rev. J.H.Lorrain had arrived in Aizawl on January 4, 1894,⁶⁶ and during their four years stay, they translated the ‘Gospel of John,’ ‘Gospel of Luke’ and the ‘Acts of the Apostles’ in Lushei dialect.

Through some students, a copy of the Gospel of St. John reached the hands of the chief of Senvon, Kamkholun Singson.⁶⁷ After some days, Roberts received an invitation from the chief of Senvon to visit his village and to tell him more about the Gospel. In response to this invitation, Rev.Watkin Roberts, accompanied by two Vaiphei students from Manipur, Thangkai and Lungpau, visited Senvon village in Manipur on February 5, 1910.⁶⁸ While staying about ten days at Senvon, Rev. Roberts visited the neighbouring villages and preached the Gospel. Kamkholun requested Rev. Roberts to open a school in his village. On their way back to Aizawl, they halted at Vaitin village. Rev. Roberts delivered a sermon that convinced Thangkai and Lungpau to become Christians. They were the first two persons who embraced Christianity in Manipur South (Present Churachandpur District).⁶⁹

In Aizawl, Rev Roberts invited volunteers to serve as evangelist teachers at Senvon in Manipur. In response to the invitation by Rev. Roberts, three Bible students, namely Savawma, Vanzika, and Thangchhingpuia, offered themselves to be the evangelist teachers. The three evangelist teachers reached Senvon on May 7, 1910.⁷⁰ A Mission School was opened at Senvon.

W. Roberts sent R. Dala and Taisena to establish Mission Works at Senvon. The Mission founded by W. Roberts in 1913, was initially called the Thado-Kuki

⁶⁵ Thanglienkhram and T.C. Tunngung, “Eben Ezer (JCA, MCC, MPC, MGP, ABFM, ZCC, ELCC Tanchin Tomkim),” *Tapidaw-50 Golden Jubilee Souvenir (1954-2004) of Evangelical Lutheran Christian Church*, eds. T.C. Tunngung, et al. (Churachandpur: Editorial Board, 2004), 1.

⁶⁶ General Assembly, *History of the Presbyterian Church of India* (Shillong: Presbyterian Church of India, 2020), 133.

⁶⁷ D.Khaizalian, *Tangthupha Tunma leh Tunnung Thu* (Lamka: Convention Press, 1986), 70-71.

⁶⁸ Savung Infimate, “Jubilees of the Independent Church of India,” *The Amazing Guidance of God: Manipur South Christian Diamond Jubilee Souvenir, 1910-1985*. ed. Editorial Board (Churachandpur: Independent Church of India, 1985), 28-29.

⁶⁹ Khamchinkhai, “Transition of Zou society,” 28.

⁷⁰ Jeyaseelan, 85.

Pioneer Mission (TKPM). The founding of the TKPM and its work in Manipur brought controversy to the American Baptist Mission because the latter considered the State as its area of operation. As a result, Rev. W. Roberts was ordered to leave Senvon village, which he resisted and refused. Over time, it was decided that a boundary between the TKPM and the American Baptist Mission be drawn for their respective regions.⁷¹

The Mission was successful, and Senvon became the centre for evangelism, a base for Watkin Roberts' works.⁷² In 1924, TKPM was changed to the North East India General Mission (NEIGM).⁷³ However, in 1930, there was conflict within the Mission due to the misappropriation of funds, which resulted in division.⁷⁴ One group sided with Rev. Watkin Roberts, and some others were with Mr. H.H. Coleman, and the NEIGM became divided into two groups. The matter of misappropriation of the Mission funds was taken to a law court, and as per its verdict, one group under Mr. Coleman retained the NEIGM with headquarters at Churachandpur, the other group led by Rev. Watkin Roberts founded a new Mission called the Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission (IBPM).

Thus, it is seen that Missionary activities were started in the hill areas of Manipur. One is among the Tangkhul Nagas in the north by William Pettigrew, and another is in the south among the Chin-Kuki-Mizo ethnic tribes in Senvon and its surrounding areas by Rev. Watkin Roberts.

6.8.3 Spread of Christianity among the Zous:

The Zous did not come into direct contact with the Western Christian missionaries. The conversion of the Zous to Christianity was through the agency of native evangelists or missionaries. The TKPM and later the NEIGM engaged some newly converted natives as evangelists and missionaries to spread the Gospel. They

⁷¹ Jeyaseelan, 85.

⁷² J. Meirion Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram: Harvest in the Hill* (Aizawl: Synod Publication Board, 1991), 153.

⁷³ Thanglienkham and Tungnung, "Eben Ezer," 2.

⁷⁴ Khup Za Go, *A Critical Historical Study of Bible Translations Among The Zo People in North East India* (Churachandpur: Chin Literature Board, 1996), 61.

were committed to the mission work entrusted to them. Due to their untiring efforts, the Gospel could reach the interior parts of the Zou inhabited areas.

The year 1922 was an important landmark in Zou's history, for it was the year the Zous heard the gospel for the first time. The first known Evangelist to the Zous was Hrangchhuaka under the NEIGM. In 1922, he visited the Zou villages from his station in Hlanbung. After two years, with the permission of the chief of Singngat, Mr. Tonghau, Hrangchhuaka settled at Singngat.⁷⁵ Hrangchhuaka hired a young boy named Suohdou to guide him during his work. However, in 1925, he was compelled to shift to Saikot, and from there, he continued to preach the Gospel in the same area for the next ten years. Later, in 1935, Hrangchhuaka settled at a Zou village named Khienglam and used the village as his station to propagate the gospel of God among the Zous until 1937. Till then, there were no known baptized people among the Zous. During that time, Pastor Thangchhingpuia also worked in the Zou areas. He was one of the three Bible students who voluntarily came forward to serve as Evangelist teachers at Senvon. In 1939, Thongluan settled at Khajang village and continued the work of evangelism.⁷⁶ With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, he had to leave the area. After the war, Thongluan returned to the same village and resumed his work. He left Khajang village in 1946.⁷⁷ Another Paite Missionary teacher, Pumzaneng, opened a Lower Primary School at Munpi, a Zou village in the same year.⁷⁸ In the 1950s, a Paite Missionary named Mr. Khamzalian visited Hiangtam village to preach the Gospel. In this way, evangelists made tremendous efforts to spread the gospel in the Zou-inhabited areas. However, despite their strenuous efforts, they could only bring a few people into Christianity. It is to be noted that in 1951, there were only four Christian villages out of the sixty-six Zou villages.⁷⁹

⁷⁵T. Lamkothawng, ed., *Jou Christin Association Golden Jubilee, 1953-2003 Souvenir*, (Churachandpur: T. Lamkothawng and M. Dongzalam, 2004), 4.

⁷⁶Pum Za Tang Tombing, *Thangkhal Missionary Pastor Thongluan* (Lamka: Ginsuanhau Zou, 2021), 83.

⁷⁷Lamkothawng, ed., *Jou Christin Association Golden Jubilee*, 5.

⁷⁸General Assembly, 219-220.

⁷⁹Thanglienkham and T.C. Tungnung, "Eben Ezer," 3.

6.8.3.1 Zous' Resistance to Christian Conversion:

The Zous were deeply rooted in their traditional cultural and religious practices, so they did not easily accept Christianity. They regarded Christianity as an alien religion that was totally foreign to them. The new life following Christianity was a threat to the social, cultural, religious, and political life of the Zous. Therefore, it is not surprising that some of the early native missionaries were not allowed to move freely among the Zou people; they were tortured, their houses were dismantled, and they were even expelled from a village. The same persecution was meted out even to the newly converted Christians. R.R. Lolly said that when Christianity was first propagated, there was strong opposition on political, religious, and cultural grounds.⁸⁰ It was true so far as the opposition to the spread of Christianity among the Zous in Manipur was concerned.

One of the strongest oppositions to Christianity came from the village chiefs and their subjects. The Zou chiefs opposed the advancement of Christianity for political reasons. The chiefs feared that if their respective subjects were converted to Christianity, they would become clever and would oppose them, and also, they would undermine their authority. Therefore, the chiefs opposed Christianity, thereby not allowing the missionaries to enter their respective villages without their permission. One such incident occurred in the 1950s when Goulun Manlun, chief of Hiangtam village, shot with a catapult an evangelist named Khamzalian who entered his village to preach the Gospel.

A confrontation with the Christian Missionaries was also due to the fundamental differences in the socio-cultural life of the Zous with that of the West. The missionaries wanted to do away with the age-old practices such as singing, dancing, drinking rice beer in feasts and festivals, ancestor worship, sacrifices, etc. and imposed a new life contrary to their traditional practices. The Zous regarded the new life as a threat to their socio-cultural life. Brewing and drinking of traditional *Zu* were an inseparable part of their socio-cultural life. *Zu* was a popular and common drink of the Zous, brewed in large quantities and served liberally in all ceremonies,

⁸⁰ R.R.Lolly, *The Baptist Church in Manipur* (Imphal: Manipur Baptist Convention, 1985), 17-18.

festivals, feasts, and social gatherings, and even for entertaining guests. The majority of the Zous found it not possible for them to abandon their old habits and live a new life based on the teachings of Christianity, especially abstaining from drinking and brewing *zu* (rice beer). They, therefore, not only adopted an aggressive posture but also hindered the proclamation of the Gospel.

Another opposition encountered by Christianity was the village priest. The village priest found that his position in society was threatened. The Zous' religious life was dominated by customary rites and rituals associated with births, marriage, health and prosperity, and funeral ceremonies. On such occasions, the priest invoked and dispelled spirits for the Zous. But Christianity taught the abolition of sacrifices to spirits and all other propitiation rituals. As the priest found his premier position in society was threatened, he strongly opposed Christianity.

The government officials also created trouble for the Christians. During their visit to the villages, they were no longer served rice beer as before and then they wrongly accused the missionaries, and heavy fines were imposed upon them for no reason.⁸¹ Shaw, an ICS officer, was particularly hostile towards Christianity and did everything in his power to prevent its spread.

Though Christianity grew on the other side in the Zou inhabited areas, incidents of persecution occurred on the other side. As Hrangchhuaka started his propagation of the Gospel among the Zous, there was opposition to his work. Mr. Duncan, the then Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO), and Mr. Semthong dismantled the houses of the Hrangchhuaka and his new convert, by the name Ginthong. It compelled him to move out of Singngat village and settle at Saikot in 1925. In this way, the opposition was raised when the propagation of Christianity among the Zous was in progress, and the missionaries and the new converts were increasingly beaten, tortured, and expelled from the villages. When the construction of a church building was undertaken, the materials were broken and scattered.

⁸¹ Khamchinkhai, "Transition of Zou Society," 88.

6.8.3.2 Formation of Christian organization - Jou Christian Association (JCA):

Before forming their own Christian organization, some newly converted Zou Christians remained under the NEIGM. Under the NEIGM, there was one administration and one organization until 1947. With the increase in the number of Christians in each community, the language problem cropped up because not all could understand what was read or spoken. Hence, the idea of separate association on ethnic lines was discussed under Resolution No. 19 of 1948 in the Conference of the NEIGM at Lungthulian in 1948.⁸² The following year, Presbyteries were formed based on dialects spoken, such as Paite, Kuki, Mizo, Vaiphei, Hmar, and Gangte. Still, the Zous did not meet the required population to form a separate Association. They were together with the Paites under the *Simsak Bial* Presbytery (later changed into the Manipur Christian Convention) till 1952.⁸³

In an attempt to have their church organization, the first Christian converts and educated youths of the Zous worked ceaselessly to bring all their brothers into a united Zou church.⁸⁴ Preliminary meetings were also convened by them. The meeting at Ngoiphai village in June 1952, attended by persons, namely – S. Semkhopau, Kamkhosam, Nengkhogin, Letkhogin, Nengdou, Lamzagin, and Lunkap, expressed the need for having separate Zou church organization.⁸⁵ The meeting also proposed the ‘Jou Christian Association’ as the name for the new organization. In another meeting held at Tuaitengphai village in 1952, Kamzakhup and Thawngzakhup managed to bring the village elders together for a group discussion. But nothing concrete came out of both meetings. Even a joint meeting between Daizang and Tuaitengphai in 1953, attended by S. Semkhopau, T. Thonghang, P. Kaizakham, Kamzakhup, Thawngzakhup, Dongzagin, etc. also ended in partially successful⁸⁶. However, after the meeting, a verbal agreement was reached between Thonghang and Kamzakhup. As per the agreement, the three educated Zous, namely – T. Thonghang, S. Semkhopau and P. Kaizakham, who were still students at Imphal at

⁸² Jeyaseelan, 96.

⁸³ General Assembly, 220.

⁸⁴ David Vumlallian Zou, “Glimpses of Zou Ethno-History,” *United Zomi Organization Golden Jubilee (1954 – 2004) Souvenir*, ed. Thangchinsuan (Churachandpur: P. Tongthang Zou, 2004), 127.

⁸⁵ Lamkothawng, 5.

⁸⁶ Thanglienkhram and Tungnung, “Eben Ezer,” 3.

that time, were entrusted with the task of drafting a ‘Constitution’ for the Jou Christian Association (JCA), the name for the organization as proposed in the Ngoiphai meeting.

In the meantime, Royal C. Paddock, Officer of the North East India General Mission (NEIGM) in early 1953, announced permission that if ten percent of the common linguistic tribe were willing, they would be allowed to form their own Association. Following the announcement of Royal C. Paddock, an initiative was taken to form a new church organization under the leadership of S. Semkhopau, Kamkhojam, Nengdou, Letkhogin, Lamzagin, and Lunkap.⁸⁷ In an Assembly held at Daizang on 20 February 1954, the first Zou Christian organization - Jou Christian Association (JCA) was formed, and its ‘Constitution’ was also adopted⁸⁸.

The historic Assembly was held under the leadership of Kamzakhup, S. Semkhopau, T. Thonghang, P.Kaizakham, and other Zou Christian leaders.⁸⁹ T.Thonghang served as the Recording Secretary during the Assembly.⁹⁰ The following persons were elected as Office Bearers of the newly formed Association:

1. Chairman	: Ngulzakhup of Tuaitengphai village.
2. Secretary	: Kamzakhup of Daizang village.
3. Treasurer	: Thongzakhup of Tuaitengphai village.

The Assembly of the JCA at Daijang resolved that NEIGM be requested to recognize JCA and its permission to have one church elder. The NEIGM, in its Assembly at Lamka in 1954, recognized the Jou Christian Association as a separate church organization, and Upa Ngulkhup of Tuaitengphai was also accepted as a church elder.

Due to the initiative taken by the newly English-educated Zou youths, namely T. Thonghang, S. Semkhopau and P. Kaizakham, the J.C.A. could bring out some

⁸⁷ Editorial Board, *Zomi Christian Church Silver Jubilee Souvenir*, 1953-1978, (Churachandpur: ICI Press, 1978), 5.

⁸⁸ Khaizakham, “Jou Christian Association Kipatna (The beginning of Jou Christian Association),” 27. Also see S. Semkhopau, ed. *Jougam-Thusuo*, 1.

⁸⁹ Thanglienkham, and Tungnung, “Eben Ezer,” 3.

⁹⁰ Lamkhotawng, 6.

publications in the first year of its establishment. The first publication in the Zou dialect was a primer called *Jou Simpat Bu* by the J.C.A. in 1954. The same year, gospel songs translated into Zou dialect by P. Kaizakham and T. Thonghang were compiled and published in a book called ‘Jou Khristian Labu’ by T. Thonghang. The first issue of a journal, *Jou Gam Thusuo*, a monthly newspaper edited by S. Semkhopau, was also published by the J.C.A. in March 1954.⁹¹ The same Zou-youths residing in Imphal for their education founded a socio-political organization for the Zous, Jou National Council (JNC), on 23 May 1954 with S. Semkhopau as its President.⁹²

The second JCA Assembly was held under the chairmanship of Ngulzakhup at Khienglam village on February 22, 1955. Rev. Luaia conducted a Holy Communion service.⁹³ It was recorded as the first communion service in JCA history. The Khienglam session resolved that Kamkhozam be invited to serve as a teacher at Buhsau village. It is to be noted that till 1955, Ngulzakhup was the only Zou Christian who paid tithe to the church.⁹⁴

The Jou Christian Association had its third Assembly at Buhsau village on January 22, 1956. Ngulzakhup, the Chairman of the JCA, chaired the session. The Buhsau session resolved that Kamkhozam should be given evangelism work to be performed alongside his teaching ministry, with a monthly pay of Rs 30/-. The session also accepted Vungdal of Simbuk as a Pastor of the Association, and he was recorded as JCA's first Pastor.⁹⁵ At the Buhsau Assembly, Ngulzakhup was ordained as a ‘church elder,’ and he was recorded as the first church elder among the Zous.

⁹¹ Thanglienmang, “A Descriptive Grammar,” 7.

⁹² Thangchinsuan, “United Zomi Organization Khangthu, 1954-2004,” *United Zomi Organization Golden Jubilee (1954-2004) Souvenir*, ed. Thangchinsuan (Churachandpur: United Zomi Organization, 2004), 1.

⁹³ Khamchinkhai, “A Study of the History of Christianity Among the Zou Tribe in Manipur,” (BD Thesis, Eastern Theological College, 1996), 33.

⁹⁴ Lamkhotawng, 7.

⁹⁵ Thanglienkham and Tungnung, “Eben Ezer,” 7.

6.9 Conclusion:

Though the early Zous believed in the existence of one Supreme Being, *Pasien*, and a lesser god called *Lungzai* and invoked them on every important festival and social occasion, their daily life revolved around appeasing the spirits to avoid their wrath. They believed that malevolent spirits caused all kinds of illnesses and misfortunes. They also performed ancestor worship to get blessings in health and wealth from the spirits of their respective ancestors and fathers. The Zous practiced different types of magic and witchcraft to appease or drive away the evil spirits and spent most of their valuable time and energy performing sacrifices with animals. Various kinds of sacrifices, such as *baangtung kithoina*, *nuupi kithoina*, *tuilut kithoina*, etc., were performed depending on the nature of the sickness. The priest performed all the rites and rituals. Upon their encounter with Christianity and modernity brought by colonial authority, the Zou gradually transitioned from ancestor worship to Christian religious practices, consequently diminishing the significance of clan priests. As Christian belief took hold, the Zous' traditional fear of evil spirits subsided, leading to the abandonment of expensive sacrificial rituals. Furthermore, the traditional role of village priest was supplanted by church elders and pastors, marking a fundamental shift in religious authority within the community.

The Zous believed in life after death. However, the journey of the soul to *pielgal* and the life after death would be hard or easy, depending on what they accomplished in their lifetime. The concept of life after death – *misikhuo* and *pielgal* – was changed to the Christian concept of *vangam* (heaven) and *gawtmun* (hell).

In the early twentieth century, they could hear the Gospel through the agency of native evangelists and missionaries. Despite the resistance to the spread of Christianity, the evangelists and missionaries continued to propagate the gospel among the Zous. In the mid-twentieth century, the first Christian converts and the educated youths of the Zous felt the need for a separate church organization. Their dream materialized in 1954 with the formation of the Jou Christian Association.

Under the JCA, the gospel could penetrate into the interior part of the Zou inhabited areas.

The untiring effort of the local missionaries and evangelists was responsible for bringing a new faith to the Zou-inhabited areas. The establishment of the first Church organization - Jou Christian Association, and its publication of two books and a journal was also possible due to the initiatives of some newly English-educated Zou youths. However, Christianity and education did not bring rapid changes in the life of the Zous till the 1950s. Some aspects of the socio-cultural life of the Zous did not transform and remain intact even today. But it is to be noted that the changes in the socio-cultural life of the Zous had their roots during this period.



Fig.6.1. Pot for Brewing Rice Beer.
Photo: Thangsuanhang

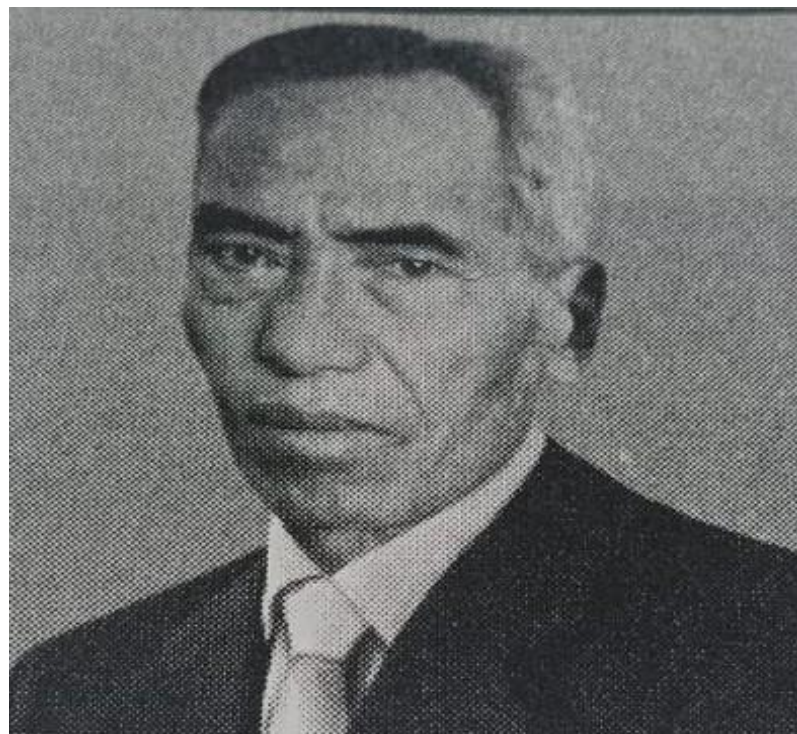


Fig.6.2. Pastor Thawngluan, missionary in Zou inhabited areas from 1939 to 1947.
Courtesy: Dr T.Pum Za Thang

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Across five chapters, this study examines the socio-cultural history of the Zous of Manipur and attempts to provide detailed ethnographical insights, with less emphasis on political and economic historical dimensions. It focuses largely on the traditional era and strives to understand the emergence of a new socio-cultural system with the advent of Christianity in Zou society during the first decade of the second half of the twentieth century.

Largely amateur but passionate colonial administrators and Christian missionaries, who were hardly or never professionally trained in anthropological, ethnographical, or historical studies, have carried out some ethnographical work on hill tribes of Manipur. These works have been referred to by researchers to understand the history of the Northeast tribes. Later, many research works on the hill tribes of Manipur have been produced through scholarships in universities and research institutes. Unfortunately, very little authentic research, so to speak, has been undertaken on the Zous of Manipur. The thesis examines the history of the Zous of Manipur through oral tradition, archival sources, and secondary literature. It also explores the legacy of the anti-colonial rebellion – Zou Gal (1917 – 1919). So far, the available secondary works consist of a general account of the Zous in the form of articles, booklets, souvenirs, and a few unpublished research works undertaken by theology students.

The entire community in the state is mainly composed of two categories - the tribals and the non-tribals. The tribals of Manipur can be divided into the Nagas, the Chin-Kuki-Mizo and other smaller tribes. Some tribes identified themselves as Chin-Kuki-Mizo. The Non-Naga or Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes are Gangte, Hmar, Lushei, Mate, Paite, Ralte, Simte, Sukte, Thadou, Vaiphei and Zou. They are predominantly found in the Churachandpur, Pherzawl, Chandel, Tengnoupal and Kangpokpi districts in the state.

The beginning of the history of Manipur can be traced back to the reign of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba in 33 AD. Manipur was an independent state till its defeat in the Anglo-Manipuri War in 1891. She remained a colonial state until India attained independence on 15 August 1947. By the Reorganization of North-East India Act 1971, Manipur became a full-fledged state on 21 January 1972.

The early Zous did not know written records, and therefore, an oral tradition is the most reliable means of transmitting past events. Tradition has it that the Zous are descendants of Progenitor Zo, and their place of origin is *khul*. Some persons hold the view that they are the descendants of Manasseh. However, in the absence of solid pieces of evidence to support the claims, these theories are merely myths and are not convincing theories for the origin of the Zous. Therefore, the origin of the Zous is still shrouded in almost complete mystery.

In the historical sources, the Zous are recorded as Jo, Yau, Yo, Yoe, Zo, etc. The accounts and documents of the travelers, the Christian missionaries, the colonial ethnographers and local scholars made passing references to the settlements of the Zous. It may be assumed that the name Zou originated from the ancient progenitor Zo, and the ancient Zo royal line of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo is handed down through the Manlun family and to the present Zou tribe.

It is a fact that the population has moved from the earliest times to the present due to causes such as wars, famine, drought, collecting food, and so on. The Zous belong to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo linguistic family of the Tibeto-Burman group. Therefore, it is believed that due to the reasons mentioned above, the Zous moved from Southern China to Burma along with other ethnic tribes at the end of the eighth century.

The knowledge of pedigrees and respect for birth is common and strictly preserved among the Zous, and every person addresses another person in strict accordance with the genealogical tree. Traditionally, the Zous are divided into forty-four clans, and each of these clans is subdivided into several sub-clans. The head of each clan among the Zous is called *tulpi*, the eldest male in the patrilineal line of the

clan. The *tulpi* acted as the clan priest of his respective clan. The worship of *pusa* and rituals with it was not possible without him. With the advent of Christianity, the worship of *pusa* was gradually discarded and the importance of *tulpi* for this rite was decreasing day by day. However, as the head of the clan, the *tulpi* is still respected and consulted in every matter relating to a family till today.

The family structure is interlinked in some ways by the institution of *inndongta*. The *inndongta* plays an important role in crucial matters of every household in its dealings with one another in society. It links the whole society and unites the households of the village, especially in matters related to social activities. The household council is characterized by obligations and reciprocal obligations that are manifested in ceremonies connected with marriages, births, or deaths.

The early social life of the Zous revolved around the village setup. Life was very simple, and persons, irrespective of sex, were freely mixed in society. Courtship was common and freely followed in the Zou society. The Zous were very particular about the place of their residence. In pre-colonial times, places that fulfilled such conditions as holding a better defensive position, a flat hill ridge where plants grew in abundance, getting morning sunlight, a flow of river or brook nearby, the slope of a hill, etc., were chosen for settlements. Later, apart from the above conditions, a place suitable for wet cultivation were the criteria for selecting their settlements.

Marriage was usually regulated by customary practices in which the first preference was matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. The practice of marrying *neita* was preferred to maintain the affinal bond that had been continued from generation to generation. It also signified the respect and deep-rooted love for maternal uncles. A unique customary practice of the Zous was *mouluo*, in which the elder or the younger brother married his deceased brother's wife. Over the years, some minor changes were beginning to be seen in marriage practices. The marriage that was once solemnized by the clan priest began to be done by a competent minister of the church. The marriage practice - *mouluo* was gradually discontinued. Apart from *siel*, other animals such as cow, ox, or buffalo are also gradually accepted as a principal

bride price, for it became too expensive and difficult to procure for the common people. Some of the subsidiary bride prices began to be paid in cash.

Death can be of various types. The disposal of the dead depended on the nature of the dead. The dead body of a distinguished person was dehydrated and then kept for days, sometimes even for a month. But an ordinary person was buried in two to three days. The practice of dehydration of the body was gradually given up because it was found to be time-consuming and unhygienic. The process of change of the Zou traditional system of disposal of the dead, where the clan priest and the village priest played a significant role; the hoisting of animal flags and headgear of the dead man on funeral days had its beginning during the period under study and was subsequently abandoned.

The Zous have their own traditional customary practices dealing with every aspect of social and individual life, such as crime, death, marriage, divorce, adultery, etc. These customary practices serve as a moral guide in social and individual life. These practices bind the chiefs, the councilors, and the common people. A distinctive customary practice of the Zous is that the eldest son, even an illegitimate has the right of inheritance of the father's property. In the meantime, he has obligations and responsibilities towards the family. The inheritance system of the Zous ensures the absence of dispute over the heirship of the father's property. As per customary practices, the Zou women enjoy some amount of freedom and opportunity. However, there are some areas where such an opportunity is denied. For instance, they are not allowed by custom to inherit the father's property.

The birth of a child is an auspicious occasion. Ceremonies such as naming, *aahnel vuhna*, and *nau aitahna* were held during the child's infancy. Usually, a child's name is taken after the paternal grandparents' names. *Aahnel vuhna* and *nau aitahna* were associated with the maternal grandparents' blessings upon the child. When the child attained adulthood, he would take a pot of rice beer and offer it to his maternal grandparents. It is done to express love and respect for the grandparents and receive their blessing. Over the years, the superstitious belief associated with the birth of a child was gradually abandoned.

Pu zukhol, one of the customary practices of the Zous, is an offering of a maternal grandfather or maternal uncle with traditionally brewed rice beer by the grandson. It is done to express love and respect for the maternal grandfather and to seek his blessings.

The bachelor's dormitory practice of the Zous had its distinctive features. Unlike the usual practices of the neighbouring tribal communities, the Zous had no separate building called a dormitory house. The *sawm* was attached to the chief's house, which was an extension of the front room of the village chief's house. Secondly, the number of *sawm* in the village was not defined. The number of *sawm* depended on the size of the village and varied from village to village. The institution of *sawm*, which served useful purposes for villagers and acted as the backbone of the early Zou villages during the pre-colonial period, began to decline in the late nineteenth century and subsequently became extinct. This was perhaps due to the colonial government's strict measures against any village or tribe indulging in an act of aggression towards other villages within the British territory that led to the improvement of the law-and-order situation in the hills in Manipur on one hand, and due to the advent of Christianity and introduction of modern school systems on the other.

The Zous have an age-old method of cutting and dividing the meat of animals killed in a game or animals killed for a feast on different social occasions and ceremonies. It is to be noted that the categories of relatives are obliged to arrange one pot of rice beer every time they receive their share of meat. The distribution of meat shares and the reciprocal act ensure a stronger bond between the householder and the meat receivers. This age-old customary practice has not changed and remains intact till today.

The Zous indigenous festivals and feasts were events of prayers and thanksgiving to their ancestral god. With the spread of Christianity in the Zou inhabited areas, these festivals began to fade, and they were gradually replaced by Christian festivals such as Christmas, New Year, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, etc.

Dance is an integral part of the indigenous culture of the Zous. They have varied numbers of traditional dances. These dances are performed during joyful occasions, funeral functions, and recreational and religious ceremonies. With the spread of Christianity, dances performed on funeral and religious occasions ceased and they began to be performed in joyful and recreational ceremonies.

The Zous have traditional or composed folksongs typically characterized by the simplicity of melody. These songs are written by ordinary people or in the style of the common people. There are about forty types of traditional songs, depending on genre and theme. The Zou folksongs are sung in unison by men and women in a dual-tone melody. Over the years, popular folksongs like *zangta la* and *laleh* have been sung on joyful occasions, but *hanla* and *lapi* sung at funeral functions lost their importance.

Due to Christianity and modernization, the Zous adopted a new lifestyle, which is a mixture of Western and traditional lifestyles. They progressively relinquished some of their indigenous attire and costumes and favoured western attire. The new lifestyle was reflected in their hairstyle, too. Other traditional and costumes such as *Puondum*, *puonlaisan*, *dielkhai*, *sakhi lukhu*, *khiba*, *bilba*, *tau*, are worn even today, depending on the ceremonies and occasions.

The Zous used various kinds of traditional musical instruments. The musical instruments were played or used on different occasions, such as joyful occasions, funeral functions, and recreational and religious ceremonies. After conversion to Christianity, musical instruments like *sielki*, *khuong*, *phiit*, *theile*, *zampi*, *daguol*, *datang*, *pengkul*, are played or used on occasions related to Christianity.

Hunting was an important pastime for the Zous. Hunting provided a person with an opportunity to gain social status in society. It is also believed that the spirits of whatever animals were killed by the person in hunting and killed as *kosa* for the person when he died would be with him on his journey to *misikhuo*. With the advent of Christianity, the concept of life after death has changed, and hunting and *kosa* have lost gradually their religious significance.

Zu (wine or liquor) was the most popular and valued drink among the early Zous. It played a vital role in social, religious, and other occasions. The observance of every life-cycle ceremony could not take place without *zu*. However, the Christian missionaries and the early converts did not allow the consumption of *zu* by church members. Therefore, it is replaced by tea in all customary practices, engagements, marriages, etc.

In the early times, the primary source of livelihood for the Zous was agriculture. Jhum cultivation (also called slash and burn) was the main occupation of the Zous. Digging was done with pointed sticks, stones, hoes, and spades. Seeds of crops such as millets, brinjal, barley, rice, basil, chilies, ginger, maize, beans, sweet potato, yam arum, cucumber, etc., were sown according to the seasons. Tobacco and cotton were also sown for household use. In the colonial and post-colonial periods, jhum and wet cultivations were the main occupations of the Zous.

It is seen that the Zou chief enjoyed absolute power within his chiefdom. He occupied a unique position in the village. Though, in theory, the chief appeared despotic, in reality, he was a paternal chief over his villagers, and the Zou village administration was democratic in character. The chief acted as the guardian, treated the villagers with equal love and affection, and helped them in times of need and trouble. He was responsible for protecting the villagers from external aggression and danger. All the households of the village were bound by custom to obey him. While administering justice, the chief and other members of the village council were guided by the traditional Zou customary practices. The administration system was the most effective way to maintain law and order in society. It also ensured peace and tranquility, social justice, social harmony, and cohesion among the people.

The Zous showed loyalty to their chiefs during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Under their chiefs, an attempt was made to resist the British imperialists in Manipur. It is known locally as Zou Gal (1917-1919). Though abortive, it was a bold attempt on the part of the Zous, thereby leaving a rich legacy in the history of Manipur.

As a result of Zou Gal, the hill areas were brought for the first time under the British imperial power's intensified political and administrative control. Attempts were also made by the then government to undermine the power and position of the village chief. The Manipur Hill Peoples' (Administration) Regulation, 1947, reduces many tribal chiefs, including the Zou chiefs, to unrecognized chiefs. Subsequently, under the Manipur (Village Authority in Hill Areas) Act, 1956, the tribal chiefs are reduced to an ex-officio chairman of the village authority. The sub-divisional magistrate exercised control over the village authorities, but ultimate control was with the commissioner. However, due to certain reasons, the two Acts were not implemented by the Government of Manipur.

Though the early Zous believed in the existence of one Supreme Being, *Pasien*, and a lesser god called *Lungzai* and invoked them on every important festival and social occasion, their daily life revolved around appeasing the spirits to avoid their wrath. They believed that malevolent spirits caused all kinds of illnesses and misfortunes. They also performed ancestor worship to get blessings in health and wealth from the spirits of their respective ancestors and fathers. The malevolent spirits were such as *kau*, *siha*, *gamkau*, *pheisam*, *zinmang*, *thadam*, *misau*, etc. The Zous practiced different types of magic and witchcraft to appease or drive away the evil spirits and spent most of their valuable time and energy performing sacrifices with animals. Various kinds of sacrifices, such as *baangtung kithoina*, *nuupi kithoina*, *tuilut kithoina*, etc., were performed depending on the nature of the sickness. The priest performed all the rites and rituals. Upon their encounter with Christianity and modernity brought by colonial authority, the Zou gradually transitioned from ancestor worship to Christian religious practices, consequently diminishing the significance of clan priests. As Christian belief took hold, the Zous' traditional fear of evil spirits subsided, leading to the abandonment of expensive sacrificial rituals. Furthermore, the traditional role of village priest is supplanted by church elders and pastors, marking a fundamental shift in religious authority within the community.

The Zous believed in life after death. However, the journey of the soul to the *pielgal* and the life after death would be hard or easy, depending on what they accomplished in their lifetime. The concept of life after death – *misikhuo* and *pielgal* – was changed to the Christian concept of *vangam* (heaven) and *gawtmun* (hell).

In the early twentieth century, the Zous could hear the Gospel through the agency of native evangelists and missionaries. Despite the resistance to the spread of Christianity, the evangelists and missionaries continued to propagate the gospel among the Zous. The untiring effort of the local missionaries and evangelists was responsible for bringing a new faith to the Zou-inhabited areas. The establishment of the first Church organization - Jou Christian Association, and its publication of two books and a journal was also possible due to the initiatives of some newly English-educated Zou youths.

The Zous' habits, ideas, behavior, beliefs, values, etc., are reflected in their songs, festivals, dances, naming systems, dresses, and ornaments. They are peace-loving people, evidenced by the fact that they were not at war with their neighbouring villages unless provoked or attacked. Most of their feasts and festivals are deeply connected with the soil. Practices like singing, dancing, and feasting enriched their life and brought them together.

In the socio-cultural life of the Zous during the period under study, some kinds of inequalities were experienced. Firstly, when selecting a site for an agricultural field and residence, the chief and his council of elders were given the first opportunity. Secondly, when an ordinary person died, the body was disposed of in two to three days. Still, for a person who had performed *ton*, *mim-ai*, *sa-ai*, *gal-ai*, etc., in his lifetime, the body was dehydrated and was kept for days and even a month before burial.

The thesis finds that while some socio-cultural elements gradually withered away with the advent of Christianity and modernity, some others remain untouched and continue even today. Some of these elements, such as the traditional lineage

system, *inndongta*, clan system, inheritance, family structure, etc., do not undergo any change. Certain cultural elements associated with birth, death, marriage, etc., still exist among the Zous. For instance, the traditional bride price of the Zous continues till today with minor changes in the mode and amount of payment.

APPENDIX – A

The Genealogy of Manlun Clan

1. (a) Zo
2. (a) Kipmang (b) Chinhil
3. (a) Nawphut (b) Leimang
4. (a) Nawsong (b) Phusong
5. (a) Songthu (b) Songkip
6. (a) Thatlun (b) Sungmang
7. (a) Tavai
8. (a) Lephuo
9. (a) Ngawngtawm
10. (a) Hangngul (b) Lelun
11. (a) Hanghil (b) Milun
12. (a) Manlun (b) Mantuong (c) Mangson (d) Hangvung (e) Matmang
13. (a) Nungon (b) Sellang (c) Chinkhomang
13. (b) Sellang
14. (a) Nungkhothang (b) Lunngék
14. (b) Lunngék
15. (a) Luntom
16. (a) Phapum
17. (a) Saituong
18. (a) Lephu (b) Nungtuong (c) Lungen
19. (a) Tuongpum (b) Mangsel
20. (a) Thangkhokam
21. (a) Mangneu
22. (a) Langza (b) Nungkhothong
23. (a) Pumkhokam (b) Henza
24. (a) Zapum
25. (a) Amthang
26. (a) Zakam
27. (a) Langzachin
28. (a) Pumkhomang

- 29. (a) Za on
- 30. (a) Langkam
- 31. (a) Paungillou
- 32. (a) Chinkholian
- 33. (a) Ngilzapau

Source: Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, *Zo Tulpi Hanghil Tangthu leh Khanggui Ciemtena (The History of the Zo Chief Hanghil and His Genealogical Record)* (Kalaymyo: Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina), 2012.

In the above Manlun genealogy, the vertical and increasing number represents the eldest male line. The letters (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) represent male siblings. In the tree, Manlun is the 12th generation from Zo. Langza, the chief of Khuangnung village in Burma (present Myanmar) and the 22nd generation from Zo is contemporaneous with Khan Thuam of Mualbem, the founder of Sukte rule in the Chin Hills in the nineteenth century. The 27th generation is Langzachin, one of the most important leaders of the Zou Gal (Kuki Rebellion) of 1917-1919. Ngilzapau is the 33rd generation from progenitor Zo and is the present chief of Nungsai village in Henglep Sub-Division, Churachandpur District, Manipur.

APPENDIX B

The Genealogy of Dopmul-Suontah Clan

1. (a) Zo
2. (a) Kipmang
3. (a) Nawphut
4. (a) Nawsong
5. -
6. (a) Neimang
7. (a) Songza
8. (a) Zahong
9. (a) Suantah
10. (a) Suonzo
11. (a) Neilut
12. (a) Neikeng
13. (a) Lamkeng
14. (a) Lam-el
15. (a) Dopmul
16. (a) Mulpi
17. (a) Zomtuong
18. (a) Vumkham
19. (a) Vungpau
20. (a) Lunglang
21. (a) Onnsuon
22. (a) Pausuong
23. (a) Thangkhup
24. (a) Amzachin
25. (a) Khupzakam
26. (a) Chinsuonthang
27. (a) Kamhauthang
28. (a) Tunkhendong
29. (a) Paudeitungmung

Courtesy: S.D.Go Za Pau, *Suantah Dopmul Khangsimna (Genealogy of Suantah Dopmul)*, (Kalaymyo: Author, 2000).

In the given genealogy, the descendants of the Dop Mul/ Dop Mul-Suantah trace their origin to Za Hong, who is the 8th generation from progenitor Zo. The 5th generation cannot be identified. The vertical and increasing number represents the eldest male line. The letter (a) represents male siblings.

APPENDIX C

Genealogy of Phiamphu Clan

1. (a) Zo

Many generations gap

2. (a) Phiemphu
3. (a) Phiemthang
4. (a) Kamkeithang
5. (a) Muvanlai
6. (a) Khomlun
7. (a) Nengseng
8. (a) Thangngul
9. (a) Neuhen
10. (a) Hensing
11. (a) Khupthuo (b) Ziemthuo
12. (a) Talnawh
13. (a) Thuotut
14. (a) Khuothang
15. (a) Gawngul
16. (a) Kanneh
17. (a) Ngulzamang
18. (a) Nehchinthang
19. (a) Mangkhenmung (Tahzang)

Courtesy: P.S.Kham Do Nang, "Upto Date History of the Zo tribes" (HGP Thesis, Myanmar Institute of Theology, 1994).

In the above Phiemphu genealogy, the vertical and increasing number represents the eldest male line. The letters (a) and (b) represent male siblings.

APPENDIX D

The Genealogy of Tungdim Clan

1. Zo
2. Kip^yman
3. Nophut
4. Noson
5. Suonman
6. Sonthu
7. Sonza
8. Kilhol
9. Ngontom
10. Phunhom
11. Nantal
12. Gabo
13. Talhan
14. Hillun
15. Saiza
16. Tungdim
17. Sincin
18. Tunsau
19. Hlinhel
20. Hlinviel
21. Manhel
22. Hulsin
23. Vietuon
24. Pauhel
25. Namhel/Ngamhel
26. Onkithan
27. Heltut
28. Thanchinman
29. Tutlienkhup
30. Mansienminlun

Courtesy: Philip Thanglienmang, 'A Descriptive Grammar of the Zo Language' (PhD Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2012).

In the given genealogy, Tungdim is the 16th generation from progenitor Zo. The vertical and increasing number represents the eldest male line. The letter (a) represents male siblings.

APPENDIX E

The Genealogy of Samte Clan

1. (a) Zo

Many generations could not be identified

2. (a) Samte

3. (a) Sievang

4. (a) Langlet

5. (a) Phungsuoh

6. (a) Phungdou

7. (a) Hangthang

8. (a) Phungel

9. (a) Khanhang

10. (a) Man on

11. (a) Khaidam

12. (a) Onneng

13. (a) Phungtuong

14. (a) Nengzakham (Singngat)

Courtesy: P.S.Kham Do Nang, “Upto Date History of the Zo tribes” (HGP Thesis, Myanmar Institute of Theology, 1994).

In the Samte genealogy given above, the vertical and increasing number represents the eldest male line. The letter (a) represents male siblings.

Appendix F

CHIN ETHNICITY

Tibeto-Burman



(Torr)

Bawmzo

Pawih

Courtesy: Vumson, Zo History (Aizawl, Author, 1986)

APPENDIX G

Zou inhabited Villages and Towns in Myanmar

Tedim Township

1. Bumzang	2. Gamngai
3. Geelzang	4. Kahgen
5. Khuodai	6. Mawngken
7. Tedim	8. Tualmu
9. Zozang	

Tonzang Township

1. Anlun	2. Bizang
3. Aisi	4. Buangmual
5. Buangzawl	6. Gampum
7. Geelmual	8. Kasau (Phaidim)
9. Kasau (Taklaam)	10. Khamzang
11. Khianglam	12. Khuavum
13. Khuomun	14. Khuumnuoi
15. Lamthang	16. Langphun
17. Lennakot	18. Likhan
19. Lomzang	20. Lungtah
21. Mawngkawn	22. Maulawm
23. Phaidim	24. Phaisat
25. Phaitu	26. Phuntong
27. Salzang	28. Sehshi
29. Sekang	30. Senam
31. Sielmei	32. Sielthaw
33. Taahzang	34. Taalzang
35. Tahlaam	36. Thaangsi
37. Thauthe	38. Tonzang
39. Thuambual	40. Vanglai

Kalay Township

1. Kan Oo	2. Kalaymyo

3. Kuanglian

4. Manlong

5. Nahanuai

6. 55 Mile

Tamu Township

1. Buongkung

2. Khampat

3. Nangkateih

4. Phailien

5. Tamu

6. Tuikhal

7. Tuino

8. Ywath

Courtesy: Khup Gin Thang, *Mangngilo Ding Zote Sung Thu Piang* (Kalaymyo: Author, 2012).

APPENDIX H

List of Zou Villages in Manipur

1 Churachandpur District:

1.1 Churachandpur Sub-Division:

1. Awnchinkap Veng	2. HiangZou	3. Immanuel Khopi
4. Kerith	5. New Zoveng	6. Phaibem
7. Tongdam	8. Zoumun	9. Zoumunnuam

1.2 Henglep Sub-Division:

1. Aina	2. T.Nungsai

1.3 Saikot Sub-Division:

1. BenaZou	2. Bohlui	3. Sehken
4. Tuibul	5. T.Daijang	6. Tuaitengphai
7. Zoumun	8. M.Saljang	

1.4 Sangaikot Sub-Division:

1. Gangpimual	2. M.Kholmual	3. Khuainuai
4. Khuongkhaijang	5. L.Khaukual	6. Kuvan
7. L. Alpha	8. M. Singheu	9. Phaisan
10. PN Khovong	11. Saiboh	12. Sangaikot
13. Teisaljang	14. T.Khuangkhai	15. T. Munnuam
16. T. Taalnuam	17. T. Vajang	18. Tuining
19. Zomi Zion	20. Zou Bethel	

1.5 Singngat Sub-Division:

1. Behiang (H)	2. Behiang V	3. Buhsau
4. Hiangdung	5. Hiangmuol	6. Hiangtam (K)
7. Hiangtam (V)	8. Jangnuam	9. Kullian
10. Likhai	11. L. Kanan	12. Lunjang
13. M.Buangmun	14. M.Lunmual	15. Muollum
16. Pahmual	17. S.Belpuan	18. Sehngaljang
19. Sialna	20. Singngat	21. S.Munhoih
22. S. Munpi	23. S.Muvanlai	24. S. Sehken
25. Suangkuang	26. Suangphu	27. Tangpijol
28. T. Khajang	29. Tonjang	30. Zabellei
31. Zahong	32. Zoukhonnuam	

1.6 Suangdoh Sub-Division:

1. Allusingtam	2. Mawngken	3. Maukot
4. Mualjin	5. P. Suahzahau	6. Tuimanjang

1.7 Tuibuang Sub-Division:

1. Kamdou Veng	2. Manniang khuo	3. Ngulzen Veng
4. Sabual	5. S. Kaplane	6. Zomi Colony

2. Pherzawl District:**2.1 Thanlon Sub-Division:**

1. Milongmun

3 Chandel District:**3.1 Chakpikarong Sub-Division:**

1. Gelngai	2. Haika (H) Kathuong	3. Khullen Khaillet
4. Paldai	5. P. Salem	6. Sajik Tampak
7. Singtom	8. S. Muolnuom	9. Sugnu Lamhang
10. Sugnu Lokhijang	11. Sugnu Zouveng	12. T. Jangnuam

3.2 Machi Sub-Division:

1. Kuraopokpi

3.3 Tengenupal Sub-Division:

1. Molnoi

3.4 Moreh Sub-Division:

1. T.M. Zoumunnuam

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GLOSSARY

<i>Aahgie</i>	-	Fowl's plume.
<i>Aisaan</i>	-	A kind of fate prediction.
<i>Bangkuo</i>	-	A member of the household council and head of the clan of the householder.
<i>Chin-Kuki-Mizo</i>	-	It refers to a group of kindred tribes, speaking the Tibeto-Burman language and inhabiting northeastern India, western Myanmar and southeastern Bangladesh. They are identified as either Chin, Kuki or Mizo.
<i>Galla-salla</i>	-	Victory song over enemy and animal.
<i>Gulsamnu</i>	-	She is a female dragon or spirit, who guards the narrow bridge between <i>misikhuo</i> and <i>pielgal</i> .
<i>Handal ni</i>	-	It means 'the day of prevention of visiting the graveyard.' The next day after burial.
<i>Hanla</i>	-	A song of self-acclamation, proclaiming one's heroic deeds.
<i>Haam</i>	-,	<i>Haam</i> is a room where Sawm's inmates sleep. It is an extension at a space above the porch of the front room of the village chief's house.
<i>Hausa</i>	-	Village chief.
<i>Hiemkham</i>	-	The literal meaning of <i>hiemkham</i> is a ceasefire. It is used as a truce when offences and accidents are caused.
<i>Hlimpha</i>	-	It is the front veranda of a house.
<i>Inndongta</i>	-	It is a household council.
<i>Innpi Sap</i>	-	Court fee charged in the village chief court.
<i>Innsungsa</i>	-	It is a sacred meat which can be eaten only by members of a family.
<i>Inntehpa</i>	-	Householder.
<i>Kemtung</i>	-	A raised platform in front of the verandah of a house.
<i>Khiba</i>	-	A necklace of beads

<i>Khibapi</i>	-	Garland of big onyx beads.
<i>Khul</i>	-	Cave or bowel of the earth.
<i>Khulman</i>	-	Fine for divorce.
<i>Khuotha</i>	-	A compulsory one-day free labour rendered by the villagers to the chief.
<i>Kiminsielna</i>	-	It means ‘an act of utterance of words of pride.’
<i>Kosa</i>	-	A funeral feast.
<i>Kunou</i>	-	An elevated floor on the downhill side of the central room of the house, which was a sleeping place for guests.
<i>Lagui</i>	-	A traditional song sung at burial.
<i>La khien</i>	-	A traditional song of seapARATION.
<i>Laleh</i>	-	It is a type of song that conveys the childhood romance and joy of the youth.
<i>Lang</i>	-	A matted bamboo frame or bier
<i>Lapi</i>	-	It is a Zou traditional song that can be sung at the time of death with attention and admiration.
<i>Lawm</i>	-	<i>Lawm</i> was a corporate labour youth organization in the early Zou villages.
<i>Lungzai</i>	-	He is either an assistant or brother of God and is lesser in power.
<i>Manpi</i>	-	The principal bride price.
<i>Mankang</i>	-	It is the subsidiary bride price payable by the groom’s family. The subsidiary bride price is distributed to different categories of persons who are relatives or friends of the bride’s family.
<i>Misikhuo</i>	-	Abode or village of the dead.
<i>Mou vanken</i>	-	Bridal goods or articles.
<i>Pangli</i>	-	A bamboo frame or a rough bamboo armchair on which a dead body is seated.

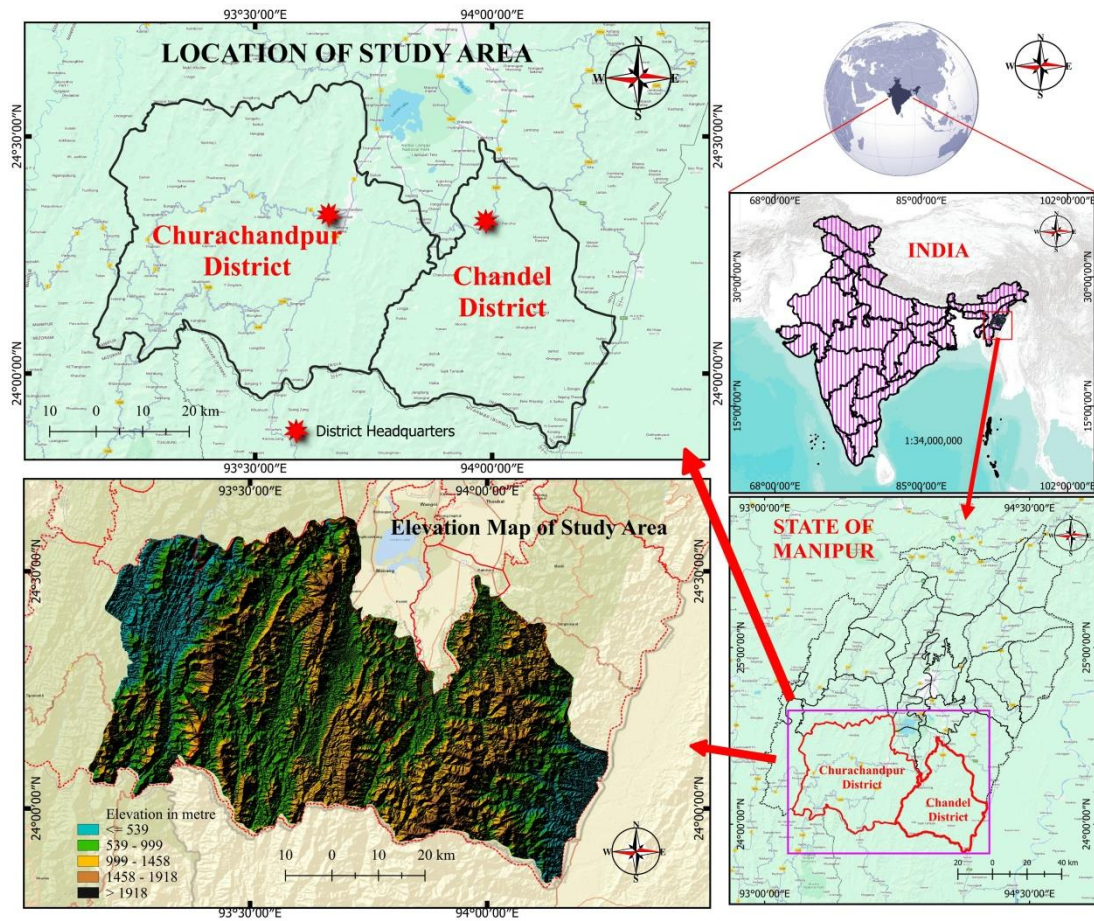
<i>Pasien</i>	-	Holy Father.
<i>Peila</i>	-	A traditional song of departure sung on the day of burial.
<i>Phoipi</i>	-	A hand-woven cotton blanket.
<i>Phuisam</i>	-	Uttering of words of incantation.
<i>Pielgal</i>	-	Land beyond the <i>piel</i> river.
<i>Pu</i>	-	Maternal or paternal grandfather.
<i>Pusa</i>	-	<i>Pu</i> means ‘ancestor’ and <i>sa</i> is ‘spirit,’ hence, <i>pusa</i> is the ‘spirit of ancestor.’
<i>Pusum</i>	-	The share of the maternal uncle in a bride price
<i>Sabengsiin</i>	-	A shawl covering a basket that contains meat to be taken to the groom’s house.
<i>Sa diel</i>	-	Animal flag hoisted on brave hunter’s dead.
<i>Sakhuoilu</i>	-	A piece of meat extracted from the two hind legs of an animal.
<i>Salam</i>	-	It is a punitive feast of a domestic animal, preferably a pig, arranged by the convicted person as a fine when a dispute is settled in the chief’s court.
<i>Sasem</i>	-	A non-clan member of a household council who is an expert in cutting meat.
<i>Sawntel</i>	-	White goat hairs dyed red.
<i>Sesing</i>	-	It is the name of a particular tree.
<i>Sibot</i>	-	Forcible snatching of the dead.
<i>Sielguol</i>	-	It refers to a young gayal.
<i>Siel kengding</i>	-	It is a live gayal.
<i>Sielpi</i>	-	A full-grown gayal.
<i>Siem-an</i>	-	Annual tax of paddy given to the village priest.
<i>Siempu</i>	-	A village priest authorized to perform sacrifices and rituals.
<i>Siemtha</i>	-	Annual one-day labour rendered for the priest.

<i>Si pusuo la</i>	-	A clan's funeral songs.
<i>Sisan Pal</i>	-	It means a married woman who has conceived a child and gave birth to a child.
<i>Sisan Pal lo</i>	-	When a married woman has not conceived a child.
<i>Sumtawng</i>	-	Ground verandah or porch in the front of a house.
<i>Sutpi</i>	-	The main pillar in the middle of a house.
<i>Tangchin puon</i>	-	A kind of shawl for journey used for covering a dead body.
<i>Tangseu</i>	-	It is a paddy tax collected by the chief from every household in his village.
<i>Tanu</i>	-	It refers to the married daughters.
<i>Tanubul</i>	-	The eldest married daughter/sister of a householder's family.
<i>Tanu guol</i>	-	All the married females of the household's clan or sub-clan.
<i>Tanu nina</i>	-	The second grade of married daughter in a household council.
<i>Tanu thumna</i>	-	The third-grade married daughter in a household council.
<i>Thatanman</i>	-	It is a portion of the bride price paid by the groom's side.
<i>Ton</i>	-	<i>Ton</i> is a grand feast performed by a wealthy person.
<i>Tuithei</i>	-	Bamboo watertube.
<i>Tui um</i>	-	It is a gourd pot.
<i>Tul</i>	-	Spike of sharpened bamboo or iron piece.
<i>Tulpi</i>	-	Head of a lineage clan. The word is derived from <i>tul</i> , which is a spike of sharpened bamboo or iron piece used for piercing animals to death. As the head of the the clan is always in possession of this sharpened piece, he is called <i>tulpi</i> , i.e. the one with a sharpened bamboo or iron piece.
<i>Tunsa</i>	-	It is the meat taken by the bride to the groom's house on the day of a marriage settlement.
<i>Tuol</i>	-	Courtyard of a Zou house.
<i>Upa</i>	-	Elder (of the village council of elder) or eldest son in a

family.

- Vabu-zial* - It is a bird's nest-like made of *khaam* and *uilusin* plants.
- Zawl* - *Zawl* is a non-clan member of a household council. He is the best friend of the householder.
- Zawlgai* - It refers to a girl or woman who conceives a child out of wedlock.
- Zawlta* - It is an illegitimate child born out of wedlock.
- Zawltai* - It means the elopement of a boy and girl without the knowledge of their parents.
- Ziataang* - An act of abstention.
- Zo* - The term by which the Zous of Myanmar identifies themselves. It is also a wider generic term used to replace the term 'Chin-Kuki-Mizo' in current academic and political discourse.
- Zubel* - A clay pot of rice beer.
- Zu ngau* - A dry gourd filled with rice beer.
- Zuphiit* - An act of incantation using liquor.
- Zupi* - It is traditionally brewed rice beer.

MAP OF MANIPUR SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE STUDY AREA



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PUBLISHING HISTORY

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“The Traditional Religious Beliefs of the Zous of Manipur” in *International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Studies*, Volume 5, Issue 5 (September – October), 76-81.

RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTED IN SEMINARS & CONFERENCES

“Biography of Goulun Manlun (1871-1957): Unsung hero of Zou Gal (Anglo-Zou War), 1917-1919” at the National Seminar on Anglo-Kuki War, 1917-1919: A

Biographical Discourse, organized by Kuki Research Forum in collaboration with Department of History, Manipur University, Imphal on 14 October 2019.

“Settlement history before the era of national boundaries: A Case Study of the Zou in present day Manipur’ at the National Workshop on the History of the Zou People & Anglo-Zou War, 1917-1919 organized by Zogal Centenary Commemoration Committee-2017 in collaboration with Zou Youth Organization GHQ and Zou Sangnaupang Pawlpi GHQ, held on 24 January 2018.



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ABSTRACT

**SOCIO - CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE ZOUS OF MANIPUR
FROM PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD TO 1956**

**AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

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**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY
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ABSTRACT

SOCIO - CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE ZOUS OF MANIPUR FROM PRE-
COLONIAL PERIOD TO 1956

BY

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Submitted

In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
History & Ethnography of Mizoram University, Aizawl.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

I. Introduction:

This work explores the socio-cultural, religious and other traditional orders of one of the fringe communities in Manipur through ethnographical and historical approaches to provide a more holistic historical understanding of Manipur. The heroic resistance of Zous against colonialism in the first half of the twentieth century is of great importance. At the same time, the social and cultural history of Zous needs to be highlighted in the historical writings of Manipur, because without proper knowledge of who they are and their social, cultural, political and economic history, understanding will definitely be shallow. In short, this research work mainly deals with the social and cultural history of Zous of Manipur from the archaic period to the first decade of the second of the twentieth century.

Believing in the idea that empirical research perhaps provides the foundation before embarking on in-depth theoretical research, this research attempts to shed more light on the social institutions, cultural practices and customary laws of the Zou community. This research leans more towards the empirical research approach than theoretical debates. Since little authentic research has been done on the Zous, there is a dearth of literature on the history, by and large, social and cultural, of the Zous of Manipur. The only written accounts available about the Zous are general accounts in the form of articles, booklets, souvenirs, and some unpublished research works (dissertations, theses) undertaken by scholars at theological institutions.

The beginning of the history of Manipur can be traced back to the reign of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba in 33 AD.¹ Manipur was an independent state till its defeat in the Anglo-Manipuri War in 1891.² She remained a colonial state until India

¹ Gangmumei Kamei, *History of Manipur Vol. I: Pre-Colonial Period* (Imphal: National Publishing House, 3rd Edition 2011), 91.

² L. Ibungohal Singh, *Introduction to Manipur* (Imphal; Saraswati Printing Work, 1987), 35.

attained independence on 15 August 1947. By the Reorganization of North-East India Act 1971, Manipur became a full-fledged state on 21 January 1972.³

Manipur is situated at the extreme northeastern border of India, bounded on the north by Nagaland, on the south, partly by Mizoram and partly by the Chin State of Myanmar, on the west by the Cachar district of Assam, and on the east by Myanmar.⁴ The state covers an area of 22,327 sq. km. The state has two major physiographic regions: River valley and a large surrounding tract of mountainous country.

For the convenience of administration, the state is divided into sixteen districts, namely i) Imphal East District, ii) Imphal West District, iii) Thoubal District, iv) Bishnupur District, v) Kakching District, vi) Jiribam District, vii) Churachandpur District, viii) Senapati District, ix) Tamenglong District, x) Ukhrul District, xi) Chandel District, xii) Kangpokpi District, xiii) Pherzawl District, xiv) Noney District, xv) Kamjong District and xvi) Tengnoupal District.

The Census 2011 shows the total population of Manipur as 2,855,794.⁵ The entire community in the state is mainly composed of two categories - the tribals and the non-tribals. The tribals of Manipur can be divided into the Nagas, the Chin-Kuki-Mizo⁶ and other smaller tribes and their total population in Census 2011 was 11,67,422.⁷ Some tribes identified themselves as Chin-Kuki-Mizo. They have a closer affinity with the Mizos of the Mizoram and the Chins of the Chin Hills in Myanmar. The Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes are Gangte, Hmar, Lushei, Mate, Paite, Ralte,

³ Jeyaseelan, *Impact of the Missionary Movement in Manipur* (New Delhi: Scholar Publishing House, 1996), 7-8.

⁴ Vedaja Sanjembam, *Manipur: Geography and Regional Development* (New Delhi: Rajesh Publications, Third Edition 2017), 14.

⁵ Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, *Manipur Population Census 2011 | Manipur Religion, Caste Data - Census 2011*. (Hereafter Manipur Census, 2011). URL: <https://www.censusindia.co.in/states/manipur>.

⁶ It refers to a group of kindred tribes, speaking the Tibeto-Burman language and inhabiting northeastern India, western Myanmar and southeastern Bangladesh. They are identified as either Chin, Kuki or Mizo.

⁷ Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, *A-11: State Primary Census Abstract (PCA) for individual scheduled tribes, Manipur – 2011* (hereafter Census, A-11, Manipur) URL: <https://censusindia.gov.in/nada/index.php/catalog/42953/>

Simte, Suhte, Thadou, Vaiphei and Zou. They are predominantly found in the Churachandpur, Pherzawl, Chandel, Tengnoupal and Kangpokpi districts in the state. The non-tribals include the Meiteis, Muslims, Nepalese, Sikhs, Biharis, Malwaris, etc.

The Zous belong to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo, a subfamily of the Tibeto-Burman group. They are recognized as one of the Scheduled Tribes,⁸ and their population, as per Census 2011, was 24,294.⁹ They are mainly found in Churachandpur and Chandel districts and are also scattered in other districts of Manipur. The population of Zou in Myanmar, as recorded in 2012, is more than 61,000¹⁰ and they are recognized under Code No. 421. In Myanmar, the Zou are located primarily in the Chin State and parts of the Kabaw Valley. Today, the Zou villages are located in the northeast of Tiddim Township, Tonzang Township, Kale-Kabaw Valley, etc.¹¹ The Zou tribe is divided into numerous clans and sub-clans. Haochinthong listed them as 44 clans.¹² However, the number of clans was reduced to 43 with the recognition of the Mate clan as one of the Scheduled Tribes of Manipur.¹³

There are 99 villages under the chiefship of the Zous in Manipur. The number of villages under the Zou chiefship in the Churachandpur district is 84; that of the Chandel district is 12; in the Pherzawl district, it is 1, and the number of Zou villages in the Tengnoupal district is 3. These are the villages completely inhabited by the Zous. Besides, there are some localities in the bigger villages or towns which are inhabited by them. These localities are Thingkangphai, Simveng, Lailam Veng, Tuibuang, Kanan Veng, and Bible Hills in Churachandpur town. Moreh, the Indo-Myanmar town is also partially inhabited by them.

⁸ Ministry of Home Affairs, *Notification Order No. SRO 2477A, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes List (Modification) Order, 1956, Manipur, Sl. No. xvii* (New Delhi: Government of India, 29 October 1956).

⁹ *Census of India: A-11*, 15.

¹⁰ Academic Dictionary and Encyclopedia, "Zo (people)," 1.
<https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/248202>. Accessed 31 March 2024

¹¹ Khamchinkhai, "Transition of Zou Society from Animism to Christianity: A Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Analysis" (MTh Thesis, Senate of Serampore College, 2004), 9.

¹² Haochinthong, *Zou Sung Kivaihawmna (Administration Among the Zou Tribes)* (Lamka: M/S Express, 1988), 36.

¹³ The Gazette of India, *The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Act 2011* (New Delhi: Ministry of Law and Justice, 2012), date 9/1/2012.

II. Statement of the Problem:

The Zous have been settling in their present settlements since the pre-colonial period. In the nineteenth century, the Zou, under the Manlun chiefs, were strong contenders for regional power in the Northern Chin Hills. There was a stiff struggle between the Zous and the Kam Hau Sukte to control the Northern Chin Hills, especially Tedim.¹⁴ However, no detailed study of the socio-cultural history of Zous has ever been made.

The Zous have a rich heritage of customary practices, which they have developed and preserved over a long period. They are also unique in the sense of the name they bear and the culture they practice in reflection of the ancient Zo traditions. During the colonial period, the Zous were known for their resistance against the British government and the Maharaja of Manipur, which led to the outbreak of the Zou Gal in 1917.

Despite having such a rich culture and being daring enough to challenge British imperialism, little authentic research on the Zous of Manipur has been undertaken. The available written records are the general account of the Zous in the form of articles, booklets, souvenirs, and a few unpublished research works undertaken by theology students. Therefore, the study attempts to uncover the socio-cultural history of the Zous of Manipur from the pre-colonial period to 1956 and present a comprehensive historical account of the Zous of Manipur.

III. Review of Literature:

Though the life of the kings and important events in the palace in Manipur were recorded in Chronicles such as *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, *Ningthourol Lambuba*, etc., writings on the history of Manipur about the tribes in the hills started during the colonial period. With no knowledge of the writing system, everything was passed orally from generation to generation. The early works on the history of the hill tribes

¹⁴ Joseph Herbert Cope, *Tedim Thu Kizakna Lai*, July 1937, 3. It is Baptist journal, edited and published by J.H. Cope since 1919, 4.

of Manipur were done by colonial administrators. Concerning the Zous, the colonial writers made only passing references in their writings.

A History of the Zou People is edited by Dr. David Vumlallian Zou and Dr. S. Thangboi Zou and published in 2017 by the United Zou Organization-India, in commemoration of Zou Gal (Anglo-Zou War) Centenary 1917-1919. As it is a commemorative volume to honour the Zou fighters who took part in the Zou Gal, most of the articles contributed are related to Zou Gal, that includes the British's punitive measures, the Zous' resistance to the British troops, a series of encounters at different fronts, the impact of the war and even short biographies of all the Zou fighters. There is also a section in the volume where space for articles on a general history of Zous is given. The articles in this section touch on the origin, settlements, beliefs, etc., of the Zous. In this volume, the data used for writing most of the articles are collected from oral and archival sources.

A book titled *Zo Tulpi Hanghil Tangthu leh Khanggui Cieptehna (History of the Zo Lineage Head, Hanghil and Record of his Genealogy)* is edited by Mang Kho Lien and published by Hanghil Innkuon Kipawlina, an Association of the Hanghil family at Kalaymyo in Myanmar in 2012. The book traces the roots of the Zos in China and deals with their movement from China, to Tibet, to Burma, and thence to the Chin Hills. A major part of the book is devoted to writing the history of Hanghil and his descendants, particularly giving a detailed genealogical account of the clans. It also deals with the Zou chiefs' struggle against the Sukte in the nineteenth century. Though not exhaustive, the book deals with the socio-cultural and religious life of the Zous in Myanmar. Khup Khan Mang's *History of Hanghil, Milun Family* (in Zou) is another book that deals with Hanghil and the Milun family, the offspring of Hangngul. The book also gives the genealogical accounts of Manlun, Mantuang, Mangson, Hangvung, and Matmang, who are the offspring of Hanghil. Out of the five offspring of Hanghil, the descendants of the eldest son, Manlun, became the most influential chief among the Zous. However, the book is confined only to one clan of the Zous.

T. Gin Khan Thang & Paoneikhai Suantak's *Tributary Hill Polity: Chiefs and Overlords in Northern Chin Hills, 1800-1948*, published by Mittal Publications, New Delhi, in 2015, sheds light on the century-old history of a hill-based polity in the borderland between the Indian states of Mizoram and Manipur with Burma. It deals with the struggle between the Zous and the Suktes in the second half of the nineteenth century. The book also touches on the Zou Gal (1917-1919), recorded in colonial documents as 'Kuki Rebellion,' where the main focus is the participation and surrender of the Zous in this rebellion in the southern and southeastern part of the present Manipur.

The *Tedim Thu Kizakna Lai* is a vernacular Baptist journal in Tedim, edited by Baptist missionary Joseph Herbert Cope and published in July and October 1937 in Tedim in the Chin Hills. It sheds light on the contest for control of the Northern Chin Hills, particularly Tedim, between the Zou chiefs and the Kamhau clans. This journal is highly informative as a record of events in general for most of the nineteenth century.

An Introduction to the Zou Tribes, MA Dissertation by Holkholun Lhungdim is the first research work on the Zou tribe. It deals with the origin, domestic life, and the main occupation of the Zous in pre-colonial times.

P.S. Kham Do Nang, in his *Upto Date History of the Zo tribes*, presents a glimpse of the cultural and religious life of the Zou tribes in general. He also states why the Zo is believed to be the heir of Jou's descendants. Moreover, he writes that the first settlement of the Zous is Suih Mual and also describes the dispersion of the Zo tribes from Cimnuai and then their migration to their present settlements in Manipur.

Regarding Zou society, culture, and religion, an important work is Mannuamching's *Zou Culture: Past and Present* (1999), in which the author writes about the cultures of the Zou before the coming of Christianity. The book deals with the marriage system, dress, feasts, disposal of the dead, etc., and also points out the changes in the cultures of the Zous with the advent of modernity and Christianity. In

another book, *Zo Ngaina Leh Kamham Zahdan* (2016), Kai Khan Lien touches on the socio-cultural history of the Zous, focusing briefly on the household council, marriage, birth and naming of a child, festivals, feasts, traditional belief, burial system and journey of the soul to *misikhuo*. He also states that the Zous are the descendants of the progenitor Zo. He further states that the Zos in Myanmar are listed under Code No. 421, and in India, they are recognized as a Scheduled Tribe.

Transition of the Zou Society from Animism to Christianity: A Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Analysis, MTh Thesis, by Khamchinkhai deals with brief accounts of the origin, migration, dances, feasts, etc. of the Zou tribe. It emphasizes the religious aspect of the Zous, such as traditional religious belief, the formation of the Church organization, and also changes brought about by Christianity in the life of the Zous.

David Vumlallian Zou's article "Glimpses of Zou Ethno-History," in *United Zomi Organization Golden Jubilee (1954 – 2004) Souvenir*, edited by Thangchinsuan and published in 2004, is a concise ethnohistory of the Zous of Manipur. It is a brief historical account of the Zous reconstructed from documentary evidence, supplemented by oral sources. The author describes the contest between the Zous under the Manlun chief and the Sukte chief for controlling the northern Chin Hills in the nineteenth century, where the former was reduced to a subdued status. He also points out the demographic marginalization of the Zous on both sides of the Manipur and Burma frontier by awarding sixteen Zou villages to Manipur like a trophy.¹⁵ The author states that without direct contact with any Western Christian missions, the Zou Christian pioneers ceaselessly worked to form the first Christian organization in the mid-1950s. The article provides an account of how the evolution of the Zou community reflects elements of continuity and change.

The Chin Hills, Vol. I, by B.S. Carey and H.N. Tuck (reprinted 2008), trace the advent of the British administration in the Chin Hills and the Lushai Hills. It provides valuable information on the history of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo ethnic tribes

¹⁵ David Vumlallian Zou, "Glimpses of Zou Ethno-History," *United Zomi Organization Golden Jubilee (1954 – 2004) Souvenir*, ed. Thangchinsuan (Churachandpur: P. Tongthang Zou, 2004), 116-117.

who inhabited the Chin Hills in the late nineteenth century. The book briefly notes the Zous and presents them in a subdued status. It states that Khan Thuam and his son Kam Hau conquered all the Zou-inhabited areas. However, the book mentions that no Sukte chief is superior in birth to the Yo. It describes the tract of a country once occupied by the Zous: “The Yo tribe three generations back occupied the tract of the country now inhabited by the Kanhow (aka Kam Hau) clan of Soktes (aka Suktes), and many of the Kanhow villages are inhabited still by Yos whose tribal name has given way to that of “Kanhow.”¹⁶ The authors also write, “... but the people called themselves by the name Yo, and those who belong to the ‘Manlun’ family consider that they have a right to be proud of their birth.”¹⁷ The Manlun chiefs are the most influential among the Zous.

B.S. Carey and H.N. Tuck’s *The Chin Hills* Vol. II (Reprinted 2008) is a Gazetteer of Villages and Road Reports in the Chin Hills in the late nineteenth century. It also lists the villages that are tributaries to Manipur and lie north of the Chin Hills. The book records fifteen Zou villages with 548 houses under Manipur¹⁸ and fourteen Zou villages¹⁹ with 191 houses in the Chin Hills. The Zou villages in the Chin Hills are subordinated to Hauchinkhup, and therefore, they are listed as ‘Kanhow villages.’

Chinthu Zaila (Prose & Poetry), edited by M. Liensuonkap and T. Nehkhajang, was published in 2012. It is prescribed as the Zou MIL textbook for Class XI & XII by the Council of Higher Secondary Education, Manipur. The prose section of the book includes topics such as customary practices, disposal of the dead, inheritance, folk songs, feasts, festivals, etc., of the Zou tribe. Though the contributors do not deal in detail with the cultures of the Zous, it is a good source of information for writing the history of the Zou tribe. In another book *Chinthu Zaila*

¹⁶ Bertram S. Carey and H.C. Tuck, *The Chin Hills: A History of the People, Our dealing with them, their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of their Country*, Vol. I (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Reprinted 2008), 140.

¹⁷ Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills* I, 140.

¹⁸ Bertram S. Carey and H.C. Tuck, *The Chin Hills: A History of the People, Our dealing with them, their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of their Country*, Vol. II (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Reprinted 2008), cxx-cxxiv.

¹⁹ Carey and Tuck, *Chin Hills*, II, xx-xxi, xxiv-xxx.

(*Zou Literature Reader-X*), prescribed as a textbook for Class X by the Board of Secondary Education, Manipur, chapters on “Upadi (custom),” “Kithoina (sacrifices)” and “Zou Gal” are useful sources. In “Upadi,” James Khamchinsuan deals with the customary practices, focusing on the role and the privileges enjoyed by the members of *inndongta*. Kaikhohau’s “Kithoina” is about the various types of sacrifices performed by the early Zous to appease or drive away evil spirits.

Joseph Suantak, in his book, *Khulmi? Chhinlung Hurpi Khol Khul Khur Sinlung (Beyond Identity and Political Crisis)*, printed in 2012, has a bold attempt to study the *Khulmi* people: their cave-origin theory, migratory movement, settlement patterns, and their socio-cultural interactions with one another during the historical period by combining multi-disciplinary methods. He writes about the Zous's origin and the Zou family's lineage. He also mentions the migration of some of the Zous from the Chin Hills to the southern part of Manipur.

Ginzamang T. Zomi’s article, “Marriage Practices of the Zou tribe in Manipur – Continuity and Changes,” in *International Journal of Social Science Invention*, Vol. 3, Issue 10, October 2014, discusses the traditional marriage practices of the Zou tribe, which have been observed from time immemorial. He touches on the different aspects of Zou marriage - forms of marriage, bride price, customary bride’s expenditure, divorce, and so on. He concluded his article by stating that though Christianity brought changes in the Zou traditional marriage system, traditional customary practices such as bride price, marriage feast, etc., are still retained by the Zou tribe.

Thang Sut Mung, in his doctoral thesis, *A History of the Zo People*, investigates the social pattern and development of the Zou people. He traces the origin and also examines the settlements, customary practices, culture, and other aspects of the life of the Zous of Myanmar from pre-colonial times till the twentieth century. However, his study area is the Northern Chin State and parts of the Kabaw Valley in Myanmar. It is the first research work on the history of the Zous of Myanmar.

Johny Lalbiaklian, in his M. Phil Dissertation, *The Zou Customary Laws: Continuity and Changes*, studies the traditional social structure of the Zou society. He analyses the Zou customary laws and also points out that though Christianity brings changes in the religious life of the Zous, it does not have much effect on their customary laws. The study also mentions that, except for some minor changes, the customary laws continue to be followed by the Zous.

Tribal Customary Laws and Practices, written by H. Thangtungnung (2015), covers the various customary laws of the Kuki-Mizo-Zomi ethnic tribes like Paite, Thadou, Vaiphei, Hmar, Zou, etc. The book vividly reflects and discusses the customs and customary practices of these ethnic tribes. The author focuses on tribal society from the traditional background to modern adaptations and usages.

Prism of the Zo people is a book to commemorate the 60th Diamond Jubilee of Zomi Nam Ni, 2008. It was published by the Publication Board of the 60th Zomi Nam Ni Celebration Committee. The articles in this book are research-based write-ups of various scholars or are extracted from books and theses. It provides basic information on the history, culture, economy and politics of the Zomi.

The General Assembly, Presbyterian Church of India published a book *History of the Presbyterian Church of India*, in 2020. The book deals with the beginning and development of the Presbyterian Church of India, and the various activities undertaken by it over the years. It also discusses the beginning, growth and development of the various Church Synods under it. The chapter on the Zou Presbyterian Church Synod sheds light briefly on the beginning and spread of Christianity among the Zous of Manipur. The book mentions that despite opposition to the new faith from the village chiefs, the untiring efforts of the native missionaries led to the spread of Christianity into the interior parts of the Zou-inhabited areas.

Vummang and Jamkhogin compiled *The Jou Custom Book (Tondan)* which was published in 1957. In the booklet, the customary practices followed by the Zous in marriage, divorce, rape, murder, etc. and the punishments or fines imposed on the offenders are reduced in writing and compiled together.

Proceedings of the First Indo-Myanmar International Seminar on Zou Language, Literature, Culture and Custom, was edited by Aloysius T. Nehkhojang and published by Xavier Nengkhanlam and T. Lamkothawng in 2013. It is an edition of the articles presented by various resource persons in the 1st Indo-Myanmar International Seminar on “Zou Language, Literature, Culture and Custom” held at Moreh, Manipur on 15th and 16th May 2013. The resource persons touch on the culture and customs of the Zous in India and Myanmar and stress the importance of preserving them.

Thus, it is seen that the existing works of literature reviewed above concern the general aspects of the life of the Zous. However, an in-depth study of the social and cultural history of the Zous of Manipur has never been made objectively. Therefore, the study attempts to make an intensive study of the Socio-Cultural History of the Zous in Manipur.

IV. Area of Study:

The study focused on the socio-cultural history of the Zous community in Manipur, covering the pre-colonial era up to 1956. Intensive research has been carried out in the Churachandpur and Chandel districts of Manipur, as most of the Zou villages are located in these areas.

V. Research Objectives:

- To trace the origin, migration and settlements of the Zous.
- To explore the socio-cultural life of the Zous.
- To study the Zou customary practices.
- To study the post-colonial Zou social and political life and its continuity to 1956.

VI. Methodology:

This research employs an ethnohistorical and qualitative approach to examine the social and cultural history of the Zou tribe of Manipur. Due to the limited textual records of this small tribal society, where written sources emerged primarily in post-colonial times, the methodology draws upon a diverse range of sources — primary, secondary and oral sources.

The ethnohistorical framework allows for the integration of anthropological methods with historical inquiry, particularly valuable when studying indigenous communities with strong oral traditions. Primary sources include dissertations and doctoral theses - both secular and theological, and also colonial official documents, that have been collected from the governmental and non-governmental archives. Conducting a socio-cultural historical study on such a small (Zous) society, where written records emerged only in post-colonial times, has proven challenging due to limited sources. In fact, Colonial ethnographers hardly touched upon this community. In some exceptional cases, but unlike the Thadou, Lushais and other major Chin tribes, there are no specific colonial ethnographical works on the Zou people. This challenge intensified as the research timeframe does not extend beyond 1956.

To bridge this gap, oral historical sources were gathered through unstructured, open-ended purposive interviews. These interviews were conducted with respondents from various professional and personal backgrounds, such as (retired) government servants, religious leaders, village chiefs, and leaders of civil societies like the United Zou Organization, the Zou Literature Society, etc. To achieve greater objectivity and a holistic understanding of the ethnohistory of Zou society, physical and telephonic interviews were conducted with resourceful individuals from Myanmar inhabiting the Chin State and Sagaing Region as well as with members of the Zous residing in the USA.

Secondary sources, including books (published or unpublished), journals, booklets, souvenirs, etc., were utilized in this research. Websites were also accessed as per the availability of sources.

Like other hill tribes of Northeast India, the Zou community embraced aspects of modernity through education and other social transformations that began with the advent of Christianity in the 1950s. However, these changes manifested gradually over subsequent decades, as the Zous remained steadfast, content, and proud of their indigenous culture and beliefs.

In examining the equilibrium of change and continuity in the Zou society and culture from archaic until the 1950s, the research reveals a predominance of continuity over change- a distinctive characteristic of Zou history. Had the area of the study of this research been extended a few decades beyond the 1950s, it would have offered greater advantages in documenting the socio-cultural and political changes of the Zous.

The qualitative methodology employed in this study prioritizes depth of cultural understanding over quantitative metrics, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of cultural persistence and gradual transformation. The primary focus of this research work is twofold: to document how extensively the Zous preserved their indigenous socio-cultural practices and to analyze the beginning of their transition from traditional systems to Christianity and modernity.

VII. Chapterization:

Chapter 1: Introduction

The first chapter introduces the land and the people of Manipur. It also highlights a brief political history of Manipur. This chapter clarified the etymology and challenges of the terms ‘Zou,’ ‘Zo’ or ‘Zomi’ and also introduces the Zous of Manipur. It also briefly deals with the anti-colonial rebellion of the Zous. Statement of the problem, review of literature, area of study, research objectives, methodology, and chapterization are also included in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Origin, Migration and Settlements

The second chapter traces the origin of the Zous and also shows how they are referred to in recorded sources. It deals with the migration of the Zous from China to

Tibet, thence to Burma, and finally to their present settlements in Manipur. The chapter also shows the early and the present settlements of the Zous.

Chapter 3: Traditional Social Structure and Customary Practices

This chapter discusses the family structure, clan and village structure of the Zou society. It examines the social practices of the Zous, such as *inndongta*, social visits, courtship, and the marriage system. It also deals with death, funerary practices, and the ceremonies connected with death.

Chapter 4: Indigenous Culture and Festivals

Chapter 4 deals with inheritance, pregnancy, birth, the naming of a child and ceremonies associated with a newborn child. It examines *pu zukhol*, *sawm* and the traditional method of division of meat. This chapter also discusses festivals, feasts, dances, folksongs, dresses, ornaments, musical instruments, hunting, *zu* and society, and economic activities of the Zous.

Chapter 5: Chiefs and the Traditional Administrative System

This chapter discusses the Zou chieftaincy system and the powers, functions and privileges of Zou chiefs during traditional times. It also discusses the traditional village administration, *lawm*, the village council, customary laws and settlements of cases, and the chief's relationship with his neighbouring villages. Changes in the administration of the hill areas are also examined in this chapter.

Chapter 6: Traditional Belief System and the Advent of Christianity

The 6th chapter shows the traditional religious beliefs and sacrifices of the Zous in their pre-Christian period. It also traces the beginning of the Christian Mission and its activities in Manipur and discusses the spread of Christianity among the Zous.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The last chapter summarizes the whole thesis and draws a comprehensive conclusion.

VIII. Findings of the Research Work:

The origin of the Zous is shrouded in almost complete mystery. As they do not have written records dealing with their ancient past, oral traditions served as sources for reconstructing their origin. The tradition and the genealogy of each clan of the Zous trace their origin to progenitor Zo, and as such, the Zous claim that they are his descendants. A comparative study of the genealogies of the various Zou clans handed down orally since time immemorial shows that each clan traces its origin to Zo. Writers like V.Lunghnema, Vum Kho Hau, K.A.Khupzathang, C.Chawngkunga, etc., are also of the view that all the tribes in the Chin-Kuki-Mizo groups are descendants of Zo. Based on the above pieces of evidence, it is likely that the claim made by the Zous about their origin has a logical sense of historical rationality. It is also further proved by the fact that Zous, one of the ethnic tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo, has been retaining the term Zou to identify them since time immemorial till today.

After leaving Khampat, the Zous moved toward the southwest, later known as the Chin Hills. The Zou tradition claims that Suih Mual was their first settlement in the Chin Hills. Kham Do Nang also writes that after leaving Kale Palace, the Zous first arrived at Leisanmual, and then they moved to Kenedy Peak, where they later founded Suih Mual village. A Zou traditional incantation proved that Suih Mual was the first dwelling place of the Zous in the Chin Hills. Later, they moved from Suih Mual to Chimnuai. Chimnuai is said to be the centre of dispersion for the Chin-Kuki-Mizo family.

The study finds that the Zous had the Northern Chin Hills as their traditional territorial base. Led by the Manlun chiefs, they were strong contenders for regional power and were contemporary to the Suktes, Sailos, Guites, and Thados. There was a power struggle between the Zou chiefs and the Sukte chiefs for controlling the

Northern Chin Hills in the nineteenth century. However, the Zou chiefs could not withstand the Sukte chiefs, supported by the Zahau Chief, Khuang Cheu of Rallang, and they were reduced to a subdued status. The Zou chiefs did not like to remain under it, so they moved to areas that were out of the Suktes' reach and established new settlements. Constant inter-tribal raids and famine were the other factors that pushed the Zous out of their old settlements. Over the years, new villages were set up in different places in their settlement areas, either by abandoning some old villages or splitting off some of the existing Zou villages.

The *tulpi* acted as the clan priest of his respective clan. The worship of *pusa* and rituals with it was not possible without him. With the advent of Christianity, the worship of *pusa* was gradually discarded and the importance of *tulpi* for this rite was decreasing day by day. However, as the head of the clan, the *tulpi* is still respected and consulted in every matter relating to a family till today.

The family structure is interlinked in some ways by the institution of *inndongta*. The *inndongta* plays an important role in crucial matters of every household in its dealings with one another in society. It links the whole society and unites the households of the village, especially in matters related to social activities. The household council is characterized by obligations and reciprocal obligations that are manifested in ceremonies connected with marriages, births, or deaths.

The Zous have an age-old method of cutting and dividing the meat of animals killed in a game or animals killed for a feast on different social occasions and ceremonies. It is to be noted that the categories of relatives are obliged to arrange one pot of rice beer every time they receive their share of meat. The distribution of meat shares and the reciprocal act ensure a stronger bond between the householder and the meat receivers. This age-old customary practice has not changed and remains intact till today.

Marriage was usually regulated by customary practices in which the first preference was matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. The practice of marrying *neita* was preferred to maintain the affinal bond that had been continued from generation to generation. It also signified the respect and deep-rooted love for maternal uncles. A

unique customary practice of the Zous was *mouluo*, in which the elder or the younger brother married his deceased brother's wife. Over the years, some minor changes were beginning to be seen in marriage practices. The marriage that was once solemnized by the clan priest began to be done by a competent minister of the church. The marriage practice - *mouluo* was gradually discontinued. Apart from *siel*, other animals such as cow, ox, or buffalo are also gradually accepted as a principal bride price. Some of the subsidiary bride prices began to be paid in cash.

The birth of a child was an auspicious occasion. Ceremonies such as naming, *aahnel vuhna*, and *nau aitahna* were held during the child's infancy. Usually, a child's name was taken after the paternal grandparents' names. *Aahnel vuhna* and *nau aitahna* were associated with the maternal grandparents' blessings upon the child. When the child attained adulthood, he would take a pot of rice beer and offer it to his maternal grandparents. It was done to express love and respect for the grandparents and receive their blessing. Over the years, the superstitious belief associated with the birth of a child was gradually abandoned.

The disposal of the dead depended on the nature of the dead. The dead body of a distinguished person was dehydrated and then kept for days, sometimes even for a month. But an ordinary person was buried in two to three days. The practice of dehydration of the body was gradually given up. The process of change of the Zou traditional system of disposal of the dead had its beginning during the period under study and was subsequently abandoned.

The Zous have their own traditional customary practices dealing with every aspect of social and individual life, such as crime, death, marriage, divorce, adultery, etc. These customary practices serve as a moral guide in social and individual life. These practices bind the chiefs, the councilors, and the common people. A distinctive customary practice of the Zous is that the eldest son, even an illegitimate son, has the right of inheritance of the father's property. It ensures the absence of dispute over the inheritance of the father's property. During the period under study, minor changes are visible in the customary practices.

The bachelor's dormitory practice of the Zous had its distinctive features. The Zous had no separate building called a dormitory house. Secondly, the number of *sawm* in the village was not defined. The number of *sawm* depended on the size of the village and varied from village to village. The institution of *sawm*, which served useful purposes for villagers and acted as the backbone of the early Zou villages during the pre-colonial period, began to decline in the late nineteenth century and subsequently became extinct. This was perhaps due to the colonial government's strict measures against any village or tribe indulging in an act of aggression towards other villages within the British territory that led to the improvement of the law-and-order situation in the hills in Manipur on one hand, and due to the advent of Christianity and introduction of modern school systems on the other.

The social-cultural life of the Zous was characterized by several festivals and feasts. Festivals and feasts were the best means of amusement and recreation. It was hosted by a family or a group of friends and observed by a few people or the whole community. These events were meant for prayers to their ancestral god for the purification of the forests and soil, dedication of the seeds, good rainfall, good harvest, thanksgiving, success in war and hunting, etc. With the spread of Christianity in the Zou inhabited areas, these festivals began to fade, and they were gradually replaced by Christian festivals such as Christmas, New Year, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, etc.

Dance is an integral part of the indigenous culture of the Zous. They have a varied numbers of traditional dances. These dances were performed during joyful occasions, funeral functions, and recreational and religious ceremonies. With the spread of Christianity, dances performed on funeral and religious occasions ceased and they began to be performed in joyful and recreational ceremonies.

The Zous have traditional or composed folksongs typically characterized by the simplicity of melody. There are about forty types of traditional songs, depending on genre and theme. The Zou folksongs are sung in unison by men and women in a dual-tone melody. Over the years, popular folksongs like *zangta la* and *laleh* have

been sung on joyful occasions, but *hanla* and *lapi* sung at funeral functions lost their importance.

Due to Christianity and modernization, the Zous adopted a new lifestyle, which is a mixture of Western and traditional lifestyles. They progressively relinquished some of their indigenous attire and costumes and favoured western attire. The new lifestyle was reflected in their hairstyle, too. Other traditional and costumes such as *puondum*, *puonlaisan*, *dielkhai*, *sakhi lukhu*, *khiba*, *bilba*, *tau*, are worn even today, depending on the ceremonies and occasions.

The Zous used various kinds of traditional musical instruments. The musical instruments were played or used on different occasions, such as joyful occasions, funeral functions, and recreational and religious ceremonies. After conversion to Christianity, musical instruments like *sielki*, *khuong*, *phiit*, *theile*, *zampi*, *daguol*, *datang*, *pengkul* are played or used on occasions related to Christianity.

Hunting was an important pastime for the Zous. Hunting provided a person with an opportunity to gain social status in society. It is also believed that the spirits of whatever animals were killed by the person in hunting and killed as *kosa* for the person when he died would accompany him on his way to *misikhuo*. With the advent of Christianity, the concept of life after death has changed, and hunting and *kosa* have lost gradually their religious significance.

Zu (wine or liquor) was the most popular and valued drink among the early Zous. It played a vital role in social, religious, and other occasions. The observance of every life-cycle ceremony could not take place without *zu*. However, the Christian missionaries and the early converts did not allow the consumption of *zu* by church members. Therefore, it is replaced by tea on all occasions such as engagements, marriages, etc.

In the early times, the primary source of livelihood for the Zous was agriculture. Jhum cultivation (also called slash and burn) was the main occupation of the Zous. Digging was done with pointed sticks, stones, hoes, and spades. Seeds of crops such as millets, brinjal, barley, rice, basil, chilies, ginger, maize, beans, sweet

potato, yam, arum, cucumber, etc., were sown according to the seasons. Tobacco and cotton were also sown for household use. In the colonial and post-colonial periods, jhum and wet cultivation were the main occupations of the Zous.

Though the Zou chief appeared despotic, he was a paternal chief over his villagers, and the Zou village administration was democratic in character. While administering justice, the chief and other members of the village council were guided by the traditional Zou customary practices. The nature of punishment or penalty imposed on the offender or culprit mainly involved fines in kind in the pre-colonial period. Even in criminal offenses, the guilty person was awarded a penalty by way of fines, as there was no jail for the custody of the criminals. Over the years, payment of fines was either in cash or in kind. The administration system ensured peace, tranquility, social justice, harmony, and cohesion.

The Zous always showed loyalty to their chiefs. Under their chiefs, an attempt was made to oust the British imperialists from Manipur. It is known locally as Zou Gal (1917-1919). Though abortive, it was a bold attempt on the part of the Zous. As a result of Zou Gal, the hill areas were brought for the first time under the British imperial power's intensified political and administrative control. Attempts were also made by the then governments to undermine the power and position of the village chief. The Manipur Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation, 1947, attempts to reduce many tribal chiefs, including the Zou chiefs, to unrecognized chiefs. Subsequently, the Manipur (Village Authority in Hill Areas) Act, 1956, reduces the tribal chiefs to an ex-officio chairman of the village authority. The sub-divisional magistrate exercised control over the village authorities, but ultimate control was with the commissioner. However, due to certain reasons, the two Acts were not implemented by the Government of Manipur.

The thesis finds that the early religious belief was based on the fear of the unseen, and their daily life revolved around appeasing them to avoid their wrath. The religious rites and rituals, as well as the method of curing sickness, were attempts made to appease these unseen spirits. The Zous practiced different types of magic and witchcraft to appease or drive away the evil spirits and spent most of their

valuable time and energy performing sacrifices with animals. Various kinds of sacrifices, such as *baangtung kithoina*, *nuupi kithoina*, *tuilut kithoina*, etc., were performed depending on the nature of the sickness. Upon their encounter with Christianity and modernity brought by colonial authority, the Zou gradually transitioned from ancestor worship to Christian religious practices, consequently diminishing the significance of clan priests. As Christian belief took hold, the Zous' traditional fear of evil spirits subsided, leading to the abandonment of expensive sacrificial rituals. Furthermore, the traditional role of village priest is supplanted by church elders and pastors, marking a fundamental shift in religious authority within the community.

The Zous believed in life after death. However, the journey of the soul to the *pielgal* and the life after death would be hard or easy, depending on what they accomplished in their lifetime. Persons who, in their lifetime, had accomplished such achievements as feasts of merit, feasts of millet, etc., could easily access *pielgal* and enjoyed comforts in the afterlife. Christianity changed the concept of life after death from - *misikhuo* and *pielgal* – to the Christian concept of *vangam* (heaven) and *gawtmun* (hell).

The thesis finds that while some socio-cultural elements gradually withered away with the advent of Christianity and modernity, some others remain untouched and continue even today. Some of these elements, such as the traditional lineage system, *inndongta*, clan system, inheritance, family structure, etc., do not undergo any change. Certain cultural elements associated with birth, death, marriage, etc., still exist among the Zous. For instance, the traditional bride price of the Zous continues till today with minor changes in the mode and amount of payment.