

**REPRESENTATION OF THE PAWIH IN SELECT MIZO FOLKTALES**

**LALRAMENGMAWIA**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**MIZORAM UNIVERSITY**

**REPRESENTATION OF THE PAWIH IN SELECT MIZO FOLKTALES**

**LALRAMENGMAWIA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

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**DECLARATION**

*Mizoram University*

*June, 2016.*

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

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**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled *Representation of the Pawih in Select Mizo Folktales* submitted to Mizoram University by Lalramengmawia in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in English is purely an original research work accomplished by the scholar under my direct supervision and neither the dissertation nor any part of it has so far been submitted to any educational institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I am, therefore, glad to recommend in all fairness that this dissertation be sent to the examiner(s) for expeditious evaluation for the degree of Master of Philosophy in English.

Aizawl, the 28th June, 2016

(Dr Thongam Dhanajit Singh)  
Supervisor

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The term folklore was suggested by William Thoms in 1846 which marked the initiation of the scholarly study on folklore. However, even before the coining of the term by William Thoms, a British antiquarian, materials of folklore had been studied with scholarly interest as against the belief of some people:

Besides the work of the Brothers Grimm, particularly of J. Grimm, whose *Household Tales* appeared in 1812, and was recognized by Thoms himself, and which is very often used as evidence by Western scholars to trace the growth of folkloristic studies, scholarly collections of folklore materials were done in Asia, particularly India. (qtd. in Handoo 1)

According to the *Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus* "Folk" is synonymous with people (290). Folk literature is therefore, the lore of the people transmitted by word of mouth. It is composed of various components such as folktale, myth, legend, folk song, riddle, proverb, folk speech. Folktale becomes one of the important components of folk literature and it can be defined as "tales [having] their roots in the distant past, and depict the inner feelings and emotions" (Patnaik 8) of the people.

Every tribal society possesses rich folk literature which forms part of the oral heritage. Like other folk literatures of the world, Mizo folk literature is also composed of various components such as folktales, folk songs, dances, riddles, proverbs, myths, legends and many more. Among these, folktale seems to be the most thriving of all. The beginning of Mizo folk literature cannot be known, however, it is generally accepted that the Mizo folk literature began with the history of the people itself, even before the language was reduced into written

form in the later part of the nineteenth century. It is believed that the Mizo ancestors had told and composed many tales by the time they entered Burma.

According to B. Lalthangliana tales such as “Tumchhingi and Raldawna”, “Sichangneii”, etc. have been in existence before the ancestors of Mizo crossed over the Tiau River around the eighteenth century; whereas “Chhura”, “Thailungi” and “Liandova and Tuaisiala” originated after they crossed over the Tiau River, and the tales of “Chhura” is believed to have been originated in the early stages though it continued to develop in the later stages (*Culture and Folklore* 312-13). The origin and the evolution of folk literature cannot be exactly known; however, folk literature is an important tool for maintaining and expressing one’s culture, for safeguarding the identity while at the same time expressing the cultural life of the people belonging to a particular group. So, Mizo folk literature also becomes a means of expressing the social formation as well as the cultural life of the Mizo. Folktale being part of the culture of the unwritten past of the Mizo contains a great deal about the history, culture, society, and worldviews of the people belonging to the past. Therefore, the study of these tales will be grounded on their cultural significance bringing out the cultures of the two communities that is Mizo and Pawih respectively.

Generally speaking, Mizo folktales like many other folktales of the world contain characters such as widows, orphans, heroes, villains, animals as well as an ogress along with many others. The themes of love, marriage, relationship, death, bravery, sorrow, happiness, etc. are also found in them. Among these characters, the character of an ogress becomes very interesting and significant. She is seen in most of the tales as living among the human beings which is absent in most of the tales of other people of the world. Professor Siamkima gives a comment saying:



English literature-ah chuan hman lain thlarau sual leh ninhleiten hmeichhiate an tihthlabar chhan tura Pasatha (Knights) an tirh chhuah thin thu kan hmu a, amaherawhchu ramhuai chhungkaw zinga tel, phung man beh thu leh intlanchhuahtir leh thu kan hmu ngai lo. (qtd. in Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature* 70)

It is seen that the people who were terrified by the ghost or devils were saved by the knights, or rather they were sent to save them. However, the character of an ogre or an ogress that is seen as living in the world of human beings, who is captured and is let free after paying the ransom is absent in the English literature.

Mizo is a generic term covering various tribes such as Lusei, Hmar, Paite, Kuki, Ralte, Mara and Pawih<sup>1</sup> which are further divided into subclans. The different languages spoken by different tribes share close affinity with one another since all of them belong to the same language family that is the Tibeto-Burman. According to Lalthangliana who states that among the different tribes of Mizo the Pawih seem to be the only tribe that uphold the Mizo language in its original state to the present day:

Hnam ang chuan Pawih hi a tam ber leh pui ber an ni a, Zo tawng bul pawh la chhawm nung tam ber an ni ang. (16)

The Pawih as a tribe makes the largest and the greatest group, and perhaps they have been able to maintain the Zo language in its original state.

This is mainly because a good number of the tales in Mizo versions also contain the Pawih language signifying the centrality of the Pawih clan in Mizo culture, life and language.

The Pawih are mainly found in Lawngtlai district which is under Lai Autonomous District Council of Mizoram. The Lai Autonomous District Council was established by the Government of India under Article 371-79 of the Constitution. It is one of the three

Autonomous District Councils and it has its headquarters at Lawngtlai. The other two Autonomous District Councils are Mara Autonomous District Council and Chakma Autonomous District Council. The term Pawih is not a name of one particular clan, rather it is a combination of a good number of subclans which are further divided or subdivided into numerous smaller sub clans. In simple terms, the Pawih may include the original inhabitants of Matupi, Falam and Halkha of Burma, as well as the Lai Autonomous Region of Mizoram. The people who are known as Bawm in South Bangladesh and Manipur may also be counted as one of the subclans of the Pawih. The Pang and Bawm along with other clans such as Kuki, Khumi, Kiang and Miria are mainly found in the Bohmong Circle of Bangladesh, and the population amounted to 12,637 in 1901 census (shown in Lalthangliana, *India, Burma leh Bangladesh* 878). The Bawm people in Bangladesh are mainly known as ‘Bunjogi’ or ‘Banjogi’ (Lalthangliana 886). Khawtinthaga who had lived with them for ten years says that what is called as the Bawm language is a combination of Lai, Khumi, Mawk (Mogh) and Lusei (889). The Bawm people were among the first groups to enter the present Mizoram with the Hmar people in the fifteenth century. However, they continued to move further towards Bangladesh where they have lived to the present day. As a result of long separation from their fellow kinsmen in Mizoram as well as Burma, they are often left behind in the study of Mizo history. However, the language spoken by this community along with their cultural practices still carry many similarities with the Lusei or the Pawih, which show that they belong the larger Mizo tribe.

The Pawih people are scattered in various parts of the world and are known under different names and clans. With the conferment of the Lushai Hills as Union Territory resulting in the abolition of the Mizo District Council, the Pawih Lakher Regional Council was trifurcated into three Regional Councils, namely the Pawih Regional Council, the Lakher Regional Council and the Chakma Regional Council. Upon their request, the Lai

Autonomous District Council was constituted on 29 April 1972 which had its origin to the Pawih-Lakher Regional Council (hereafter referred to as PLRC) of 29 May 1971, since then provisions have been made for the protection of the customs, culture, the people, language and ways of living. According to 1901 census, the number of people who claimed themselves as Pawih was 15,038, and 4,587 in 1961 census, who scattered in different parts of Mizoram (shown in Lalthangliana, *India, Burma leh Bangladesh* 953). The number of Pawih population within Mizoram in the year 1961 had gone down considerably when compared with the previous census record. The number of both Paihte and Ralte was also decreased a lot due to a significant reason. During these years, the wave of Mizo nationalism swept the entire Mizoram which prompted the people to embrace the ‘Mizo identity’ by giving up their own ethnic identity, which was never in existence before the 1900s. According to 2011 census, the population of Lawngtlai was 117,894.

In 1970, just before the abolition of the Mizo Hills District from Assam, the then leaders of the PLRC expressed their favour for the retention of the Regional Council by saying:

As we are different ethnic groups, we cannot think of not having a separate legislature, you may also regret if you don't have district council. (Vanlawma 373-374)

So, even after a request from the leaders of the Mizo District Council and Congress who stated that "... having different sets of administration may only make us weak" (Vanlawma 373-374), the leaders of the PLRC refused to withdraw their intentions and decided to proceed with their demand for the District Council. Although they have always been identified as the Pawih in Mizoram, the people regarded the appellation "Pawih" as derogatory term. So the leaders of this community began to fight for the abolition of the name

Pawih and wanted to change it into Lai. Thus, under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution Amendment Act 1988 of Indian Parliament, the name Pawih Autonomous District Council was changed into Lai Autonomous District Council in 1988. The Lai Autonomous District Council has the largest geographical area among the Autonomous District Councils. It covers an area of 1,870.75 square kilometres.

The people belonging to this community have always called themselves as *Lai* or *Laimi*, since time immemorial. Major Shakespeare (1887-1905), the first superintendent of the then Lushai Hills, is cited to have said that the people whom he knew as Shendhu, Chin, Kuki, Naga etc. did not know themselves by such names. Similarly the people of Chin Hills did not know that they were “Pawih”, a name probably given by the Lusei (Lalthangliana, *History and Culture of Mizo* 101-2). Oral sources attribute the origin of the term “Pawih” in a number of ways, but it is difficult to validate the theories or opinions provided by these sources. It is difficult to trace the exact date when the Lai were called Pawih, what happened and why they were called so. According to the scholar who states that the Lai were never called Pawih in their history till they entered Mizoram (Lalthangliana 101-2), mainly due to the fact that the different ethnic groups were hardly addressed by their respective clan names but by the names of their subclans. This suggests the possibility that the name Lai might have been named Pawih soon after they entered Mizoram. The people in Mizoram have always known the Lai of Chin Hills as well as Mizoram as Pawih and the name Lai is a less popular term used for this community. This can be substantiated by the fact that the census report of India 1901 shows that the term Pawih was already in use in Mizoram with a population 15038 whereas the term Lai was absent from the statistical record.

However, despite the centrality of this tribe in relation to the Mizo as a whole, yet there have been endless debates amongst various Mizo scholars and writers in connection with the Pawih with regards to their identity as well as the mode of representation given to

them. Writers like S.R. Chinzah, who are from this community argue that people belonging to this clan are being misrepresented or even marginalized by the majority in the literary as well as non-literary works produced in the Mizo (Lusei) language. A larger number of contemporary Pawih writers especially within Mizoram voice their complaints to the extent of stating that the Pawih are often marginalised and as a consequence they are often referred to as *hnamdang* which means “strangers or foreigners” by the Lusei or Sailo chiefs or Mizo as a whole. The observation proposed by S. R. Chinzah says that the Pawih as a separate clan had lived in the Kale valley or plains during 1364 A. D. in the present Burma (7). The Pawih people consider themselves to be a very old clan because:

Keini Laiho hi a bul ber leh ziding bera inngai kan ni a. Kan Unau Lusei te pawh hi Lai hnam peng pakhatan kan ngai. Kan lo chhuahna lam mihring tam berte khian Lai tawng an la hmang vek. (10)

We, the Lai consider ourselves to be the pure progenitors and the most enduring of all. We even consider our fellow brothers Lusei to be one of the subclans of Lai. Most of the inhabitants of those living in the area of our origin use the Lai language even to these days.

The people belonging to this community have always called their language as the Lai language as opposed to the Lusei who have always called it as the Pawih language.

Khawchhak Chin Hills a awmte khian ‘Lai’ an inti vek a, Pawih tih hi a awmzia anhre lo. Chutiang bawkin Keini pawh hian Lai kan la inti reng a, mahse Mar/Lushei te hian Pawih min ti a, hetia min koh avang hian kan hming lo zawk Pawih tih chu hming tak angin kan pu a. (10)

All the inhabitants of the Chin Hills in Burma call themselves as ‘Lai’, and they do not even know the meaning of Pawih. In the same way, we have always called ourselves Lai but the Mar/Lushei call us Pawih, and for this reason we are known by the wrong name Pawih.

The Lusei are being referred to in this statement as the *Mar* which indicates that the Pawih have their own ways of addressing the other tribes of Mizo. It is difficult to say whether this term *Mar* contains derogatory undertones in it or not; it is simple fact that just as the Pawih tribe have their own ways of addressing the other clans, even the Lushai/Lushei communities have their own ways of addressing the other tribes. These people living in Chin Hills of Burma are called Lai and they also call themselves by that term; and we are told that according to this community the term Pawih has no significant meaning.

The origin of the term Pawih is difficult to trace and somehow, it substituted the term Lai which is considered to be the correct term by the people belonging to this community. There are various theories with regards to the origin of the term Pawih which are largely based on oral sources and it is difficult to validate their authenticity. It is generally reckoned that the Lusei people were the first ones to call these people ‘Pawih’ which caused the other clans of Mizo to do the same.

It is believed that in olden days, the people belonging to this community had the habit of carrying *tek lung* “flint stone” which was used as a weapon in a combat. They would carry this weapon on their bodies inserted in the folds of their *puan* “loin cloth” which was tied around their waist or loin, and this act of inserting is called *Pangpawi*. Not knowing the meaning of the word, they divided into two words ‘Pang’ and ‘Pawi’, so the people belonging to this community were eventually came to be identified either as ‘Pang’ or ‘Pawih’ clan.

It is also said that Saikhama who was the ancestor of Chinzah, Zathang, and Khenglawt hold a feast and he became suspicious of his wife with one of the guests named Kepchara. So, Saikhama divorced his wife who went to Kepchara's village and married him. Kepchara gave birth to three sons Hnialuma, Fanchuna and Mualchina. After the mother died, the six brothers came to realize that they were of the same mother but different father and they lamented over their unfortunate condition saying, "*A va pawi em, nu khat hrin si, pa thuhmun hrin kan lo ni lo hi, a va pawi takem! Pawi fa kan lo nih hi*" (Tribal Research Institution 2). 'Pawi' means regretful or sad or sorrowful. This is how they came to be known as 'Pawi'.

It is also believed that when the Lusei people were attacked by a group of Pawih warriors in the jungle during the time of war, a Pawih warrior started yelling by saying 'Here come I, the pawte'. *Pawte* in Pawih means a leopard. The Lusei not knowing the meaning began to call them Pawite. With the passing of the years, these groups of people who knotted their hair over their forehead were identified as a separate clan, and they came to be known as Pawih.

The word Mizo is a difficult term to define. In simple words, Mizo may mean and include various tribes such as Lusei, Hmar, Paihte, Ralte, Kuki, Mara and Pawih which feel contented with the term Mizo. Whenever Mizo identity related issues are discussed and deliberated, it is always necessary to include in the discussion about these different tribal groups and their attempts to assert their distinct tribal identities. So, the study of the socio-cultural, political condition of the Mizo in the past as well as the present becomes significant. The ancestors of Mizo were not specifically known as Zo until they entered the present Burma at Chindwin Valley.

Hnam anga Zo hnam lo pianna hi chu Burma ram luah hnu-ah a ni a. (Lalthanliana 69)

The Zo as a tribe came into being only after the migration into Burma.

They know the Chindwin River by different names– the Lusei call it *Run*, meaning river, and the Paihte as *Tuikang*, meaning white water (Vumson 33). In this valley the first Zo kingdom was established but the Pegne Dynasty<sup>2</sup> became so powerful that the Zo for fear of being assimilated moved towards the Kabaw Valley. From there, the Zo came to be divided and it is believed that the five major clans of Mizo emerged namely– the Pawih, Paihte, Hmar, Ralte and Lusei (Lalthanliana 83). It is estimated that this separation took place around the ninth century A.D. It is the opinion held by a number of Mizo historians that the forefathers of Mizo and their history until they crossed over Kabaw Valley cannot be known clearly. However, all these historians agree with the idea that early Mizo had once made settlements in this valley:

Tahan-Khampat phei phaikuam (Kabaw Valley)-ah hian kum 800-850 A.D. velah an thleng a, an cheng ta niin kan ring a. (Lalthanliana, *Mizo Literature* 2)

It is believed that around 800-850 A.D. they reached the plains (Kabaw Valley) which lies between Tahan-Khampat, and made their settlement there.

Since then, they were driven out by the Shan tribe which had already made their settlements around this valley. And from there the forefathers of Mizo who had lived together as one group for many centuries started to scatter causing them to split among themselves moving to different places. Thence, the different tribes of Mizo came into existence since these scattered tribes which would later become the different tribes of Mizo moved to different areas of Chin Hills.



Kabaw Valley-a an awm lai hian unau pathum Thuankai te, Phur Hlum leh Ral Thang (Hlawnceu) te chuan Kalaymyo atangin Chin Hills an pan a, Falam atanga khawchhak lam mel nga vela hla “Lailun”-ah an cheng ta niin an sawi (Lalthangliana, *India, Burma leh Bangladesh* 121).

The three brothers Thuankai, Phur Hlum and Ralthang (Hlawnceu) moved to Kalaymyo from Kabaw Valley and then to Lailun which was located five miles east from Falam in Chin Hills.

According to an observation made by B. Lalthangliana, it is said that the generation that came forth from Lailun started calling themselves as the Lai, which is considered to be the origin of the Lai of Mizo tribe. He also states that it is impossible to link the history of the people in Mizoram with The Great Wall of China, as the time distance is too long; and there is no connection whatsoever with the Lai of Mizo tribe of Chin Hills. It is from Kabaw Valley that the different sub clans of Lai came into existence which scattered and moved to different parts of Chin Hills of Burma. Subsequently, this resulted in the creations of many important places. While the rest of the Mizo clans moved further towards the present Mizoram, “Lai bids fair to become the general means of communication in Chin Hills” (*History and Culture of Mizo* 101-102). This suggests the idea that majority of the Pawih people have chosen to remain in the Chin Hills of Burma.

Another historian Hrangthiauva, in tracing the origin of the Pawih, says that the Pawih came out of Hrumtunga who was also the progenitor of this clan. The descendants of Hrumtunga had the habit of knotting their hair over their forehead which made the Lusei called them Pawih. The Pawih in turn called the Lusei as ‘Hmar (Mar)’. Since then the Pawih as well as the others clans began to identify each other according to the names of their respective clans. It has been considered that this separation happened in 1150-1250 A.D.

(Hrangthiauva 5). The descendants of Hrumtungga started their migration from Runkhawm by moving further down towards the lower part of the Chindwin River and they finally reached Mingin, where they made their settlement for a brief period. And from there, they began to disperse in and around the hilly regions of the Chin Hills (Hrangthiauva 374-375). Another historian Pu K. Zawla in his *Mizo Pipute leh An Thlahte Chanchin* suggests 966 A. D. as the year in which Zo people arrived in the Chindwin Valley, and he believes that they lived there two or three centuries (qtd. in Vumson 33). From there they moved towards the Kabaw Valley of Burma.

So, from the Chin Hills of Burma, a good number of Pawih sub clans moved further towards Mizoram and they consisted of four groups. They started to migrate from Burma to Mizoram in the middle part of the eighteenth century according to B. Lalthangliana:

Lai chite hi Mizoram kan tiha an lo thlen hun hi, ho li lai an ni bawk a, kum 1750-1850 A.D. velah dah ila kan ti sual awm lo ve. (*India, Burma leh Bangladesh* 126)

It would not be wrong to say that the Lai clan or subclans, which were altogether four groups, came to the present Mizoram in 1750-1850 A.D.

These four groups that migrated to Mizoram belonged to different subclans of Pawih and came at different times under the leadership of different chiefs. Some of the more places of early settlements in Mizoram were created and occupied by these four migratory groups. A large number of the Pawih people that are in Lawngtlai District and its nearby places are identified as Khuafu. Some of them are not Khuafu and this Khuafu is not the original name of the subclan or clan of the Pawih; rather it is the name of the village from where this migratory group came. With the passage of time they came to be identified as Khuafu Pawih. Likewise, Khuafu or Lungzarh-Khuafu as was known in the earlier stage, Hakha or Halkha and Falam are not the names of the subclans of the Pawih. These are the names of the

villages; however each of these villages has its own dialect since early periods of time. Therefore, that group of Pawih which is known to be Khuafu Pawih speaks the Khuafu dialect. Khenglawt, Chinzah, Famchun, Bawitlung, Hnialum, Mualchin, Tlanglian, Khualchhawn and few others speaks Lungzarh-Khuafu dialect. Lungzarh and Khuafu are two villages located near Hakha village. Under the Falam chief Vanhnuaithlira of Hlawncheu who was also the chief of Sunthla village, a large number of people migrated to Mizoram and made their settlement at Rengtlang. The other group under Phunhnawma of Tlangchhan crossed over Chhimtuipui and created villages at Sangau and Vanlaiphai. And from Thantlang of Burma, the chiefs of Hlawncching who were the descendants of Nithanga migrated to Mizoram under the leadership of Thawngliana. Moving further away from Chhuarlung, they made their settlements at Serkawr.

The manner of migration that has been suggested by a book called *Pawi Chanchin* (2011) states that:

... Champhai zawnah Tiau an kan a, chhim lam an rawn pan zel a, Bungzungah, N. Vanlaiphai, Lungrangah, Khuanghlumah, Cherhlunah te an awm a. Cherhlun atangin Thingsaiah, S. Vanlaiphai, Sangauah. Chuta tangin Lungtianah an chhuk a, Lungtian atangin hmun hrang hrangah an darh ta a ni. (Tribal Research Institution 14)

... After crossing over the Tiau river near Champhai, they continued to move further towards the south, and from there they made settlements in places like Bungzung, N. Vanlaiphai, Lungrang, Khuanghlum, Cherhlun. From Cherhlun they moved towards Thingsai, S. Vanlaiphai and Sangau. And from there, they came down to Lungtian, and after reaching Lungtian they had spread to different places.

This would include all the four groups of the Pawih that came to Mizoram between 1750-

1850 A.D. After coming down to the present Mizoram, they occupied the whole eastern belt of Mizoram:

The entire eastern belt of the Mizo District, as far as the Tuichang on the West and Champhai on the North, and the entire areas South of Lunglei are Pawi (Lai) territories. (Lalthangliana, *History and Culture of Mizo* 101-102)

Majority of the Pawih people followed this migratory route to come to Mizoram from Burma, however not all of them followed the same route. Some of the people that came to Mizoram along with the first group even went as far as Chittagong of Bangladesh and there they are identified as Bawm, Pang and others. In the same book *Pawi Chanchin*, it has been estimated that the number of Pawih sub clans that is found in Mizoram is approximately one hundred and sixty six, excluding the sons of Pawih living in Burma, Bangladesh or other parts of the country. Lakher (Mara) is one of the subclans of Pawih. Thus, the Pawih and the Lakher (Mara) share many commonalities in names, customs and in various other fields. However, there are slight variations especially in names due to slight diversification in their dialects.

Although there are numerous subclans in Pawih, there are only few dialects spoken by the Pawih as a whole. These subclans do not have a specific dialect of their own and these variations in their dialects are dependent on the usage in the villages where they live. The Pawih in Mizoram mainly use “Lai Holh”, which is a creole formed by Khuafu and Thantlang dialects. Besides this, there are Hakha or Halkha and Laizo dialects which are mainly used in Burma. These four dialects are usually referred to as the Pawih dialects, and there is no one standard Pawih language till the present time. However, they have no difficulty in understanding one another although there are many subclans within Pawih. This is due to the fact that all these four dialects share close affinity with one another, and Lusei or Mizo also shares many commonalities with these dialects. In Lawngtlai District of Mizoram,

the names of villages that speak Kluafo dialect are Ngunlinga Bualpui, Fungkah, Lungpher, Lungtian, Vartek and Rawlbuk. Similarly the names of villages where Thantlang dialect is spoken are Niawhtlang, Lungzarhtum, Archhuang, Tialdawngilung, Pangrang, Thaltlang, Vawmbuk, Sangau, Pangkhua and Cheural.

The Lusei especially the Sailo chiefs were the most powerful rulers among the different groups in Mizoram and their reign started in the middle of the nineteenth century until the coming of the British in the later part of the same century (Lalthanliana 397). They ruled for fifty to sixty years and during this period they were able to subdue all the other tribal chiefs within Mizoram and they introduced the Lusei dialect over their subjects. However, when they were defeating all the other chiefs, the Sailo had never waged war against the Pawih, Fanai, or the Lakher chiefs who ruled their own territories beyond the Chintuipui River in the southern part of Mizoram (Lalthanliana 407). So, when the Sailo chiefs introduced the Lusei dialect for all their subjects especially towards the *awzemi*<sup>3</sup> or “indistinct speakers” such as the Ralte, Hmar and Paihte (Lalthanliana 410), the Pawih people were not much affected by their advancement. This is one of the possible reasons as to why the Pawih people in Mizoram were able to maintain their ethnic identity when majority of the people in Mizoram embraced the Lusei dialect giving up their own mother tongues. The Pawih in Mizoram have always maintained a relationship with the Pawih in Chin Hills of Burma, and those subclans of the Pawih who are mainly found in Lawngtlai District came to Mizoram as a part of an expansion of their territories while at the same time maintaining their own land and habitations in Chin Hills of Burma (Lalthanliana 136). Most of the Mizo clans in Mizoram have had hardly any connection with their own clansmen in Burma. Among the Pawih, the Fanai people were the only subclan of the Pawih that had come to Mizoram by giving up their land in Chin Hills of Burma.

In Mizoram before 1800s, there was hardly any ethnic conflict except for the inter-village war which was part of their daily affairs. This was mainly due to the fact that the Sailo chiefs were the most powerful, so they could subdue all the other chiefs within Mizoram except the Pawih chiefs. However, after Mizoram became part of the then British India in 1890, a change took place:

...the Britishers had made a grievous mistake of forcibly clubbing all the Mizos under Lushai and calling their land Lushai Hills. The revulsion of the Mizo people to this was so intense that soon after independence they were changed to the present Mizo and Mizo Hills to become Mizoram on the attainment of statehood. (Thanga 258)

The use of the word Lushai which is only a misreading of the Lusei, a name of one of the clans of Mizo, was wrong. This created a division though not intentionally. It was during the British regime that a political awakening in Mizoram started taking place. As a result of which, the first political party known as the Mizo Common People's Union in 1946, which was later changed into Mizo Union was established. One of the biggest aims of this political party was to bring all Zo people under a unified administration. However, the aspirations and hopes of the people in Mizoram were not met and "the political scenario soon changed because the urge to uphold one's identity cannot remain suspended" (Thanga 258). The people in Mizoram especially those ethnic groups who did not belong to the Lusei clan became more aware of their ethnic identity unlike in the past.

The people belonging to the Pawih community in Mizoram, especially in Lawngtlai District have always been regarded as having a distinct identity of their own, which they have always held for over centuries. This was never manifested clearly until the middle of the twentieth century when a certain political revival swept the land thereby bringing about cultural resurgence amongst the different groups of people. By this time, many clans had

given up their respective dialects in favour of the Lusei or Duhlian as their own; it was altogether different for the Pawih and few others.

The Lusei had the reputation of absorbing the smaller language groups into Lusei speaking people and those called by the Luseis as AWZIA (meaning indistinct speakers) such as Chawhte, Ngente, Khawlhring, Vangchhia, Pautu, Rawite, Tlau Renthlei, Zawngte, Kiangte and quite a few others had given up the use of their distinctive dialects in favour of Lusei. On the other hand, the Ralte, Hmar, Paihte and Pawih continue to retain their respective dialects. (Thanga 257)

The arguments brought about by scholars and writers have brought a number of questions with regards to the identity of the Pawih and the ways they are represented in non-literary works such as historical documents produced in Mizo language. S.R. Chinzah in *Khuafo Hnam Chhuina* (2003) raises an argument saying that that the Mizo language means only the language spoken by the Lusei, and those tribes that do not fall under the Lusei-Mizo are categorized as *hnamdang* or “strangers or foreigners” (133-4). This becomes a cause of the desire for recognition of the ethnic identity of the people belonging to this community. Here, Pawih being one of the clans that continues to uphold not only their language but also their culture are very much against the idea of merging as one nation under the name of Lushai. In Mizoram in the pre-Accord period there seemed to be no scope for solving inter-ethnic conflict. The reason is that:

Under the Mizo identity umbrella during the period of the agitation there was no scope for inter-ethnic disaffection to the point of fighting for ethnic identity. (Dutta 87)

Therefore, eleven years after the passing of the Lushai Hills District Act 1954 by the Parliament of India, assertion of distinct identity by the Pawih became more noticeable.

In 1965, a section of them [the Pawih as well as Lakher] organized a political party called Chin National Front, which shows that they have identity dilemmas. (Burman 264)

This Chin National Front replaced the Tribal Union of 1950 which was also the third political party in Mizoram. The main objective of this political party was to build political awareness between the Pawih and Mara communities and to attain unity since ethnically these two clans are of the same origin and cultural background. So, the Pawih although they have cultural similarities with Lusei or even Mizo at a larger scale, yet when it comes to becoming of being a Lushai or being absorbed in it, they have always been in favour of upholding their distinct identity. During these periods the Pawih were not silent listener and watcher, they were very much aware of the politics and they wanted to know more about the Sixth Schedule since they wanted to preserve their own culture and heritage. The first movement was started in the name of Pawih Lakher Company. This Company brought back the scattered Pawih people and gradually paved the way for the creation of a concrete political party for the Pawih community such as the Chin Association founded on 21 January 1947. So, it is true to say that to a very great extent that Mizo or Mizoram also “illustrates the inherent weakness of constructed generic identities” (Bhaumik 4). Clearly, these different ethnic groups have enriched the Mizo culture as a whole and their contribution towards its enrichment is enormous; while on the other hand, this diversity is also the cause of discord, contention and antagonism which needs to be addressed properly. This diversity can serve as the strength as well as the weakness for Mizo.

The Pawih had struggled a lot to maintain their ethnic identity and they had strongly expressed their discontentment against the idea of merging together of all the different clans of Mizo under the name Lushai, which was also the nature of politics of the Lushai Hills in the later part of twentieth century, which was then under the control of the Lusei community.



The Pawi Lakher Company of 1947 which was later developed into Chin Association and the Pawih Lakher Tribal Union of 1949, by voicing out their political will, were able to bring out the Pawih and Mara communities to the larger notice of the Mizo society. Eventually, the Pawih Lakher Regional Council (1971) was constituted by the Government of Assam under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. After some years of administrative experience, the Pawih were not happy to bear the name Pawih and sought to change the nomenclature into Lai, upon their request the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India was amended in 1988 and the name Pawih was changed into Lai. Since then, Lai Autonomous District Council has been functioning for the promotion and protection of their ethnic identity.

The various opinions suggested by different historians show that the ancestors of Zo people were of the same group and there were no separate clans until they crossed over the Kabaw Valley. In opposition to the opinions held by a number of Pawih writers, it is believed that the Pawih or Lai as a separate clan was not in existence until they reached the Kabaw Valley. A good number of Pawih writers conclude that the word 'Lai' literally means 'centre' which signifies that the Lai people were the most powerful who lived in the centre after moving out from the Kabaw Valley. The first writer who wrote about the Pawih people Carey an Tuck says:

Lai intite chu Haka Pawih leh an thlah chhuakte hi an ni a, Falam leh Tlaihsun leh an thlahte hian Lai an inti ve lo a ti a. (qtd. in Lalthanliana 56)

Haka Pawih and their descendents called themselves as Lai, whereas Falam and Tlaihsun and their descendants never called themselves as Lai.

But, the name Lai is being used to bring unity for all the Pawih people in Burma, Mizoram and other parts of the world. When the group of people who would later call themselves as Lai moved to Hmunli and Lailun near Sunthla from where they expanded in all directions,

they might have had their name as Lai based on the names of the places where they had made their settlements. These places such as Laitlang, Laikhua and Lailun were named after the name of their clan (Lalthanliana 56). So, Lai is regarded by the people of this community as an older term than the Pawih. However, Pawih was, and still is a more common term for non-Pawih communities especially the Lusei and Paihte, and this term has been quite an established term in Mizoram for the people of this community.

For this dissertation five folktales have been selected. They are “Tumchhingi and Raldawna”, “Sichangneii”, “Chhura”, “Thailungi” and “Liandova and Tuaisiala”. The ogress as well as the Pawih characters is significantly found in these tales and the manner of representation given to these characters will be studied. Besides, the five tales, tales such as “Chepahakhata”, “Mauruangi”, “Laltheri and Chalthanga”, etc. will also be studied so as to bring out the nature and functioning of the Mizo society in the pre-colonial and post-colonial era.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Though both terms “Pawih” and “Pawi” are used by many writers and scholars, S.R. Chinzah, a writer from Lawngtlai District uses the term “Pawih” in his book *Khuafo Hnam Chhuina* (2003). Other historians such as Hrangthiauva, Lalhmuaka and V.L Siama, to mention a few among others, also prefer this term in their books. “Pawih” is more frequently used by writers on Pawih and the same spelling is maintained here too for consistency. Also, Lai and Pawih are used interchangeably in this dissertation for convenience.

<sup>2</sup> The ancestors of Mizo who had lived together as one tribe in the lower Chindwin River was destroyed by the Nan-Chow or Mon kingdom. This settlement of the earlier Mizo is called by the author as the Zo Kingdom. After a defeat, the ancestors of Mizo moved towards the southern part of the River. However, the Burmese had established a great kingdom which is called the Pegne Dynasty. Due to the fear of this dynasty, the ancestors of Mizo moved to different places. This is called by the author as the first separation among the early Mizo. It is estimated that the separation took place possibly in the eighth century A.D.

<sup>3</sup> In a broader sense, *awzemi* may include all the subclans that do not come under Ralte, Paite, Lusei, Hmar and Pawih, which are usually referred to as the five major clans of the Mizo. These minor subclans had either lost their distinctive dialects or forgotten them as a result of living among the other clans of Mizo. However, in its narrower sense, it may include all the non-Lusei communities who were under the rule of the Sailo chiefs especially within Mizoram. The people who either belonged to the non-Lusei communities or had dialects of their own other than the Lusei or Mizo language are generally known and referred to as *awzemi*.

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## CHAPTER II

### FOLKTALE AND SOCIAL REALITY

Folktale is one of the components of folklore or folkloristic studies. The study of folklore or folkloristic studies became academically popular after William Thoms introduced the term in 1846, who was a British antiquarian. His contribution is particularly significant because "...it led to the establishment of an academic discipline known as folklore (or folkloristic) in many parts of the world" (Handoo 2). Folktale is a translation of the German word *Volksmarchen*, which appeared first in *Volksmarchen der Duetschen* (1782-86), by Johan Karl August Musaus. The term is derived from Johan Gotfried Von Herder's thought, use and coinage, particularly his formulation of the concept of *das Volk*. Thus, Amos says "Folktale, hence, is an oral narrative told by peasants, lower classes, or traditional people whose literacy if existing is minimal. In this verbal art, all these groups were thought to embody the spirit of a nation" (225). Folktale, myth and legend constitute the generic classification of oral narratives which has been adopted in scholarly discourse. These three genres are closely related to one another because all of them bear the characters of a story such as plot, incident, conflict, climax, motivation and development of character. As a particular genre, folktale is taken to be "untrue-only fiction and fantasy", which is one of its significant differences from myth and legend.

Stith Thompson (1885-1976), a well-known American folklorist, has defined folktale in his book *The Folktale* (1946) saying:

Although the term "folktale" is often used in English to refer to the "household tale" or "fairy tale" (the German *Marchen*), such as "Cinderella" or "Snow White", it is also legitimately employed in a much broader sense to include all forms of prose narrative, written or oral, which have come to be handed down through the years. (4)

Thompson's definition of folktale includes "all forms of prose narrative, written or oral" which is a much broader definition than usually conceived. Generally, folktale is accepted as an oral narrative which has been handed down from generation to generation through the medium of orality.

Dan Ben Amos says that folktale "refers to oral narrative in general or to a particular GENRE of oral tales" (225). Oral literature, also called as verbal art or expressive literature are "spoken, sung and voiced forms of traditional utterances" (Handoo 7). It has also been called and known as folk literature. It is a wide genre having varied forms or sub-divisions of its own. Broadly speaking, oral literature consists of oral narrative such as myth, fairy tale, romantic tale or novella, religious tale, folk tale, legend, animal tale, anecdote, joke, numskull tale, etc.; oral poetry or folk poetry which has its own forms such as folk epics, ballads, folksongs, lullabies, work songs, and songs associated with rituals and rites like birth, marriage and death which are found in almost all parts of India. And also there is oral poetry which is connected with festive occasions, feasts and ceremonies. Proverbs and riddles form another part of oral literature. The other sub-division is folk speech which "embraces the local and regional turns of phrase that deviate from the standard language" (qtd. in Handoo 8). Besides, beliefs and superstitions, chants, laments and cries may also come under folk literature or oral literature. Oral literatures or narratives are mainly performed in the presence of audiences; they are purely oral in nature handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. Kishore Jadav even says, "The most obvious characteristic of folk literature is the fact that it is oral" (2).

Documentation of folktales started only after the introduction of literacy which affirms their oral nature. In tracing the nature of growth and development of the folktale as a worldwide phenomena, Stith Thompson says that "Until the nineteenth century we have only the slightest indication as to what the traditional oral folktale actually sounded like", and

therefore, "...the attitude toward faithful recording of tradition is now so generally accepted by all scholars as to be almost axiomatic" (406). And, "Adequate collecting, classifying, cataloguing of the stories, and studying by a comparative method and, synthesizing all the results—such is now the goal of all folklorist" (407). This is mainly due to the fact that adequate collection of the stories is one of the most fundamental aspects of folktale study. This method gradually developed since the early part of the nineteenth century partly due to the influence of Karle Krohn:

With the folktale the long lack of analysis and orderly arrangement led to much confused discussion and was partly responsible for a good deal of premature and ill theorizing characteristics of many nineteenth century folklorists. (413)

The need for systematic classification was realized by scholars such as J.G. von Hahn in 1864, which was considered as the first attempt at a logical ordering of folktales though his work was mainly concerned with correlating modern folktales with Greek myths.

Initially when Thoms first introduced the term folklore, what he meant as folklore or what folklore should consist of mainly includes "manners, customs, observations, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, and neglected customs, fading legends, fragmentary ballads, etc." (2), and his concept of folklore "...was closely associated with nineteenth century intellectual currents of romanticism and nationalism" (Handoo 2). Thom's contribution and its significance towards the study of folklore and its academic consequences cannot be ignored. His contribution in the first place has led "to the establishment of an academic discipline known as folklore (or folkloristics) in many parts of the world. Secondly, it also generated a long and unending controversy, perhaps unknown in the history of any other disciplines of equal strength about the definition...to this new field of learning" (Handoo 2). Historically, folkloristic studies began to be considered a part of literary studies rather than



being a separate discipline. Since folklore studies began much later than various disciplines such as history, anthropology, linguistics, and even science. A folklorist and an anthropologist behave in the same manner when it comes to the studies of non-literary artifacts of cultures. Normally, "...the data a folklorist studies falls within the provision of two or more disciplines and this generates a controversy regarding the boundaries of the discipline into question" (3).

Karle Krohn (1863-1933) was the first scholar to apply the historical–geographical method in the study of folktale. He recognized that one must be acquainted himself with folktales from all parts of the world in order to have a proper study of folktale. His experience with the historical–geographical technique convinced him that "there was no short road to the truth about the origin and history of the folktale as a whole" (Thompson 396). So, the study of the folktale always calls for the reconsideration of the historical and geographical elements involved, and the scholar tries to see just what has been the history of each of these elements of the tale (433). Influenced by the idea of Krohn, Antti Arne in his *Leitfaden der vergleichenden Marchenforschung* pointed out:

...that it is not always possible to find the place of where a tale was invented...Better evidence for the center of dissemination comes from a consideration of the whole geographic distribution and particularly the frequency and popularity of the tale in certain places. (qtd. in Thompson 435-453)

So, for the historical–geographical theorists such as Karle Krohn and Antti Arne the historical as well as geographical elements are necessary for the proper study of the folktale.

Folktale despite the fact that it is oral in nature, anything handed down from generation after generation may not simply be called folktale. In describing the nature of folklore Boggs says:

...fundamentally to be folklore, their currency must be or have been in the memory of man, bequeathed from generation to generation by word of mouth and imitative action rather than by printed page...Being current in memory, act and oral tradition, folklore never has a fixed form, but rather an approximate pattern which varies from time to time, from group to group, and even from one telling or performance to another within the same group or by the same individual. (qtd. in Jadav 4)

In every oral narrative including the tale there is always a change in it since the story is not in its fixed state and it resides in the human mind. Many factors influence the course of tradition, not only geographical and historical, but sociological and psychological as well. Authorship is absent in folktale and therefore, “the most vital factor in authorship, in any case with any form of folklore is the folk” (Jadav 4).

Since the origin and evolution cannot be ascertained, the study of the folktale on the basis of the environmental factors influencing it becomes significant. Antti Arne has listed out the various changes or modifications that every tale goes through in the process of dissemination. One of such changes he has established is that “as a tale wanders it adapts itself to its new environment: unfamiliar customs or objects may be replaced by familiar...animals and ogres or demons may be shifted” (436). And Boggs says that “it would be a great folly to consider a version of a folktale or proverb entirely from its teller, his group and region” (qtd. in Amos 8), stressing the significance of environmental factors in the study of folklore.

A close reading of Mizo folktales also shows this important characteristic of the folktale based on their contents and materials found in them. In Mizo folktales, there is a presence of a character called Vai in tales such as “Chepahakhata”, “Tualvungi and

Zawlpala”, “Mauruangi” and “Rimenhawii”. It seems that a number of tales came into being much later because:

Mizo nawlpuiin Tiau an kan fel, kum 1700 hnu lama chhuak nia rin Mizo thawnthu.... (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature* 67)

Many folktales came into existence after 1700, when all Mizo in general had crossed over the Tiau river....

One of the important reasons for this observation is from the contents of the tales:

Pi pute thawnthu zinga chhuak tlai deuha ngaih theih, Mizo ni lo apiang sawinan an hman “Vai” an lo lang ta. (72)

The term “Vai” is used to refer to whoever is not Mizo, among the folktales the term appears in those tales which are presumed to have existed in later years.

In simple term, it means the “plainsmen” and this means all the non-Mizo coming from outside Mizoram. The origin of these tales that contain this term cannot be traced back. However, this suggests the idea that ‘the Mizo-Vai issue’ has been in existence since long time ago even during the time the forefathers of Mizo.

In “Chepahakhata”, we see that there is an argument among the birds on: “Who are more clever? The Mizos or the Vais?” (“Chepahakhata” 25). And we also know that there are two groups: the hill mynahs who were on the side of the Vai, while the drongos were on the side of the Mizo. These two groups of birds representing the two groups of people are engaging in an argument.

Vai an tel ve tum chuan neihnun leh hausakah an ngam lova, hneh lohah an dah ziah nghe nghe a. (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature* 73)

Whenever the Vai took part in anything, the Mizo never won against them in matters of wealth and riches. So the Vai were always considered as their superiors.

But in this particular tale, Chepahakhata who stands for the Mizo defeats the Vai in the contest for wisdom. Unlike most of the other folktales of Mizo, the Vai are for the first time portrayed as losers because Chepahakhata has outwitted them all. “Thus the villagers marvelled at his wisdom” (“Chepahakhata” 25) and they free him because of his wisdom.

In a tale called “Tualvungi and Zawlpala”, it is seen that the husband Zawlpala has lost his beautiful wife Tualvungi in the hands of Phuntiha, the Vai chief. In this tale it is seen, “Zawlpala believing that Phuntiha would not be able to meet a fantastic price, felt safe and named an enormous bride-price for his wife” (“Zawlpala and Tualvungi” 175) which is easily handed to him. Zawlpala visits Tualvungi to her new home where he is offered delicious food items which he cannot resist. Phuntiha is seen as “crafty” who “offered poisoned food”, who would neither allow Tualvungi to go and mourn for her husband, nor would he let them free after death also. In this tale, although, there is an element of pride, vanity, selfishness and greed that surrounds the character Zawlpala, it is seen that Phuntiha has ruined the lives of the two lovers for he is far wealthier than them.

In “Mauruangi”, the Vailal who marries Mauruangi is seen as extremely wealthy and powerful chief, possessing innumerable servants. After Mauruangi has become the wife of the Vailal, he “clothed her in the finest apparel and gave her the choicest delicacies to eat” (“Mauruangi” 76). In this tale also, B. Lalthangliana says that the Mizo are never able to defeat the Vai in Mizo folktales:

Vai an lo lan ve tum chuan neihnun leh hausakah an ngam lova. (*Mizo Literature* 73)

They [Mizo] could not defeat or surpass the Vai in matters of wealth and riches.

And B. Lalthangliana's comment remains true again in this tale. In another tale called "Rimenhawii", Rimenhawii is seen as living in the house made of iron who is taken captive by the servants of a chief who lives down the river. After several attempts have failed, the servants have finally lured her out from her hiding place by dropping "the most delicious fruit that they had brought with them—the orange!!" ("Rimenhawii" 41). Here, the Vailal and his servants bring trouble in the lives of Rimenhawii and her husband Zawlthlia. However, Zawlthlia has finally overtaken them and he kills the servants of the Vailal and he returns home with his wife. Zawlthlia is able to kill all the servants and they cannot stand against him in matters of physical strength. Rimenhawii on describing who she is says that "I am one who feeds on water/ One who feeds on vegetable broth" (40), while the servants of the chief offer "the choicest fruits" and "they began to drop luscious fruits" (41) to her which she cannot resist to taste. Lalthuanguiana Khiangte gives his comments saying, "The story of Rimenhawii may lead one to believe that this was the beginning of the contact between the people of the plains and the Mizos (*Folktales from Mizoram* 156).

The introduction of the character called Vai in these tales indicates the early Mizo people and the contact that they had with the outsiders or the non-Mizo people in the earlier part of their migration to the present Mizoram. Under this observation, the Pawih could also come under the non-Mizo category because one could trace the connection between the portrayals of the Pawih with the Vai in a number of ways. In "Chhura is Cast Atop a Deep Lake", it is seen:

After a time he [Chhura] cut the robe that tied the basket to the tree and the hapless Pawih merchant fell in the water and died. Chhura then gathered the merchant's worldly possessions and took them home. Thus he entered the village of the the men who had tied him in the basket. When they saw him and the wealth he had amassed, they were greatly amazed.... ("Chhura is Cast Atop a Deep Lake" 47)

As it is also seen in other tales such as “Mauraungi”, “Rimenhawii” and others, the Pawih is a wealthy character just as the Vai is, and therefore the Pawih may also signify the non-Mizo identity especially in a Lusei dominated society.

Though mistreated in a number of ways, yet the Pawih is also often seen as a wealthy character that possesses valuable items of various kinds. So the Vai as well as the Pawih may be seen as interconnected, providing the idea that the Mizo people saw their relationship with their fellow kinsmen which in this context is the Pawih, in the same manner as their relationship with the plainsmen or the Vai people. The Vai characters surpass the Mizo in wealths and worldly possessions, but they are hardly seen as winners in the context of the Mizo folktale. Likewise, the Pawih is usually seen as inferior and he is usually humiliated by the other characters.

In “Chhura’s Attempt at Whistling”, it is seen “the foolish Chhura grabbed the Pawih traveller’s tongue and pulled out of his mouth” (“Chhura’s Attempt at Whistling” 38). So, when it comes to ‘Mizo-Vai issue’, one should not only consider the early relationship of the Mizo people with the plainsmen but also the Mizo and their relationship with non-Lusei communities. In real life circumstances, the Vai as well as the Pawih might have never been defeated by the Mizo or the Lusei as shown in history, the study of these tales shows us the opposite of what is seen through history.

The study of these tales in which the character Vai is seen, also brings up the idea that the influence of Hinduism or Islam can be felt slightly but not without significance. The contents of these tales show the readers that they might have originated after the forefathers of Mizo had settled down in the present Mizoram, and contacts between the Mizo people and that of Vai started taking place. B. Lalthangliana has also given his brief observation saying:

Inhnai tea an khawsakpui hnampui deuh Kawlho rim nam awm deuha lang pawh an vang hle...Chuvangin Kristian Missionary-ten kum 1894-ah minrawn zawng chhuak lovin, kan lalte hnuaiah khan kan sakhaw hlui ang ang khan kum za dang khawsa zui leh ta ila, Hindu sakhuaah emaw, Mosolman sakhuaah emaw kan lut vek mai awm e, tih a rin theih hial. (*Mizo Literature* 73)

The Burmese are hardly seen in the tales although the forefathers of Mizo had been living in close relationship with them...Therefore, this gives one idea that had the Christian Missionaries not come in 1894, and had we been under the chiefs with our old religion for another hundred years, we would have been converted to Hinduism or Islam.

The important underlying theme in these tales is the existence of good and conflicting relationship between the Mizo and the Vai. There have been several conflicts between the groups of people at the larger cultural level as well as at the individual level since the olden days. This tension between them is still in existence even in the present day and sometimes it creates certain misunderstandings among them.

Giridhar says that oral narrative “is an impersonal expression of a collective unconsciousness unlike written narrative” (46). This important aspect of folk or oral narrative can be studied in terms of the projection of women in a number of folktales along with the orphans or less fortunate members in the society. The traditional patriarchal Mizo society often saddens the position and status of women in most of the cases as is seen through the folktale. Before turning to folktales, a little consideration of few proverbial sayings of Mizo will throw light on the condition of women in a society dominated by the male members. For instance, sayings such as *Hmeichhia leh chakaiin sakhua an nei lo* “Women and crabs have no religion”, *Hmeichhia leh pal chhia chu thlak theih* “A woman and a damaged fence can be

replaced”, and *Hmeichhe thu thu ni suh, chakai sa sa ni suh* “A woman’s word is not a word as crab’s meat is not meat” (Khiangte, *Mizos of North East India* 84) to mention a few. These sayings hold a firm grip in the minds of the Mizo as a whole even after the introduction of education into the land. This can also be considered as an expression of “a collective unconsciousness” of the Mizo towards women which suggests that women especially in the traditional Mizo society were dependent upon men who had the authority over them.

According to Soumen Sen, “Folklore represents the archaic thought of mankind, their feelings and worldview. It articulates a culture and provides a part of the historical picture of bygone ages” (*Introduction* vii). Taking this view into consideration, a careful reading of some of the Mizo folktales illustrates the pathetic condition of certain women. In “Tualvungi and Zawlpala”, Tualvungi suffers a lot because of her proud husband Zawlpala. “Zawlpala was very proud of her and told Phuntiha that she was his sister” (“Tualvungi and Zawlpala” 175). She is the victim of her selfish, vain and greedy husband who sends her off to marry a stranger from a distant land. However, Zawlpala suffers no less than Tualvungi for it is seen that he spends the rest of his life in loneliness after he has given away his wife to Phuntiha. The value of his wife and that of the wealth that Phuntiha has to offer holds equal value in his mind, and he is not so concerned about his wife’s dignity. Tualvungi is his wife and being the husband he can do anything to his wife. This can be regarded as a resonance of the insecure position of a wife in the traditional Mizo family.

The tale “Mauruangi” shows the pathetic condition of a woman who is ruthlessly disposed of by her unkind husband. The husband on reaching the house tells Mauruangi, who is eagerly waiting for their return that her mother “...since she was afraid to cross the bridge I had no other choice but to push her off” (“Mauruangi” 70). The husband is secretly in love with the neighbouring widow and he wants to marry her replacing Mauruangi’s mother. The crafty husband ensures that he carries the light bundle while his wife bears a heavier load. A



divorce between a couple leaves the wife to a very pathetic condition and the only thing left for her is to live in poverty. She could be replaced by her husband at will, and if she would return to her parents, she would no longer feel at home as she used to be in the past. Therefore, the sad plight of Mauruangi's mother in the tale "Mauruangi" can be regarded as a manifestation of the low status of women in Mizo patriarchal social system.

The women in Mizo society in the past had no share in the property of the family and they had no say in almost all matters. In matters of divorce also, the children belonged to the father and this could not be argued by the wife. The status of a widow was regarded to be very low by the society and if she wanted to marry again, the bride price would be lesser than the other women. A woman could divorce her husband using the traditional practice called *sumchhuah*. However, in most cases it was the husband who would do away with his wife for want of a new wife. In order to justify his conduct, the husband might make use of these different excuses. James Dokhuma gives his observation in his book called *Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung* (1992) saying:

Hmeichhia an en dan chu, an pawng hmuhsit lutuk deuh a ni lo maw chu aw, tih theih khawpa an ngaihndan a hniam avangin an thu pawh chawtak khukupui tlakah an ruat lo.  
(289)

Their attitude towards women brings out the idea that since women were treated very lowly and with contempt for no reasons, their opinions were not regarded seriously.

The husband had even the right to beat his wife and this act of beating might not necessarily be considered as a decent nature in man. However, the husband under the influence of alcohol could beat his wife in small matters such as when the husband would not get what he expected during meal time. And this act was a common practice of the olden Mizo society.

Folklore “being the result of the working of the imagination upon the facts of collective experience of a social group, it often provides the material for the history without being direct evidence of history” (Sen, *Editor’s Note* vii). Tales such as “Lianchhiari and Chawngfianga” and “Laltheri and Chalthanga” show the position and status of commoners as against the royal or wealthy families. And tales such as “Mauruangi”, “Thailungi”, “Rahtea”, and “Liandova and Tuaisiala” portray the lives of the orphans and the less fortunate sections in the society.

In pre-colonial Mizo society, every village had a chief of its own and these chiefs had the full authority over their subjects in all matters. Usually, the wealthy families in the village had a good relationship with the chief. In “Lianchhiari and Chawngfianga”, and “Laltheri and Chalthanga”, the existence of class division in Mizo society in olden times is briefly hinted. In both these tales, Chawngfianga as well as Chalthanga are commoners and the daughters of these chiefs have fallen in love with them. Lianchhiari is deeply in love with Chawngfianga, a commoner in the village. “Chawngfianga, however, could not reciprocate her love for him because he was a mere commoner” (“Lianchhiari and Chawngfianga” 49). Chawngfianga dare not woo her for she is the daughter of the village chief because for a commoner, the punishment for such an act or offence could be a severe one which may cause even his life. “Chawngfianga staunchly bore in mind that she was the daughter of a chief and so he did not dare to seduce her” (51), despite Lianchhiari’s alluring advancements towards him. Instead, “Chawngfianga and his family hastily gathered their belongings together and, fearing for their lives, fled the village” (53), in the middle of the night. The kind chief may not be always cruel towards his subjects, however in this case for a commoner like him, has no say in the matter. So it is better to stay away from her for his safety.

In “Laltheri and Chalthanga”, Chalthanga suffers a lot for falling in love with the daughter of a chief. It is seen that “In frenzy they [the chief and the brothers of Laltheri]

drove out Chalthanga from the village and they even wanted to kill him” (“Laltheri and Chalthanga” 59), and not only that has he been killed brutally but also “his body has been thrown on the outskirts of the town” (60). In olden times, if the chief was angry he had the power to do anything against the man who had fallen in love with his daughter; he could even take the life of his daughter’s lover. None could argue the matter even if the daughter of the chief had fallen in love with the commoner by her own wish. In this oral narrative also, Chalthanga after he has run away from the village he is sought after and brutally murdered by the chief. It does not end here, the family of the man no longer feel at home or secured in their own village, so they move to another village. In the past, it was a humiliating experience for the family to be driven out of the village by the chief.

The study of Mizo history shows that the Sailo chiefs ruled in the present Mizoram for almost two hundred years. And during these periods they were able to subdue all the other chiefs within their territories acquiring a position where they were the most powerful. The despotic chiefs would take severe action for petty deeds against their subjects. The commoners would dare not wear their necklaces or any other valuable items for fear of being snatched away from them by the chiefs. Some would even hide their possessions and the commoners were so heavily oppressed by the tyrant chief. The commoners could no longer bear the rule of a tyrant ruler and this resulted in the emergence of *Lal Sawi*<sup>1</sup>. B. Lalthangliana has given his observation on *Lal Sawi* saying:

A tlangpuia thlirin a hnu zelah tangkaina a nei vak lo bawk. Amaherawhchu Mizo lalten an khua leh tuite an enkawl chungchanga mipuite rumna leh tuarnate, ipik leh chep em ema an inhriat avanga thawh an tum ve uaih uaih dante, leh heng hunlai boruak min hriatttir. (Lalthangliana, *India, Burma leh Bangladesh* 362)

This [*Lalsawi*] might bear no fruitful consequences in the following years to come. However, this shows us the sufferings, the sad plight and the oppressed state in which the commoners were subject to during these periods and, also of their reaction towards their tyrant chiefs.

It has been estimated that this event took place around 1882-83.

It was a popular practice among the old Mizo to accuse a beautiful young woman of lower status as having *khawhring*<sup>2</sup>. If a woman who was of marriageable age was charged with this kind of accusation, she had no other choice but to leave the village by her own choice or on being driven out by the chief. Normally, these women were beautiful and they were commoners who did not secure a high or respectable position in the society. The daughters of the wealthy families were jealous of their beauty so they would find a way to get rid of these women. This kind of condition leaves women hapless and their lives were ruined even to the extent of depriving husbands for the rest of their lives. This incident normally, never occurred to the wealthy women but only to the poor families and their beautiful daughters.

“Liandova and Tuaisiala” tells the reader a lot about the Mizo society through the projection of the life of an orphan. Soon after the death of her husband the mother looks for a new husband by abandoning the two brothers. The mother of Liandova and Tuaisiala seems to be a young woman because the elder of the two Liandova begs his mother not to leave them saying that he will not be able to look after his brother who is still a very young boy. The study of Liandova’s mother and her character shows the readers that she is not free from blame. However, this kind of incident often takes place in real life also. Besides, this tale can also be regarded as how fortune has changed the life of the poor and brought them to a respectable position in the society.

In their study of the tale, Vanlalruata Rengsi and Lallianzuali Chhangte have given their observations:

From the story we see that the main source of food was agriculture, in which most of Liandova's early struggle with life was related to. The simple crop was rice. Hunting was also very important engagement. The story also clearly shows that in both agriculture and hunting, there was teamwork and cooperation. Liandova could easily get help in the harvesting of his crop. Materially from the fact that Lersia could change his apparel to denote poverty, it can be suggested that this was a culture where weaving was quite developed and that ordinarily people were clothed with garments. (qtd. in Dena 104)

This tale shows us the presence of the chief whose name is Lersia, and he is a kind, benevolent and generous person who brings fortune in the lives of the two brothers. Not only this, the two brothers find a great amount of treasure extracted from the python's intestine for the python has swallowed a well-known Pawih merchant. So they are now in possession of gongs and huge amount of colourful beads which are highly valuable.

There were already numerous necklaces hanging from the walls, and many more unthreaded heaped on a large bamboo tray. ("Liandova and Tuaisiala" 226-7)

Liandova and Tuaisiala become richer than all the other people in the society after they are in possession of the Pawih merchant's wealth. The society that is seen in this tale shows us the prestigious condition that the rich people enjoy in contrast to the miserable condition of the poor. Lal Dena has said:

Possession of gong, gun, amber necklaces were considered prestigious and enhanced one's status in the society...in such society, orphans and the poor were not only looked down upon but were cursed. (105)

They bear all the humiliations from the chief, their fellow members in the society who treat them like outcasts. However, it is the Pawih merchant and his wealth that bring fortune into the lives of the two brothers.

The tales, "Mauruangi" as well as "Thailungi" are stories about two stepdaughters who are mistreated by their stepmothers in every way. Mauruangi's stepmother seems to be a nice mother at the outset of the marriage, but after few days have passed she "meted out harsh treatment to her and favoured her own daughter Bingtaii" ("Mauruangi" 70). She gives her stepdaughter only mashed bran which is fit only for the pig and Mauruangi often goes hungry without proper food to fill her stomach. Bingtaii "was without care in the world and she did as she pleased, whereas Muaruangi "grew thin and pale" ("Mauruangi" 70). The tale "Mauruangi" shows two contrasting worlds lived by two little girls in the same family.

In "Thailungi", we see a little girl who is sold away to the merchants by her stepmother in exchange for the scrap of iron. It is seen how Thailungi is sold away to the Pawih merchant,

One day Thailungi's stepmother was weaving away at her loom while Thailungi was crouching underneath the loom. So her stepmother was quite unaware of her presence. Just then a man from the Pawih community came by and said, "We are selling iron scrap, do buy some." ("Thailungi" 15)

And after sometime, Thailungi is taken away by the Pawih into their land and "The Pawih travelers captured her quickly and took her to their land" ("Thailungi" 15) In another tale

called “Rahtea”, there is a character who is mistreated again by his cruel stepmother, who forces “him to do the toughest chores in the house and gave him the smallest amount of food possible. He was also dressed in rags” (“Rahtea” 71). And her cruel nature does not end here; she even finds a way to kill her stepson. Thailungi’s mother as well as Mauruangi’s mother fit the description of the wicked stepmother which is seen in the tales across cultures. Mauruangi’s stepmother does not only mistreat her step daughter because she is “pained to see Mauruangi’s fortune up lighted” and she “would not stop at nothing but to see Mauruangi’s downfall” (Dena 114 & 116). And “Muaruangi” in particular, besides being a tale of a pathetic stepdaughter who is heavily mistreated by her wicked stepmother, “it may be inferred that the Mizo had good neighbourly relations with the non-Mizo, plainsmen and inter-community marriage was also prevalent at that time” (117).

Folktales are the product of society which reflects the patterns of a culture of a particular people living in certain geographical areas. Goswami says that, “Many tales are satirical in nature and these are about a select body of persons who claim a superior status” (68) over other people. The aspect of identity in terms of the projections of orphans and less fortunate sections in the society through the readings of these few select folktales denotes that they are not heard. Society thus creates its “others” whose individuality is suppressed having no means of access to upward mobility. These subordinate groups or “the others” are being silenced and marginalised in a society at the cause of the interest of the dominant groups. “Identity is about belonging....At its most basic it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality” (Weeks 88). These characters are like outcasts in a highly established society not out of their own choice and they have nothing which helps define them their individuality.

Folklore deals with reality and gives us a wide view of culture embedded in it. Folktales can function both as a source of entertainment and depiction of social life of the

people through their various elements: “Folklore thus ultimately becomes the means of expression of a group’s own attitudes and cultural life” (Sen, *Editor’s Note* viii). Through the projection of these characters the social reality is reflected in Mizo folktales since “Folklore gives insight of any culture *from the inside out* instead of *from the outside in*” (Dundes 55). The study of the folktale presents the readers with fantastic characters, elements which are unnatural in the proper sense of the term and therefore, “reflects prehistoric reality, medieval customs and morals....” (Propp 17). Folktale as a whole depicts the society through the projections of various characters, the relationship between the upper class sections in the society with that of the lower sections which would otherwise not be discussed openly. Alan Dundes has rightly said that folklore is “autobiographical ethnography, a people’s own description of themselves” (53). It can take the readers to the past and highlight important events in the past while at the same time offering certain examples for the readers.

The study of folklore is connected with humanities, social sciences and this link is quite strong. In marking the boundaries, however thin as it is Handoo says that folklore still concerns many disciplines, and will be studied across disciplines and sometimes with entirely different perspectives (3-4). A historian may use folkloric evidence for reconstructing the history of the masses, a linguist or a psychologist may use folklore data as supportive evidence into their own areas of inquiries. The same author in disseminating the idea of folklore and the work that a folklorist performs, and how the work of a folklorist differs from other established disciplines says that the only difference in the work of a folklorist as against a literary scholar or a historian lies in that a folklorist, if he is “a narrative specialist, studies the structure, language, motifs or style of a narrative; its problems of diffusion, dissemination, aspects of narration and the narrator, besides the factors other scholars study” (4). So, the real complexity of folklore or folkloristic studies lies in that a folklorist must take the help of other related disciplines in order to interpret his data accurately or correctly.



William Bascom, a student of Herskovits defined it as “verbal arts” to denote the oral aesthetic tradition of tale, proverb song and riddle in the culture, tearing out the supernatural belief system and others. He clarified the functional uses of folklore in nonliterate classes (qtd. in Jadav 4). And “scholars generally seemed to be in agreement that verbal art of folk literature is folklore and is an independent area of inquiry different from cultural anthropology” (Handoo 6). However, controversy generated itself with the passage of time since there was an attempt to include different areas of study like material culture, social folk customs, performing folk arts, etc. which were not initially included under folklore study.

Among the folk narratives, folktales seem to be the most powerful narrative. Mizos have a number of folktales that deal with various themes. Like most folktales of the world, the Mizo folktales are concerned with “...bravery, rivalry, respect of parents, honour, the ill rewards of cruelty, treachery and falsehood, the awe and fear of spirits, tiger-men...,” (Khangte, *Mizos of North East India* 94) life after death, etc. A large number of these tales might have existed long before the early Mizo came and settled in the present Mizoram. These tales as a whole reveal the Mizo sensibility, ethos, religious outlook, and social system especially of the pre-British era, along with their value systems which are relevant in the study of the Mizo culture. Therefore, B. Lalthangliana has commented saying:

An suangtuahna leh an thil thlir dan te chenin a sang ve fe tih a hriat theih a. (*Mizo Literature* 64)

It can be said that their [early Mizo] imaginations and their mindset were highly progressive.

The Mizo concept of life after death is seen in the tale “Tlingi and Ngama”. In this tale, a brief description of the other world i.e. the world of spirits is seen.

The world of spirits as seen in this short tale with all its differences from the world of the living reveals the concept of life after death of the Mizo in the pre-Christian era.

There were two places where the souls used to go after death. *Mitthi Khua* and *Pialral*. But it [*Pialral*] was a place only for the rich people who could perform *Thangchhuah Feast*. (Lalrinawma 361)

For the commoners, their souls would go into *Mitthi Khua*.

In the early Mizo traditional faith, a human being was perceived as having *thlarau* (spirit), which roams around the village. From there it went either to *Mitthi Khua* or *Pialral*. (Lalrinawma 361)

This tale denotes that Tlingi lives in *Mitthi Khua* which suggests that she had been a commoner during her lifetime. The same is for Ngama as well because he goes to the same place after he is dead. These kinds of tales are heard in the childhood and have a vital role in the making of the ethos and aesthetics of a person and they are an integral part of the country. They carry some or the other cultural context in them although they might not have scientific accuracy or logical grounding in them. Most of them are the reflex of human mind and project human beliefs and fads. They are part of the pervasive process of the society and have become the cultural identity, value systems and social norms of it. These are tales of family relationship of every kind, gods, demons and fate. Folktale is the “spontaneous outburst of innermost feelings of man”, and therefore, folk literature is the better projection of the social and cultural life of a society.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> It simply means dismantling of the chieftainship by the people. The manner of practice differs from village to village. Generally, when the people could no longer bear the rule of their chief they would come together showing their anger. The chief could not continue to remain as the ruler once this was done against him.

<sup>2</sup> *Khawhring* is the name of an evil spirit which is believed to bring sickness to a person. When someone is instigated by jealousy or hatred, she would accuse her victim as being possessed by *Khawhring* or a malignant spirit. A malicious person wishing to harm an innocent victim would pretend to fall into a trance and accuse the victim as being possessed by it.

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### CHAPTER III

#### AN OVERVIEW OF THE CULTURAL PRACTICES OF THE PAWIH

Generally speaking, Mizo is accepted as a generic term covering different clans such as Lusei, Hmar, Paite, Ralte, Mara and Pawih (Lai) which live in Mizoram and in other parts of the world such as Burma, Bangladesh, Manipur and many others. The Pawih clan is one of the biggest groups among the different clans of the Mizo and they are considered as a group of people who have always been able to maintain their ethnic identity. B. Lalthangliana has said:

Burma ram, Chindwin phaizawlah hian 600 A.D. (or kum zabi 7 A.D.) velah an thlengah dah ila, a inhmehin a awm thawkhat a, pawm a hahdam tawk awm e. (*India, Burma leh Bangladesh* 64)

It is generally reckoned that they [the forefathers of Mizo] reached the Chindwin Valley, Burama in an around A.D. 600 (or 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.)

Then from there they moved to the Kabaw Valley from where they spread to different parts of the Chin Hills. The same author in his book called *Mizo Literature (Mizo Thu leh Hla)* (1993), says:

An aia tam leh chak zawk Shan hnam te chuan Tahan-Khamphat phei phaikuama awm Mizo pi leh pute chu kum 1200 vel khan an nawr chhuak ve leh ta thung niin a lang. (2)

The forefathers of Mizo were driven out of the Kabaw plains by the more powerful Shan tribe around 1200 A.D.

Therefore, in order to study the culture of the Pawih people, it is necessary to know the history of the Mizo.

China ram, Thailand ram khi lai vela tlangmite nena inhnaih taka an chen a, an khawsak lai hian Mizo Culture hi a intan a, khi-ah kum zabi 4-na hma lamah, China leh Tibet ramri vela an khawsak lain a intanah dah ila. (*Mizo Culture*, 11)

The embryo of the Mizo Culture can be regarded as having its origin in the earlier part of the fourth century A.D., when the early Mizo lived in closed relationship with the other tribal people in Thailand and its nearby places in the boundaries of China and Tibet.

K. Zawla in his book *Mizo Pi Pute Leh An Thlahte Chanchin* (2011) says that the forefathers of the Mizo reached Chinzua (Burma) in 700 A.D., which was located between Rangoon and Zimengchhaw (7). In his book *Mizo History (Mizo hnam hrang hrangte chanchin)* (2011), Hrangthiauva makes mention of a place called Runkhawm and in this place, the forefathers of the Mizo and the Meiteis lived together which was around 1150-1250 (3). The Runkhawm that he mentions in his book could be the Run Kam where the forefathers of the Mizo lived after being driven out by the Shan Tribe from the Kabaw Valley. Besides, other historians such as Reverend Liangkhaia, V.L. Siama, Lalmama, Lalsuaka and Remkunga, to mention a few, have also agreed with the idea that the early Mizo made their settlement in the Kabaw Valley, and the years that they proposed to be the time of their settlement are coincided with one another, which is around the seventh century A.D.

In his book *Mizo Culture* (2013), B. Lalthangliana says:

Mizo chanchin kan hriat phak hla ber chu Run kam thlang lamah lal chi bik nei lovin, mahni chi chiin an awm tih chauh a ni. (3)



The oldest story that we have concerning the Mizo is that they made their settlement in the lower part of the Run, where they lived together according to their own clans but without separate clan chiefs to rule them.

In this place, separation took place and they moved to different parts of the Chin Hills mainly in the nearby places from the Run River. The largest of the groups moved towards the eastern part of the Chin State and settled in hilly regions like Thantlang and others. During their settlement in the Run Kam, due to unfavourable condition of the environment, there was huge backwardness in their culture.

Kabaw valley-a Kalaymyo atanga Chin Hills pan a, Falam atanga khawchhak lam mel nga vela hla “Lai Lun” hmuna cheng hmasa unau pathumte chu Thuan Kai te, Phur Hlum te leh Ral Thang (or Hlawn Ceu) te niin an sawi. (qtd. in *India, Burma leh Bangladesh* 68).

It is said that Thuan Kai, Phurhlum and Ral Thang (or Hlawn Ceu) were the first three brothers to live in a place called “Lai Lun” after they moved from the Kabaw valley, Kalaymyo to Chin Hills. And Lai Lun was located five miles away from Falam.

It is estimated that the three brothers reached Lai Lun around 1570-1580 A.D. (123). The generation that came forth from these three brothers came to be known as the Lai people or the Pawih people known by other groups of the Mizo, and then they spread to different parts of the Chin Hills such as Thantlang, Halkha, Falam and other places. S. Zapeng, a historian from this community has given his observation saying:

Chuvangin Simpi hi Laimite zia-rang leh nunphung intanna bul niin a lang. (qtd. in 123)

The Simpi village could be regarded as the place of origin of the Lai culture.

The settlement at Simpi village is believed to have taken place around 1450-1475 A.D. Many similar cultural practices are also found among the different clans of the Mizo which can be attributed to hundred years of living together.

Like all the other groups of the Mizo, the main occupation of the people of the Pawih community was shifting cultivation. Rice was the staple food and it was cultivated more abundantly than all the other items. Millet was also grown which was for the purpose of making *zu* “rice beer” and not for food. *Fangra*<sup>1</sup>, *kawlbahra* “sweet potato” and maize along with other vegetables were also grown. If the harvest of rice was not sufficient then maize would be eaten as a substitute for rice. Domesticated animals included rearing of gayal, pig, goat and poultry. Not all the families could afford these animals, but at least one of these would be found in every household. Since, agriculture was their main occupation; they never remained in the same village for more than four or six years mainly because they were in search of more fertile lands. Another reason is that when the village people felt that the land was unhealthy and when they could not improve their health, they felt the need to move to another village. The other reason is that when there was a feeling that the security of the village was at threat they moved to another village. This was because they continually engaged in inter-tribal wars and there was a constant threat from their enemies.

The new village spots were chosen carefully by the chief’s ministers after consulting the village priest who would perform certain rituals by trying to make an egg stand on the palm of his hand. If he was successful in the act, it was considered a good omen and therefore, the ministers would start venturing for the new area. After the move had been decided, cultivation was done near the new site so that they could eat the fruits of their harvest on entering the new village the next year. If the community moved from a place far from the one that was occupied earlier, it was called *zuan* “jump”. The chief would choose first followed by the eldest among his ministers who had taken part in the survey, then the

ministers. After this, the villagers would choose which part of land they wanted for the construction of their houses. The chief's house was constructed by all the villagers and the chief's ministers would construct their houses surrounding the house of the chief, which was built in the middle of the village. The houses were built of planks and logs of wood only after a proper plan was laid out for their construction. A tower was erected in the centre of the village which served as a refuge for the children and women from their enemies in times of war. A fort was also constructed which surrounded the entire village that would protect them from the intruders. The tower and the fort were made of mud.

The Pawih society is a patriarchal society in which the father is the head of the family; however, in the past, the women were also given importance in the family. The eldest son who inherited the family property would continue to live in the house while the rest of the brothers would leave the house after getting married where they started living on their own. In the Pawih society, it is seen that the concept of Zawlbuk was absent, which was a dormitory for bachelors. This was one of the most essential parts of the Mizo society where the young people learned good manners from their elders. Since Zawlbuk was not found in the Pawih society, meal time was mainly used by the parents to instruct their children on various matters. However, one practice which was quite common among the Pawih people but was absent among the other groups of the Mizo was the practice of sleeping together of young men in the house of a woman. The woman would take pride in having many bachelors sleeping in her house for the number would speak of her goodness.

Though the Pawih society is a patriarchal society, the women in the Pawih society enjoyed a great amount of freedom in various matters in the past. For instance, the unmarried young women could show their favour towards their male guests by letting them sleep in their houses. However, the male guest was supposed to maintain his behaviour during the night, and if he by any means tried to make an unbecoming advancement towards the young

woman, she could refrain him from the act by saying *chang hlah* “do not move”. And if he was persistent in his behaviour, she could do anything against the man even to the extent of putting him to shame. The women were rather powerful in the family and their voice was given high recognition. This was mainly because:

Mahni pasal sual ngam loh chu nutling lova ngaih a ni. (Tribal Research Institute 44)

The woman who had no courage to fight with her husband was not considered as a real woman.

This clearly shows the status of women in the family. The women hardly took part in the field works except when there was an extreme circumstance that demanded their involvement. Weaving, drawing of water and collecting of firewood were considered as the responsibility of young women and the rest of the household chores were taken care of by the mother of the family. Any woman who was of age could take part in the drinking including married women who would enjoy with the young men and other male members in the society by singing songs together. Generally, women were the drum beaters in these kinds of enjoyments and their husbands would rather feel proud after seeing their wives engaging in such activities. The son of a widow could court even the chief’s daughter. However, the women never took part in the counsel of the chief and his ministers. Despite this huge amount of freedom rendered to them, women never misused their privileged status.

The study of the Pawih customary practices regarding marriage shows slight differences compared to their counterparts mainly the Lusei people and their practices. The young women were usually sent to the marriage at the age of fifteen to twenty, whereas men usually married at twenty to twenty five. An emissary would be sent to the girl’s house and he would discuss the matter with the girl’s parents, who would choose the husband for their daughter. There was a practice among this community in which a young girl would be

betroted to a young boy at an early age and the neighbours would be the witnesses of the betrothal. The boy's family would either give a sum of rupees fifty to sixty or any domestic animal at their disposal for the price of betrothal. Then, the girl would live in the boy's house since she was a little girl as one of the family's daughter. Until they came of age they would not live as a husband and a wife. If the girl who had been betrothed to a boy ran after another husband without the consent of the boy's parents, it was considered as an act of adultery. In such circumstance, she had to pay the *manpui* "the bride price" which amounted to rupees fifty to ninety, and the same applied for the boy.

The Pawih community conducted marriage ceremony solemnly. The bride price was rather expensive compared to the Lusei people and their practices. The first item given to the bride's family was called *Phunthawh* which was similar with what was called by the Lusei community as *Manpui* which was equal to the value of a full grown gayal. This was given to the father of the bride, however, in some cases it was also given to the bride's maternal grandfather. The grandfather would be given some amount of money from the *phunthawh*, this is called *pusum*. If the groom did not give *phunthawh* to the bride's family, he could not claim their children in time of divorce. Besides this, there was *mantang* which was distributed to some of the groom's close relatives. It included *taman* which was given to the bride's brother, *pa-man* which was given to the bride's paternal uncle, *nu-man* which was given to the bride's maternal aunt, and *ni-man* was given to the bride's paternal aunt. There were many practices connected with marriage found among the Pawih community but were absent in the Lusei community, and these were part of the *mantang*. These were-firstly, *tum man* which was given to the father of the family, *chiang* which was given to far off relatives usually the son of the widow or the illegitimate son among their relatives. *Arat* was given to the bride's maternal aunt or sometimes, the friend of a bride's brother, or the bride's father's friend. Next, there were *sakawr man* also known as *rang man*, *hum man*, *dar man*, *fei man*,

*thi man*, *nam man* and *salpa man*-which were to be paid by the groom. After all these demands had been paid off by the groom and his family and having been distributed as the tradition required, the wedding was finally performed with great celebration. Divorce was rarely seen and the reason for such a steady and secure marriage among the people of this community can be attributed to the fact that marriage was considered a solemn ceremony and it was never performed perfunctorily. Most of these practices are still found today while some of them have become obsolete.

The practice of polygamy was found among the Pawih community in olden times especially before the coming of Christianity in the later part of the nineteenth century. The husband would select one from his concubines to be his true wife with whom he would perform a ritual called *arnak inthawi*. The husband would not be hasty in selecting the wife for that would restrict him from having more concubines. So, this ritual would be delayed and performed much later. The women would not mind to be one among the concubines of the man mainly because one day one of them could be chosen as the true wife having the status of a mother in the family.

The Pawih, unlike most of the other clans of the Mizo have only two big festivals in a year, and these festivals have become more or less obsolete in the present day. These two festivals were observed mainly for the dead and usually, they lasted for four days. The manner of celebration of festivals by the Pawih clan differed from the other Mizo clans. *Tho Kut* which is also called monsoon festival is similar with the *Mim Kut* of the Lusei people. It was celebrated in the month of September. Another kind of festival called *Hlukkha Kut* which is also known as *Thal Kut*. It was usually celebrated and observed either in the month of December or January soon after the harvest was over, or in the month of March. These two festivals are collectively called *Thitirh Kut*. The *thitirh* ceremony was performed two times, and during which the families of the dead persons along with the people in the villages went

to the graveyards and offered food and other edible items to the dead. If anyone died between *Tho Kut* and *Hlukhla Kut*, they would first perform the *thitirh* ceremony at *Tho Kut* which would be performed again at *Hlukhla Kut*, and then the ceremony would be considered as complete. The main purpose of these two festivals was not entertainment alone; rather it was more of a celebration on behalf of the dead. However, along with the biggest purpose, other useful activities were also carried out which would call for the people's involvement and participation.

As part of the preparation for the festivals, the male members from each family would go to the forest hunting for wild animals. *Zu* "rice beer" was also prepared beforehand so that there would be an abundant amount of it on the day of the festival. And, even if the hunters could not kill any wild animal, at least some domesticated animals would be killed on the day of the festival; it could be a hen or a pig depending on the wealth the family possessed. Some of the activities or items that were performed and carried out during the two festivals were as follows:

1. *Thitimh Ni*: This was also called *Thlatlun* which was the first day of the festival. This day was considered as the day when all the spirits of the dead came together for the festival. The families of dead persons prepared items such as *chhangpai* and *chhangza* which were given as an offering to their dead family members.

During day time, the neighbours especially the old members in the village came together to the house where someone died or recently died bringing rice beer which they drank together. It was the responsibility of the family to prepare meal for the people who came to comfort them in the evening. It was only after the food was offered to the dead that the family, friends of the dead person or the people started enjoying the meal. If there were more than one family where there was dead person, then the people would go to any house

which they considered important. At night they would sing songs of the dead which were accompanied by drinking of rice beer. On this day, the family of the dead would go to the graveyard, cleanse it and drink beer.

2. *Kut Pui Ni*: This was the second day of the festival and as usual they would place their offering to the dead along with the *chhangpai* and *chhangza* in a bamboo basket. On this day, the people in the village, children, and relatives were invited for the meal. They would sing songs at night and also during day time. The neighbours and relatives would bring rice beer and it was usually available in abundance for all the guests.

3. *Lamlai Sial Ni*: The literal meaning of it would be ‘clearing of road or construction of pathway’. However, a real pathway was never cleared or constructed on this day and it was different from the Lusei tradition of making a pathway. Unlike other activities, this was not organized by the families of the dead persons; rather it was organized by the chief of the village and his noblemen which was compulsory for all the villagers. This day was used for clearing a pathway connecting the village as well as an area where stones were erected, and they would clear a space which would be as vast as the size of a house. At night they would go to the house of the dead persons to comfort their families.

4. *Lamlai Sarulh Ni*: The meaning of *Sarulh* in Pawih is “sacred or consecrated”, and the reason being that every kind of activity except drawing of water was strictly prohibited on this day. The people were expected to stay at home as a part of the celebration.

In the Lusei society *chhawngnawh*<sup>2</sup> was organized during the the Chapchar Kut as part of an entertainment, but in the Pawih society *chhawngnawh* could be organized when there was someone who died an unnatural death. In the year when such death took place, the villagers would perform *chhawngnawh* from the village *Lungdawh*<sup>3</sup> towards their homes. Also, the wealthy families in the village could organize *chhawngnawh* even in the absence



of unnatural death, and this was organized only in *Hlukhla Kut*. The two festivals such as *Tho Kut* as well as *Hlukhla Kut* were celebrated with equal importance and the manner of celebration was more or less similar with one another. The only difference that could be seen between these two festivals is that they were celebrated in different time of the year.

The Pawih have a number of traditional dances which are popular even today. Most of these dance forms are claimed by all the different clans of Mizo as their own and therefore, it is difficult to know which dance belonged to which clan in the beginning. However, this shows that all the different clans in Mizo are one and the same tribe with the same origin. Some of these dances which are claimed by the Pawih community as their own are not seen among the Pawih alone, rather most of them are considered as their traditional dances by every clan of the Mizo. These different dance forms are known under different names by different clans according to variations in dialects.

1. *Ruakhatlak*: The other name for this dance form is Cheraw and it is one of the most popular dances of the Mizo to this day. The Pawih people call this dance *Ruakhatlak* but it is widely known as Cheraw as is called by the Lusei community. In the past, the Pawih performed this dance when a woman died at childbirth to bid farewell to the departed soul. In the beginning, this dance was more or less related with the ritual practices. Legend has it that this dance came into practice soon after Dardini died at childbirth from a Mizo folktale called “Duhmanga and Dardini”. So, when Dardini died, the people in the village had to observe *Ramthakserh* which was a ritual performed when someone died an unnatural death, and it lasted for one week. On that day, the youths from the village went to the river carrying various edible items to be given as an offering to the departed soul. They gathered bamboo poles and started dancing the *Ruakhatlak*. On returning to the village, they were welcomed by the older members of the village. The manner of performance in different places might show slight differences. However, this dance was performed only when a woman died at childbirth

and usually it lasted for one week. The reason being that the earlier people thought that when this kind of unnatural death happened to someone, the spirit was restless and wandering about in the earth. Since, this death was considered a curse and therefore, this dance would lead the departed soul in reaching her abode safely.

2. *Pawhlothlawh*: This was an important dance performed on big occasions such as *Khuangchawi*<sup>4</sup> which was a public feast organized by the wealthy family for the whole village, and as part of a ritual called *sa-aih* which was performed after killing certain wild animals such as tiger so as to protect themselves from harm which might befall them. Men and women danced together and it was usually performed inside the house. There are three steps in this dance such as *lamtluang*, *khupsuk* and *khelkhawn*<sup>5</sup> and each of these steps are accompanied by a particular song. It is not very different from the Lusei form of dance called *chai*<sup>6</sup> which is still popular to this day.

3. *Chawnglaizawnh*: This dance was performed on the funerals of men with great stature such as the chiefs or warriors, and the purpose of which was not for entertainment but it was a dance to show their mourning for the dead. It was a dance performed by an individual person by the side of the corpse by the chief's noblemen or warriors, and women never took part in it. These dancers, one by one would say a word of comfort to the departed soul by stating the great deeds he had done during his lifetime. It is very popular even today among the people of Mizo.

4. *Sarlamkai*: This is a popular dance form of the Pawih community. In the past, the warriors who came home as victorious after winning the battle would bring home the heads of their enemies as a trophy which was followed by the celebration of their victory in the battle. The heads which were taken as trophy would be hanged in the poles nearby the village entry. It was believed that after killing their enemies, a ritual must be performed, which

would otherwise bring curse on the slayer such as certain sicknesses or diseases or even death. The celebration lasted for one day.

Music, dances, and singing occupy an important place among the people of the Pawih community. They have a number of musical instruments which are more or less similar with those found among the Lusei community except for the two which are *bengbung* and *rawchhem*. Other instruments used by this community include drums of different kinds, a kind of guitar called *burtingtang* which is sometimes called *Lai tingtang*, *thawnglawi* known among the Lusei people as *phenglawg* “flute” which is made of bamboo, *chawnawih* or *lemlawi* as called by the Lusei people. Besides these, *cherkhawng*, *tuiumvuak*, gayal’s horn, *tumphit* and different kinds of gongs are also largely used on various occasions. These different kinds of gongs were never used for dancing in the past. Most of these musical instruments were played by men except on a certain occasions like public drinking where women would lead the song by beating the drum.

The Pawih people possess rich traditional dresses which are popular even today. Some of the dresses worn by women include the following:

Among the women *hni* (frock) of different kinds are popular and one of the most valued *hni* is called *arsi hni*. It is black in colour dyed with indigo in which star-like-patterns are woven all over the frock. In olden times, only few could possess it. Another popular item is called *thi hni* mainly worn by the chief’s wife and common women never wore it. It is an excellent work of craftsmanship which must be worn on the day of the *Bawi*<sup>7</sup>, and tiny pieces of beads are attached to its hem for appendage. The colour is black in which colours like red and yellow stripes are woven around it, and it is either called *nawn thum hni* or *ka nga* depending on the number of red stripes which is sometimes three and five respectively. These

are some of the more popular *hni* “frocks” worn by the Pawih women which are quite popular even today.

The Pawih women possess a large number of frocks but they have few traditional *puan* “cloths”. *Chawngnak puan* was the most common cloth among the women both for the royal women as well as the commoners. The wife of the *Bawi* would wear a cloth which differed in its stripes so that whoever saw her would recognize that she and her family had performed *Bawi*. The stripes are made of different colours such as red, black, yellow, green and blue and the cloth itself is made from a fine silk. This *chawngnak puan* is same with the *puanchei* or *puanlaisen* of the Lusei community. Another type of cloth largely worn by this community is called *pupuan* which is filled with black and white stripes and is made of silk.

The Pawih women wear various kinds of traditional waistbands or belts which are not commonly found among the Lusei women. Some of these are: *saka* which is made of a thin iron wire which is encircled around the waist four times. *Kharvar* which is another type of belt made from a one or one and a half inch of flat and thin iron piece, which has a round end on both sides. These pieces have holes which are tied together with a strong thread through its holes. Another type of belt is called *hrangkha* which is almost similar with *saka* but slightly bigger in size. It has four edges and is made of thin and flat brass, and these pieces are fastened together by tying one piece over another. *Chhinchhik* is made of a brass coil and the coils are bound together and it looks like a small chain. Besides these, there are belts such as belt made of coins called *tangka kawnghren*, and *darzai kawngchilh* which is made of brass. These waistbands are very much popular to this day.

The Pawih men in olden times did not have many dresses and their dress code was quite simple. *Hnawkhal* is one of the oldest cloths worn by men, which is like a robe with an open front and the tip of it would extend below the knee and it is woven from cotton. *Angki* is

another type of cloth worn by men and it was more or less similar in shape except for its length which reaches the upper thigh, and its stripes of different colours which are woven on the shoulder area and the elbow. *Hrenpereng* “loincloth” was also commonly worn by men in the past. Some of the male ornaments include a traditional necklace called *thipui*; and *hrukkual* or *thimkual* as is known among the Lusei people, is made of brass and is used as an ornament which was inserted in the fold of their knotted hair. There are two types of head cloth and the first one is called *Phawngpi* or *diar* “head cloth” as is called by the Lusei community and this was mainly used on special occasions. And ordinary head cloth was also largely worn in the fields or whenever they felt like wearing it. The male dress code was far simpler than women’s. Besides these, there are various other kinds of cloths for men but mostly these are of recent inventions and were not in use in olden times. These clothes which have been described as worn by traditional Pawih men are not only particular to the males of this community; rather they are common among all the men folks of the Mizo. The father of the house is the owner of almost all the valuable items the family possessed such as brass pot, gongs of various kinds, gun, necklace, shield, bow, or any other domestic animals such as goat, gayal, and others.

The Pawih concept of life after death is rather interesting and there are certain dissimilarities as well as similarities with the Lusei people’s concept of life after death. The souls of the dead were believed to be wandering in the world until *thitirh* was performed two times, after which they finally moved to the *mitthi khua* “dead men’s village”. The Pawih people believed that the entrance of *mitthi khua* was guarded by Sanu<sup>8</sup> who would transfigure the spirits from their former beings. Then this would make them forget their longings of the world so that they could live in the place meant for them. The *mitthi khua* had a number of vicinities and these vicinities were: *sarthi veng* which was meant for the spirits who died by accidents of various kinds, *raicheha thi veng* in which the spirits of those that died soon after

their birth would go, and *pulthi veng* which was meant for those who died a natural death. And *Pialral* was believed to be located beyond these precincts which was a place meant only for the royal families and those who had performed *thangchhuah* during their lifetime. If a commoner died, Sanu would snatch away the valuable items possessed by that person. Contrary to the Lusei concept of life after death, there is no single concept accepted by all the subclans of this community. Some of the groups even believed that there was another gatekeeper besides Sanu and the name was Tuarthlua who was a woman. In olden times, grave digging was not carried out voluntarily by the young men in the village; the villagers would send some men from the village to carry out the task separately. This is another difference between the Pawih and the Lusei communities for the later would voluntarily take part in grave digging.

The concept of rebirth or reincarnation is found among the people of this community. A child that died soon after its birth was believed to be born again, and it was also believed that even animals could be reborn into human beings. If a child died after his birth, the parents would make a black mark on his body so that when he or she would be born again they could recognize him or her easily. It was believed that adults were never born again. Among the people of the Lusei community, the concept of rebirth was not totally absent but it was not taken seriously.

One important factor that keeps the Pawih community distinct from the rest of the other Mizo groups or communities is their distinctive dialects. The Pawih dialect is one of the most flexible and richest dialects among the different dialects found among the Mizo people. It has been mentioned that majority of the Pawih people in Mizoram use a particular dialect which goes by the name 'Lai holh' which is also sometimes called 'Khuafo tawng', is a combination of dialects spoken in Thantlang, Halkha or Hakha, Lungzarh and Khuafo areas in Myanmar. In Mizoram, the 'Lai holh' or 'Khuafo tawng' speaking people are mainly

found in the southern part. The Pawih (Lai) language speaking people are hugely found in different parts of Myanmar, Bangladesh, Assam, Manipur and Tripura. There is no standard Pawih (Lai) language even today and therefore, the Pawih (Lai) language mainly includes the four dialects found among this community which are Khuafu, Thantlang, Laizo or Falam and Halkha or Hakha. The speakers of these different dialects have no difficulty in understanding one another and each favours his own respective dialect which has resulted in the absence of the common language which is accepted by all. B. Lalthangliana has made a mention on this issue saying that the Chin Students' Union at Rangoon University, realizing the need for having a standard language for this community took the initiatives in 1952-52<sup>8</sup>. And the Township People's Council members, various non-governmental organizations along with the opinions of the individuals were consulted and collected. However, the effort of the diligent organizations and a group of individuals has not been able to bear successful results till today.

The Pawih language is rich in vocabulary, idioms and phrases, and even grammatical structures and its adjectives and verbs are quite flexible. The study of Mizo old songs such as *hla do* and *bawh hla*<sup>10</sup> are mainly composed using the Pawih language and the language used in these songs or chants are not differed much from the Pawih language which is very much in use today. The so called Mizo language also contains a large number of the Pawih words and phrases and the study of Mizo history in general and the old songs and chants could not be completed excluding this language. This signifies the centrality as well as the significance of the Pawih language in the making of the present Mizo language though unrealized by many in most of the cases. However, despite its centrality the language especially within the boundaries of Mizoram can be considered as dwindling for the fluent speakers of this language are disappearing slowly due to various reasons or factors. This can be substantiated by the fact that back in the year 1901, eighty seven out of hundred percent, and the people in

Mizoram had adopted the so called Mizo language discarding their each dialect. And more than sixty percent residing in Manipur, Tripura and Mizoram have embraced the Mizo language as their own mother tongue and for the lingua franca.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the provisions available for the protection of the Pawih culture as well as the language as has been granted by the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, more and more people have adopted the Duhlian or the Mizo language as their lingua franca. Besides, there are only few people left among this community who are well versed in the language; no major steps for the revival of the language could bear out successful results till the present time. All the important functions in churches, public gatherings, political meetings and even the District Council Assembly sessions are mostly conducted in Mizo or Duhlian rather than Pawih. Those who use the Pawih language as their first language against the Mizo or Duhlian are largely confined to remote villages among older generation. However, the younger generation no longer speaks the language. Therefore, the Pawih language in Mizoram is moving towards extinction despite several attempts of its revival from different groups of people including the politicians, church leaders, organizations and others.

The general reading of the Pawih people and their culture denotes that the people of this community used to live a simple life which was connected with certain superstitious beliefs and practices. Inter-tribal war was prevalent and they invaded one another for no specific purposes. Before 1890s, they hardly led a peaceful life for they were at constant fear of being invaded by their neighboring villages. The manner in which they took after their dead was such a burdensome task for they would keep the body for many days before they buried it, and the making and digging of the tomb for the wealthy and the royal families was such a troublesome task. However, after the coming of the colonial rule into the State in the later part of the nineteenth century, many evil practices were done away with by their colonial masters. The habit of drinking rice beer was also strictly banned by the rulers. In this



way, the nineteenth century has brought many changes into the land, the people, their culture and even their lifestyle which, in many ways, could be considered as the beginning of an era of progression in various walks of life. They gave up the practice of moving from one place to another which in turn brought a number of progress on various matters such as cattle rearing, agriculture which slowly opened a better door for having a better living standards by bringing improvement in their economic life as a whole. These developments could be attributed to the positive outcome of the colonial rule and the Christian missionaries.

The Pawih culture and cultural practices which have been described in this chapter do not aim only at pointing out the differences of the Pawih culture from the Lusei people and their practices. In matters of language, cultural practices and even in dresses, there are a huge number of similarities. Hmunhre has also commented saying, “In a certain place at a certain past these groups of people had shared the same language” (qtd. in Lalthangliana, *History and Culture of Mizo* 224), and Thangchemsang of Pangkhua has also said:

These different groups of people are closely related to one another, in language, religious practices, lifestyle and habit, and even in songs, and therefore, these people had lived together at a distant past. (Lalthangliana, *History and Culture of Mizo* 224)

These comments show that all the different groups of the Mizo share a large number of similarities which are seen through the various dance forms, songs, dresses, habits and lifestyle which in turn suggests they are of the same ancestors being scattered into different parts of Myanmar, Mizoram, Bangladesh, Manipur and even Tripura. Linguistic and boundary barriers still serve as an obstacle to the unity of these different groups of people. However, these distinct cultures are worth study and they are keys to the survival of the Mizo culture as a whole.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> It is the name of a large bean. For better definition, see Lorrain 133.

<sup>2</sup> *Chhawnghnawh*, the name of children's and young people's feast held during the *Chapchar Kut* and *Pawl Kut* festivals. For further studies, see Lalthangliana 377-382, or Dokhuma 105-118.

<sup>3</sup> A stone or stones erected in memory of the dead usually located at the entrance of a village.

<sup>4</sup> For a detail description of the *Khuangchawi* and how it was performed, which is a part of the *Thangchhuah Feast*, see Dokhuma 66-69. In order to know more about the *Thangchhuah Feast* and how it was performed by the Pawih community see Tribal Research Institute 82-103; and for the Lusei community see Dokhuma 55-69, or Lalthangliana 411-435. These two communities share many similarities on the manner in which the *Thangchhuah Feast* was performed or celebrated, and on the whole the requirements for this feast and the values of these items are more or less equal in value.

<sup>5</sup> A detailed description of these different dance steps can be seen in Tribal Research Institute, 150

<sup>6</sup> In olden times, this dance was performed only on the day of Chapchar Kut. To know more about this dance form, see Lalthangliana. *India, Burma leh Bangladesh-a Mizo Chanchin*, 383.

<sup>7</sup> In this paper, the detailed description of the *Bawi* and how it was performed have not been given. For the proper study of the same, see Tribal Research Institute 89-91.

<sup>8</sup> The concept of Sanu and even Tuarthlua as the gatekeeper can be considered as similar with the Lusei concept of Pawla who would shoot the young men who died without sleeping with any young woman during their lifetime.

<sup>9</sup> See B. Lalthangliana. *Mizo Culture* (2013), 224-225.

<sup>10</sup> To know more about these Mizo old songs, see B. Lalthangliana. *Mizo Literature (Mizo Thu leh Hla)*, 10-17 & 40.

<sup>11</sup> See B. Lalthangliana. *Mizo Culture* (2013), 227.

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## CHAPTER IV

### CRITIQUING THE PORTRAYAL OF THE PAWIH IN SELECT MIZO

#### FOLKTALES

This chapter will critically examine the representation of the Pawih found in select Mizo folktales. The Pawih character is seen in tales such as “Chhura”, “Liandova and Tuaisiala” and “Thailungi”, while the character of an ogress is found in tales such as “Sichangneii” and “Tumchhingi and Raldawna”. The ogress is the major character representing the Pawih community in the folktales under discussion. These five Mizo folktales selected for a close examination are significant because the manner of representation given to the Pawih could be regarded as a reflection of the ethos and attitudes of the non-Pawih communities towards the Pawih. The reason as to why the Pawih character is found in these tales becomes significant for it is the only community that is represented in the Mizo folktales at a large scale. The ogress found in these tales is seen as terrifying and powerful opponent who in most of the cases uses the Pawih language or a foreign accent “tawngpai” when provoked to anger. Through these tales, the concept of an ogress and what it represents in the Mizo psyche could be seen. A parallel can also be drawn between the ogress and the Pawih character in terms of their projection in these tales, and this in turn can also be somehow related to the historical relationship between the Pawih and the Lusei communities.

Sue Stedman Jones says, “It [representation] is ... central to the nature of experience” (2) and it is an important term in sociology. This statement denotes that representation is brought about by social experience and this basically involves mental experience displayed by certain group of people towards certain situations, ideas, or any object. A sociologist Durkheim says:

A representation is not, in effect, a simple image of reality, an inert shadow projected in us by things; but it is a force which raises up around it a whole whirlwind of organic and psychic life and levels of conscience. (2-3)

So, representation does not only involve describing or showing the reality, it involves a lot more than that, which is the moral action or mental outlook formed by a group of people towards certain issues, events or topics. The social experience becomes significant because it has the capacity to influence the people's attitude towards anything which in turn brings about representation. The characterization of the Pawih found in these tales also generates the idea that certain reality must be involved in it. This is a social reality which is expressed in the form of the character in such tales. Likewise, the various characteristics associated with an ogress in general, and the reason as to why this particular character is represented in a manner so that the readers might be able to exact traces of connection between it and the Pawih character must contain certain elements of reality. This makes it necessary to take a closer look into the relationship of the Pawih and the Lusei in the past so as to be more accurate in the study of the nature of their relationship, which will in turn provide certain groundings on the manner of representation given to these characters– the Pawih and the ogress.

The inter-tribal confrontation among the different clans of the Mizo was not absent during their settlements beyond the River Tiau but history shows that it was far less prevalent until they came to the present Mizoram in the eighteenth century. With the passage of time, the speakers of the same dialect started living together as one group, which in turn generated conflicts and suspicions against their counterparts living in different nearby places. H. Lalrinawma says:

Tiau chhak lamah hian Hmarho leh Luseiho an indo kan hre ngai meuh lo. Lai hnahthlak, Mar/Mhar/Hmar (Lusei leh Hmar)-ho hi Pawihovin an run ngun hle. (235)

The Lusei and the Hmar people never engaged in war among themselves beyond the Tiau River. But, the Pawih clan constantly invaded Mar/Mhar/Hmar (Lusei and Hmar)– people and their villages.

During 1470-1750 A.D., the earlier Mizo waged wars among themselves, and presumably these were the years in which they were still living in the Chin State of Burma. The Pawih people and their involvement in those wars were very prominent, and history indicates that they usually came out victorious in them. In the earlier part of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Pawih people waged war against the Khawhling and the Zawnge people who were defeated entirely. In this war the Burmese helped the Pawih people. The same historian H. Lalrinawma further says:

Myat Sana leh a sipai 200 (Myat Sana hi Thilin/Tilin khaw lal a ni) tanpuitu atan an pe a ni. (239)

They [Pawih] were provided with 200 soldiers commanded by Myat Sana (Myat Sana was the ruling chief of Thilin/Tilin during this time).

After this, the Pawih people fought against the Khalthag, Zangiat also known as Khualsim people, who were killed, captured and enslaved by their captors. So, the Pawih people continued to grow more powerful which compelled the other clans to move further towards the west up to Mizoram. During the same periods, the Lusei and other few clans had made their settlement at a place called the Seipui village. However these groups of people also had to flee the place due to continuous unwelcome intrusion or invasion from the Pawih living in their vicinities. So, with the turn of the eighteenth century, the Lusei started their journey

from Burma to Mizoram under the Sailo chiefs. The Sailo chiefs after having established their position and status as the most powerful rulers, and having extended their territories in Mizoram continued to be disturbed by the Pawih and their activities mainly from the Chin Hills of Burma. The Pawih as a clan was the only enemy who was strong enough to remain as the obtrusive foe for the Sailo chiefs and the Mizo particularly in Mizoram.

It has been estimated that the people belonging to the Lusei clan came to the present Mizoram in an around 1700-1750 A.D. They were joined by few other clans such as the Hmar, the Ralte and even the Pawih under the leadership of the Sailo chiefs. This migration is generally referred to as the Lusei migration for the Lusei people formed the majority of the group. And according to H. Lalrinawma again says:

Tiau chhakah chuan Sailo tih chu Thangur tiin a lar zawk...Thangur thlangtlaho hi Dungtlang, Selesih, Tualte leh Samthang (Zopui) velah khian an chetla ber a, chuta tangin lal dang chi hrang hrang an tudai ta a ni. (261)

Thangur was a more common term over Sailo beyond the Tiau River...The Thangur continued their rules in different villages such as Dungtlang, Selesih, Tualte and Samthang (Zopui) from where they were able to subdue all the other chiefs and started expanding their territories.

During these periods of settlements, the Pawih clan continued to cause troubles to the people by collecting taxes, demanding various valuable items such as ivory, clothes, chickens and any other domesticated animals from them. B. Lalthangliana says:

Chhiah panngaia anga hunbi neia khawn pawh a ni lova, an duh hun hunah an khawn mai thin. (*India Burma leh Bangladesh* 278)

They [Pawih] would come so often as and when they felt necessary to collect the taxes.

If the people failed to give them what they wanted, harsh treatment would be meted out to them. Lallula (1780-1790), one of the greatest of the Sailo chiefs to rule in Mizoram became enraged with the continuous raids from the Pawih people and therefore, he decided to counter-attack them. One of the most prominent events in the Mizo history took place during this time which is normally called as the “Thlanrawn Rawt” (which literally means invading the Thlanrawn community). Thlanrawn is the name of the village and the people living in the village were collectively called Thanrawn Pawih. Lallula was able to defeat Thanchhuma, the chief of Thlanrawn after inviting him to collect the taxes from his village. All the villagers who came along with him were killed after they got drunk heavily. In this event, the chief and two of his noblemen were taken captives by Lallula and his village. This event is said to have reduced the insolent actions of the Pawih towards the Lusei people in Mizoram for few years to come. It is also said that though Lallula was a brave chief who became famous after he invaded the Thlanrawn Pawih, he no longer felt safe in his own village called Seipui for fear of the Pawih who might want to avenge their defeat. Then, he moved to different places and later he died in Darlung village.

After this, around 1860s the chief Tlutpawrha of Lungmawi village again conducted a raid against the Pawih of Halkha who were collecting taxes from his village. This raid against the Pawih of Halkha is called “Halkha Rawt” in which the Pawih were killed but Thanghlianga who was also the Pawih chief luckily escaped from the hands of his enemy. However, he lost his son, a famous gun which was called *Parangpa*, and the valuable bead which was called *Pumtek thi* at the hands of his enemy (Lalthangliana, *India Burma leh Bangladesh* 283). After these two incidents, Mizoram became more peaceful from the attacks of the Pawih enemies from the Chin Hills. The Pawih people also did not take their revenge



against the Sailo chief Lallula or Tlutpawrha. These two raids against the Pawih are significant in the history of the Mizo mainly because they subjugated the Pawih people. So, the Pawih people and their advancements against the Mizo in Mizoram were brought to an end. The Pawih elders have commented saying:

Anni ngaihin Halkha Thantlang ral chu hlauhawm ber a ni a, keini ngaihin Lusei ral chu hlauhawm ber a ni fo a ni, an huai si... (qtd. in Vanchhunga 51-2)

The Thantlang Halkha enemies were regarded as their strongest enemy by them [Lusei], and for us the Lusei who were brave people....

These few historical documentations show that the Pawih and the Lusei had always been living as neighbouring villages but these two communities were at constant war against each other on various issues.

The fictional representation of the Pawih corresponds to the historical documentation in a number of ways. Through the study of the Mizo history one comes to realize the kind of relationship that was there between the Lusei and the Pawih in the past and therefore, one would not doubt that they feared each other almost all the time. Biakliana's (1918-1941) novel *Hawilopari* written in 1936 is considered as the first Mizo novel. This novel is mainly about the heroine Pari that waits for more than nine years for the return of her lover named Mawia who lives in a distant land called Hringchar. During these nine years, many things happen to her, her family and the village. On the ninth year since Mawia and his younger brother Liana along with Zema left the village, Pari has to flee her village resulting her movement into another village after Khualtawna has wrongly accused her of lying with him.

In the later part of the novel, it is seen that the village where Pari and her family have recently moved in is raided by the Pawih warriors. The enemies have burnt down the village

into ashes and the villagers except for few young men who have been to jungle are captured and taken as slaves, and Pari and her family being among the captives. Along the way in the middle of the night, to their great surprise they unexpectedly encounter a kind young Pawih man. In reality, this Pawih man is the family old friend and his name is Zema. On seeing the man a thought strikes Pari saying:

Pawihte ni si-a, chuti khawpa Mizote a hmagaih mai chu. A, Pawihte pawh ni se, mihring an ni ve bawk a, mi khawngaih thei tak takte pawh an awm ve bawk awm a ni reng a ni. (Biakliana 260)

It is a wonder how much he loves the Mizo when he is a Pawih. Ah! May be being a Pawih doesn't mean that one can't show humanity. May be there really can be such a thing as kind and merciful Pawih.

This clearly suggests the idea that the act of love or kindness is the least that these characters expect from their captors who are also the Pawih warriors. And Zema in his attempt to save these people after having disguised himself as one of the Pawih warriors says:

Mizo tlangval in tam vei nen engah nge maw in beih ve loh le? In hneh lutuk ang chu. (228)

Why did you not fight against them for the Mizo young men were also in large number? You could have defeated them.

The above statements raise an important question with regards to the Pawih people as well as their identity in relation to the larger Mizo identity.

Generally speaking, the preconceived notion formed by the Lusei people against their counterparts, the Pawih people, is clearly highlighted through this novel. The Pawih people no matter what they are or who they are or where they come from, are generally seen as an

enemy who are unkind and cruel; who are almost incapable of showing an act of love or kindness towards their counterparts. The manner of warfare or the war strategy implemented by the Pawih warriors in olden times, which is to invade their enemies when least expected and without warning is the biggest factor that makes them really threatening. In earlier Mizo society, inter-tribal wars and invasion were part of the everyday life and it is not only the Lusei people who fought wars against the Pawih enemies, even the Lusei chiefs fought against one another in a number of instances. However, the Pawih people are seen as enemies who are quite powerful and skillful at wars against their counterparts in this context.

The tale “Thailungi” is about an orphan girl who is sold to a Pawih traveller in exchange for the iron scrap by her stepmother. Thailungi is extremely afraid of being taken away by an unknown person but she is too scared to disobey her stepmother. Thailungi’s stepmother cunningly devises a plan to send her stepdaughter away. We are told that Thailungi has a younger brother who loves her. The tale speaks about the sufferings of Thailungi who is mistreated by her stepmother in every way and she is sold to the Pawih traveller and she is carried away. The tale also speaks about how her younger brother finally rescues her from the hands of the captors after he has gone through many difficult tasks.

In the tale, it is seen that Thailungi has no value in the eyes of her stepmother because she is offered “as payment for the scrap iron” (“Thailungi” 15). Thailungi seems to be a young girl because when her brother asks the permission from his mother to go and search for his sister, his mother forbids him saying that he is too young to undergo such an adventure. If he wishes to go he may go in the future when he is old enough to take care of himself. Later on, Thailungi’s brother begins his adventure and he starts looking for his sister everywhere. And before he meets his sister he has to accomplish three tasks which he completes successfully. After he has finished the second task, he sees a man who is leading a gayal, who takes him to his house. When the boy asks the man about his sister, the man says:

Just follow the gayal that I am leading, and do exactly as he does. If he crouches, you should do likewise. If he stands up, you must stand up too, and if he nibbles grass, then you must do the same. (16)

After the boy sleeps the night at the man's house, he finds out that it is the house where his sister has been living for a long time. Then, the brother and the sister are finally united.

It is seen in the beginning of the tale that Thailungi is taken by the Pawih merchants in exchange for the scrap iron. When the brother finally finds her, the man is not ready to let Thailungi go easily and the brother is assigned a task before he frees Thailungi. And here, since we are told that it is the Pawih man who takes her away in the beginning of the tale that "The Pawih travellers captured her quickly and took her to their land" ("Thailungi" 15), it gives us a hint that he is a Pawih. So, what is seen through historical records about the Pawih and their habit of taking ransom from their captives remains true again, and the same is seen in the tale. The man is also seen as owning the scrap iron which was considered as a valuable item in the past, and he is selling it to Thailungi's stepmother. This becomes a hint that in matters of wealth and other worldly possessions, the Pawih as a tribe was economically more advanced than the other clans of the Mizo. The reason being that the Pawih people had always lived in closed association with the Burmese since olden times; their advancement at the early stage in the field of business is also highlighted through this tale. Likewise, the gayal which was a symbol of wealth is seen as being owned by the man who keeps Thailungi, and the man being Pawih in this context, signifies the wealth of the Pawih man.

Also, the last task that the boy has to fulfil is really significant mainly because he finds himself in the house of the captor who keeps his sister. The task does not require skill or physical strength alone but a total submission to the man. Otherwise, the act of crouching or nibbling the grass as the gayal does is no noble job on the part of the boy but he must do this

to get his sister. Therefore, the captor who keeps Thailungi is a man of great wealth. By the turn of the eighteenth century, the Pawih had already been introduced to the act of business while the rest of the Mizo had not become familiar with the matter.

This tale also speaks about the concept of Pawih *râl* or enemy which is very much part of the sensibility of most of the non-Pawih communities especially within Mizoram.

In *Zoram Thim Ata Engah* (1988), the writer says:

Pawih lal kan hlauhna ber chu, rawralin an che a, naupang hi, an man duh ber a ni thin. An naupang man tam berte chu Burma lamah an hralh thin a, chu hlawkna chu an um a ni e. (Lalhmuaka 19)

The Pawih chiefs were feared mainly due to their habit of ambuscading, and they usually captured children who were their most favourites. Most of the children captured were sent to Burma which became a great source of benefit for them.

This becomes a vague hint that the Pawih as a tribe came into contact with the Burmese and they were exposed to the act of business earlier than the other groups of the Mizo. Even to this day, the Pawih *râl* or enemy is used to frighten children who are rebellious and disobedient. The hatred for the Pawih clan which was automatically ingrained in the children became part of their sensibility once they grew up at some point of time in the past, if not today.

The Pawih chiefs had perhaps captured and sold them to the Burmese in exchange for money, this is not to be considered as strange and unusual act. No one is surprised to hear the inter-village wars among the Sailo chiefs of old times within the present Mizoram as well as outside the state. Likewise, the Pawih chiefs also fought wars among themselves or against

other communities and captured children and perhaps sold these captives to the Burmese. Thus they were earning by engaging in such wars which was also done by the Sailo chiefs.

The tale “Liandova leh Tuaisiala” is about the two brothers who are abandoned by their mother after the father dies. The mother runs after another husband which leaves the brothers in a very difficult situation. They are orphans and are treated without respect in the society. One day when the people go out for a group hunting, Tuaisiala who is walking in behind happens to see a large python which they kill. It is seen that Liandova and his brother Tuaisiala are given only the worst part of the python which is its entrails and they are further warned so that they wash it down the river.

It so happened that the python they killed had swallowed a well-known merchant, Singaia of the Pawih clan, along with all his precious merchandise. (“Liandova and Tuaisiala” 222-3)

The treasure found from the python’s entrails makes the brothers extremely wealthy. This incident where the Pawih merchant is seen as swallowed by the python corresponds with the Pawih people and their engagement in the act of business.

From the tale, it is seen that the goods extracted from the python’s entrails include gongs, bells, necklaces and ornaments. These items were highly valued by the Mizo people in the past and not every family could afford to have them. Only the wealthy and the royal families could afford these valuable items. The python or the snake in general was never considered as a lovely creature. However, in this tale the snake, though it is not the one that brings fortune to the lives of the two brothers, yet it becomes an instrument which works for their advantage for it has swallowed a rich merchant. The Pawih is seen again in this tale as the character that possesses a great amount of wealth that brings fortune into the lives of the two brothers. The wealth that the two brothers gather is so enormous that they become the

richest persons in the village. It is seen that besides gongs, the brothers also possess other valuable items because “There were already numerous necklaces hanging from the walls, and many more unthreaded ones heaped on a large bamboo tray” (“Liandova and Tuaisiala” 226-7). The new riches that the brothers find has been brought to them by the wealthy Pawih merchant and his merchandise.

The Pawih is seen as a wealthy man again in this tale in the same manner as he is seen in the previous tale “Thailungi”. In the past, items such as gongs, bells necklaces were priceless treasures for the Mizo and these were highly valued. In the tales of Chhura, the manner in which the Pawih is seen is different from the previous tales such as “Thailungi” and “Liandova and Tuaisiala”.

In “Chhura’s Attempt at Whistling” a Pawih traveller is seen again. This tale is about Chhura who loses the art of whistling who happens to see one Pawih character and he asks, “Pawiha, I have lost something, please help me recover it,” (“Chhura’s Attempt At whistling” 38). The Pawih traveller does not know what Chhura has lost but he helps him anyway. After several hours, the Pawih man becomes exhausted and he begins to whistle softly out of despair for they cannot find what Chhura has lost. Then, Chhura realizes that it is exactly what he is looking for. We are also told in this tale that at the end Chhura grabs and pulls out the tongue of the Pawih traveller who helps him recover what he has lost.

In “Chhura is Cast Atop a Deep Lake”, it is seen that Chhura is captured by his enemies who tie him up and put him inside a huge basket. The basket is cast on top of the river and Chhura cannot find any escape because only few people pass that way. The Pawih merchant happens to pass by the place and he is seen by Chhura. On seeing the Pawih man, Chhura calls out and threatens the man to death if he does not untie him immediately. After Chhura gets down from the basket he asks the man to take his place inside the basket who is

too afraid to disobey Chhura. Then Chhura cuts the robe and the basket with the Pawih man inside it falls into the water and the man dies. We are also told that the Pawih happens to be a wealthy man and Chhura takes the man's possessions and bring them home. The villagers are greatly fascinated by the wealth Chhura has found because they have left him inside a bamboo basket on top of a river. When they ask him how he has found such huge amount of wealth, he tells them that he dives into the water and gathers as much wealth as he wants. Soon after, we are told that all the men in the village die because they have jumped into the water to collect wealth as Chhura has told them. In this way, Chhura is able to sleep with all the women in the village because Chhura has put out all the fire while they are gone to help their husbands.

In "Chhura's Attempt At Whistling", the character Pawih is not seen as a rich merchant. The character is not being given a name and instead he is being fooled and humiliated by Chhura. The Pawih becomes a source of help for Chhura because if it had not been for the Pawih, Chhura would not have recovered his talent of whistling or found his escape. The adventures of Chhura are very much appreciated and they are appealing both to the young and adults of all ages.

In "Chhura is Cast Atop a Deep Lake", the Pawih is seen as a rich merchant again. The wealth of the Pawih man is taken way by Chhura who is not afraid of the Pawih who comes that way. Chhura says to the pawih man, "Could you untie me? If you dare to refuse I shall knife you to death" ("Chhura is Cast Atop a Deep Lake" 47). Even when Chhura is tied up inside a basket he still has the courage to threaten the Pawih. The courage displayed by Chhura towards the Pawih can be considered as a resonance of the Lusei and their dislike for the Pawih people and their habit of invasion in the past. According to historical documents, it is known that the Pawih chiefs were strong and powerful who invaded the Lusei chiefs and their villages from time to time. In "Chhura and Nahaia Exchange Fileds", the mother ogress



is seen with her children, and they live at the bottom of the field. The ogress is so afraid of Chhura and therefore “she came out of her hiding place and ran towards the river downstream” (“Chhura and Nahaia Exchange Fields” 233). In this tale, Chhura brutally kills the children of the ogress. So, these tales act as a recompense for the Lusei and the dishonour they suffered at the hands of the Pawih and their unwelcome activities in the past. Chhura therefore, greatly humiliates the Pawih just as he brings great shame and disgrace to the ogress, who is neither afraid of the Pawih nor the ogress.

The connection between the Pawih character and the ogress found in the tales of Chhura is that the Pawih is also seen as a man of great wealth and the ogress as the owner of valuable items such as the horn of plenty, an axe that can till the soil and a hoe that can weed. And we are told that Chhura rejects all these items except the horn of plenty and this becomes a great source of benefit for him. The cunning ogress tries to cheat him till the end but she fails in her plan. The Pawih character and the ogress become a great source of benefit for Chhura.

Laihote hi Pawih tia Luseiho ten min lo koh avang leh mawl zawk chan an chan avangin, tlema lo chankang zawk leh fing zawk Lusei chu Mizoin anrawn thlak leh a...Thlahtu bul chhuinaah hian Laihote hi hlamchhiah leh thupbo zel an ni (Chinzah 132).

Since the Lusei had called the Lai people as the Pawih, they were considered as slow-witted; and since the Lusei people were little more advanced and slightly wiser, Lusei became equated with Mizo...The history of the origin always leaves them behind.

The tale “Tumchhingi and Raldawna” is about Raldawna who sets out on adventure to find Tumchhingi who lives in heaven. He finally meets Tumchhingi who is a beautiful young woman and soon after that he takes her as his wife. The couple then head for Raldawna’s

village and on the way Tuchhingi realizes that she has forgotten her comb which is made of copper. She wants to go back to her house so that she might fetch it which Raldawna disallows. Then Raldawna makes a comfortable *thangte*<sup>3</sup> and asks her not to welcome any strangers until his return. While Raldawna is away, an ogress comes and sits under the tree where Tumchhingi is hiding. Later on, it is seen that the ogress swallows Tumchhingi and on his return Raldawna takes the ogress home to be his wife. After a long time, a mango tree grows out of the defecation of the ogress that bears a fine fruit on top of it. This fruit contains Tumchhingi who hides herself inside it.

“Tumchhingi and Raldawna” gives a vivid description of the ogress and also of her nature. The ogress is just the opposite of beauty and her appearance is terrifying and appalling, intimidating yet she is often the object of contempt and extreme derision. She is often associated with ugliness, cruelty, evil and she is even harmful. The ogress has “bulgy eyes, sharp and pointed fingers” (“Tumchhingi and Raldawna” 24) and the description of her appearance fits the description of a deadly devil who brings only destruction to people’s lives. She is seen as possessing no skill whatsoever to do simple household chores and she is so foolish like the Pawih in the tales of Chhura and people make fun of her. She is treated with contempt though she lives in the society mainly due to her strange nature as well as appearance. This is her lot for being what she is, which an ogress is.

Among the tales, the world of spirit or life after death of the pre-colonial Mizo era is seen in “Tlingi and Ngama” as discussed in Chapter II. The early Mizo believed that *Pial Ral* was meant for the wealthy people whereas *Mitthi Khua* was meant the commoners. So, the spirit of a person would go to one of the two. However, the ogress seen in the tale is defeated and killed by Tumchhingi and her body is thrown at the bottom of the garden which grows into *saisu*<sup>4</sup> which tells us that even in death her lot does not get better. From “Tumchhingi

and Raldawna”, it becomes very clear that the ogress is loathsome character who is also an outcast in the human society and her presence is never appreciated by others.

The tale “Sichangneii” talks about the six brothers who are threatened from time to time by the ogress. Their mother lives in heaven happens to pour down a husk of grain and they become blind. And in their blindness also, they lay traps for wild animals which they distribute to themselves. When the time of distribution comes, the ogress comes and she is always given a certain portion until Tlumtea discovers about it. So, Tlumtea kills the ogress by thrusting her head heavily against the rock and the brain splatters everywhere. The splattered brain hits Tlumtea’s eyes and he receives his sight again. His brothers also apply the brain in their eyes and they can see again. This is the first appearance of the ogress in the tale. After many days have passed, when the brothers go to their jhoom everyday and they cook food in the hut one after another, the ogress often comes and threatens all of them except for Tlumtea who is not afraid of her threats. In this manner, the ogress often comes and snatches their food for so many days. She is caught by Tlumtea when his turn for cooking comes and he puts her inside a large basket. She becomes really frightened and she has to buy her freedom by paying a heavy ransom. Then, Tlumtea releases her only after she promises to give a hoe, a wife, a gun and a gayal to each of the brothers. And this is the second appearance of the ogress in the tale. After some days, when all the brothers are gone to fetch the gayal as the ogress has promised Tlumtea, another ogress comes along and she swallows all their wives who are at home leaving only the wife of Tlumtea. The ogress is very central to this tale and she brings both fortune and misfortune to the characters.

In the tale “Sichangneii”, the ogress often interferes in the lives of the characters, which in most of the cases is unwelcomed. She is seen as a cunning character who gathers anything from others whatever she can obtain for free. It is clearly seen through the tale that it is not due to her impoverished circumstance that induces the ogress into collecting food from

the brothers. We see from the tale that she is in possession of many valuable because “the ogress pleaded with him and she promised him guns, wives, mithuns, spears and hoes for all the brothers if she was let free” (“Sichangneii” 81). The ogress a representative of the Pawih is a loathsome character and her menacing nature conform to the Pawih people and their activities seen through historical records.

The Pawih as has been discussed earlier were introduced to the act of business and therefore, they are seen as possessing various valuable items. The Pawih and also the ogress, though they find themselves in human societies, never enjoy recognition or any status. The ogress in “Sichangneii” is seen as engaging in all the daily activities of the people in the society, yet she is a strange being who finds no favour among the social members. With the passage of time and the coming of the colonial rule into the country, inter-tribal war was no longer prevalent among the Mizo in Mizoram. The Pawih people in Mizoram had suffered certain kind of discrimination in the Lusei inhabited areas for the Pawih people who went to Lunglei to buy salt were called “*Pawite, or Pawi Chhia*”<sup>5</sup> by others. It is also said that it was partly for the discrimination that the Pawih people faced from their fellow kinsmen within Mizoram that Zangena Bawitlung, Kawlkhuma (father of Rev. Vanlalnghaka), Dahrawka (Father of Thenphunga), Lalhema organised a feast which they called *Pawih Ruai*<sup>6</sup> as an act of resistance. This incident took place in 1956 in Aizawl.

In the tale “Chhura”, the ogress is seen using the Pawih dialect whereas in “Tumchhingi and Raldawna”, and “Sichangneii”, as usual an ogress is seen as a terrifying being that brings troubles into the lives of the characters. However, terrifying as she is, the ogress speaks in Duhlian just as any other character. According to B. Lalhangliana’s observation which is seen in his book *Culture and Folklore of Mizoram* (2005), it is said:

The tale of “Chhura” is regarded as having its origin before the ancestors of the Mizo crossed over the Tiau River and it continued to develop after the crossing of the River. Whereas, the remaining tales might have been told before the fifteenth century when the Mizo made their settlements at Lentlang. (312)

Inter tribal wars were not heard among the different clans of Mizo until they came down to the Tiau River and therefore, the ogress in these tales except for “Chhura” is seen as using Duhlian; whereas in “Chhura”, since it originated much later than the other tales, the ogress is presumably made to speak in Pawih to signify the hatred for the Pawih enemies and their horrifying acts of invading their counterparts especially the Lusei community. Historical records tell us that the Pawih were more powerful than the Lusei chiefs because the Pawih chiefs collected taxes from them. However, in tales told in Mizo language, we see the exact opposite of what is seen through historical documentations that is the Pawih are often harshly treated, fooled or even killed for various reasons. And the same treatment is given to the ogress also.

V.P. Anikin says that “Immediate social and historical experience is the source of faithful representation of reality in folklore” (qtd. in Propp 17) which makes folktale and its relation to reality rather obvious. Unlike historical documentation, in the folktale the characters and the actions do not have to correspond completely to a recorded history, however, the group attitude towards the past events, persons and circumstances are manifested in it. This is the historicity of the folktale which is quite significant. The Mizo of today never really encountered the Pawih people and their habitual act of invasion and they never saw the Pawih warriors as such. Yet, these select folktales which contain the Pawih character in them were presumably composed by the people who were the witnesses of the Pawih warriors and their violent acts at some point in the past. Vladimir Propp in emphasizing the methods of the old Historical school and its study of folklore says that, “...in

folklore chiefly the representation of events, and persons were correct” (52). Taking this as premises, these select folktales and their contents may be fictitious but the circumstances could be considered historical for they are a reflection of the relation of the Pawih people and the Mizo in the past. The same scholar says that in every folklore genre reality is reflected in two ways, that “reality is reflected independently of the narrator’s intentions, and in the other, the reflection of reality is the artist’s basic purpose” (55-56); either way reality is reflected which may or may not be the intention of the narrator.

The representation of the Pawih and even the manner of projection given to the ogress expresses certain idea, and this becomes significant “since ideas are born not of themselves but at a certain time and place” (Propp 59). The historical study of the folktale, the Pawih and the ogress would take one into the deeper understanding of the concept of the Pawih, an ogress as well as the ideas built around these two characters and how they are related to one another. So, this becomes a hint that history and folktales are connected with one another. One of the important characteristics of the folktale is that:

In each new stage of civilization, in each new historical epoch, the symbols and configurations of the tales were endowed with new meaning, transformed, or eliminated in reaction to the needs and conflicts of the people within the social order” (Zipes 7).

It can therefore, be said that the earlier Mizo and their continuous conflicts with their Pawih enemies are reflected through these tales mainly because “the basic structure of most folktales is connected to the social situation” (9) of the people.

The folktale at some point is the product of the imagination, real life experience which is also greatly influenced by the environmental circumstances where the society finds itself. For Ramanujan, “A folktale is a poetic text that carries some of its cultural contexts

within it” (*Preface xii*) and therefore, “to contextualize a tale fully, we need to know the teller, when and where...and other such details” (*Introduction xxi*). So, when it comes to the topic of representation it automatically involves the issue of identity which is a crucial topic of discussion.

Ample evidence from folklore can easily document the existence of stereotypes. It could even be seriously maintained that folklore provides one of the principle sources for the articulation and communication of stereotypes. An individual may gain his first impression of a national or ethnic or religious or racial group by hearing traditional jokes or expressions referring to the alleged personality characteristics. (Dundes 23)

In shaping the identity of an individual, folklore can be quite influential which may not always be desirable. It has been described how the Mizo in general see the Pawih and their conception about this group of people. The Pawih are not necessarily gullible, stupid or even terrifying but they are generally seen in that context by majority of the Mizo. The attitude of the Mizo towards their counterparts and their desire against this community are reflected or manifested in Mizo folktales which generate negative identity features for the Pawih people.

Generally speaking, this kind of stereotype creates negative identity features for an individual or for a group of individuals which develops negative views towards that group of people. “These negative elements, caused or, at any rate, reinforced by members of other groups, can lead to self-hate, as it is termed” (Dundes 24) and these in turn influence the ethos and worldview of a person in various ways. In the context of the Mizo folktale, the Pawih character may not necessarily develop what Dundes calls “self-hate” for the “negative identity features” works the other way round. This is because the Pawih character which is seen in relation with an ogress as well as its projection is turned to advantage for “in terms of

folklore, it is pertinent that sometimes negative identity features are turned to advantage” (Dundes 25). Since these select tales are Mizo folktales written in Mizo language they portray the Lusei sensibility, social systems, aesthetics and values and not the Pawih and therefore the Pawih character is marginalised or at the periphery. The Pawih identity at least in the context of the Mizo folktale, is created by the majority and it can be assumed that the element of prejudice is not absent either. That is why negativity is often associated with the Pawih identity.

In terms of the Mizo stereotype of the Pawih people as is often the case, the Pawih character seen in these particular tales is usually weak, foolish and even inferior. For in the tale “Chhura” also, it is seen that “the foolish Chhura grabbed the Pawih traveller’s tongue and pulled it out of his mouth” (“Chhura’s Attempt at Whistling” 38) who helps him find what he has lost. The humour lies in the pulling out of the Pawih traveller’s tongue which contains discriminatory undertone in it. The term *Pawih* itself is often seen simply not as a prestigious name for it usually has been seen in association with negative connotations. “*Pawnpui chhe duh Pawihthe*”<sup>2</sup> (Lalthangliana, *Zotui* 228) are some typical jokes in this sense. The term *Pawih* often has a slight pejorative connotation which may have been remained unnoticed or unaware in most of the cases. When an ogress tries to show his terrific nature to Chhura in her anger she is seen as using the Pawih language to defend herself. However Chhura does not take into account the ogress and her terrifying nature. Instead he pulls her out of her hiding place by grabbing her hair killing all her children, which shows that Chhura is not intimidated by the ogress and the ogress which uses the Pawih language is not feared by Chhura at all. So, under this observation, the Pawih character may be considered as an alienated member and the manner of representation given to it is not free of prejudice. This is because, “Folklore gives a view of the people from the inside-out rather than from the outside-in” (Dundes 35), which in this context being the Mizo and their views about the



Pawih people in general. The author is absent in the folktale and therefore, the people themselves are the creators which in turn expresses the group's attitude or consciousness in a very critical and realistic manner.

Jones says that "social experience of reality, functions of consciousness and the particular details of social and historical reality" (7) determine the manner of representation given to a particular subject. These select Mizo folktales were under no circumstance composed for the purpose of expressing the hatred and contempt the Mizo had in earlier times against their counterparts which are the Pawih people. This is to say that the social phenomena have a heavy influence on the manner of representation given to a certain thing or object or even people. On the other hand, it can be said that in these select tales the theme of bravery is very prominent which was highly praised by the forefathers of the Mizo. In the tale "Sichangneii", Tlumtea defeats an ogress after he thrusts her against a rock and her brain scatters everywhere. One day in the jhoom, Tlumte again captures an ogress that snatches their rice everyday from his elder brothers. He puts her inside bamboo basket and threatens her saying,

Ti hian ka hawn ang che'ng a, naupangin an khawih vir huai huai mai ang che le.  
("Sichangneii" 81)

I'll take you home, and the children will make fun of you.

The ogress has to pay ransom to save herself from the hands of his captor by paying various items such as axe, spade, wives, gun, and spear. The wife of Tlumtea also fights with an ogress and she (ogress) is greatly defeated. The tale is particularly different from the rest of the folktales of the world as Siamkima has given his comments saying:

Phung man beh thu leh intlanchhuahtir leh thu kan hmu ngai lo (qtd. in Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature* 70)

An ogress seen as the captive at the hands of humans who has to pay ransom for her freedom is never seen.

In “Raldawna and Tumchhing”, Tumchhingi kills an ogress that comes in between her and Raldawna bringing all sorts of problems, by cutting her into two halves. Another hero, Chhura also obtains his horn of plenty after he defeats the ogress who lives in his jhoom with her babies. She has to give away her most valuable possession to Chhura after he has killed all her children lest she suffers the same fate as her children. All these characters show courage in the face of an ogress which is regarded as the most terrifying being often used to scare the children, which in itself a great act, is displayed through these tales. B. Lalthangliana in his book *Culture and Folklore of Mizoram* (2005) says:

As a whole, we can say that our [Mizo] ancestors cited stories which teach us about the moral laws, civic sense, evils of war, sacrifice for the cause of others, importance and greatness of love and many other civil and moral ethics.” (313-14)

The concept of life after death is vividly seen in the tale “Tualvungi and Zawlpala”, in which the two lovers go to the village of the death which gives the readers a glimpse into the Mizo pre-colonial concept of life after death.

Despite various interpretations on the term *Pawih* and its meanings, what can be said is that this term is used in the same sense as the word foreigner in most of the cases. An observation given by a historian named V. L. Siama in his book *Mizo History* (2009) says that:

Hma lama sam zial chi hi Pawih tih thin a ni deuh va; Vai pawh ni se hma lama sam zial hi chu “Vai Pawih” an ti thin. (95)

Those that had their hair knotted on their forehead were called the Pawih; the Vai were also sometimes called the ‘Vai Pawih’ if they had their hair knotted on their forehead.

Here, V. L. Siama has mentioned the term *Vai Pawih* which signifies that the term *Pawih* was used in connection with the foreigners or the non-Mizo that the early Mizo encountered in the past. B. Lalthangliana has also stated in his book *Culture and Folklore of Mizoram* (2005) that “...we also notice that the word ‘Vai’ referring to a non-Mizo started being included in the stories...” (314-15), the example containing such characters is found in tales such as “Chepahakhata” who is popular for his ugliness. This signifies that the Vai people were never considered as part of their social members by the Mizo. Another definition of the word “Vai” is given By Laltluangliana Khiangte in his book called *Mizo of Northeast India: An Introduction to Mizo Culture, Folklore, Language and Literature* (2008) saying:

The more civilised communities they found in the plains were referred to as ‘Vai’, and those in Burma plains were ‘Kawl Vai’, and those in Indian plains were ‘Kawr Vai’. (124)

It can be said that the word *Vai* refers to all the non-Mizo who came into contact with the Mizo people. So, for the Mizo both the terms *Pawih* and also *Vai* make no significant difference because both these terms were used to refer the foreigner or foreigners. This shows that the Pawih people are the “others” or even “marginalised” section in the early Mizo society. As a whole, the term *Pawih* signifies the non-Mizo identity of an individual at some point in the history, if not today.

These few folktales show that the tension between the Pawih and the Lusei or Mizo was already intensified during the later part of the nineteenth century. When Mizoram which was then called the Lushai Hill was annexed to the British Empire in the later part of the nineteenth century, the colonial rulers took several initiatives to put an end to the inter-tribal wars among the Mizo. Until the coming of the colonial rule into the territory there was no central authority for the Mizo people and therefore, inter-tribal wars became common, leaving a trail of bitterness and hatred. The people became loyal only to their respective clans. One of the largest groups of the non-Lusei communities is called the Ralte clan, however, this clan is nowhere particularly seen in Mizo folktales. This could be due to the fact that the Ralte clan as a whole readily accepted the rule of the Sailo chiefs and they gave up their own dialect in favour of the Duhlian which is now called the Mizo language.

Whereas, the study of the Mizo history in general would show that, for many centuries the Pawih people lived as individuals having a dual identity in the present Mizoram which was mainly ruled by the Lusei chiefs. They did not find favour in the Lusei dominated societies and they were treated with contempt in many circumstances. Goswami has commented:

The Pawih, however are considered by the Mizo as inferior to them, there are many Mizo sayings which mock at the Pawih intelligence. This is so, possibly because, a significant percentage of the population maintains the traditional dress, hairstyle and customs. (59-60)

Since the past, the Pawih people would not willingly embrace the Mizo identity at the cost of giving away their customs, culture or cultural practices or even their language. This is so because:

Through Christianity the Pawih people have come nearer to the Mizo. The Pawih are educated through the medium of the Mizo language. Their Bible and Hymn Books are in Mizo language, practically, the Pawih, however worked against the Lakhers and the Mizo both. (Lalsiamhnuna 46)

Among this community, the ethnic consciousness has been in existence for a very long time and this was even realised by their counterparts especially the Lusei communities in Mizoram. This could be the main cause of the tension between these two groups which are even manifested in folktales of Mizo version. Their loyalty for their own clan continued after the entry of politics into the region for the Pawih people were one of the first groups to voice out their dislike for the idea of merging all the different clans of Mizo under the name Lushai or Lusei as one nation. This continued and it finally culminated with the creation of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council in the same year when Mizoram was given the Union Territory status in the year 1972.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A Mizo dish made of potted crab. See Margaret L. Pachuau, *Folklore From Mizoram*, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> This expression means “A Pawih man who gathers torn blanket”. The blanket here refers to Mizo traditional blanket which was a local made used by the earlier Mizo. This is just one example to show the satirical jokes made by the Lusei people towards the Pawih people.

<sup>3</sup> A platform raised above the ground from which to watch the crop or to get a good shot at some wild animals. Such a platform is built in a tree.

<sup>4</sup> The name of the tree resembling the wild plantain or banana, but it has a very large base and tapers. The trunk which in construction is exactly like the plantain is eaten as vegetable.

<sup>5</sup> This expression is insulting for the Pawih and it contains discriminatory undertones in it. Literally, the word *chhia* in *Pawih Chhia* means “bad, inferior, poor,” etc. So, the inferior nature of Pawih is denoted through this practical remark or expression. To know more about this, see Lalramthlirliana Chinzah, *Zoram Leilung Fate Thuruk Ril Chu (A Criticism in Mizo History)*, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> See Lalramthlirliana Chinzah, *Zoram Leilung Fate Thuruk Ril Chu (A Criticism in Mizo History)*, p. 9.

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## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

In the eighteenth century especially with the works of the Brothers Grimm, the study of folktale was mainly carried out with the aim of preserving nation's cultural heritage. This belief was mainly based on the theory that a nation and its character were formed by the people who shared its language and folklore.

The romantic theories of the Brothers Grimm give evidence of their consciousness in creating a folktale style that would be warm and vigorous enough to appeal to the soul of the nation. (Kamenetsky 6)

This shows how folktale and its aspects are related to culture and therefore, the study of folktale interests many non-folklorists even today. Wayland D. Hand has commented: "As people tell stories, they express and explore their ideas about the world and their place in it" (qtd. in Golberg 1). Folktale therefore contains a great deal of cultural elements which becomes an "autobiographical ethnography, a people's own description of themselves" (Dundes 53). These aspects of folktale point to the traditional nature of the material which is much a broader definition than the Brothers Grimm and their Romantic theories of the nineteenth century, or the English usage of the term "folktale" to refer to "household tale" or "fairy tale". The ambition of the brothers was to bring together the entire oral tradition of Germany, so they took their information mainly from the peasants and not from written documents. With the publication of the *Kinder-und Hausmarchen (Children's and Household Tales*, 1812), the folk and fairy tales became more popular not only in German but in England also.

Folklorists have recognized the significance of knowing the cultural background of which the tale is a part of in order to understand the tale. Erika Friedl has said: "Without the

knowledge of the culture in which the story-telling is embedded, no valid statement about the tale can be made” (128), which is to say that culture and tale are related to one another. The understanding of these two aspects is equally significant in order to draw a meaningful statement on the tale.

On commenting the historicity of the folktale, Valdamir Propp says: “Folklore, like any other art, derives from reality” (*Introduction* liv). Folktale becomes the embodiment of culture, history, spirit of the people and society of the past. For society like Mizo that has no written record of the past, it is largely dependent on its rich oral heritage. Through the projection of various characters which are seen in Chapter II such as Mauruangi, Laltheri and Tualvungi inform the readers that Mizo society is essentially a patriarchal system. In this kind of social set up, women enjoy lesser freedom in comparison with their male counterparts, which leaves the women in a pathetic condition and they are often silenced in various matters. These women characters are the victims of such kind of social system in matters of choosing partners for themselves. They suffer more or less the same fate. Thus Thailungi and Mauraungi are highly mistreated by their step mothers. The male members are also not the only ones who endorse these mistreatments to the women. Often, the women themselves are the ones who initiate cruel treatments to their daughters.

In the modern Mizo society, women have been given more freedom in various matters than in the past. The coming of the Welsh missionaries in the nineteenth century and the introduction of education thereafter have brought significant changes in the Mizo society in various ways. Women have come to the forefront in various matters in the society and they now hold important posts in various fields. Women are no longer bound to their parents in matters of choosing husbands, and they are free to make their own decision. Many laws have been made for the protection of women and they have a share in the family property also. The traditional roles assigned to women have had no great impact in today’s society. Women are

taking up all kinds of professions freely and they are the breadwinners in many families. These are the positive impacts brought by education into the land.

The life of an orphan is depicted through the characters of Mauruangi, Liandova and his brother Tuaisiala, and Thailungi who are mistreated in various ways by the society where they find themselves in. Through the study of these characters, the functioning of traditional Mizo society has been highlighted to a very great degree. Though Mizo society has always been termed as an egalitarian society, yet the less fortunate sections and the orphans enjoyed fewer opportunities in society and they were often treated with contempt and derision at least sometime in the past, if not today.

And the character Chepahakhata in the tale of the same name has significantly hinted at the early contact between the Mizo people and the plainsmen. Chepahakhata who represents the Mizo has won the contest for wisdom against the plainsmen which is a resonance of the early contact between the Mizo and the plainsmen. The Mizo engaged in the act of business with these people in the past and history tells us that these two groups of people often tried to get better against one another. The social system and its functioning have come to light after reading these tales.

The word Mizo is a big term under which come the major clans such as Lusei, Hmar, Paite, Ralte, Mara and Pawih (Lai). All these clans have distinct cultural characteristics of their own, which are often left out by the mere readings of the Mizo history. So, Chapter III has brought out the cultural practices found mainly among the Pawih people, though these practices bear many similarities with that of the Lusei or Mizo as a whole. The various dance forms such as *Pawhlothlawh* and *Ruakhatlak* or Bamboo dance to mention a few are very much found among the other clans but are known under different names due to difference in dialects. Due to the lack of communication, means of transportation for a long period of time,

it has resulted in the emergence of variations in various areas such as dresses, dialects, dance forms, festivals and the manner of celebration. However, these variant forms in different areas do not change the fact that these clans have come down from common ancestors. These distinct practices found among the Pawih community are not limited to them only, for this is applicable and true for all other clans of the Mizo.

The different clans have distinct dialects of their own and among them, the Mara, Pawih, Paihte, Hmar people and few others still use their respective dialects in areas inhabited by them. In its broader sense, the Mizo language may include all the dialects spoken by the Mizo. On the other hand, the Mizo language formerly known as the Lusei/Lushai, which has been accepted as the common language in Mizoram is the combination of all these dialects, and therefore it does not belong to the Lusei community alone. For example, many old Mizo words found in the Mizo language either have their root in the Pawih or any other dialects. It is not therefore, the language of the Lusei people alone; rather it is the language for every Mizo. Since language is one of the important components of culture and its role is very significant, the loss of it will result in the loss of Mizo identity or culture as a whole.

Fannigan has given his observation in discussing the importance of folktale and its place in culture saying that “folktales as windows to culture, [are] rooted in the past and persisting as cultural objectives” (qtd. in Jirata 288). This hints at the relationship between folktale and culture and they are indispensable to one another. The study of the history of the Pawih and Lusei or Mizo in particular informs the readers that sometime in the past, these two communities had a very deep relationship. The Sailo chiefs had been able to establish their territories in the present Mizoram partly with the help of the Pawih chiefs, and yet this connection did not prevent them from becoming the worst enemy against one another. For instance, Lallula who is regarded as the greatest among the Sailo chiefs had a Pawih lady for

his daughter in law, whose name was Khuangtiali. She was the daughter of Nicheuva of Thantlang chief (Chinzah 155). This shows the relationship between the Pawih and the Lusei even before 1720s, which continued for many years.

Lallula is known in the Mizo history as the chief who had tricked the Pawih chief and his warriors in coming to his village, and he slayed almost all of them. This incident is known in the Mizo history as the “Thalnrawn Rawt” (1780-1800). However, Lallula could not be at peace for fear of the Pawih chiefs and their revenge, which they might exact at any time. It is said that the Pawih chief of Thlanrawn and his habit of collecting taxes from the Lusei people had prompted Lallula to trick the chief so that he could slay him. However, in order to secure his position and status as a chief, he finally asked the Pawih chief’s daughter for his son’s wife. So, after the marriage, Lallula and his territory became more established in the present Mizoram.

In the pre-colonial Mizoram, the territory of the Sailo chiefs was vast and they were strong rulers. However, the Pawih rulers were equally strong and powerful because they could collect taxes within the Sailo chiefs and their territories against the wishes of the Sailo chiefs. While this was the condition of the relationship between the Pawih and the Sailo chiefs, mutual intrigues and hatred were also part of their lives. Even before and after 1700s, inter-tribal war often took place between them.

The historical records correspond to the representation of the Pawih seen in these select tales, and the name Pawih is significantly seen in it. After the migration into the present Mizoram, inter-tribal wars and raids were still the common practice among these people, and the Pawih chiefs usually won those wars. The Pawih character and the manner of projection given in these tales might have been the product of the antagonism between them, mainly because the Pawih is hardly seen as a desirable or respectable character. In the same way as

the character ogress is seen in tales such as “Tumchhingi and Raldawna”, “Sichangneii” and even in the tales of Chhura, the Pawih is also either presented almost as a fool yet possessing valuable items, or a traveller or a merchant in tales told in Mizo version. Also, the characteristics attributed to an ogress denote the sensibility of the Lusei people towards their counterpart which is the Pawih people. Though terrifying as her appearance and nature seem to be, the ogress just like the Pawih character, is always the victim of the mistreatment meted out by the society and the people around her. There has never been a good ogress as such, similarly the good Pawih is believed to be of rare existence, and the Pawih is usually seen in the light of an enemy. Since these select tales are tales told in the Mizo language, the attitudes of the Lusei community towards the Pawih are deeply embedded in them. In the pre-colonial as well as post-colonial Mizo society, there has never been proper scope for addressing the inter-ethnic conflict or the solution to it. The consequence is that this inter-ethnic conflict has manifested in the present day in a more prominent manner, preventing integration among the people in Mizoram in various ways.

These select tales show that stereotype is often linked with representation, which in this case is the product of historical antagonism between these communities. The undesirable outcome to these conflicts has been manifested in various ways in the present Mizoram where unity among these different distinct groups has been the slogan of the different political parties as well as the NGOs. The present scenario of Mizoram shows the existence of different organizations such as Young Mizo Association, Mara Thyutlia Py and Young Lai Association; other organizations such as Mizo Students’ Union, Lai Students’ Association and even the Mara Students’ Organization. All these groups have their own set of goals or aims. The Young Lai Association for example has strived for the protection and preservation of the Pawih people and their distinct or ethnic identity ever since its establishment in 1974.

Likewise, the Mara Thyutlia Py works for the welfare of the Mara community in and outside Mizoram.

The Pawih people in Mizoram have always preferred to uphold their distinct identity since long time.

While many consider the Mara and Lai as belonging to Mizo, they maintain their own separate entity. They are not likely to become Lusei-Mizo, as they do not want their language, culture and ethnic to become extinct. (qtd. in Chinzah 3)

It has been mentioned that the British colonial rulers had mistakenly clubbed all the different clans of the Mizo under the name Lushai. As a result, the Pawih people who do not want to get themselves and their culture assimilated into Lushai, strongly revolted against the idea of becoming a unified nation under the name Lushai. Since, the Pawih people have often equated the term Mizo with the Lushai, it is their opinion to this day that Mizo is a narrow term which leaves no space for non-Lusei communities. Lalramthlirliana Chinzah even says:

Duh thlang ni ila chuan CHIN tih hian a huam zau ber mai awm e. (7)

If I were to choose, the term CHIN would be broad enough to cover all.

So, in his opinion, the term Chin would be a better term over Mizo which may include all the people of Mizo. According to his opinion, Mizo is not broad enough for it is equated with the term Lushai or Lusei. The distinct characteristics found among the different communities have often been the cause of conflict since olden days and has caused a huge gap among different communities within Mizoram

Within Mizo, there are distinct cultures which are closely related to one another. And tales found in one community may be told in another with certain distinctiveness. Though the origin of these tales is not known, yet these tales are common to every clan. This suggests the

possibility that the tales came into being and were composed when the ancestors of Mizo lived together as one group or that they originated from one clan which were then passed onto others. The distinct identity of each of these communities in Mizoram has fallen prey for claims of separate identities among the different groups and has often generated misunderstanding among the Mizo in many ways. The absence of proper scope to address this identity dilemma has produced displeasing results several times. The Lusei people and their intolerant attitude towards the non-Lusei people are seen through these tales, and it is brought to light in vivid ways. What is seen through the history, the same is reflected through the folktale since folktale and its place in culture is significant. Therefore, the age old inter-ethnic conflict needs to be addressed with proper scope for the integration of the Mizo people in and outside Mizoram.

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**ANNEXURE-I: Select folktales available in English translation**

*Chhura and Ai Um*

(Source: Margaret L. Pachuau. *Folklore From Mizoram*. Ed. & Comp. Margaret L. Pachuau. Kolkatta: Writers Workshop, 2013. 37. Print.)

One day when Chhura was out on a trip he was served ai um for dinner. *Ai um* was a traditional Mizo dish made of potted crab. Chhura had never eaten this dish before and he was greatly enthralled by its taste. So much so that he exclaimed, “How delicious this dish is! When I reach home I shall ask my wife to make some.”

He then asked his host, “What is the name of this dish?”

And his host replied, “It is *ai um*.”

Satisfied with the reply Chhura made his way home. So afraid was he of forgetting the name of the precious dish which he so relished that he kept repeating the name to himself, and he muttered, “*ai um...ai um...*” all the way back home.

However, on the way back he fell atop a white ant mound and forgot the name of the dish. All that time, a traveler of the Pawih tribe came along and so Chhura called out to him for help, “Pawia, help me search for something that I have lost.”

The man asked, “What is it that you have lost?”

Chhura replied, “If I had known what I had lost, then I would not have required your help.”

The man was secretly afraid of Chhura and even as he attempted to search for what Chhura had lost he muttered, “What on earth could it be that you have lost? And as it is, you are reeking of the smell of *ai um*.”

Immediately, Chhura was overjoyed and jumped up and exclaimed, “That is...that is exactly what I have lost!”

And in fear of losing it again he muttered, “*ai um...ai um...*” until he eventually reached home.

### *Chhura’s Attempt at Whistling*

(Source: Margaret L. Pachuau. *Folklore From Mizoram*. Kolkatta: Writers Workshop, 2013. 38. Print.)

Chhura and his antics were numerous. One day it so happened that he learnt how to whistle. So enthralled was he with his new talent that he began to whistle every now and then for no rhyme or reason. Now one day, he was rather clumsy, he fell atop a white ant mound yet again and suddenly in the melee he forgot how to whistle. He felt that his talent for whistle could be recovered and so he began to search for it in earnest. One again, a Pawi traveler arrived on the scene and Chhura said, “Pawite, I have lost something, please help me recover it.”

The man said, “What is that you have lost?”

Chhura replied, “Had I known what it was that I had lost, I would not have required your help.”

The perplexed man then tried to help him and he began to look all around the place for what Chhura had ostensibly lost. Finally he was exhausted and so in despair he sat down

upon the ground and began to whistle softly. Immediately, Chhura exclaimed, “Now that is exactly what I have lost...you were hiding it inside your mouth all the time. Out with it.”

And saying this, the foolish Chhura grabbed the Pawih traveller’s tongue and pulled out of his mouth.

### *Thailungi*

(Source: Margaret L. Pachuau. *Handpicked Tales from Mizoram*. Kolkatta: Writers Workshop. 2008. 15-18. Print.)

One day Thailungi’s stepmother was weaving away at her loom, while Thailungi was crouching silently underneath the loom. So her stepmother was quite unaware of her presence. Just then a man from the Pawihte<sup>1</sup> community came by and said, “We are selling scrap iron, do buy some.”

Thailungi’s stepmother replied, “I would really want to buy some, but I do not have the money. However I have a daughter who is strong enough to carry at least two pails of water and I can offer her as payment for the scrap iron.

Thailungi was astounded by her mother’s reply but she was afraid to protest. The man was deeply interested in the offer and soon a deal was made. Thailungi’s stepmother said, “I will send Thailungi to fetch water and you must lie in wait for her and then it will be easy to capture her.”

Thailungi could overhear the entire conversation and she was deeply disheartened. She could not even run away, for fear of wild animals, thus she was very alarmed. She was too scared to disobey her stepmother and even as she pondered about in a dilemma her mother ordered, “Go and fetch water. Make sure you carry only the worthless em, hnam, um and fenthli<sup>2</sup>.”

And so very reluctantly the little girl went her way. The Pawihte travelers capture her quickly and took her to their land.

A short while later her younger brother came home and asked his mother, “Mother, where is my sister?”

And his mother replied, “She has gone to fetch water.”

After a while he asked her again and she was compelled to tell him the truth. Thinking of the sad predicament that had befallen his sister, the little boy was saddened and he wept endlessly. One day he told his mother, “I shall go out in search of my sister.”

She replied, “You are too small, you may search for her when you are as high as the fireshelf.”

He wanted to start as soon as possible but his mother was reluctant to let go of him. After a while, as he was very determined, his mother realized that she could no longer argue with him, and she had to agree to the search. On his way he saw an old woman pounding sesame, and he enquired, “Ka pi, can you tell me where my sister Thailungi is?”

She replied, “You must spill all the sesame pounded by me. And after that you must gather all of it well intact and only then will I answer your question.”

He did as he was told and she said, “Go and ask that old man fashioning a wooden mortar for husking rice.”

He did as he was told and asked the old man, “Ka pu, have you seen my sister Thailungi? Will you let me know of her whereabouts?”

And the old man replied, “You must hack this mortar into half and join the two halves together again and I will let you know.”

He did as he was told and the old man said, “Go and ask that man leading the gayal.”

After he had gone some distance, he saw a man, leading a gayal and he asked him, “Ka pu, can you tell me where my sister Thailungi is?”

And the man replied, “Just follow the gayal that I am leading and do exactly as he does. If her crouches, you should do likewise. If he stands up, you must stand up too, and if he nibbles grass then you must do the same.”

He then did as he was instructed and soon they reached the village of the man leading the gayal. The boy rested for the night and it so happened that he had arrived in the very house where his sister resided. At first, because it had been a long while since they had parted, they did not recognize each other. Later, as recognition dawned they realized that they were indeed brother and sister and they were overjoyed. In a short while they both set off for home in great happiness.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A name embracing all the tribes such as Chins, Lakhers, Fanais who do not wear their hair knot at the back of the head as Lushais do.

<sup>2</sup> Basket. A plate band of cane which passes over the top of the head and is used to support a load when carried on the back. A receptacle for holding liquids. The name of a ladle made from a gourd.

#### *Liandova and Tuaisiala*

(**Source:** Margaret Ch. Zama. Trans. “Liandova and Tuaisiala”. Ed. Tilottoma Mizra, *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from north East India: Fiction*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2011. 219-228. Print.)

Once upon a time there were two brothers named Liandova and Tuaisiala who lived with their widowed mother. They were very poor and as though this was not enough, their mother one day decided to marry again and leave them. The two boys wept at the prospect of their bleak future and Liandova, the elder of the two, pleaded with his mother saying, 'Mother, please don't leave. Who will take care of us? We are still too young and we might die of hunger.' But his pleas fell on deaf ears as the selfish woman replied, 'I don't care what you do with yourselves or where you go, but I am not going to sacrifice having a husband just because the two of you!' with these words she left them without a second thought, and all that the two brothers could do was shed copious tears at their miserable plight.

Soon realizing the futility of their tears, Liandova bravely told his brother, 'Come Tuaisial, don't cry anymore. We have to look for ways of earning our livelihood, or look for yams to dig for food.' Thus began their hard life as hungry wanderers. Liandova being the elder, somehow managed to earn enough to feed himself, but Tuaisial being too young for hire, burdened his brother, for Liandova had to always include him, which, of course, was not agreeable to his employers. So Liandova would look for yams to dig for both of them, but to do this he had to borrow farm implements such as the hoe, and in exchange, the lender would claim the major share of the yam, thus leaving little for the two brothers. In this way they managed to survive in abject poverty, suffering from constant hunger pangs, and exploited and despised by the community.

Liandova found work as a hired hand to tend cattle or watch over paddy fields in return for supper at his employer's house. This was often the term of payments in those days. Tuaisiala would follow him everywhere and when supper time came, Liandova would hide his little brother under the house. The houses then were made of bamboo and stood on stilts, so Liandova would instruct Tuaisiala to look for the cooked yams that he would quietly drop between the openings of the bamboo floor. He was compelled to take such measures as he

knew that no one was willing to feed Tuaisiala for free, yet his love would not let him allow to let his brother go hungry. Once, as Liandova was secretly dropping the yams, the young Tuaisiala grew more daring and loudly calling from under, 'Big brother, drop the bigger-sized one to me.' On hearing this, Liandova's employer got very angry and scolded him saying, 'So this is how you have been consuming more than your share! I refuse to feed your twin mouths, so get out at once!' and drove him out of the house.

Liandova however, had to continue to look for work, but he was refused as soon as people knew he had an extra mouth to feed. They often accompanied hunting parties, but whenever game was killed, they would be given only the bones and leftovers. Liandova would collect those bones in a basket kept behind their little hut. The two boys grew with the passing years. One day, they ran out of food and as there was no work available, they wandered around scouring for food until they found a solitary millet grain which they happily divided between themselves. Tuaisiala, still young and none too clever, would often cry for food, causing untold misery to his elder brother who loved and pitied him. At such times, Liandova would comfort his brother with these words, 'Don't worry Tuaisiala, a time will come when our fortunes will be reversed. The God above is watching over us.'

One day, Liandova, while tending a *jhoom* cultivation, kept himself busy rolling clay pellets for his catapult, within which he would insert a paddy grain. Before long he managed to make and collect a large number of them. When the season for clearing the *jhoom* for rice cultivation arrived, Liandova erected a swing by the side of the strategic footpath where the farmers used to rest on their way to and from their fields. Liandova would let them use the swing while he would borrow their tools like the axe and dao and clear the nearby area for his own *jhoom* cultivation. Very soon, he managed to clear three mounds and some bits of the surrounding land. Soon the time came for sowing and Liandova accomplished with the help of his catapult, shooting the pellets with the paddy grain inside, until all of them lay



embedded in the claymoulds and surrounding areas. Young shoots soon sprouted in great abundance and Liandova, who still had his swing, continued to use the farm tolls of the workers for weeding his little jhoom, while they rested and enjoy his swing.

Once, while the two brothers were busy at their jhoom, a crow flew above them with a captured snake in its beak. They raised a hue and cry causing to drop its prey. When they went to pick it up they discovered that it was no ordinary snake, but one that belonged to the 'Khuavang', or guardian spirit. So they wrapped it up in a large leaf and tucked it between the bamboo wall of their jhoom hut. From then on, they would discover their meal cooked for them each time they returned from work in the evening. At first, the brothers were afraid to eat the food as they thought it belonged to someone else, but as it continued, they began to eat and enjoy it.

They became very curious about their secret benefactor, so one day they decided to lie in wait, and sure enough, an old female guardian spirit turned up and began cooking their food. As soon as she completed her chores, they seized and questioned her. She replied, 'The snake you rescued from the crow and clothed and sheltered was my child and I decided to repay your kind deed by cooking you meals for you.' Liandova and Tuaisiala then pleaded with her to remain and live with them but she declined. 'it is not possible for me to live with you, but whenever you miss me, all you have to say is- "Oh, how I miss my old guardian spirit,' and I will come to you.' Saying this, she left.

Another time Liandova and Tuaisiala followed a hunting party into the deep forest and they unknowingly walked over a huge python thinking it to be a log. Tuaisiala, who was the last of the party, thought he saw it move, and on close examination, he saw it blink. Greatly frightened, he ran up to his elder brother and said, 'this log we crossed has eyes and can move too!' but Liandova refused to pay heed saying, 'It's unbelievable. How can a log

move and have eyes? Just keep quiet about it.’ Actually Liandova did believe his brother and guessed it might be a python, but he was not interested as he knew that should the hunting party come to know of it, they would kill it and give them the worst cuts as their wont, while everyone would end up with the best parts of the meal.

After a while, the grouped stopped to rest, and the simple Tuaisiala could not resist the temptation, so he blurted out, ‘The loge we crossed sometime back had eyes,’ to which Liandova quickly replied, ‘What lies! It’s not possible for log to have eyes. It was probably it’s uneven surface.’ Saying this, he pinched his brother on the sly, but the slow witted Tuaisiala did not realize it was his brother signal to stop, so he loudly exclaimed, ‘Ouch! Why did you pinch me? It did have eyes, and it moved too! I am not being stupid.’ The curiosity of the hunters were aroused by now, so they questioned Tuaisiala closely and realized it must be the python. So, just as Liandova had feared, they decided to return to the spot and should the python not be there, Tuaisiala was promised a sound beating. Liandova was very unhappy that the snake could have slipped away by now.

But the snake was still there and the hunting party got down to business. The two brothers ended up, as feared, with only the stomach and intestines of the python and were rudely instructed to clear themselves away. ‘Take these as it is all that you deserve, and go immediately downstream as you stink too much!’ they were told. The brothers had no opinion to drag their smelly lot downstream to wash. Liandova shed bitter tears of humiliation and anger at the injustice of it all, but Tuaisiala was too young to understand. Happy and contented, he proceeded to wash and cut the python’s stomach with his blunt dao. He tried to comfort Liandova, ‘Big brother, don’t cry. Listen, can you hear the grating sounds as I cut? It could be a gong!’ But his brother angrily replied, ‘You are such a fool for thinking there can be a gong inside that.’ But Tuaisiala continued with the task and eventually cut open the stomach and discovered that it was filled with treasures such as gongs and precious

beads. Greatly excited by their find, but fearing they would be discovered, they moved further downstream. It so happened that the python they killed had swallowed a well-known merchant, Singaia of the Pawih clan, along with all his precious merchandise. They hid their gongs inside the hollow framework of their fireplace and the beads were carefully stowed away in a large covered basket. Nobody knew of their new found riches, nor did they reveal it to anyone, knowing full well if they did so, they would lose everything.

It was now harvest time and Liandova, growing pensive called out, 'Oh, how I miss my old guardian spirit.' When she appeared, Liandova told her, 'It is harvest time and we have no harvest tolls, so please stay and help us out.' So she told him to invite the whole village to help out the next day, and as they reaped she would dance in front of them. So long as the two brothers did not laugh at her, there would be no end to the harvesting. They agreed and invited the whole village to help them with their harvest the next day. Nobody took them seriously as everyone knew how small their plot was, and the womenfolk set out to help saying, 'Liandova's jhoom is just the size of a chicken's face, and we can surely complete the harvest even as we chew food for our young babies.'

As the harvesters began to reap, the old guardian spirit began her dance in front of them, and so long as she danced the little jhoom continued to yield and the work could not be over. The womenfolk who came with their mouths filled with rice to chew for their babies, eventually spat them out all over the place. Soon, evening came and Tuaisiala, who was tired and by now, quite fed up with the work, laughed at the dancing guardian spirit. All at once the remaining paddy in the field disappeared and so the harvesting was declared over. Liandova and his brother however very happy as they now had enough grain to last them almost a year. So though still very poor, fortune began to gradually smile down on the two of them.

One day, a great chief named Lersia and his followers were expected at Liandova's village. As they neared the village, Lersia told his followers, 'Let's see if these people will recognize me' and proceeded to beat his entire body with stinging nettle which gave him the appearance of a leper covered with swellings and welts. When they arrived at the village, everyone wanted to host Lersia but no one recognized him. Presuming that anyone of the followers could be Lersia himself, the villagers led them off one by one to their homes until only Lersia was left. Seeing this, Liandova and his brother invited him to be their guest, 'Sir, you are welcome to stay with us. We have no food to offer you, but you can at least warm yourself by our fire.' They of course were not aware that it was the great Lersia himself.

Lersia thanked them and told them not to worry as he had ample food for the three of them. As they settled down, he brought out his flack made from gourd that contained his *zu*, the traditional rice beer of the Mizos. As they passed each other the drink, Tuaisiala in great appreciation commented, 'What a sweet brew this is! I am sure that the great Lersia's could outdo this in sweetness!' At this, their guest spoke up saying, 'I am the one called Lersia! Go out and announce to the whole village "Lersia is our guest!"' Liandova at first thought it be a joke, but soon realized it was not so. Tuaisiala went out, stood on the high platform at the village entrance and shouted for all to hear, 'Lersia is our guest!'

Soon the whole village gathered at Liandova's house and each one vied with the other to invite Lersia to their home, some promising to kill a chicken, while another promised to slaughter a pig. 'Come with us,' they said, 'this house is no place for you and the inmates are poor and common people. They do not even have any food to offer you.' But Lersia refused them all saying, 'No, it is fitting that I remain here. We three seem well suited enough.' Lersia shared his meal that night and the next day with the two brothers. Tuaisiala enjoyed the meal so much that with each mouthful he would exclaim, 'Oh how tasty this is! Heaven right now seems to me to have shrunk to the size of a pit's bottom! (N.B. The 'pit' is a small

bird that is very destructive to the rice crops. The exaggerated comparison used by Tuaisiala is expressive of the extent of his appreciation for the kind of meal he had never tasted before.)

When the time came for Lersia to leave, he turned to the brothers and said, 'I thank you and would like to return your hospitality by inviting you to visit me. I wish to also give you a female *mithun*<sup>1</sup> to help you start a herd of your own.' So they followed Lersia back to his village and stayed there as his guests. He fed and looked after them all and they enjoyed their stay immensely.

Soon, the time drew near for their departure, so Liandova paid a visit to a widow who lived next door to Lersia, 'Madam,' he said, 'I have come to seek your advice. Lersia has promised to give a female mithan from his great herd, but how am I to know which is the best and most fertile of the lot?' the widow was flattered and told Liandova, 'You have come to the right person. Only I know the answer to your question. Lersia's enclosure is full of huge mithans but do not choose any of them as they come out. Last of all will remain a tiny mithan just the size of a goat which you will find amongst the chaff on the floor. You will have to trample and tread around for it to come out. As it does so, noose it immediately, for this is the best of the herd. It will give birth every month.' Liandova thanked her and returned to Lersia's house.

On the day of their departure, Lersia instructed Liandova to select his mithan. Liandova took a rope and stood by the entrance of the enclosure while Tuaisiala entered it. As he drove the huge animals out one by one, he would call out to his brother, 'There, noose that one! Noose that one!', but Liandova would deliberately miss them. Finally only the largest of the lot was left and Tuaisiala was now by quite desperate. 'Be sure you don't miss this one! There is none left here!' he called out. But again Liandova let it go and Tuaisiala shed tears of anger and annoyance at what he thought was his brother's incompetence.

Liandova comforted him saying, ‘Don’t be unhappy Tuaisial, just tread around the chaff there and I am sure there will be something just fitting for us both.’ Tuaisiala reluctantly obeyed his brother’s instructions and sure enough, a small female mithan just the size of a goat, goat up unsteadily from one corner and Liandova immediately roped her. Tuaisiala was still very unhappy at his elder brother saying, ‘You let go all the best mithans and then you end up roping the worst of the lot!’ But Liandova pacified him saying, ‘No, little brother, we would be mismatched with the large ones, this little one is just good enough for the likes of us.’

Lersia marveled at the wisdom of Liandova, ‘You have selected the best from my herd. May God bless it for you too,’ he said, and looked on as they departed. They did not take the mithan home, but let it into the deep forest where they made a large enclosure, with a spring nearby, for its home. In this way, no one was aware of their new possession. Each month Liandova would send Tuaisiala to check on the mithan, and each time there would be a new calf, and Tuaisiala would report back saying, ‘Big brother, I saw a deer leaping about in our enclosure,’ and his brother would reply, ‘That’s good, just let them be.’ Before long the two brothers became proud owners of a large herd of mithans. In this way Liandova and his brother, unknown to anyone, grew very rich. Sometimes they would play on their gongs and passers-by would call out

*Liandova and brother*

*What gong is it that you, you play?*

And they would quickly stow them away, beat and old vessels and reply,

*It’s no gong that we play*

*Just Liandova’s old vessels that we play, we play.*

Time passed by and Liandova was a young man, Tuaichawngi, their chief's daughter, however secretly knew of their wealth and was in love with Liandova and wished to marry him. She was exceptionally pretty and her parents were justifiably proud of her. One day, the chief made a public announcement declaring, 'The time has come for my daughter to choose her husband from the young men of my village. Therefore, all will take part in community work. Meanwhile Tuaichawngi will await for their return at the village entrance and point at her chosen one, presenting him a woven *puan*.'<sup>2</sup> On the appointed day, all the young men of the village set out for the community work. Liandova and Tuaisiala too set out saying, 'We might as well since it is expected of us.' In the evening Tuaichawngi, accompanied by her parents and the village elders, stood at the village entrance. As the young men returned from the work, each passed her by but she paid no heed. Last of all came the two brothers and she lost no time pointing out Liandova saying, 'This is the man whom I have chosen to be my husband,' and presented him with her *puan*. The chief flew into trage and scolded her angrily. 'You could have had your choice of the bset, but you chose the poorest and most common of the lot! Tuaichawng, you will not be blessed, and with these words he cut off the fingers with which she had pointed at Liandova. So, afraid to return to his father's house, she followed the two brothers home and married Liandova. The traditional Mizo bride price demanded by her father was extreme to say the least. It was-enough mithans to crash down his enclosure, and enough bead necklaces that would break the clothesline with their weight.

So Liandova and Tuaisiala prepared to pay the bride price. There was one p[roblem though. Although they had countless precious beads that they had saved from the pyhton's stomach, they had no thread with which to bead them. So Tuaichawngi approached her mother for a spindleful of cotton saying, 'Mother, the brother's are terribly torn and I need thread to mend them.' her mother gave her one spindleful but Tuaichawngi was soon back for more. Her mother was surprised and and suspicious as she kept giving the same excuse, so

she decided to spy on her. Far from mending the torn clothes of the two brothers, she spied her daughter busy threading colourful beads. There were already numerous necklaces hanging from the walls, and many more unthreaded ones heaped on a large bamboo tray. From then on, the mother was secretly pleased and would generously help her saying, 'Should this be insufficient dear child, just come and ask for more.'

When they felt they had made enough necklaces for the bride price, the brothers went to Tuaichawngi's father and proceeded to hang them on his clothesline. When Liandova hung a particularly long and heavy one, the line snapped under their weight and the chief had to concede that it was enough. Tuaisiala went with a group of young men deep into the forest to help him herd in the mithans into the cattle enclosure of Tuaichawngi's father. As the last mithan entered, Tuaisiala took aim with his catapult and shot a pellet at its testicles which caused it to charge in pain at the others, thus causing a stampede which crashed down all the fencing of the enclosure. In this manner, the two brothers were able to fulfill the chiefs' demands.

Liandova and Tuaichawngi were blessed with a healthy baby boy in the third year of their happy union. They then decided to 'Khuangchawi', a traditional public feast given only by chiefs and prominent persons. They invited their relatives from far and near including Liandova's mother. The whole village enthusiastically took part in the elaborate preparations, and when the big day arrived, all partook of the great feast and the evening celebrations that followed. To fulfill the festive tradition, Liandova and his family were put atop a huge drum carried by the young men of the village, and taken on procession. As they proceeded, they were tossed up and down to the cheers and laughter of the crowd. Tuaichawngi threw precious beads into the crowds and when she saw her father, she brandished her disfigured hand and called out, 'Father, take a look at the finger you chopped off!' and her father hung his head in shame and embarrassment. Liandova then brought out the big basketful of bones



that he had stored and emptying with a flourish for all to see, he said to the crowd, 'Behold! These are the meat cuts that you all had given us when we were poor,' and the crowd shamefacedly left one by one.

Liandova's mother finally arrived from her village three days after the 'Khuangchawi' was over. On seeing how great her sons had become, with a home fit for a chief and numerous servants waiting on them, she felt embarrassed to enter and loitered on the steps. The servants on seeing her, escorted her in, and took down her load that contained food for her sons, such as dried lizard meat, arum bulbs and some maize. She stayed on for days, and when it was time for her to go, her sons loaded her with smoked meat from their feast, and also returned the food she had brought telling her, 'Take them back as we don't serve such kind of food.'

As she departed, she paused at a distance and looked backed at the village with the thought, 'Oh to think that Liandova and his brother have become so great!' Filled with remorse and shame, she suddenly grew faint and died there on the spot.

Liandova and Tuaisiala both led contented lives blessed with happy families of their own. So Liandova's words of comfort to his little brother many years back, that 'a time will come when our fortunes will be reversed. The God above is watching over us' did finally come to pass. Many years later, Tuaichawngi's parents moved to another village and being quite aged by now, invited Liandova's family to pay them a visit. On their way they managed to safely cross the Run river, but on their return journey, the river was in flood and as they attempted to cross it, Tuaichawngi stumbled and drowned in the river. Liandova mourned this loss with these words,

*On my way I passed it through,*

*On my return flooded was the Run's waters,*

*I led my Tuaichawngi by the hand through the flooded river,*

*I failed to wade through, my Tuaichawngi is now no more.*

There is a version that tells us that Liandova was holding his concubine on the other side and as he was about to fall into the water, he unintentionally let go off Tuaichawngi's hand in order to save the other.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Himalyan bison.

<sup>2</sup> Mizo shawl.

**ANNEXURE-II: Summary of the tales by the scholar, not available in English translation**

*Chhura and Nahaia Exchange Fields*

(Source: Dahrawka, P.S. *Mizo Thawnthu*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Aizawl: Published by Thankhumi, 2008. 233-234. Print.)

There was a large hollow log at the bottom of Nahaia's jhoom and the ogress with her babies lived there. One day Nahaia hit the log as he aimed at the parrots that were flying around. The ogress cried out saying, "Shall I show up?" and Nahaia became extremely afraid. Then he asked Chhura to exchange their fields saying, "If you throw stones against the log that lies at the bottom of my jhoom, the parrots will come out in large number", and Chhura finally agreed to it.

One day, Chhura as he went to the field which he recently exchanged with Nahaia, he hit the log with stones. The ogress shouted again as she had done to Nahaia. But Chhura was not afraid of her and said, "Show yourself as big as a mithun", and he continued to throw more stones hitting the log. The ogress said, "Will I show up, for you are going to smash the heads of the babies into pieces". However, Chhura was not afraid of her and he continued to hit the log with the stones, and therefore, the ogress finally ran away and haste towards the bottom of the river. While she was gone, Chhura took all her babies away and dried them in the fireshell. After sometime when the ogress came back from the river, she wept bitterly because Chhura had killed all her children.

*Sichangneii*

(Source: Dahrawka, P.S. *Mizo Thawnthu*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Aizawl: Published by Thankhumi, 2008. 76-85. Print.)

Once upon a time, there was a man who was also a widower. He went to the pond every

morning to draw water. But the water was always muddy and dirty because Sichangneii and her sister flew down from their home in heaven to take bath in the pond. After few days, the man caught Sichangneii and took him as his wife and hid her wings on top of fireshef.

Eventually, the couple had seven sons-Kaptheia, Dotheia, Haitheia, Chhintheia, Mantheia and Tlumtea, who was the youngest of them all. While their sons were still very young, the husband and the wife had to go to field by turns alternately. When their father stayed at home, usually they had a good time because the father would let them play with the feathers and wings of their mother which the children enjoyed greatly. He told them not to reveal this to their mother. But one day, Tlumtea told everything to their mother, and he also told her where their father had put away her wings.

The mother then wore her wings and she flew away from them. When the father returned from the field in the evening, they told him what had happened to their mother while he was away in the jhoom. Then, the father became so desperate that he took away his own life. So, after this incident the brothers became orphans and they wandered about everywhere.

One day, the brothers became lonely and they visited their mother in her home. Their mother had a brother who was cruel to them and he tried to take their lives many times. So, the mother advised them to return to earth for their safety, and she also told them to prepare traps for wild animals.

The brothers caught all kinds of wild animals and they wished very much that their parents saw their success in hunting too. Then, they looked towards the sky when their mother poured husks of grain which made them blind. They continued to lay traps in their blindness and divided the lot among themselves. The ogress would always come and take her own share from them because they were blind and they did not know about it. Tlumtea finally found out that the ogress had been taking a certain portion from them. So, he killed her by

hitting her head against the rock. The splattered brain fell on his eyes after which he received his sight. Likewise, the rest of the brothers applied the brain into their eyes and they could see again.

The brothers had jhoom cultivation and the ogress would come often and take the food from them. When Tlumtea's turn to cook came, he caught the ogress and put her inside a large bamboo basket. The ogress pleaded with him and she promised him guns, wives, mithuns, spears and hoes for all the brothers if she was let free. Then, Tlumtea let her go after she had made her promise to give these items.

When the brothers set out to lead mithuns from the ogress' village, another ogress came and she swallowed all of their wives. But, she did not kill Tlumtea's wife and took her away. The ogress did not kill her because she had just delivered a baby boy. As the years went by, the boy grew bigger and he decided to search for his mother.

One day, he finally set out on a mission to search for his mother who had been taken away by the ogress. When he reached the house where his mother lived, and also the ogress. As told by her son beforehand, the mother asked the ogress, 'We have lived together for many months, why don't we tell our creators'. The ogress told her that pigeon was her creator, while the mother told a lie to the ogress. Soon after, a fight took place between the ogress and the mother. The mother with the help of her son, who destroyed the creator of the ogress, was able to defeat the ogress and she finally killed her. After the ogress died, the mother and the son continued to live their lives happily.

***Tumchhingi and Raldawna***

(Source: Dahrawka, P.S. *Mizo Thawnthu*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Aizawl: Published by Thankhumi, 2008. 76-85. Print.)

Tumchhingi lived in heaven while Raldawna belonged to the earth. On day, Raldawna and his father went into their small garden which was just behind their house. There, they saw a *vani-an*<sup>1</sup> which was fully ripe with red colour. Raldawna asked his father if there could be someone who was as beautiful as the ripe *vani-an*. His father told him that there was a beautiful maiden named Tumchhing who lived in heaven, and soon after Raldawna went out to search for the beautiful maiden.

Raldawna finally reached the heaven and there he saw a young maiden who was weaving cloth. Then he made a comparison of the maiden with the fruit and the beauty of the maiden did not match the beauty of the fruit and he went away. He walked higher up towards the east and there he saw another beautiful young maiden again. He made the comparison just as he had done before and he found out that the beauty of the fruit outdid the maiden's beauty. So he went away from there. He moved further east where he finally found Tumchhingi who was also weaving cloth. After he had compared the beauty of the maiden with the fruit, Raldawna found out that the beauty of the maiden was far more excellent than that of the fruit. "There she is, who is none other than Tumchhingi," said Raldawna.

Eventually the two started their conversation. After sometime Tumchhingi and Raldawna left for Raldawna's village. That day Tumchhingi's parents had gone to their *leipui*<sup>2</sup>, and a small bird came by and flying towards them and it started chirping in this manner:

*How are they going to do about it,*

*Her father, her mother for Tumchhingi and Raldawna*

*Have eloped?*

Tumchhingi's mother on hearing the chirping of the bird turned to her husband and she listened to it more carefully. As both of them were listening the bird began to sing again and they came to know that Raldawna and Tumchhingi had finally eloped and now they were heading towards Raldawna's village.

The new couple were going together and after they had reached a certain distance, Tumchhingi realised that she forgot to bring her copper comb which she had left it at home, and she wanted to go back to fetch it. But Raldawna did not allow her to go back and he went instead. So, Raldawna made a tall and comfortable *thangte*<sup>3</sup> on the top of a tree for Tumchhingi. Having placed her there, he went back to fetch the comb.

While Raldawna was away, an ogress came and she rested herself under that *thangte* where Tumchhingi was hiding. The ogress said repeatedly, "My shadow is clothed with bangles and necklace while my body wears nothing." Tumchhingi should have kept quiet but she did not. Every time the ogress spoke Tumchhingi gave her reply saying that it was her own shadow.

The ogress always gave the same reply to Tumchhingi, "Don't you dare say 'I hi hi hi,' I shall swallow you up." Having said this, the ogress turned her head and looked upwards and there she saw Tumchhingi. She asked, "How did you climb up Tumchhingi?" Then Tumchhingi told her a lie, and she said, "I could climb on this tree by turning my head downward while raising my two feet towards the sky." The ogress failed after many attempts and she asked the same question with rage, "How did you climb up Tumchhingi? Tell me quickly; otherwise, I shall surely swallow you up." Finally, Tumchhingi became extremely

frightened and told her how she climbed up the tree. So, the ogress was able to climb up the tree and she finally reached the spot where Tumchhingi was sitting, and she said, “Tumchhingi, let us search for the lice on our heads.” They did as the ogress had suggested because Tumchhingi was caught with fear and she dared not refuse what the ogress had suggested. The ogress told her to crunch every single louse she found with her teeth. The lice found in the ogress’ hair were big *bawkbawnrul*<sup>4</sup> and Tumchhingi did as she had been asked for she was extremely afraid of the ogress. After some time, the ogress rose up and said to Tumchhingi, “Let me now look at your head.” As she started looking for lice on her head, the ogress did not see single louse and instead she saw that Tumchhingi’s scalp was so white and she became extremely jealous of it. Then she tried Tumchhing’s bangles, necklace, and she gave everything that she had to the ogress. At the end the ogress swallowed Tumchhingi.

When Raldawna had returned he saw the ogress and was looking at her and he became sorely disappointed. And he asked the ogress why her eyes had become so bulgy; and her fingers had become so sharp and extremely pointed. Out of desperation he said, “Now, go! If you truly are not Tumchhingi, you will be extremely regretful about it,” and he gave her a painful kick as he said this to her. Because she was an ogress, she always attempted to jump into the holes that were found on the side of the road, and sometimes she even aimed at them as if to jump into those holes. Raldawna was convinced that she was not Tumchhingi but he had no other choice and he took her home as his wife.

The whole villagers gathered at the entrance of the village because they knew that Raldawna was bringing home his new bride. When the crowd saw that it was but an ogress and not Tumchhingi that Raldawna had brought home with him; they became extremely disappointed and they started sprinkling the infant’s food everywhere and all of them left for their homes.



The ogress defecated Tumchhingi in the outskirts of the village. She became *haite*<sup>5</sup> and it sprouted and grew so large that it was creeping on the top of a large tree with one fine fruit on top of it. Whenever a group of hunters passed by that spot, they were always trying to shoot it down but none of them succeeded in the attempt. Raldawna too happened to pass by that tree and he hit the fruit and it fell on the ground. Everybody started searching for the fruit but none of them could find it, and Raldawna came and searched for it and he found the fruit easily. He took it home and placed it on the wall at the bottom of their bed. Whenever they returned from the jhoom, they always found with surprise cooked rice and vegetable ready to be eaten. This was because Tumchhingi happened to be inside the fruit. After she had prepared everything she always returned and hid herself inside the fruit. Raldawna asked his neighbours but no one knew the person who was doing that. So one morning Raldawna was hiding himself behind the wall and he was keeping a careful watch. When evening came, Tumchhingi came out of that *haite* and jumped down on the floor. He was looking at her while she was cooking the food. After sometime, he could no longer wait so he rushed towards her and he caught her.

In the evening, the ogress came home with the leaves of arum which she had collected for the pig feed; she called out from the front porch and she heard voices. So she lay down the load she was carrying by herself and she forcefully leaned against the door and broke it and she entered the house. She found out that Raldawna was keeping the company of Tumchhingi. Then Tumchhingi and the ogress fought with dao. Raldawna had given the ogress a dao made from *khawmhma*<sup>6</sup> tree and she thought it to be a sharp dao because Raldawna had casted a magic spell on her eyes. And for Tumchhingi, he made a real dao which was extremely sharp and gave it to her. And he also gave *pawnpui*<sup>7</sup> to wear while he gave the ogress a pallet made of plain cloth. When the ogress hit Tumchhingi with her dao, a loud sound was heard but no harm was done to Tumchhingi. Then, when Tumchhingi's turn

came, she began to hit her with a severe blow which cut the ogress' body into two halves. Raldawna and Tumchhingi took the dead body and threw it at the back of their house. After this incident, Raldawna and Tumchhingi got married again and they lived together happily.

One night, Raldawna decided to prove to his villagers about his wife's identity for he was afraid that the villagers might still be thinking that he was being married to an ogress. He visited every house in the village and asked them not to give the leaf to Tumchhingi when she came to ask for wrapping the meal. So, when morning came she went out of the house searching for the leaf, but no one gave her as Raldawna had asked them. After she had visited every house in the village, she could not find one. She came home and told her husband about it and the husband simply asked her to wrap the meal with her frock and he left for the jhoom.

After the husband had left, she went down to the garden to take the leaf of *saisu*<sup>8</sup>. When she had nibbled almost all parts of the leaf but she could not cut the last thread on the edge of the leaf, so she started biting it with her teeth, and the sharp edge of the leaf cut her tongue which got swollen and infected; and she died shortly after this incident.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The name of a wild plant, with edible leaves used as vegetable. For better definition see James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, p. 544.

<sup>2</sup> A kitchen garden at a distance from the house. See James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, p. 292.

<sup>3</sup> A platform raised above the ground from which to over a hill in order to get a good shot at some wild animals, or from which to watch the crop. Such a platform is built in a tree. See James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, p. 448.

<sup>4</sup> The name of a large green hairless caterpillar with a tail. See James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> The mango tree and fruit; the generic name for all kinds of mangoes and there are different species of mangoes and this *Haite* is one of its kind. See James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, p. 140.

<sup>6</sup> The name of a tree and its small acid edible fruit, which grows in clusters and which when mature, has on it a curious white extremely acid growth known as *beh*. The wood of the tree is used to make charcoal for gunpowder and the leaves are said to be a good remedy for *vawmbal haw pân*. The scientific name is *Rhus semi-alata*. See James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, p. 257.

<sup>7</sup> A traditional Lushai blanket.

<sup>8</sup> The name of the tree resembling the wild plantain or banana, but it has a very large base and tapers upwards. The trunk which in construction is exactly like the plantain is used as vegetable. See James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, p. 399.

## APPENDICES

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**DEGREE** : **M.Phil.**

**DEPARTMENT** : **English**

**TITLE OF DISSERTATION** : **Representation of the  
Pawih in Select Mizo  
Folktales**

**DATE OF PAYMENT OF ADMISSION** : **30.07.2014**

**(Commencement of First Semester)**

**COMMENCEMENT OF SECOND** : **01.01.2015**

**SEMESTER/ DISSERTATION**

**APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL –**

1. BOS : 15.05.2015

2. SCHOOL BOARD : 21.05.2015

3. REGISTRATION NO. & DATE : MZU/M.Phil./209 of  
21.05.2015

4. DUE DATE OF SUBMISSION : 30.05.2016

5. EXTENSION IF ANY : 1.01.2016 – 30.06.2016  
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HSSLC	MBSE	2009	I	69.8%
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1) Attended and participated in International Seminar entitled 'Indigeneity: Expression and Experience', organised by the Department of English, Mizoram University on 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> February 2016,

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3) Awarded UGC-MZU Fellowship for the tenure of eighteen months from the date of admission on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2014.

**ABSTRACT**

**REPRESENTATION OF THE PAWIH IN SELECT MIZO FOLKTALES**

**LALRAMENGMAWIA**

**Registration No: MZU/M.Phil./209 of 21.05.2015**

**SUPERVISOR**

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Generally speaking, Mizo is accepted as a generic term covering different clans such as Lusei, Hmar, Paite, Kuki, Ralte, Mara and Pawih<sup>1</sup> which live in Mizoram and in other parts of the world such as Burma, Bangladesh, Manipur and many others. The Pawih clan is one of the biggest groups among the different clans of the Mizo and they are considered as a group of people who have always been able to maintain their ethnic identity. The dissertation attempts to examine the representation of the Pawih in the Mizo folktales. It will also critique the character of an ogress found in Mizo folktales which represents the Pawih. The select tales include “Tumchhingi and Raldawna”, “Sichangneii”, “Liandova and Tuaisiala”, “Chhura” and “Thailungi”, where the representation of the Pawih is found prominent. The study includes the Pawih culture, their relationship with the Sailo chiefs or Mizo in the past as well as the present. In the context of the dissertation, the characterization of the Pawih is considered as the basis to examine the attitudes of the Mizo towards the Pawih community who are also known to have always maintained their distinct identity or culture in Mizoram.

The study of folklore or folkloristic studies became academically popular after William Thoms introduced the term folklore in 1846. At the initial stage of introduction, the term folklore was mainly considered to mean “manners, customs, observations, superstition, ballads, proverbs and neglected customs, fading legends, fragmentary ballads, etc....” (Handoo 2) which was a vast concept. So, folktale is one of the components of folklore or folkloristic studies. Folktale is a translation of the German word *Volksmarchen*, which appeared first in *Volksmarchen der Duetschen* (1782-86), by Johan Karl August Musaus. The term is derived from Johan Gotfried Von Herder’s thought, use and coinage, particularly his formulation of the concept of *das Volk*.



Folktale, hence, is an oral narrative told by peasants, lower classes, or traditional people whose literacy if existing is minimal. In this verbal art, all these groups were thought to embody the spirit of a nation. (Amos 225)

With the turn of the nineteenth century, the works of the Brothers Grimm and the study of folktale were greatly influenced by the Romantic theories.

Stith Thompson, a well-known American folklorist, has defined folktale in his book *The Folktale* (1946) saying:

Although the term “folktale” is often used in English to refer to the “household tale” or “fairy tale” (the German *Marchen*), such as “Cinderella” or “Snow White”, it is also legitimately employed in a much broader sense to include all forms of prose narrative, written or oral, which have come to be handed down through the years. (4)

Thompson’s definition of folktale includes “all forms of prose narrative, written or oral” which is a much broader definition than usually conceived. Generally speaking, folktale is accepted as an oral narrative which has been handed down from generation to generation through the medium of orality. Therefore, oral literature, also called as verbal art or expressive or folk literature is the lore of the people transmitted by word of mouth. It is composed of various components such as folktale, myth, legend, folk song, riddle, proverb, folk speech, etc. Folktale becomes one important component of folk literature and it can be defined as “tales [having] their roots in the distant past, and depict the inner feelings and emotions” (Patnaik 8) of the people.

The study of folklore is connected with other disciplines such as humanities, social sciences and it is studied across disciplines in a number of ways. For instance, a historian may

use folklore evidence for reconstructing the history of the masses which suggests that in order, for a folklorist, to interpret his data accurately he must take the help of other disciplines.

Karle Krohn (1863-1933) was the first scholar to apply the historical-geographical method in the study of folktale. He recognized that one must be acquainted himself with folktales from all parts of the world in order to have a proper study of folktale. His experience with the historical-geographical technique convinced him that “there was no short road to the truth about the origin and history of the folktale as a whole” (Thompson 396). So, the study of the folktale always calls for the reconsideration of the historical and geographical elements involved, and the scholar tries to see just what has been the history of each of these elements of the tale (433). Influenced by the idea of Krohn, Antti Arne in his *Leitfaden der vergleichenden Marchenforschung* pointed out:

...that it is not always possible to find the place of where a tale was invented...Better evidence for the center of dissemination comes from a consideration of the whole geographic distribution and particularly the frequency and popularity of the tale in certain places. (qtd. in Thompson 435-453)

So, for the historical–geographical theorists such as Karle Krohn and Antti Arne the historical as well as geographical elements are necessary for the proper study of the folktale.

Since the origin and evolution cannot be ascertained, the study of the folktale on the basis of the environmental factors influencing it becomes significant. Antti Arne has listed out the various changes or modifications that every tale goes through in the process of dissemination. One of such changes he has established is that “as a tale wanders it adapts itself to its new environment: unfamiliar customs or objects may be replaced by familiar...animals and ogress or

demons may be shifted” (Jadav 436). And Boggs says that “it would be a great folly to consider a version of a folktale or proverb entirely from its teller, his group and region” (qtd. in Amos 8), stressing the significance of environmental factors in the study of folklore.

Folk literature is found in every tribal society which forms part of the oral heritage. Like other folk literatures of the world, Mizo folk literature is also composed of various components such as folk tales, songs, riddles, proverbs, myths, legends and many more which signifies that it is equally rich in its content and nature. B. Lalthangliana has commented saying:

It is not certain when the Mizo started telling stories. But one thing is certain that our ancestors no doubt told and composed stories in the year 1350. (*Culture and Folklore* 311)

During this time, the ancestors of Mizo still lived together as one group until they were driven out of the Kabaw Valley where they lived for about five hundred years or more. So, the Mizo folktales were already told during the time where they all lived together as one group because it is estimated that the seven major clans came into being only after they were driven out of the Kabaw plains.

Folk literature is an important tool for maintaining and expressing one’s culture, for safeguarding the identity while at the same time expressing the cultural life of the people belonging to a particular group. So, Mizo folk literature also becomes a means of expressing the social formation as well as the cultural life of the Mizo. The Mizo folktale being part of the culture of the unwritten past of the Mizo contains a great deal about the history, culture, society, and worldviews of the people. Therefore, the study of these tales is grounded on their cultural

significance by bringing out the cultures of the two communities that is Mizo and Pawih respectively, highlighting their similarities as well as their distinctiveness.

The different languages spoken by different Mizo tribes share close affinity with one another since all of them belong to the same language family that is the Tibeto-Burman. A good number of the tales in Mizo versions also contain the Pawih language signifying the centrality of the Pawih clan in Mizo culture, life, and language.

According to Soumen Sen, “Folklore represents the archaic thought of mankind, their feelings and worldviews. It articulates a culture and provides a part of the historical picture of the bygone ages” (*Introduction* viii). Folktales are the product of society which reflects the patterns of a culture of a particular people living in certain geographical areas. Goswami says that, “Many tales are satirical in nature and these are about a select body of persons who claim a superior status” (68) over other people. The aspect of identity in terms of the projections of the Pawih and the ogress in the society through the readings of these few select folktales gives an idea that they are not given recognition in the society which creates its “others” whose individuality is suppressed by the majority. These subordinate groups or “the others” are being silenced and marginalized in a society at the cause of the interest of the dominant groups. This is what Weeks said: “Identity is about belonging....At its most basic it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality” (88). The Pawih character in these tales is like an outcast in a highly established society not out of his own choice and he has nothing which helps define his individuality.

Folklore deals with reality and gives us a wide view of culture embedded in it. Folktales can function both as a source of entertainment and depict social life of the people through their

various elements: “Folklore thus ultimately becomes the means of expression of a group’s own attitudes and cultural life” (Sen, *Editor’s Note* viii). Through the projection of these characters the social reality is reflected in Mizo folktales since “Folklore gives insight of any culture *from the inside out* instead of *from the outside in*” (Dundes 55). The study of the folktale presents the readers with fantastic characters, elements which are unnatural in the proper sense of the term and therefore, “reflects prehistoric reality, medieval customs and morals...” (Propp 17). Folktale as a whole depicts the society through the projections of various characters, the relationship between the upper class sections in the society with that of the lower sections which would otherwise not be discussed openly. Alan Dundes has rightly said that folklore is “an autobiographical ethnography, a people’s own description of themselves” (53). It can take the readers to the past and highlight important events in the past while at the same time offering certain examples for the readers. The five tales through their projection of the characters– the Pawih as well as the ogress– may be read and analyzed as an expression of the attitudes of the Lusei people towards the Pawih community in the past, and also of the existing mutual conflicts between these two communities in the past as well as the present time. Through these tales, the concept of an ogress and what it represents in the Mizo psyche could be seen, also, a parallel can be drawn between the ogress and the Pawih character in terms of their projection in these tales, and this in turn can also be somehow related to the historical relationship between the Pawih and the Lusei communities.

Among the folk narratives, folktales seem to be the most powerful narrative. The Mizo have a number of folktales that deal with various themes. These tales as a whole reveal the Mizo sensibility, ethos, religious outlook and social system especially of the pre–British era, along with their value systems which are relevant in the study of the Mizo culture

The first chapter “Introduction” explores the growth and development of folklore as a genre of academic discipline. It studies and examines the Mizo folk literature, history of the Mizo as well as the Pawih people and the various steps taken by them in order to maintain their ethnic identity within Mizoram. It also examines in brief the historical events that have led to the projection of the Pawih as a marginalized character in these select Mizo folktales.

The second chapter of the dissertation titled “Folktale and Social Reality” studies folktale and its relations to history, society and culture. It makes an in-depth study of the select tales with their thematic contents along with few other tales. According to Olson and Worsham, the problem of cultural difference is not that different cultures exist in the world, it is that the location of culture often becomes a site of “contestation, abuse, insult and discrimination” (362). So, the historical and cultural exactitude of the people concerned are included in the study of the tales.

On commenting the historicity of folktale, Vladamir Propp says, “Folklore, like any other art, derives from reality” (*Introduction* liv). Therefore, folktale becomes the embodiment of culture, history, spirit of the people and society of the past. In the context of Mizo folktales, through the projection of various characters such as Mauruangi, Thailungi, to mention a few, informs the readers that Mizo society is essentially a patriarchal system and women are usually the victims of such social order. However, the male members are not the ones who endorse these kinds of mistreatments to the women. Often, women themselves are the ones who initiate cruel treatments to their daughters. Also, the life of an orphan is depicted through the characters such as Liandova and his brother Tuaisiala, and Thailungi who are mistreated in various ways by the society where they find themselves in.

The third chapter “An Overview of the Cultural Practices of the Pawih” dwells upon the culture of the Pawih by pointing out the distinct characteristics in comparison with the Lusei or Mizo culture. The chapter traces the origin of the Mizo culture as a whole and how the distinct Pawih culture came into being from the embryo of Mizo culture are also studied and highlighted.

The fourth chapter titled “Critiquing the Portrayal of the Pawih in Select Mizo Folktales” studies the five select tales. Through the readings of these tales, one comes to the awareness that the Pawih is often seen as a weak, foolish and inferior character when compared to other characters. The characterization of the Pawih in these tales generates certain negative identity features which are also a manifestation of the attitudes of the Lusei towards the Pawih community especially within Mizoram.

In terms of the Mizo stereotype of the Pawih people as is often the case, the Pawih identity at least in the context of the Mizo folktale is created by the majority and it can be assumed that the element of prejudice is not absent either, and which is why negativity is often associated with the Pawih identity. In the tales like “Chhura” also, it is seen that “the foolish Chhura grabbed the Pawih traveller’s tongue and pulled it out of his mouth” (“Chhura’s Attempt at Whistling” 38) who helps him find what he has lost. The humour lies in the pulling out of the Pawih traveller’s tongue which contains discriminatory undertone in it. The term *Pawih* itself is often seen simply not as a prestigious name for it usually has been seen in association with negative connotations. Jokes like “*Pawnpuichhe duh Pawihthe*”<sup>2</sup> (Lalthangliana, *Zotui* 228) are typical in this sense. The term *Pawih* often has a slight pejorative connotation which may have remained unnoticed or unaware in most of the cases. When an ogress tries to show her terrific nature to Chhura in her anger she is seen as using the Pawih language to defend herself and she says: “Hawng lang maw, nauva lu lu khuai lai chi”<sup>3</sup> (“Chhura and Nahaia Exchange Fields”

233). Chhura does not take into account the ogress and her terrifying nature. Instead he pulls her out of her hiding place by grabbing her hair and killing all her children, which shows that Chhura is not intimidated by the ogress who uses the Pawih language. So, under this observation, the Pawih character may be considered as an alienated member and the manner of representation given to it is not free of prejudice. The author is absent in the folktale and therefore, the people themselves are the creators which in turn expresses the group's attitude or consciousness in a very critical and realistic manner.

The last chapter sums up the findings of the previous chapters. In the study of the Pawih as well as the ogress character representing the Pawih in the tales, the dissertation investigates into the Lusei societal set up and the root of stereotype in which the Pawih seems to be most targeted. The chapter acknowledges the interrelationship of the folktale and culture because, "Without the knowledge of the culture in which the story-telling is embedded, no valid statement about the tale can be made" (Friedle 128). The study, thus, contextualizes the community relationship between the Pawih and the Mizo communities by historicizing the folktales.

[N.B. Annexure of the select folktales in translation, and summary of the untranslated tales, is given in the dissertation.]



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Though both terms “Pawih” and “Pawi” are used by writers and scholars, S.R. Chinzah, a writer from Lawngtlai District uses the term “Pawih” in his book *Khuafo Hnam Chhuina* (2003). Other historians such as Hrangthiauva, Lalhmuaka and V.L Siama, to mention a few among others, also prefer this term in their books. “Pawih” is more frequently used by writers on Pawih and the same spelling is maintained here too for consistency. Also, Lai and Pawih are used in this interchangeably in this dissertation for convenience.

<sup>2</sup> This expression means “A Pawih man who gathers torn blanket”. The blanket here refers to Mizo traditional blanket which was a local made used by the earlier Mizo. This is just one example to show the satirical jokes made by the Lusei people towards the Pawih people.

<sup>3</sup> The abusive language spoken by the ogress that means “You will smash the heads of the babies into pieces, will you show yourself.”

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