

**PRE-COLONIAL SOCIETY AND CULTURE OF THE PAITES: A  
STUDY ON INNDONGTA**

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ZAMKHAN KHUAL GUTE

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

MIZORAM UNIVERSITY: AIZAWL

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**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY  
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY  
AIZAWL, MIZORAM**

Prof. Orestes Rosanga  
Phone: 9436197294, 7629973641, 0389-2330410  
E-mail: oramzu@gmail.com

**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Pre-Colonial Society and Culture of the Paites: A Study on Inndongta**” submitted by Mr Zamkhan Khual Guite in fulfillment of Master of Philosophy in history is an original work and has not been submitted elsewhere for other degree. It is recommended that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

Supervisor

Dated : 18-12-2017

(Prof. ORESTES ROSANGA)

Place : Aizawl

## **Acknowledgement**

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Last, but not the least, with earnest gratification, I express my sincere thanks to my family who always supported and backed me up throughout the programme.

(ZAMKHAN KHUAL GUTE)

## DECLARATION

I, Zamkhan Khual Guite, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the content of this dissertation did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any research degree in other universities or institutes.

This is being submitted to Mizoram University for the degree of Master of Philosophy.

Dated: 18th December 2017

(ZAMKHAN KHUAL GUTE)

Place: Aizawl

MZU/M.Phil/370 of dt.22.5.2017

(Dr. LALNGURLIANA SAILO)

(Prof. ORESTES ROSANGA)

Head

Supervisor

Department of History & Ethnography

Department of History & Ethnography

Mizoram University

Mizoram University

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**Bibliography**

**Department of History & Ethnography  
Mizoram University  
Aizawl, Mizoram-796004**

**Statement on Anti-Plagiarism**

It is hereby certified that the M.Phil dissertation entitled ‘**Pre-colonial Society and Culture of the Paites: A Study on *Inndongta***’ is the result of Master of Philosophy research programme and have not taken recourse to any form of plagiarism in any of the chapters of the dissertation, except for quotations from published and unpublished sources which are clearly indicated and acknowledged as such.

The source material from works such as books, articles, essays, interviews and internet sources are properly acknowledged and quotations and paraphrases are clearly indicated. This dissertation or any version of it has not been previously submitted to any university and the same has not yet been published.

(ZAMKHAN KHUAL GUTE)

MZU/M.Phil/370 of dt.22.5.2017  
Department of History & Ethnography,  
Mizoram University

(Prof. ORESTES ROSANGA)

Professor  
Department of History & Ethnography,  
Mizoram University

Attaining the status of statehood on 20 February, 1987, Mizoram, with its capital Aizawl, lies in the northeastern part of India sharing international boundaries with Bangladesh and Myanmar and national boundaries with the states of Assam, Manipur and Tripura. Mizoram is home to a number of ethnic groups like the Hmars, Lais, Luseis, Maras, Paites, Raltes, etc. who shared the same trails of history. They are commonly known as Mizo.

The community under study is the Paites living mostly in the northeast region of India. They concentrated in the states of Manipur and Mizoram with a population of 55,542 and 23,183 respectively.<sup>1</sup> They are also found in other northeastern states in Meghalaya and Assam. The term 'Paite' is a two-syllable word which means 'to move in group'; *pai* meaning 'to move' and *te*, a suffix denoting the plural form. The term is given to them by their consanguineous neighbors referring to their migratory habit.

### **1.1 Historical Background and Settlement of the Paites in Mizoram**

Behind what is known of the Paites in contemporary period, there exists myriad of entities which were referred to in many and different confusing ways when tracing their history. Many references about the Paites were adopted from works done by colonial ethnographers and administrators whose informations were mostly secondary. This may partly be because of the limited knowledge on the part of the colonial authorities or because the Paites might not have direct contact with the colonizers when ethnographic monographs were produced. One instance that can be made is Shakespear's account of the Paites. He mentioned that 'the clan (*Vuite*) is generally known to the Lushais as *Paihte*...' and used *Vuite* and *Paihte* interchangeably in his account (139-141).

The appearance of the term *Paite* in the colonial accounts is very nominal. G.A. Grierson used it to denote as a language spoken by the *Poi* or *Pai* people, which he supposed it to be a Northern Chin dialect.<sup>2</sup> Then, J. Shakespear used the term *Paihte* interchangeably with *Vuite*. His account reveals that the term *Paihte* is *Lushai* origin and that the signified prefer *Vuite*. His statement of *Vuitea* and *Paihte* as the sons of *Lamleia* is unconvincing and rather a

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011census/population\\_enumeration.aspx](http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011census/population_enumeration.aspx), (accessed 12 June 2017).

<sup>2</sup> G.A. Grierson, ed., *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. III: Tibeto-Burman Family, Part III: Specimens of the Kuki-Chin and Burma Groups, Calcutta, Government Printing, 1904, p. 82.



misinterpretation, though.<sup>3</sup> E.W. Dun mentioned that the *Suktis* (Sukte) or *Kamhau* or *Wite* (Guite) clan under their chief *Yatol* (Zatual Sukte) would migrate to Manipur being pressed hard by the *Pois*. Moreover he identified Sumkam as the chief of the *Simmte* (Simte), who appears to be a Guite chief succeeding his father, Gokhawthang.<sup>4</sup> In separate chapters, Carey and Tuck traced the history of *Sokte* and *Nwite*, alongside *Thados* and *Yos*.<sup>5</sup> Alexander Mackenzie's *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal* (1884) dealt in length Manipur's contact with the *Kamhows* or *Sooties*, where he, like the others, interchangeably used these names when signifying the same people.<sup>6</sup>

From the mentioned accounts, it can be ascertained that there existed diverse references of similar people who came into contact or whose existence was known through other sources in the borderlands of Colonial India and Colonial Burma. It is to be noted that before and after the advent of the British, there was no concept of collectiveness as in modern understanding of nationhood or common identity. More so was the pre-literate condition of the people that no substantive sources as to determining the contacted people could be discerned.

Despite the above criteria, there, however, existed clan-based or village-based entities which form the main basis of any collective behavior. There was also another collective behavioral function in which chiefs under the same clan or outside their clan when in times of necessity combined together to form groups against any external threat.<sup>7</sup> Then, these groups, in due course, came to share a common entity—an entity that was distinct from the earlier ones which came in the form of organizations. The shared common entity can be witnessed only at the near end of colonialism and the post-colonial period saw the dawn of different organizations each vying for a different interest.

Christian missionaries' proselytization endeavors have changed the socio-cultural milieu and world-view, other than religious conversion, of the Zo people as a whole. The introduction

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<sup>3</sup> J. Shakespear, *The Lushei-Kuki Clans*, Aizawl, Tribal Research Institute, 2008, p. 139.

<sup>4</sup> E.W. Dun, *Gazetteer of Manipur*, Delhi, Manas Publication, 1992, pp. 33-34.

<sup>5</sup> Bertram S. Carey and H.N. Tuck ed., *The Chin Hills: A History of the People, our Dealings with them, their customs and Manners and a Gazetteer of their country*, Vol. 1, Aizawl Tribal Research Institute, 2008, pp. 118-126, 140-141.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Mackenzie, *The North-east Frontier of India*, New Delhi Mittal Publications, 2013, pp. 163-175.

<sup>7</sup> See more Ricky Vanlallawm Guite ed., *Guite Khangthu (History of Guite)*, Lamka, Laizom Society, Second Edition, 2008.

of writing system, educational institutions and other forms of ‘colonial beneficence’ was a turn for these people. As such, the concept of ethnic identity which was hitherto unknown came to be the talk of the people. In Mizoram, Paite became a recognized tribe in 2003 although they were already in the state before the advent of the British. Ethnic consciousness was, no doubt, popularized since the early years of Indian independence and the notion of self-administration in the form of regional council was already at demand in the 1960s. The demand, however, was declined as the ‘Pataskar Commission’, headed by H.V. Pataskar, commented on the needlessness of establishing such new council since the existing councils did not meet the expectations of the government. Then, the Mizoram Paite Organization (MPO) began to voice tribe recognition which was followed up by the Siamsinpawlpi, Mizoram and Zomi/Paite Students’ Federation. Such other organizations that were formed exclusively for the Paites are the Mizoram Paite Cultural Society (1982), Paite Federation (1990), changed to Paite National Council in 1991, and Mizoram Paite Union (2004).<sup>8</sup>

For obvious reasons the history of any pre-literate ethnic groups as they are known today cannot be studied with an authenticated slant given the absence of written texts or material evidences. This is because orality has characterized their society and their customs, traditions and value-systems were handed down through generations by words of mouth, as in folktales, myths, legends, folksongs and proverbs. In this regard folklore has played a significant role in establishing a common belief, or a collective memory, that explains the pasts of human society referring to their origin and their evolving traditions and customs. Asserting that folklore is a ‘mirror of culture’, Alan Dunes remarks that “folklore is *autobiographical ethnography* —that is, it is a people’s own description of themselves.”<sup>9</sup>

It is commonly held that the Paites first settled at Chimnuai, which is speculated to be in present-day Chin State of Myanmar. It is obvious that population growth in the settlement leads to scarcity in resources: food for consumption, firewood, wood for construction of house, among others. As a consequence, people moved out in search of new settlements. The Thados were known to have left Chimnuai the earliest whose remnants of settlement could be seen in the areas

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<sup>8</sup> H. Thansanga, ‘Mizoram Paite Chanchin’. Available from: [www.sialkal.com/home\\_article\\_dr.thansanga.htm](http://www.sialkal.com/home_article_dr.thansanga.htm) (accessed 17 October 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Alan Dunes, ‘Folklore as a Mirror of Culture’, *Elementary English*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (APRIL, 1969), p. 471. Available from: [Jstor, www.jstor.org/stable/41386525](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41386525), (accessed 19 May 2017).

around Tedim and Tonzang.<sup>10</sup> Since the two-syllable term 'Paite' means 'to move/go in group'; *pai* meaning 'to move' and *te*, a suffix denoting the plural form, it is probable that the signifying name had been used since their take off from Chimnuai. Even though the exact origin of the Paites, or for that matter the Zo people, cannot be pointed with certainty, other than conjectures, there obviously was a continuity of human evolution and that there existed a human community even before they were called the Paites.

The Guite tradition held that Guite became the chief of Chimnuai, when his father Songthu left the settlement to form a new one, at Cianlai; twenty-two generations passed between their settlement in Chimnuai and Tedim, the latter was established by Guimang. By the time of Mangsum, the Suktes under their chief Khanthum had already become a formidable force with assistance from the Falams.<sup>11</sup> Initially, the rise of Khanthum was checked by a combination of nine chiefs, *Mang-kua*<sup>12</sup> and he was forced to take flight at Falam. In return for becoming a tributary of the Rallang chief Khuang Ceu, Khanthum received shelter and protection from the chief. Eventually, when he knew his position was favorable enough to retaliate for what had befallen upon him, Khanthum and his associates began raiding villages one after another, keeping them under their domination, until they reached Tedim.<sup>13</sup> Mangsum had already realized the vigour and recklessness of Khanthum and eventually left Tedim for Mualpi, an old Thado settlement. Thus, Khanthum became the overlord of Tedim and its surrounding areas.

The Sukte rose to controlling influence in Tedim and its surrounding areas under their chief, Khanthum Sukte turned the table for clans like the Guites and the Manluns, who subsequently left Tedim, but not all of them. The Guites who left Tedim moved in two directions: one party under Mangsum headed towards north and settled down at Mualpi, which was an old Thado settlement and the other party under Sianthum went along with Pawibawiha,

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<sup>10</sup> Thang Khan Dal, 'Guite Mang Khan Khatna', Excerpt from *Zomi Khang Thang Thu*. Available from: <http://www.laibusaal.com/2017/02/guite-mang-khan-khatna-agelh-thang.html>, (accessed 6 March 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Dal, 'Guite Mang'.

<sup>12</sup> *Mang-kua* literally means 'nine chiefs'. In the pre-literate days each village was under a chief who was known as *Hausa* and a *hausu* is entitled *Mang* when he held overlordship over other chiefs by realizing tributaries and taxes upon them. The title suggests that he is above a mere village chief.

<sup>13</sup> Pum Khan Pau, 'The Sukte Paramountcy in Northern Chin Hills', in K. Robin (ed.), *Chin: History, Culture and Identity*, New Delhi, Dominant Publishers and Distributors, 2009, pp. 131-132.

the Palian chief, and settled at the northeastern part of Mizoram.<sup>14</sup> Sianthuam was the fifteenth generation from the lineage of Guite and settled in places like Nuam, Keizang and Chinlou. Later, they joined with the Palian chiefs at Dungtlang and settled for a period of time. This dispersal from Tedim is believed to take place in the year around 1840 C.E.<sup>15</sup>

When the settlement at Dungtlang collapsed, these groups of Paites also moved alongside some of the Palian chiefs, settling with them in places like Thinglian, Sialhau, Arthlawr, Chipui and Keihak. During their stay in Keihak under the chieftainship of Buka, they were raided by the Sailo chief Lalpuithanga. It appears that the Paites were settled in the outskirts of Keihak and when the raiding party of Lalpuithanga came across them, they called them *Dap zar ho* (*Dap* means ‘splitted bamboo’ and *zar* means ‘spread’, and the phrase means ‘people who use splitted bamboo for roofing their houses’). As such, *Dapzar* Paite came to be used after the Sailo chief Lalpuithanga raided their settlement in the Chipui Range.<sup>16</sup>

Also, another group of Paite under the Guite chiefs entered Mizoram from Manipur. They were pushed out from their land by the Suktes. They mostly settled in the Sialkal range of northeast Mizoram in villages like Ngopa, Chiahpi, Mimbung and Kawlbem. For a period of time Mimbung held the seat of Guite *Innpi* as Kamzamong Guite, the inheritor of chiefly status in the lineage, entered Mimbung in 1899. Despite being the overlord of the Guite cognate chiefs, the fight for power in 1909 among kins compelled him to leave Mimbung and return to Manipur. He was accused and reported of attempting to wage war against the British and also possessing a number of unregistered guns in his village to HWG Cole, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills. The Superintendent took the matter seriously and entrusted one Liannawna to enquire and collect the unregistered guns. Since there were some who refused to hand over their unregistered guns, they were taken to Aizawl under police custody, along with Kamzamong, his elder brother Henkai and Thangpum Guite. The chief and his companions were released shortly and they

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<sup>14</sup> Carey and Tuck, *The Chin Hills*, p. 141. See also, Lalthanliana, *Mizo Chanchin (Kum 1900 Hma Lam)*, Aizawl, Vanlalhmuaka and Vanlalhrui, 2000, p. 344.

<sup>15</sup> While Carey and Tuck maintains the exodus from Tedim took place about 1870, the movement seems to take place earlier than that as Goukhawthang had already inherited chiefship from his father Mangsum at Mualpi by 1870. Moreover, Goukhawthang was taken captive by the Manipuris during the Lushai expedition of 1871-72.

<sup>16</sup> Tribal Research Institute, *Paite in Mizoram*, Aizawl, Tribal Research Institute, Art & Culture Department, Mizoram, Second Impression, 2011, p. 1. See also Siamromuan (ed.), *Mimbung Khua leh Tui*, Aizawl, YMA Mimbung Branch, 2006, p. 7.

returned to Mimbung. Seeing the situation detrimental to his position as a chief he decided to leave the village and join Ailian, the chief of Phaitong. The events took place in the year 1909. Eventually he established his own village at Hansip which holds the seat of Guite *Innpi* till date.<sup>17</sup>

The Paite entrance to Mizoram did not stop there. One group among them known as *Teizang* Paite entered Mizoram from Manipur during and since 1930.<sup>18</sup> Record of their first settlement shows Vapar and later established settlements at Ngur, Kelkang, Leisenzo, Sesih, Mualbawk, Lailiphai and Ngaizawl. While they made their own settlements in some areas, in other areas they joined the already settled Lusei villages.<sup>19</sup>

Looking from the time of their entrance to Mizoram and the place of their settlement, it is obvious that there are many changes and continuities in the socio-cultural life of the people. Although they are of the same lineage as that of the other groups of Paites, the Dapzar group lived among the Luseis since their entrance to Mizoram. The influence of the larger community upon them can be seen in their use of tongue and their everyday life. This means that they are socio-culturally imbued with the Luseis.<sup>20</sup> The Lamzang are found to be settled alongside the Dapzar in a number of their settlements. Likewise, the Teizang group also reflects the same case. It should also be known that they are not completely aloof from the other Mizo groups as a whole.

The dissertation is a historical study of a custom that has long been an important characteristic of the Paites that evolved spatio-temporally in the unseen past. This custom known as *Inndongta* forms part of the primordial culture that has evolved since the pre-literate stage of society to present-day, though with modifications. Like any other Mizo groups, the Paites were believed to have migrated from Central China to Myanmar and finally settled in parts in the

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<sup>17</sup> Siamromuan (ed.), *Mimbung Khua leh Tui*, pp. 15-19.

<sup>18</sup> TRI, *Paite in Mizoram*, p.8.

<sup>19</sup> Paite as a language comprised of a number of dialects and accordingly are used to denote the different groups. They are used as identifiers of their place of first settlement from where they dispersed or something significant attributed to them from within or without. The different names are: Lamzang, Dapzar, Tuichiap, Bukpi, Losau, Teizang, Sihzang, Dim, Sukte and Saizang.

<sup>20</sup> Siamromuan (ed), p. 7.

northeastern part of India. They are mostly concentrated in the northeastern part of Mizoram and to the south of Manipur, a good number of them are also found in Assam.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Limitations on knowledge about the past tend to be common phenomena. At what point of time did *Inndongta* has evolved and where sufficed the epistemic constraints. Nonetheless, the practice has continued till this date. Apart from existing literatures, there has been little profound scholarship on the subject which cut into the different aspects and critically analyzing the practice. The forms of exchange evolving within it can serve as a means for its evolution, while at the same time it can also break relationship among kins.

In a predominantly chiefdom society, the authority of the chief has always been respected and matters beyond the execution of *Inndongta* has been brought to the chief's court. This means that to the point where problem- or dispute-solving is within the realm of the institution, the authority of the chief remains silent. In respect to this, there can be queries on how far the practice has maintained social relationship.

## **1.3 Review of Literature**

In an edited book *Toward a General Theory of Action*, it is stated that "Once an organized system of interaction between ego and alter becomes stabilized, they build up reciprocal expectations of each other's action and attitudes which are the nucleus of what may be called *role-expectations*." The book confines itself to studying a human action that is represented in a way that the roles and actions of an individual in a social system are expected of the beneficiary. It is a continual interaction between social actors that is determined by "expectations".

Stating that "the norm of reciprocity is universal", Alvin W. Gouldner, in his article 'The norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement', expressed the view that benefits exchanged are not always equal and that the beneficiary does not return with nothing. Instead the anything received is reciprocated but the amount may not always be equal to what is received. These returned benefits can be fulfilled instantly or may take a long period of time so that at some point the benefit may equals out. Moreover, Gouldner goes further by stating that it is obvious for people to help those who help them and people should not hurt those who help them.

Linda M. Molm's 'The Structure of Reciprocity' posits that reciprocity is not just a norm but it is structure and varies with different forms of exchange. While stressing on the impact of reciprocity in building "trust and solidarity" within the structure, she also acknowledges the unpredictability and uncertainty of the structure. This is because individual's actions may not always intend on giving benefits to others but the same can be realized unintentionally.

Raymond Firth's *Elements of Social Organization*, a series of Josiah Mason Lectures delivered at the University of Birmingham in 1947, focus on the theoretical and methodological implications although it is based on the author's study in Maori, Tikopia, Malay and Africa. Chapter 2, "Structure and Organization in a Small Community", focus on the concept of human community where relationship within the community can be realized only when an individual participates with others in achieving his aims. Moreover, Firth stresses on the "four constituents essential to social existence in a community": "social alignment" (sex, age, kinship and rank), "social control" (etiquette, morality, law and ritual), "social media" (material goods and language), and "social standards" (systems of value); the four constituents comes in sequence which are requirements of a human community.

H. Kamkhenthang's *The Paite: A Transborder Tribe of Burma and India* provides a lucid and detail account of the nature and function of the *Indongta* and also the different positions within the framework of this organization. Trained in the discipline of social anthropology, the author made an extensive ethnographic study of *Inndongta* based in a village called Lungchin in Churachandpur, Manipur. Besides dealing primarily on the subject, the book also deals with the different aspects of *Inndongta* in the social life of the Paites.

While acknowledging the inventedness of the so-called customs and traditions, M. Thawngzanang's intention in his book *Pupa Tawndan: Akgesawm Lenna* is to diffuse knowledge about the pre-Christian life of the Paites by dealing with areas like the social life, social institution, belief system and amusements, among others.

*Paite Pupa Ngeina: Indongta Zuhawm Sahawm* is a book exclusively on *Inndongta*, encompassing its different aspects: meat distribution in mortuary feast and feast of merit, rice beer and its uses, marriage, death and its rituals and others. Another book, *Paite Pupa Ngeina leh Tawndan Suina* also focus on the said aspects while enlarging its content by including the

authority of *Inndongta* in exercising authority over cases concerning murder, theft, violence committed on animals, hereditary laws and penalty on adultery.

*Paite in Mizoram* is a monograph published by the Tribal Research Institute, Mizoram which deals exclusively on the history of the Paites of Mizoram, their customs and traditions. Although the book did not stress at length on *Inndongta*, it provides detail account of the proposed area of study.

In a comprehensive nature, Jonathan Turner made an extensive analysis on the historical evolution of different social institutions: economy, kinship, religion, law, polity and education, in his book *Human Institutions: A Theory of Societal Evolution*. The book is sociological in nature and no doubt insist on a more analysis on institutions. Other ‘institutions’ apart, Turner is of the view that the evolution of kinship took a long history from the hunting-gathering stage of human societies to the establishment of families and families with kin ties. He defines kinship as “those marriage and blood ties organized into structures and mediated by cultural symbols that regularize sex and mating, provide biological support, reproduce societal members, offers social support, engage in social placement and, at times, coordinate societal relations.”

In *The Gift*, Marcel Mauss presents at length the existence of ‘gift’ among archaic societies of Polynesia, Melanesia and the American Northwest. This gift he calls it ‘total service’ or ‘potlatch’ is an expression of the obligation to give presents while at the same time receive the same. Whereas his study took an economic nature, it is not free from a total society. The system of exchange that he brought into light answers to create and maintain social ties, which in turn keeps the society functioning in a certain way through different aspects. In almost a similar tone, in *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann stresses on the notion that there are actions of individuals that became habitualized in due course, characterized by reciprocity, and that subsequently leads to the institutionalization of such human activity.

#### **1.4 Area of Study**

Apart from the organization of *Inndongta* itself, the study focussed on the existence of mutual dependence either in goods and services. The physical area of study encompassed the Paite-occupied areas of Mizoram and the period of study attended to pre-Colonial Mizoram.



## **1.5 Objectives**

1. To understand the nature of *Inndongta* and its formation.
2. To study the evolution of *Inndongta* in the society.
3. To examine the efficacy of *Inndongta*

## **1.6 Methodology**

The study is ethno-historical and qualitative in nature. Semi-structured interviews and archival sources constitute the primary sources and textual analysis of existing literatures adds to the discussion as secondary sources.

## **1.7 Structure of the Study**

### **Chapter I: Introduction**

This chapter introduces the historical background of the Paites and their settlement in Mizoram.

### **Chapter II: *Inndongta*: Nature and Patterns of Ordered Positions**

This chapter focuses on the concept of *Inndongta*, nature and the different kinds of positions ordered within the custom.

### **Chapter III: Mutual Dependence and *Inndongta***

This chapter attempts at surfacing the different kinds of exchanges taking place in feasting, marriage and death. Together with reciprocity, it also casts attempt at studying the efficacy of *Inndongta* within the society.

### **Chapter IV: Conclusion**

This chapter summarizes and includes the findings of the study.

Drawing on relevant conceptual frameworks formulated by sociologists and anthropologists, this chapter will deal with the concept and nature of *Inndongta* and the roles and responsibilities apportioned within the institution that was practised among the pre-literate Paites. *Inndongta* is basically an organization with roles and obligations, formed at the household level comprising of agnates, affines, enates and other selected non-clan members. It is an organized institution solely arranged for the purpose of meeting societal needs, establishing relationship between individuals and the similar institutions that exist with the same social environment. As such, this chapter will also deal with the evolution of kinship as an institution, the concept of institution itself and the institutionalization of such institutions.

## **2.1 Institutions and Institutionalization**

The concept of social institution has a very long history of usage within the field of social sciences. The predominant existence of certain kind of institutions among pre-literate societies, the interdependence between individuals participating, the relationship between institutions and the society and the inter-linkages between institutions has always been the centre of interest among scholars.

John Scott defined institutions as

“systems of interrelated norms that are rooted in shared values and are generalized across a particular society or social group as its common ways of acting, thinking, and feeling. They are deeply embedded in social life and generate the recurrent social practices through which most social activity is undertaken.”<sup>1</sup>

It can be understood that institutions enabled social interaction between human beings and between human beings and its social system. Inclusive of norms, roles and positions,<sup>2</sup> institutions acts as an agency of human action. Action refers to the practice of human beings, be it at the individual level or collective level and agency is the medium through which the practice

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<sup>1</sup> John Scott, ed., *Sociology: The Key Concepts*, London, Routledge, 2006, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick L. Bates, ‘Position, Role and Status: A Reformulation of Concepts’, *Social Forces*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (May, 1956), p. 314. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2573663>, (accessed 18 June 2017).

is carried out.<sup>3</sup> The most important institutions according to sociologists include kinship, marriage, law, property, religion and education.<sup>4</sup>

After analyzing the past usage of the concept of social institution, Thomas W. Martin presents a new definition of the concept.<sup>5</sup> He develops an analytical model of what is meant by the term institution and identifies two basic components in defining it: *institutional structure and content* and *the problem of institutional boundaries*. Firstly, an institution may be defined in its own area or system of social activity where interaction between individuals resulted in the systematic maintenance or the emergence of certain set of social conditions. He further stated:

“Structurally, an institution may therefore be described as a limited set of patterned activities enacted to bring about or maintain a certain set of social conditions. Concretely, these activities are performed by particular groups of people in which specific individuals occupy given social positions and perform certain roles toward others in the group. The role activities of any given actor are defined in terms of certain expectations which he and the group hold in common. These shared expectations, taken in total, constitute a normative means-ends schema governing the total performance of the group.”<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, in trying to identify the problem of institutional boundaries, Martin maintains that the existence of institution is prevalent among groups whose ‘activity patterns are society-wide’. And, within such institutions, actors hold positions wherein the nature of interaction between roles and positions are characterized by reciprocity and complementarities.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Scott, ed., *Sociology: The Key Concepts*, p. 3. See also, Nigel Rapport, *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts*, London, Routledge, 2000, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Robert H. Lowie, *Social Organization*, New York, Rinehart & Company Publishers, 1948, p.4. Available from: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015012178417;view=1up;seq=12> (accessed 23 June 2017)

<sup>5</sup> Martin noted the past usages of the concept that “...institutions have generally been defined either in terms of their membership (*i.e.*, particular groups of individuals), in terms of specific behavior patterns or activities, or in terms of particular normative or value systems. Thus, *actors*, *roles* and *norms* have variously been held as basic components of institutional structure.” Thomas W. Martin, ‘Social Institutions: A Reformulation of the Concept’, *The Pacific Sociological Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Autumn, 1968), pp. 100-109. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1388324>, (accessed 30 March 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Martin, ‘Social Institutions’, p. 103.

<sup>7</sup> Martin, p. 103.

Conducively, any institution is characterized by some kind of rules or norms dispensed by persons who played the role of administering the norms. As such, it is inevitable that the process requires homogeneity toward its exercising. In other words, the behavior and attitudes of individuals within a particular group in its particular sphere has to conform in order to meet its objective end. To this end the shared culture of the group has webs of characteristics which are organized and which makes the group distinct of others.

Malinowski is of the view that “the essential fact of culture as we live it and experience it...is the organization of human beings into permanent groups. Such groups are related by some agreement, some traditional law or custom...”<sup>8</sup> The existence of human beings in its social world requires an organized behavior. Malinowski also acknowledge that institutions are characterized by an organized framework of norms, laws, set of values and agreements through which individuals dispensed actions in congruence with the organized group’s intentions.<sup>9</sup> Organization, as defined by Raymond Firth, implicates various domains as

“the ends and activities of individuals in society, a pattern for their co-ordination in some particular sphere, and specific integration of them there by processes of choice and decision into a coherent system, to yield some envisaged result.”<sup>10</sup>

Institution, thus, is an organized human behavior in congruence with its social existence.

In explaining the evolution of human institution, more precisely on the institution of kinship, Jonathan Turner made a comprehensive study of kinship from the hunting-gathering stage of human societies to the establishment of families and families with kin ties. His study reveals that *sex drives* led to competition among hunter-gatherers resulting in binding norms about sex and mating, which in turn led to production of offspring(s). Secondly, the biological helplessness of the newborn became the sole responsibility of the parents who protect and brought up the newborn in its social system. Thirdly, biological reproduction is complemented through social reproduction where the newborn acquire socialization. The condition is necessary

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<sup>8</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*, New York, Oxford University Press, p. 43. Available from: <http://book4you.org/dl/1169988/6628fd>, (accessed 8 September 2017).

<sup>9</sup> Malinowski, *Scientific Theory of Culture*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>10</sup> Raymond Firth, ‘Some Principles of Social Organization’, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 85, No. 1/2 (1955), p. 1. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2844179>, (accessed 12 March 2017).

for the child's participation in the social system, guided by certain kind of structure. Fourthly, the family becomes a solace for 'disruptive emotions— such as fear, frustration, uncertainty, anger, and jealousy—' which can hamper individuals and its social relations. Fifthly, the development from childhood to adulthood requires the placement of the young in the society, without which social reproduction is not possible. Two basic ways of inserting the young can be seen: *ascription* and *performance*. Whereas the first instance relates to the pre-determined condition of the child where he/she was brought up, the second focus on the role that the young performed in the society that in turn determines his/her position in the larger society. Lastly, now that kinship has evolved and is maintained, it has tremendous effect on the organization and co-ordination of much societal activity.<sup>11</sup>

With the mentioned process of how institution evolves, Turner defines the institution of kinship as

“those marriage and blood ties organized into structures and mediated by cultural symbols that regularize sex and mating, provide biological support, reproduce societal members, offers social support, engage in social placement and, at times, coordinate societal relations.”<sup>12</sup>

Lewis H. Morgan also studied human development from what he calls 'Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization'. Morgan outlines different stages of human progress delineating social evolution and kinship organization that came about at different periods: *subsistence, government, language, the family, religion, house life and architecture, and property*. These lines of progress have been the result of 'inventions and discoveries on the one hand and institutions on the other'. Inventions and discoveries are inter-related or connected to each other whereas institutions have been developed from 'germs of thought', i.e., ideas, passions and aspirations. Morgan stresses the importance of 'knowledge' for the progress of human civilization; however, it is more or less a materialistic interpretation of human progress.

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<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Turner, *Human Institutions: A Theory of Societal Evolution*, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003, pp. 60-63. Available from: <http://book4you.org/dl/961080/b0c8f3>, (accessed 4 January 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Turner, *Human Institutions*, p.63.

Kin and kinship relation, according to him, began to evolve during the fourth stage where consanguinity came to be maintained through marriage.<sup>13</sup>

The notion of kinship, thus, involves an evolutionary process that comes into being as a result of successive ‘human progress’, to use Morgan’s term. Moreover, kinship came to be understood as an institution by scholars.

The evolving nature of kinship as an institution and the nature of institution itself being highlighted, now, what is to relate is how certain kinds of human condition or existence came to be known as institution. Marriage, procurement of children, and the continuing practice of establishing families can be cited as an instance, together with mutual interdependence among actors in the society.

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann are of the view that ‘habitualization precedes any institutionalization’. Their thesis invokes the idea that “any human activity is subject to habitualization” and that the frequent continued performance of actions eventually forms a pattern and which is in turn grasped by the performer of the action as that pattern.<sup>14</sup> Actors in any society performed actions objectively and in most cases, the actions performed are mutually correlated among actors. Then, the idea of an institution being formed out of the habitualized human activity requires endorsement. ‘Reciprocal typification’, according to Berger and Luckmann, as in goods and services, is foundational to institutionalization.<sup>15</sup> Reciprocity is an essential part of human activity, without which any action performed by an actor can be in vain as there is anticipation from both actors. Apart from reciprocal typification is the process of legitimation that materializes institutions. Language serves as a means of providing legitimation in a manner in which individual’s knowledge pertaining to the social world is best explicated through language.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Lewis H. Morgan, *Ancient Society: Or Researches in the lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization*, Chicago, Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1877, pp. 3-6. Available from: <https://archive.org/details/ancientsociety00morg>, (accessed 9 August 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, London, Penguin Books, 1991, p. 71. Available from; <http://book4you.org/dl/891951/162e29>, (accessed 28 June 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, pp. 72.

<sup>16</sup> Berger and Luckmann, pp. 79-84.

As thought precede language, knowledge remains the basis of expressing and objectifying social reality. Expression and objectification comes in the form of language which in turn becomes the basis of communication among actors.<sup>17</sup> Upon closer look at the thesis propounded by Berger and Luckmann, it seem quite functional in determining the nature of institutions since human institutions are not an instant formation, rather a tenacious habitualization in human evolution *per se*, characterized by perpetuity.

Apart from these explanations of social institutions, the very being of social institution is characterized by its function and structure. The functional aspect of social institutions requires 'social solidarity' through which members 'tolerate, respect and co-operate' in achieving their social objective end. Each member contributes goods or services that are required in time and this contribution is the function of social institutions.<sup>18</sup>

With regards to structure, there are two different conceptions: *institutional structure* and *relational structure*. In institutional structure, "social structure is seen as comprising those cultural or normative patterns that define the expectations that agents hold about each other's behavior and that organize their enduring relations with each other."<sup>19</sup> Again, in relational structure, "social structure is seen as comprising the social relations themselves, understood as patterns of causal interconnection and interdependence among agents and their actions, as well as the positions that they occupy."<sup>20</sup> Both the concepts can be considered a two-way systemic pattern of understanding social structure because the expectations and interdependence of agents with regards to their actions and roles in the social system is inseparable.

## **2.2 Inndongta and its Nature**

*Inndongta* is an organized institution formed at the household level comprising of agnates, affines, enates and other selected non-clan members within a village, with roles and obligations apportioned to them. The assignment of roles is done at the individual level; however, the task of fulfilling one's duties is an obligation to be fulfilled not only by the concern

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<sup>17</sup> Charles A. Ellwood, 'Culture and Human Society', *Social Forces*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Oct., 1944), pp. 6-8. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2572373>, (accessed 9 May 2017).

<sup>18</sup> John Beattie, *Other Cultures: Aims, Methods and Achievements in Social Anthropology*, London, Routledge, 1999, Reprint, pp. 57-58.

<sup>19</sup> Jose Lopez and John Scott, *Social Structure*, New Delhi, Viva Books Private Limited, 2005, Reprint, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Lopez and Scott, *Social Structure*, p.3.

individual but together with that individual's household. It is universal for every Paite household to organize such an institutionalized framework but there may be circumstances where it may not be possible to organize the same; for instance, the poorer household within a village may not be able to do so, or may also do it in a moribund form.<sup>21</sup>

As an organized institution mainly comprised of kins, there can be assumptions whether the evolution of *Inndongta* comes along with the migration and settlement patterns of the Paites. During the pre-literate stage of societal evolution, frequent change of settlement in search of resources and new lands for cultivation was predominant; the condition being commonly termed as 'migration'. And, the setting up of new settlements was primarily kin-based under the leadership of a chief from that kin, though there were follower clans from outside that particular kin. Then, this migratory habit under the leadership of one kin should have something to do with the evolution of *Inndongta*.

It is believed by many scholars and scholar-alike that the Paites originated from a settlement known as Chimnuai<sup>22</sup> in present-day Chin State of Myanmar and the dispersal from Chimnuai was kin-based. The condition of kin-based migration might have characterized their earlier movements; however, it cannot be proved with certainty as there is no historical evidence. Coupled with this criterion is the evolution of *Inndongta* which is also kin-based. Then, it can be stated that the evolution of *Inndongta* occurred during their migration and later it came to be an important aspect of the Paite social life.<sup>23</sup>

Taking the evolutionary nature of the institution, it is to be noted also that the society and culture of the Paites is determined by a slow and gradual process of evolution. They do not come about instantly and are subjected to gradual change and continuity and also the adoption of a new environment through contact with other societies and the renovation of elements of their society and culture.

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<sup>21</sup> H. Kamkhenthang, *The Paite: A Transborder Tribe of India and Burma*, Delhi, Mittal Publications, 1988, p. 16.

<sup>22</sup> Chimnuai no longer exists today but the location is speculated to be within the present-day Tedim Township of Falam District in Chin State, Myanmar.

<sup>23</sup> Thang Thawn Tuang Guite maintains that the existing customs and traditions of the Guites were renovated while they were in Chimnuai itself in such a way that the *Inndongta*, belief system and village polity came to be an established culture of the people. Thang Thawn Tuang Guite, 'Guite Tang Thu (History of Guite)', April, 1986, Kaleymo. Available from: <http://zomi-angvaan.blogspot.in/2015/09/guite-tang-thu-history-of-guite.html>, (accessed 8 November 2017).



An *Inndongta* is formed when a married man separated and settled on his own from his parental home.<sup>24</sup> The time of separation is usually determined by the father or in case the father was deceased, the eldest male among the siblings, and also when the first born child could fetch water.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, whether a household is constituted by a joint family or a single family, the household has one *Inndongta*.

It is customary among the Paites that a ceremonial feast known as *Tousa Gawh* was organized after a married younger brother established his own household; *tou* means ‘lord’, *sa* and *gawh* or *gou* means ‘meat’ and ‘slaughter’, respectively. A four-legged animal, usually a pig, is brought in to the eldest brother’s house and slaughtered in the presence of the latter’s *Inndongta*. With the feast organized, the eldest brother set up *Inndongta* for his younger brother(s). The ceremony was organized in order to acknowledge the capacity of the younger brother that he would be able to survive on his own.

### **2.3 Patterns of Ordered Positions**

Within the institution there are different roles attributed to actors with specific duties and the accomplishment of actions to be performed is obligatory and anticipated. The following apportionments are usually attached to an *Inndongta*.

The householder is known as *Inntek* and the institution is set up solely to assist the household in times of woe and festivities, marriage, agricultural activities and other societal needs. As such, the householder has full authority over his *Inndongta* organization. Moreover, whatever feast or ceremony he is going to organize, he first approached his *Thallouh* who would in turn inform his fellow members about the news.<sup>26</sup>

#### **2.3.1 Tanu**

Literally, *tanu* means ‘daughter’, whether married or unmarried, and its usage here denotes all the married sisters and daughters of a father. The foremost criterion to be appointed as *tanu* is to be a married daughter and for which a man refers to married women of his clan as

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<sup>24</sup> Inheritance is primogeniture among the Paites and the younger married sons usually form different households.

<sup>25</sup> TRI, *Paite in Mizoram*, p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> Gouzanang, *Paite Pupa Ngeina: Indongta & Zuhawm Sahawm*, Second Edition, Central Lamka, T. Kamzapau, 2013, p. 2.

*tanu khak*, meaning his daughters whom he married off. The position is given only to married sisters and daughters. At the same time, the position is not only held by the *tanu* but along with her husband and the whole household; it means that the 'wife is the female *tanu* and the husband is the male *tanu*'.<sup>27</sup> Though the position is given individually to the immediate *tanu*, it also includes the participation of the household of her husband. Usually there are five types of *tanu*, namely, *tanupi*, *tanu nau*, *tanu thumna*, *tanu lina* and *tanu val*. The role of the *tanu* group, apart from what is going to be mentioned in the succeeding texts, that is unalterable is cooking on every occasion. As such their role and its importance partly resembled that of the importance of cooking and the assigned roles of a cook in Tikopia.<sup>28</sup> Noted here the patrilineal nature of the society that married women belongs to the family and clan of their husbands as soon as they are married.

The position of *Tanupi/Tuamp*i was given to the eldest married daughter or father's sister. In case where no such demand could be met, any married woman of the clan was appointed. Her duty is to look after cooking, serving and cleaning when the household organized feasts. The position is also known as *Tuamp*i because she was the principal wrapper on occasions of the death of her biological parents or brothers to which she is the *Tanupi*.<sup>29</sup>

As is the case with *Tanupi*, first priority for *Tanu nau/Tuam nau* is given to immediate daughters or siblings. Unavailability of such person meant the appointment of any married woman of the clan who is not appointed as *Tanupi*. No specific task was assigned to her and she worked with the other *Tanu* members. On occasion of death she bears a particular cloth called *Puan ngou*<sup>30</sup> for wrapping the corpse, for which she is also known as *Tuam nau*.

Assignment for the position of *Tanu Thumna/Sisawm* is the same as other *Tanu* members and she performed the task of attending the corpse (*Sisawm*) and bathed, washed its clothes and dressed the corpse (*Sibawl*).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Kamkhenthang, *The Paites*, pp. 19-20

<sup>28</sup> Raymond Firth, *Elements of Social Organization*, London, C.A. Watts & Co., Ltd., 1963, Reprint, p. 41. Available from: <http://book4you.org/dl/2377365/06ca77>, (accessed 21 February 2017).

<sup>29</sup> *Tuamp*i wraps the corpse with a particular cloth called *Puandum*.

<sup>30</sup> *Puan ngou* can be translated as white cloth usually made out of raw cotton.

<sup>31</sup> L. Nengkhopau Ngaihte, *Paite Pupa Ngeina leh Tawndan Suina*, Central Lamka, Young Paite Association Vengnuam South Unit, 2009, p. 3.

*Tanu Lina* is also called *Gaunawl* because of the role that she had to perform in bearing all the ritual pollution attending to death. *Tanu Val* is a position given to any *tanu* after the fourth grade and they do not have specific responsibility but to help the other *Tanu* members.

While the first three *tanu* members were regarded inevitable in *Inndongta* organization in terms of their importance, the last two were not usually appointed and were found only among the well-to-do families in the society. Moreover, the appointment to the last two did not include specific share of meat like the other members, but their share of meat could be made separately, known as *sa bak*.<sup>32</sup>

### **2.3.2 *Thallouh***

Like the *Tanu* group, there was another group within the organization known as *Thallouh*. And, unlike the *Tanu* group, this group was comprised by the male members. In this group, there were three positions:

The eldest brother of the householder was appointed as his *Thallouh/Bangkua*. If the householder was the eldest, his father's elder or younger brother could be appointed. In certain cases the above criteria could not be fulfilled, as such a man from the same clan can be appointed, or any trustworthy man outside the clan who was a close associate of the householder could be appointed. He presided over the functioning of the institution and made decisions on behalf of the householder. *Thallouh* means 'compensator', as he had to compensate or bear the sum amount either in good or in cash that was due of the householder to which he occupied the position. He was also known as *Bangkua* because he represented a door or passage in *Inndongta* deliberations. Given the appointment, the position was regarded to be very important because he was capable of inheriting the properties of the householder in cases where there was no direct inheritor.<sup>33</sup> One significant point to be noted here is that in any ceremonial drinking, he received the beer decanted by the *Thusapi*.

A brother who was not appointed as *Thallouh* was assigned to the position of *Thallouh Thusa/Beh Thusa*, and in case of unavailability of immediate brother, the same criteria as in the

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<sup>32</sup> In contrast to *sa tan*, specific share of meat given to the first three *tanu* members, *sa bak* is any portion of a slaughtered animal that is cut out after formal shares of meat is done. Ngaihte, *Paite Pupa Ngeina*, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> Kamkhenthang, pp. 32-33.

appointment of *Thallouh* was followed. His role was to support *Thallouh* in undertaking the functioning of the institution as well as to take over the duty of the *Thallouh* if he was unavailable. The position is also known as *Thusanau*.<sup>34</sup>

The position of *Thallouhmang/Thusamei/Hanzutung* was given to the immediate brother who did not have any office in the *Inndongta*. His role was to assist the other *Thallouh* members. Being assigned no specific duty he was called *Thallouh mang*, meaning the majestic *Thallouh*, or *Thusa mei* as in being the last of the *thallouh* group, or *Hanzutung* as he was the supplier of one *Phelpi*<sup>35</sup> of rice beer known as *Han Zu*<sup>36</sup> when the householder organized feast of merits.

### 2.3.3 *Thusapi/Vengthusa*

This position is synonymous with ‘speaker’ in the organization and is given to a person who was not of the same clan as the householder. He carried the decision made by members of the institution and spoke on behalf of the same. His main roles were:

- i) he mediated misunderstandings within the household, or between the household and its relatives, or between others institutions;
- ii) in matters of feast of merit to be hold by the household, he passed information to members of the *Inndongta*;
- iii) in cases of penalty to be borne by the household either in cash or animal, it was his duty to hand over the same by placing it in a specific place demanded by the other party;
- iv) he borrowed pot(s) for storing water, known as *tau bel*, when the household organized feast;
- v) he poured beer in the activities of the *Inndongta*.<sup>37</sup>

### 2.3.4 *Pu*

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<sup>34</sup> T. Thangnun’ Pa, “Paite Inn-dongta Bawldan leh Naumin Phuah dan”, in Richard V. Valte (ed.), *The 2<sup>nd</sup> Teikhang Re-Union Souvenir 2017*, Teikhang Welfare Association, Manipur, 2017, p. 79.

<sup>35</sup> *Phelpi* is the biggest rice beer pot used in earlier times which can contain 50-100 liters of rice beer and is used only on big events.

<sup>36</sup> The drink borne by *Hanzutung* is known as *Han Zu*. Literally, *han/hang* means heroic or courageous, and *zu* is traditionally brewed beer made from fermented grain. A man capable of organizing feast of merit either in *Gal-aih* or *Sa-aih*, victory over enemies or game hunt, is exalted with *Han La* which is a song composed and sung in dedication to the success and achievement of the man. The feast is celebrated with meat and drink and the particular drink that is mentioned here has to be served in one *phelpi* which represents the drink of the brave warrior.

<sup>37</sup> Ngaihte, pp. 2-3.

*Pu* occupied an important place in the organization and mother's brother or mother's father was appointed for the post. It is universal that a person for this position is either the mother's father or brother and no other person could simply be appointed as that would undermine his position as the 'wife-giver' to the householder. Although no specific task was assigned to him, he attended feasts and drinks, received meat and drinks on occasions of meat and drink divisions, and when death befell upon his grandson, he decided as to where and when to bury the dead body.

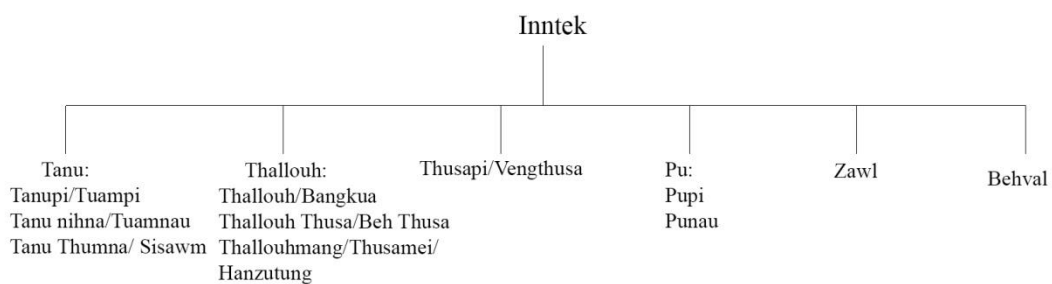
There are two sets of *Pu* with different relationship to the householder. *Pupi* is the householder's mother's father or brother whereas *Punau* is the father or brother of the householder's wife. The importance of his office is the same as that of *Pupi*.

### 2.3.5 *Zawl*

The householder's closest friend was usually appointed for this position and he worked with the *Thusa* members of the institution as no specific task was assigned to him in matters concerning *Inndongta* deliberations.

### 2.3.6 *Behval*

Usually a man from the same clan was appointed for this position and he also received a share of meat during mortuary feast and other feast of merit. *Behval* means a very close clansman who did not hold any official position in the mentioned positions but was not allowed to be left out in the *Inndongta*. His main role was to assist the *Thallouh* group.



Whereas non-kin members do participate, kinship forms the main basis of the framework of arrangement that can be seen here. Studies on kinship organization in any society, either in a small-scale or large-scale society, have been focusing on relationship either through blood or marriage. For instance, WH Rivers used the term 'classificatory system' denoting relationship or

kinship that includes six terms, viz. husband, wife, father, mother, father-in-law and mother-in-law and carries with it certain privileges and duties to be fulfilled by members within the system.<sup>38</sup> Raymond Firth also stresses on the importance of lineage alignment among the islanders of Tikopia. Lineage alignment among the Tikopia islanders is used for land-holding and use, and exchange of goods and services on occasions of marriage, funerals and initiation ceremonies.<sup>39</sup>

Such relationships do characterize *Inndongta* where participants are either related through blood or marriage. But there is an exceptional case to exclusivity in its membership through kin relation; *Thusapi* has to be outside of the clan, whereas *Pupi*, *Punau* and *Zawl* can either be from the same clan or from a different one. Then, it can be suggested that *Inndongta* is a social organization based on kin and non-kin members.

Referring to the positions and roles in the organization, and the organization itself, it can be seen that there existed a kind of positional differences in the Paite society. A question can be posed as to how far social inequality or social stratification was evidential from *Inndongta*. It has been mentioned that depending on the resource possessed by a family, it can appoint three or more *Tanu* members. And, with regard to the position of *Zawl* it is not specifically mentioned that there could be one *Zawl* in an *Inndongta* organization. This means the obvious nature of a socially eminent person to be more respected than the other social members and that the former was likely to have more close friends or acquaintances than that of an individual who was below his social status.

Moreover, the existence of social stratification is universal to societies of the world from antiquity to the contemporary. This inequality is expressed in the form of “property, or rights over goods and services; power, or the ability to secure one’s way in life even against opposition; and prestige, or social honor.”<sup>40</sup> As long as the mentioned criteria that determine social inequality prevail, it can be assumed that social stratification exists in a society. The number of

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<sup>38</sup> W.H.R. Rivers, *Kinship and Social Organization (London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology No. 34)*, London, The Athlone Press, 1968, pp. 39-43. Available from: <http://book4you.org/dl/1061149/63cf2e>, (accessed 21 February 2017).

<sup>39</sup> Firth, *Elements of Social Organization*, London, p. 54.

<sup>40</sup> Melvin M. Tumin, *Social Stratification: The forms and functions of inequality*, New Delhi, Prentice-Hall of India, Second Edition, 1987, p. 1.

members in one *Inndongta* organization varies from that of a chief and his elders and the social elites to that of the common householders. The criterion is commented by the existence of “preferential access to wealth”<sup>41</sup> among this group in the society. Since they have easy access to resources, they were likely to have more influence and power within the society. At the same time they were the ones who were able to organize community feasts and rituals that ascribed them to the higher stratum of the society.

It is also mentioned that the poorer households in the society maintains the organization moribundly. Because they are socially deprived of resources they are unable to maintain the same level of organization as the other more wealthy households.

While *Inndongta* is universal among the Paites, it is to be noted that the institution does not affect the social layering. Rather it is as always the social inequality that affected the institution. In a way the institution provided social equilibrium in that every household has their own institution as it does not determine who could or who could not organize the institution. The only difference that can be noted here is that the organization of the *Inndongta* represents the positional difference of households in the Paite society.

## **2.4 Functions of *Inndongta***

As a whole, the main function of *Inndongta* is the survival and welfare of the household within the social realm. The functions of the institution can be assessed in terms of the institution itself as well as the functions attributed to the individual members. Whereas their functions cannot be strictly compartmentalized as different entities, the members perform their own actions in producing the desired objective of the institution. The individual members were an entity to the institution in their functions as they intercommunicate among themselves within the institution. Each position, alongside the institution itself, carries with it certain functions and these functions do not end within its own entity. Rather it also includes the external behavior; its interaction with other similar institutions in the society.

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<sup>41</sup> Robert F. Wenke and Deborah J. Olszewski, ed., *Patterns in Prehistory: Humankind's First Three Million Years*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 288. Available from: <http://book4you.org/dl/734792/dc3e0d>, (accessed 18 April 2017).

*Inndongta* serves as a means of connecting people and bringing together households within a village. Every household was dependent upon its institution on every occasion as the institution itself was set up for that household. It is also to be noted that while the household was dependent on its institution it did not mean that the latter had the power and authority to decide whatever it wanted for the household. The household had the final say in every *Inndongta* deliberations and the members of the institution could give suggestions and proffered and spoke on behalf of the household. And, how well the members of the institution performed their roles and responsibilities determined the efficiency of one's *Inndongta*.

Among the Paites, a household could invite its *Inndongta* to come to its aid on whatever occasions or events when the household could not accomplish such matters by itself. Apart from the direct members of the institution, friends, neighbors and households to which the household was a member may also assist the household. The activity is known as *Thachial*, invited labor, where members of the *Inndongta* lead the group in helping the household. Accordingly, the household was obliged to provide meat and drinks to the work group to show its gratitude. At the same time, it was not the first option for the household for an invited labor; they could invite the labor only when it is beyond their fulfillment or completion of the task. There are various *thachial* which were known as *inn lam thachial* (invited labor for construction or renovation of house), *lou vat thachial* (invited labor for clearing of forest for cultivation site), *buh tuh thachial* (invited labor for seed sowing), *lou khawh thachial* (invited labor for weeding), *buh vuak thachial* (invited labor for threshing paddy) and *buh sek thachial* (invited labor for conveying paddy).<sup>42</sup>

On occasion of *thachial*, the *tanupi* cooked and served drinks to the participant workers; in case the *tanupi* was not available to perform her role, the *tanu nau* could take up the role of the *tanupi*. The *thallouh*, *thusapi* and *pu* were referred to as the thigh (*sa phei*), fore-thigh (*phei lai*) and lower spine of a tailed animal (*sa ngum*) of an animal respectively.<sup>43</sup> These references or epithets signify the importance of their positions in the work group and the efforts paid in the work was supposed to be an example set for the other work group members. Other members also did play their own roles. In this way, timely accomplishment of the work could be met.

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<sup>42</sup> Gouzanang, *Paite Pupa Ngeina*, p. 37.

<sup>43</sup> Kamkhenthang, p. 78.



Before the advent of the British, swidden agriculture or shifting agriculture characterized the agricultural practice of most pre-literate societies. A certain area of forest was cleared in rotation and each area was cultivated for a particular period of time. Individual households cultivated different areas and the labor force and the produce was owned by those households who cultivated such lands.<sup>44</sup> Under certain circumstances a household may lagged behind other households in agricultural activities, to meet such difficulty communal assistance may be provided to the household. A household might lag behind at a particular stage of cultivation or agriculture due to unavoidable circumstances that befell upon the household. The householder could invite his *Inndongta* members to his aid, who was also accompanied by friends, neighbors and households to which the household was a member of their *Inndongta*. The *tanupi*, along with other *tanu* members, cooked and fetched water and was not engaged with other activities while the *thusapi*, *thallouh thusa* and *thallouh mang* directed the work group. Since every household had their own area of land to cultivate and look after, the household could not anticipate continual communal work. In any *thachial* that is confined to agricultural activities, *zampi* (gong), *khuang* (drum), *daktal* (one among a set of small gongs known as *dakbu*) and *sialki* (horn of a gayal) were sounded in order to hasten any worker who was lagging behind others. And, even if the work was not completed on the day, what was left off was left as it was, to be completed by the household.<sup>45</sup>

In the construction or demolition of a house, the *tanupi* observed her duty as in other *thachial* activity together with cleaning the house and after the work was done she helped the mother of the household in making a fire-place. The *thusapi*, *thallouh thusa* and *thallouh mang* did not climb the roof for thatching or removing the thatch, instead they supervised from ground. One would take position to the up-slope side of the ground above the house, another one to the down-slope side of the house while the third one could go in and out of the house to see if the workers needed anything. During thatching, the three were to provide thatches and bamboos for roofing. Because they were entitled for that particular task, failure to provide such materials in time meant that the work was not progressive and members of the work group would wait until

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<sup>44</sup> In the case of the Paites, some amount of paddy, called *Tangseu/Buhsun*, is annually given to the village chief, the blacksmith and the priest.

<sup>45</sup> Thawngzanang, *Pupa Ngeina Leh Tawndan Suina*, Central Lamka, Author, 2006. p. 25.

they were provided the required material. They were also obliged to take away the removed thatches and place the removed building materials in proper order.<sup>46</sup>

The function of *Inndongta* is also very important in matters concerning the socially unwanted events or circumstances that be-chanced a household. Adultery, theft, murder and other socially unwanted cases were also common in the Paite society. In order to solve such problems and avoid further repercussive actions, careful discussion with an intention to solve the problem was usually held by parties from both the victims and culprits.

*Inndongta* has the full authority to decide and resolve these cases. Here the purpose of setting up the institution comes into action. Instead of the householder or the victim personally approaching the other party, the *thusapi* as a speaker for the household may take up the responsibility of approaching the other party for considering the case. In this way further misunderstanding and grievance on both sides could be avoided. The *thusapi* would relate the matter to the culprit household and the latter, along with its *Inndongta*, was obliged to come over to the victim's household at the earliest to solve the matter.<sup>47</sup> Fines and penalties differed depending on the seriousness of the case. One pot of *Zu* and one *Sa sat*, it means the act of slaughtering a four-legged animal as a penalty, were to be borne by the culprit as a penalty for settling such cases.

For instance, penalties demanded by the social norm relating to adultery and other cases related to marriage were different. If a married woman committed adultery, the fine for was borne by the man with whom she had copulation. The man must pay a fine of five gayals as a fine to the husband of the woman with whom he slept. In the case of a married man, if he committed adultery and made the woman as his second wife, he must enter his house according to the custom. The matter was discussed between him and his first wife and if the latter loathed continuing to live together as husband and wife, the husband had to leave the house with his new wife and they must live separately. All the properties of the man would go to his first wife and children and he could not claim ownership over them, not even his children.

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<sup>46</sup>Kamkhenthang, p. 76.

<sup>47</sup> Ngaihte, p. 31.

In case of a divorce, there were separate penalties to be fulfilled. If the husband was the adulterer, his wife was liable to take back all the properties that she brought in to her husband's house at the time of marriage. The wife could not claim all the bride price except if there was a due in the bride price. It was an obligation for the husband to fully pay the required amount. In case wife was the adulterer, she could not take back the properties that she brought in to her husband's house at the time of marriage. In addition to that, she had to requite the bride price to the husband.

Matter concerning a man eloping with a married woman was taken seriously and the penalty was higher than other cases of adultery. The husband of the adulteress was indemnified by the other person with no less than ten gayals, and also to return the bride price that the husband had paid for his wife.

In case of elopement between an unmarried man and woman, the parents of the woman could impose a fine of one gayal, apart from the actual bride price and other liabilities.<sup>48</sup>

Likewise, in other cases too, penalties were always realized from the perpetrator of any wrongdoing.

Above all, there were certain cases where the problem could not be solved by both parties of the *Inndongta* or either one refused to comply or pay the penalty imposed upon the same. Then the matter was taken over to the chief's court by the disgruntled group. A court fee of one pot of rice beer, known as *Zu bel tung*, was to be borne by the party who put up the case for discussion by the chief's court. The chief and his elders would call all persons belonging to the side of both the plaintiff and the defendant and the matter was discussed and solved according to the customary law. Accordingly the person who was found guilty by the court had to pay whatever penalty was imposed upon him/her and it was also an obligation to slaughter a four-legged animal, usually a male pig no less than *tuk li* (*Tuk* is a system of measurement where the diameter of the thorax of a gayal or pig is measured by means of the width of the fist of a grown up man), which was known as *Salam sat* (equivalent to *sa sat*).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Paite Tribe Council, *Paite Customary Law & Practices (2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment, 2013)*, Hiangtam Lamka, Paite Tribe Council, General Headquarters, 2013, pp. 79-84.

<sup>49</sup> PTC, *Paite Customary Law & Practices*, p. 117.

Apart from the institution acting as an agency of actors or agents as problem-solving domain, it also acted as a field of action for individual actors. Positions and roles apportioned in the institution is already being mentioned, individuals were obligated to perform their roles as expected by the norms of the society. Since the institution is owned by every household in a village, it is to be known that either the father or mother of a household participated in one or more *Inndongta* organization of other households within the same village. Herein lays the limitation of one's role when two *Inndongta* organizations were confronting at any social event. Depending on the position of the individual and the circumstance relating to the meet up of the two institutions, the individual may refrain from acting either one of his roles.<sup>50</sup> For instance, two *Inndongta* held talks regarding a marriage proposal and Mr. X was a member of both the institution, *Thusapi* in the boy's *Inndongta* and *Pu* in the girl's *Inndongta*, respectively. In this case, his position as *Thusapi* was more in demand than his position as *Pu*. Consequently, he took the side of the boy in the meeting of the two institutions. This means that his position as *Pu* for the girl was kept aside for a moment but he still received drinks and goods that were supposed to be received by him.

The function of the *Tanu* group was to cook meat and food on every occasion. On occasion of a feast of merit hosted by the householder, the direct *Tanu* group cooked food while their husbands cooked the meat. Usually three pots of meat were cooked, or even more, and the male *Tanupi* attended the biggest meat pot, the other male *Tanu* members attended the other two. In *Thachial* and other small feasts, the *Tanupi* was responsible for cooking meat during such occasions as one pot was usually used for cooking. They were also responsible for bringing their own cooking pots on these occasions.

The *Thallouh* group gathered pots for storing water and other pots that were required when the household organized any feast. Apart from this, they cut meats, collected vegetables to be cooked with meat and made skewers for roasting meat.

The function of *Pu* as the wife-giver was very important to the household. There was no specific role apportioned for him but in rituals concerning death, no ritual could be conducted without his presence. If the householder or his sons passed away, *Pupi* beat *Lang*, a bier used to put a corpse in a sitting position, and slaughtered a pig.

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<sup>50</sup> Kamkhenthang, p.89.

The position and function of *Zawl* typifies reciprocity at its utmost during the pre-colonial period where in times of feud has a person died or being captured, his *Zawl* was to seek revenge of his *Zawl*-counterpart or rescue him from his adversaries. The *Zawl* led his counterpart's clan members in avenging the death of his friend and for which the relationship that existed between them was remarked as *Zawl phu la*: *zawl* avenger; should he defy the danger of his own life at the cause of his friend's death. At the same time, his function was also known as *Zawl sial sat*, meaning he either killed one *gayal* of the killer of his friend or any one from the killer's village that would be used for mortuary feast. From what is mentioned, this resonant relationship between *Zawl* was eminent from mere relationship. The members of *Tanu* offered him rice beer and boiled egg as a mark of honor and he received meat and drinks that showed that he was no less important than the other members of the organization. Particularly in any meat division he also received a portion of meat reserved for members of the clan, known as *phung sa*.

With regard to *Zawl* relationship and its 'reciprocal typification' there are evidences of similar, but not altogether, relationship in other societies. Among many African societies, 'blood brotherhood' existed where trust and reciprocity between two persons was made through a formal ritual act. There were local as well as societal differences but the common practice that prevailed was drinking the blood of their counterparts either directly from the cut flesh or swallowed with a piece of meat or groundnut or coffee-berry.<sup>51</sup> The case with the *Zawl* relationship was different since there was no such formal rite taking place but the relationship was characterized by the social norm different from that were mentioned above.

The already presence of an individual and its anticipated role in the *Inndongta vis-à-vis* the social activity also helped in better working out any activity.<sup>52</sup> This means that the institution was an ever-present framework which could be utilized at any time and space for a household without immediate call or appointment of individuals to perform certain actions.

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<sup>51</sup> E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "Zande Blood-Brotherhood", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Oct., 1933), pp. 369-401. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1155555> (accessed on 5 August 2017). Luise White, "Blood Brotherhood Revisited: Kinship, Relationship, and the The Body in East and Central Africa", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (1994), pp.359-372. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1160786> (accessed 5 August 2017).

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Thanglianzau, 4 October, 2017, Dawrpui Vengthar, Aizawl.

By looking at the functions of one *Inndongta*, one can have a glimpse of how it works in the society. This is also congruent with the functioning of one such institution when dealing with another. As mentioned, direct confrontation of immediate persons in any issue rarely exists in the society. Be it marriage, death, murder, theft or any social issue, which demands the involvement of two parties, it was through *Inndongta* level that the issue was discussed and solved.

Moreover, individuals were not independent of each other in the social system, or for that matter in the *Inndongta* organization, so also between different *Inndongta* organizations. The interdependent nature of individuals in institutions is expressed by Seumas Miller:

“The regularities in action (or rules or norms) ... cannot be simply be a single person’s regularities in action (or a single person’s rules or norms prescribing his or her individual action alone); rather there must be interdependence of action such that, for example, agent *A* only performs action *x*, if other agents, *B* and *C* do likewise.”<sup>53</sup>

The above statement is, no doubt, Miller’s examination of the atomistic model of institutions which tend to define social actors as collective entities. The atomistic model is guided by conventions, norms, or rules where individuals conform upon their actions. However, according to him, such element guiding an institution that requires interdependence of actions is insufficient.<sup>54</sup> As against the atomistic model of institutions, the holistic model of institutions stresses “the inter-relationships of institutions (structure) and their contribution to larger and more complete social complexes, especially societies (function).”<sup>55</sup> An important holistic model is the organicist model which sees the function of each organs of an animal that is dependent of one another and the absence of one organ cannot be supplemented by the other. In this context, the functions of *Inndongta* can be seen in such a way that its function was not exclusive of itself but similar with other institutions of the same kind.

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<sup>53</sup> Seumas Miller, “Social Institution”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Available from: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/social-institutions>, (accessed 26 February 2017)

<sup>54</sup> Miller, “Social Institution”.

<sup>55</sup> Miller.

Raymond Firth's 'four constituents essential to social existence in a community', namely, 'social alignment, social control, social media and social standard',<sup>56</sup> comes into light after discussing the nature of *Inndongta* and its functions. Firth's analysis is inter-dependent of one another in the sense that one constituent element is supplementary to one another. Firstly, the institution acting as a medium of people's participation in social activities and other events of importance to the society connotes the 'social alignment'. No age limit is set for participation but no minor is likely to participate as well. And, the alignment is referred here is basically constituted by kinship.

Secondly, in a way *Inndongta* provides the general system of learned skill and knowledge to people's involvement and use of its social environment. 'Social control', according to Firth, 'is the systems of beliefs and procedures by which activity can be guided and controlled'.<sup>57</sup> Although there is no written document as to the practice and working of the institution, the knowledge on the institution itself is responsible for its continued practice. Moreover, the institution provides certain unwritten sets of norms and practices that are anticipated of its participant members.

Thirdly, social control requires material basis for activity and a medium of communication. This criterion is what Firth calls 'social media', meaning the existence of material goods side by side with the existence of language for communication. *Inndongta* activities are not solely based on services and counter-services. It also involved certain material goods mostly represented by meat and drinks and other corporeal things that have relevance as per the occasion. The goods and services that are characteristics of the institution are expressed among the participants through the use of language. Thus, they all have meaning and significance in their usages.

Finally, there is the 'social standard' through which actions and conducts are guided. Credibility and positive outcomes toward actions in the institution; anticipated as the efficiency of one's *Inndongta*, is determined by how well and dedicated members of the institution carried out their roles and responsibilities.

By and large, functions of the institution in extending to the society at large cannot be overlooked. As already mentioned, the interaction between institutions on any matter is in turn

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<sup>56</sup> Firth, *Elements of Social Organization*, p. 41-43.

<sup>57</sup> Firth.

functional to the society. This means that by solving matters via the institution, social cohesion is realized at large. The vitality of the institution in providing social coherence is one of the primary functions of the institution.

## 2.5 Self and the Institution

The state of nature of how positions were systematically arranged that comes along with functions could be said to be performed in conformity among the members within the organization. And, this state of nature also coordinated the usages of the organization in such a way that the organization seemed to be very a vital and inevitable part of the social and cultural life of the people. Individuals tend to play their own significant roles in an expectation to produce an equity and consensus in a situation. ‘Coordination equilibrium’, to borrow David Lewis’s term, can be achieved when each player plays its own role.<sup>58</sup>

Regardless of the realization of equilibrium in works and benefits, the position of the self or for that matter the identity of the individual within the institution could be questioned as it was mentioned that *Inndongta* was solely owned by the householder and in congruence to it the institution serves the purpose of the householder. Should it be agreed to the notion of power in any institution, the *Inndongta* as an institution was also characterized by certain degree of power. There existed a correlation of individuals and institutions which produced an effect whether individuals agree to conform or resist. Refraining from the pyramidal conception of power as ‘negative, constraining and repressive’, Foucault viewed power as a “productive, giving rise to new forms of behaviour rather than simply closing down or censoring certain forms of behaviour.”<sup>59</sup>

In the light of the above discussion, *Inndongta* as an institution did possess power which was exercised by its members:

“Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization... individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application.”<sup>60</sup>

Besides the exercise of power, the position of the individual and its identity needed to be stressed. Identity can be understood as the construction of the ‘self’ within a social system that is

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<sup>58</sup> David Lewis, *Convention: A Philosophical Study*, London, Blackwell Publishers, 2007, p. 83. Available from: <http://book4you.org/dl/812954/5277c2>, (accessed 29 March 2017).

<sup>59</sup> Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault*, London, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2015, Indian Reprint, p. 33.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in Mills, *Michel Foucault*, p. 35.



perceived in terms of the individual and the group to which she/he belongs.<sup>61</sup> There is also a correlation of the 'self' with its 'other' in a social system. Erving Goffman was of the view that the activities of an individual had a 'promissory character' when in the presence of the contiguous others but faded in their absence.<sup>62</sup> The action performed by an individual in a society cannot always be based on the rational choice of the person; rather should it be for the good of the society, the action was performed. To be blunt, the actions are "responsive" which everyone did not choose to rebel.<sup>63</sup>

In *Inndongta* organization, the assigned roles of its members were performed by themselves; no one member played a role that was beyond its assigned one. Relating to an invited labor for the construction or demolition of a house, the *thusapi*, *thallouh thusa* and *thallouh mang* did not climb the roof but supervised from the ground. However, they were to supply thatches and bamboos and failure to provide when in need meant that no other member of the institution or any other worker should supply the materials in place of the mentioned three. All the workers waited for the materials to be supplied. This is an instance cited to elaborate the strictness in the performance of one's roles in any activity.

Because *Inndongta* was owned by a householder, it had to be functional and reliable to the householder. In spite of the fact that individuals had separate entities that was different of its other in any social realm, the same distinctiveness was also absent in most of social life. Since the institution was owned by an individual, its members were to an extent also owned. This means that the members of the institution performed actions in accordance with the interest or any circumstances demanded by the owner. As such, an individual's identity as a social being was submissive to the owner of the institution. It should also be known that the notion of individualism which was absent in any pre-literate society suggested that no individual lived independent of its neighbor. Rather social beings depended upon each other in most, if not all, for its existence and its identity was constructed in the society and culture where the individual

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<sup>61</sup> Kate Cregan, *Key Concepts in Body and Society*, Los Angeles, Sage Publications, 2012, p. 112. Available from: <http://book4you.org/dl/2613241/3bd0d0>, (accessed 17 June 2017).

<sup>62</sup> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> George H. Mead, *Man, Self and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, ed. by Charles W. Morris, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1972, Eighteenth Impression, p. 261. Available from: <http://book4you.org/book/914145/cba3d5>, (accessed 17 November 2017).

participated.<sup>64</sup> The norms of the society drove individuals to act communally for the betterment of the society.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Although there can be no certainty as to the origin, where and when, of the institution, it came to be an integral part of the Paite society in due course. Marginally, it is a kinship organization, or for that matter an extended kinship organization, but is not exclusive of kins. Persons from outside a particular kin also participate in the organization giving a larger extension of the realm and function of the organization. Moreover, in a norm driven society each individual plays their own significant roles.

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<sup>64</sup> Lisa Blackman, *The Body: The Key Concepts*, Oxford, Berg, 2008, pp. 22-23. Available from: <http://book4you.org/book/930615/ecb199>, (accessed 16 June 2017).

Apportion of roles and positions determined by norms in the institution do not all in all qualify its continual practice. There exists certain kind of mutual dependence within the practice and this standard is most fully expressed through goods and services that are intercommunicated among participant members as well as with like institutions. This chapter will focus on this aspect of the institution and how far it is responsible for the continual practice of this primordial tradition. It will throw light on the traditional practice of marriage, *Tousa*, feast for the eldest brother and death rituals.

### **3.1 Reciprocity: An obligated Action**

Reciprocity, at best, can be understood as the act of giving and returning the same value of what is given. It is an exchange of benefits between two or more units who are in contact. The term reciprocity or reciprocal is derived from the Latin word, *reciprocus*, meaning alternating. *Re* and *pro* in the term means ‘back’ and ‘forth’, respectively and imply a back and forth movement.<sup>1</sup> The concept applies in human interaction where material goods or services given calls for returning the same. To Hegel, “cause and effect are inseparable” and their relationship is foundational to reciprocity.<sup>2</sup>

Georg Simmel is of the view that “reciprocity of service and return service” is characteristic in establishing social balance and cohesion and he rightly held that “all contacts among men rest on the schema of giving and returning the equivalence.”<sup>3</sup> This schema of give and return is the basis of human interaction in all societies, which is objectified in “exchange”.<sup>4</sup> It is not done perfunctorily rather it is determined by “faithfulness”, without which “society could simply not exist, as it does, for any length of time”.<sup>5</sup> To Simmel, reciprocity is the vital aspect of social existence and cohesiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.etymonline.com/word/reciprocal>, (accessed 8 August 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1992, p. 52. Available from: <http://book4you.org/dl/2642099/d4e8eb>, (accessed 22 August 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. and edited by Kurt H. Wolff, Glencoe, The Free Press, 1950, p. 387. Available from: <http://book4you.org/dl/856958/68a807>, (accessed 21 August 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, p. 388.

<sup>5</sup> Simmel, p. 379.

Linda D. Molm is straightforward in labeling reciprocity as a “structure” by which the term is more than neither just a norm nor a process and “it is variable across different forms of exchange”. She further stated that the structure of reciprocity has an outstanding effect for social relationship where “trust and solidarity” emerges.<sup>6</sup> Solidarity follows after trust is accomplished but the latter is seemingly complex as it is “voluntary and uncertain”.<sup>7</sup> Simmel’s “faithfulness” in reciprocity has close proximity to the new approach formulated by Molm.

Taking together “faithfulness” and “trust and solidarity”, the nature of reciprocity seem complete as no other than the two criteria are most in demand when fulfilling human interaction and building interpersonal relationship. At the same time, while reciprocity may occur between two parties at the same time, there may also be instances where goods or services given to one may not be returned at the same moment; certainty as to whether or when the other person may reciprocate cannot be known.<sup>8</sup>

Marcel Mauss talked about ‘total services’ which includes three obligations: the obligation to reciprocate presents received, the obligation to give presents and the obligation to receive them.<sup>9</sup> The goods and services, thus, exchanged become an obligation in realizing that whenever a person receives anything he is obliged to return the same. Mauss studies this ‘total services’ under the term ‘potlatch’, the Chinook term, which is a highly developed form of service existing among the Pacific and American Northwest societies. The term potlatch has different definitions such as ‘system for the exchange of gifts’, ‘to feed, to consume, ‘a place of being satiated’. Literally, potlatch is practiced in festivals where goods and services of all kinds are exchanged.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Linda M. Molm, ‘The Structure of Reciprocity’, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (June 2010), p.120. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25677393>, (accessed 14 July 2017).

<sup>7</sup> Molm, ‘The Structure of Reciprocity’, p. 124.

<sup>8</sup> Molm, p. 120.

<sup>9</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, trans. W. D. Halls, London, Routledge Classics, Indian Reprint, 2012, pp. 16-17.

<sup>10</sup> Mauss, ‘Editorial Note’, in *The Gift*, p. vii.

Talcott Parsons is of the view that “it is inherent in the nature of social interaction that the gratification of ego’s need-dispositions is contingent on alter’s reaction and vice-versa.”<sup>11</sup> In fact, Parsons’ treatment of social interaction is based on the mutual dependency of individuals who made up the social system. He stresses on the importance of “role” performed by individuals in the social system which he called as “a sector of the individual actor’s total system of action”.<sup>12</sup> As such, his theory goes on to emphasize ‘role-expectations’ that organizes the “reciprocities, expectations, and responses to those expectations in the specific interaction systems of ego and one or more alters”.<sup>13</sup> ‘Role-expectation’ that is prevalent in the social system of individual action determines one’s action upon the other and vice-versa. And, the nature of reciprocity itself is determined by the presence of expectation and response is also much relevant. However, Parsons’ use of ‘reciprocity’ and ‘complimentarity’ interchangeably and focusing on the latter when studying ‘role-expectation’ is much criticized by Alvin Gouldner as “a systematic neglect of reciprocity” by saying that complimentarity is an ambiguous term and is not synonymous with reciprocity.<sup>14</sup> To be blunt, his treatment of the importance of ‘role-expectation’ is eminent and is almost in accordant to Gouldner’s hail of the dependence of a stable social system on the norm of reciprocity.<sup>15</sup>

Frederick L. Bates defines reciprocity, or reciprocality, as “a relationship existing among the norms composing two roles that the performance of one is contingent upon the performance of the other.”<sup>16</sup> Bates sees reciprocity as a norm exercised between roles and in turn is determined by positions through which reciprocal roles are related. Adding to this, he also pointed out ‘two facts’ that is inevitable of reciprocity: firstly, the concept involves two separate positions, and secondly, the occupants of the two positions are always two different actors.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Alvin W. Gouldner, ‘The norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Apr., 1960), p. 167. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2092623>, (accessed 14 July 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils (ed.), *Toward a General Theory of Action*, New York, Harper & Row, 1951, p. 190. Available from: <http://book4you.org/dl/869756/e7114a>, (accessed 27 August 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Parsons and Shils (ed.), *General Theory of Action*.

<sup>14</sup> Gouldner, ‘The norm of Reciprocity’, p. 168.

<sup>15</sup> Gouldner, p. 172.

<sup>16</sup> Frederick L. Bates, ‘Institutions, Organizations, and Communities: A General Theory of Complex Structures’, *The Pacific Sociological Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Autumn, 1960), p. 59. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1388201> (accessed 18 June 2017).

<sup>17</sup> Bates, ‘Institutions, Organizations, and Communities’, p. 60.

Yet another important issue in the norm of reciprocity is the notion of “indebtness”. Martin S. Greenberg defines the term indebtness as “a state of obligation to repay another.”<sup>18</sup> The term is used in studying social interaction where the selfless disposition of goods or services by an individual which when received by the other invokes the obligation to repay the same by the latter.

From the above discussion it can be said that human society is a framework where individual actions are performed and these actions are, for the most part, performed with objective ends. The objective ends may relate to the selfless action of an individual for the welfare of the other and vice versa. Through action, humans intercommunicates each other and the criterion is supplemented by objects of exchange in the form of material goods and services. Congruently, interdependence, thus, also plays an important role in the give and receive domain as no individual is independent of other when it comes to forming a social group and participating in it. At the same time, norm driven individual action always does characterize human society.

### **3.2 Interchanging Goods and Services**

Culture provides the basis for social institution where people share as members of a community or society.<sup>19</sup> Culture, with varied definitions and a factor that distinguishes human groups, is basically what determines the social being and existence of individuals in its society. “Culture includes the whole body of knowledge that people hold in common and the various ideas and values that provide them with general principles for action, rules of behavior and legitimizing beliefs.”<sup>20</sup> This whole body of knowledge is shared by individuals within a certain group. The practice and profession of the knowledge and values in time came to form the social norm of the group. Also, culture is seen as a means of communicating that knowledge and the interchange of experiences by individuals through the use of language.<sup>21</sup> Language, thus, forms

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<sup>18</sup> Martin S. Greenberg, ‘A Theory of Indebtness’, in Kenneth J. Green, Martin S. Greenberg and Richard H. Willis, ed., *Social Exchange: Advance in Theory and Research*, New York, Plenum Press, 1980, p. 4. Available from: <http://book4you.org/dl/2247286/e116e9>, (accessed 26 October 2017).

<sup>19</sup> Lopez and Scott, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup>Lopez and Scott.

<sup>21</sup> Ellwood, ‘Culture and Human Society’, pp. 6-7.

the means of intercommunication between individuals. In the present context, it is used in naming the positions as well as the objects and services of intercommunication.

Every society is characterized by certain traditions and customary practices to which participants of the society intercommunicated. This communication, from the perspective of the norm of reciprocity, involves the use of material objects and services between the participants that is manifested in language.

### **3.2.1 Marriage**

Sociologically, marriage comprised one of the important social institutions. The importance of marriage to every society cannot be neglected as it is foundational to biological reproduction as well as social reproduction. Biological reproduction entails social reproduction in which actors of social system are continually procreated. The process of procreation also goes hand in hand with the establishment of families, kinship and the ties that bind such relationships.

Among the Paites, marriage occupied an important place and was highly revered. A consentaneous decision was always demanded whenever a marriage was going to take place. Such consent was to be witnessed from the marrying man and woman as well as from both their parents. Marriage did not always occur consentaneously as parents from either side would not always agree to the marriage. In such cases, elopement usually happened and the matter was resolved later on. In *Paite in Mizoram*, it is mentioned that

“With regard to their marriage system they have one distinct feature from the rest of Mizo tribes. Men usually marries between the age of 25-35 and, women between 20-23 years of age. This range is uniform with only few exceptional cases.”<sup>22</sup>

The most desirable and worthy way for a marriage to take place was by beginning with the tradition of *Innbulhel*. Marriage usually took place in two ways: a man and a woman agreeing to marry and also receiving consent from their parents and an arranged marriage. Either way, the man’s parents had to inform their *Inndongta* and a messenger called *Palai*, either the

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<sup>22</sup> TRI, p. 62.

male *Tanupi* or the *Thallouh*, was sent to the house of the bride for initiating a proposal. No formal gift accompanied the initial step but one pot of beer was to be offered, to be brought in *belkhenei*.<sup>23</sup> The messenger would go to the bride's house at night after all visitors went home and gave the beer to the parents of the bride. Also, the messenger would give the same at dawn before no one woke up. In both ways of the initiation of the proposal, the messenger requested the parents to accept the beer brought by him. The beer brought at the woman's house was called *Zawl zupuak*. If the bride's parents did not agree to the proposal, they would receive the pot for the sake of receiving but would not consume the beer. They would empty the beer and filled the beer pot with beer lees: they would not even relate the proposal to their *Inndongta*. In case the beer was drunk by the bride's parents, it was obvious that there was no disagreement to the proposal and the same messenger from the groom's side would again visit the house of the bride to take back the empty beer pot.<sup>24</sup> The date for taking the woman as bride was also discussed right away which usually fell two to three days after the *zawl zu* was consumed. This tradition is known as *Innbulhel*.<sup>25</sup> Direct rejection to the proposal by not receiving the *zawl zu* was usually avoided.<sup>26</sup>

Marriage proposal usually lasted for a year, or could be earlier, and at least the groom's side offered beers three times to the bride's parent during such time. The bride's parent agreed to the marriage of their daughter according to the time they considered most appropriate in a year. They would allow the marriage to take place usually after harvesting or weeding or planting. Moreover, the death of a family member before taking the bride could also delay marriage as it was considered that such event could befall misfortunes in the future.

When the day for taking the bride arrived, the *Tanupi* went to the house of the bride to escort her to the groom's house. At late night, the bride's mother packed one pot of beer in *dawntou*<sup>27</sup> to be brought to the groom's house and follows the *Tanupi* who came to take her. When they reached the man's house, *Pu*, *Thusapi* and *Thallouh* were summoned to drink the

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<sup>23</sup> *Belkhenei* is the smallest rice beer pot which can contain 5-10 liters of the beer.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with T. Vungkholian Guite, 26 September, 2017, Pearsonmun.

<sup>25</sup> Gouzanang, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> Kamkhenthang, p. 93.

<sup>27</sup> *Dawntou* is the second biggest rice beer pot which can contain approximately 30 liters of beer.



beer brought by the bride. Marriage did not happen at once after one tradition was completed. The process mentioned here can be regarded as the initial stage of a marriage ceremony.<sup>28</sup>

Marriage consummation did not occur immediately since the newly married couples did share the same bed. For a period of ten to fifteen days, the bride would spend the night at her husband's house, at dawn she would pound and clean rice and then left for her natal house. During daytime she would put one basket of dry wood at her husband's house. She only slept and carried out such works while at the same time she also did not eat at her husband's house, but at her natal house. The bridegroom was expected to continue to spend the night as a *Sawm*.<sup>29</sup> At night, he would visit his wife at her natal house before going to *Ham*.<sup>30</sup> He would leave the house at late night for *Ham* and his wife would also be taken to her husband's house to spend the night by one of the latter's siblings. The reason why they act in such a way is that the marrying couples were shy of being known as married.<sup>31</sup>

Marriage was usually consummated only after a passage of ten to fifteen days or even a month while during those span of time the wife continue to perform her duties at her husband's

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<sup>28</sup> There can be cases where the bride refuses and is beyond compulsion to go to the groom's house even after her parents consumed the offered drink. In such cases, her parents will reciprocate the same offering to the groom's side which is considered as a way of solving the matter. The tradition is known as *Zuthawl din*; repaying of beer.

<sup>29</sup> Unlike the Mizo *Zawlbuk* or the Naga *Morung* that has separate house as men's dormitory, the Paites have no such separate house constructed. In every Paite village, either inside the chief's house or in the house of some big or wealthy man of a village, a separate place was consecrated near the hearth for men in the village to spend the night. Depending on the size of a village, there could be two or more such houses. Eligible males in the village would come to these particular houses to spend the night after courting girls. They were known as *sawm* or *sawm giak*, as in the act of being a *sawm* and the house in which they were *sawm* is known as *sawm inn*, house of the *sawm*. The purpose and function of this tradition is similar to that of man's dormitory in other societies. They were to help the host in building his house and in his cultivation. At the end of the year, the *sawm* members would bring beer to the household and the household in turn would slaughter a pig or a gayal. The occasion is known as *sawm zukhawlh*, an act performed by the *sawm* members by offering beer to the household. The occasion was also attended by all the villagers who also brought beers. The festival was held for two days where they ate drank and dance. All the young men and women performed a dance known as *Zangta Lam* in front of the house. No animal was slaughtered in the next day but drinking and dancing were still continued. The *sawm* members reciprocated the household by bringing beer, the household did the same act by slaughtering animal and the villagers brought beers as a sign of showing gratitude to the young men for giving security to the village. It can be said that the tradition of *sawm* and the feast was an act of reciprocity shown among the villagers themselves.

<sup>30</sup> In common parlance, *Ham* is the institution that binds the tradition of *sawm* and the *sawm inn*. It is no less than a man's dormitory in its function and purpose and acts as an institution of learning social values, manners, and other social and cultural needs that are inevitable to social existence.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with T. Vungkholian Guite.

house and the husband also continued to be a *sawm*.<sup>32</sup> Payment of bride price called *mou man* and other traditions were discussed only after the couple had their first child, without which no traditions as such could be performed. Bride price and *tha man* were discussed only after the bride delivered her first born, known as *sisan pal* (its usage can be put as delivering a child). *Tha man* is the price of the bride given by the wife-takers to the wife-givers: *tha* means ‘labor’, ‘soul’ and *man* means ‘price’. The literal meaning equates the price of the bride for her labor or soul, a compensation given to the parents of the bride who gave away their daughter in marriage. The actual representation of this price, however, allowed the wife-takers to bury the bride when she died. Deferred payment or non-payment of the price, even if the bride had already born a child, meant that her body was still owned by her natal family and as such they had the right to take the body and bury on their own terms. *Tha man* can be more or less the right to bury the body of the bride and a typical cloth known as *Puandum*, a blend of white and black cloth, was given.

Bride price changed and differed according to time and space. During the time of Vummang Guite, the nineteenth generation from Guite, bride price was ten gayals. The price decreased during the time of Mangsum Guite, the twenty-sixth generation, to five gayals. Likewise, during the time of Kamzamang Guite, the thirtieth generation, bride price was three gayals which was followed for a considerable length of time by the Chiahpi, Bukpi and Lamzang group of Paites. By the time of Kamzamang Guite, the British had already encroached upon the hills that situates between British India and British Burma. As such, money economy arrived in these areas and it effected the payment of bride price or any other prices whatsoever could be mentioned. The price of one gayal was made equivalent to forty rupees, and one pig with the size of *tukli* cost four rupees.<sup>33</sup> Common acceptance to bride price falls to one female gayal and its calf.

After *sisan pal*, the groom’s side again approached the bride’s side to decide the bride price and *tha man* with one *phelpi* of beer. As mentioned, depending on the status of the bride, the price was decided and *tha man* was also paid as well on the same day. Those who could afford to pay the bride price paid in full on the same day itself while those who could not were not imposed to fulfill instantly. As a saying goes, *Singkung kah lah a tawp a, zi lei lah a tawp*

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<sup>32</sup> Gouzanang, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Guite (ed.), *Guite Khangthu (History of Guite)*, pp. 512-513.

*kei*, which means ‘a person who cannot climb a tree may give up the attempt, but a person who cannot pay the price of his wife does not give up’, there was no stoppage or back out in payment of the sum amount. If the present *Inndongta* could not pay the amount, the same was anticipated to be fulfilled by the next generations to come.<sup>34</sup> It is also said, *Zi man ngak ngei tui kang ngak ngei*, which means ‘it is a rule to wait till one can pay one’s own wife’s bride price as one waits to get water from a scanty fountain’. From the sayings the importance given to marriage and of bride price can be seen.

As and when bride price was discussed and paid, either in full or in part, it was customary for the bride’s father to organize the feast of *Sial khumsa*. Bride price was paid in terms of *sial* or *gayal* and the feast was called as such. It was an act of reciprocity done by the bride’s father or brother as the wife-giver by slaughtering one *gayal* to the wife-receiving family and it’s *Inndongta*. It was an inevitable feast to be organized by the wife-giver as an act of compensating the wife-receiving group for the amount they paid for the bride. As such, it was also known as *Liau vak*, an act of feeding the groom’s side for the bride price they incurred. The feast was participated by the *Inndongta* of both the bride and groom’s side. While the feast was an act of reciprocity and showing gratitude to the wife-receiving group for their payment of the bride price, it also meant that the feast was organized as to ask for the amount of bride price that was still left to be paid by the wife-receiver.<sup>35</sup> Although the feast was named after the slaughtering of an animal, *zu* is also an important element in the feast.

On the occasion of *Sialkhumsa gawh*, the act of organizing the feast, different marriage paraphernalia were handed over to the groom’s side. The items that usually accompany a marrying woman were *Tutang* (hoe-blade), *Heitang* (axe-blade), *Lelpi/Singlem* (wooden trunkbox), *Puanpi* (mattress made from raw cotton), *Sathau Bing* (Pork fat kept in a bottle made from dried gourd), *Seng zing* and *Seng vang* and *Nam* (Conical basket made from bamboo or cane, here, without hole and with holes on its walls and a plaited band of cane that is used to support the basket while carrying, respectively), *Zuthawl/Mou zupuak* (A pot of wine) and *Saseng sin* (Meat kept in *seng* and is covered with *puandum*). H. Kamkhenthang called these

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<sup>34</sup> Gouzanang, p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> Gouzanang, p. 12.

accoutrements as ‘feminine articles’<sup>36</sup> as they were the daily needs of the womenfolk, but not in exclusivity as some items can be shared by both man and woman. *Saseng sin*, to be particular, is important in the sense that it contained a portion of the shoulder and the ribs for the wife-receiving group which was covered with a cloth. It was carried by the *Tanupi* and the cloth used for covering the meat should be her possession.

Pig, gayal or cow could be slaughtered as *sialkhumsa* but meat distribution varied according to the animal slaughtered. When a pig was slaughtered, which must not be less than *tuk li*, division of meat was done equally to both *Inndongta* groups. Usually, a pig was slaughtered for the feast as the fat was part of the marriage paraphernalia, known as *Sathau bing*. The following is the meat distribution when a pig was slaughtered:

- |       |                       |  |
|-------|-----------------------|--|
| i.    | <i>Inntek</i>         | The head, the heart, the liver, the visceral fats and the <i>zang sa</i> (the spine of the pig that is usually a feet and a half in length). |
| ii.   | <i>Thallouh</i>       | A larger portion of the hind leg.  |
| iii.  | <i>Thallouh Thusa</i> | A portion of the shoulder.   |
| iv.   | <i>Thallouh Mang</i>  | One share of the flesh that is <i>Sabak</i> .  |
| v.    | <i>Thusapi</i>        | The part of the nape of the head.  |
| vi.   | <i>Tanupi</i>         | A larger portion of the ribs.  |
| vii.  | <i>Tanu Nau</i>       | A portion of the shoulder.   |
| viii. | <i>Tanu Thumna</i>    | One <i>Sabak</i> . <sup>37</sup>   |
| ix.   | <i>Pupi</i>           | Lower portion of the spine.  |
| x.    | <i>Punau</i>          | <i>Sakhawlh</i> . <sup>38</sup>  |
| xi.   | <i>Zawl</i>           | One <i>Sabak</i> .   |
| xii.  | <i>Beh Val</i>        | One <i>Sabak</i> .   |

The bride was also given one *Sabak* by her mother and she in turn gave it to her mother-in-law. Moreover, one *Sabak* was also given to the bride’s name-giver. After meat distribution was completed, both the *Inndongta* group would contribute all their shares of meat and they would enjoy all the meat. The host householder, the wife-giver, bore all the required rice for the

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<sup>36</sup> Kamkhenthang, p. 108.

<sup>37</sup> In this case if there are more than three *tanu*, they are given a portion of flesh, known as *sa bak*, as there is no exacting in their appointment. As such, they are given a portion of flesh as a mark of gratitude of their work.

<sup>38</sup> *Sakhawlh* is more or less similar to *Sabak* as it is sometimes called *Sabak Khawlh*.

feast. Meat eating was also structural where members from both sides would sit along with their counterparts; for instance, both the *Thallouh* will sit together, both the *Tanupi*, and likewise all members did the same. Both *Inntek* from the two groups shared the large intestine, while the small intestine was kept aside for the householder and its *tanu*. Apart from the meat that was distributed and cooked, all the leftover were prepared as porridge for those who eat and drink in the ceremony (they were known as *Peng simte*).

When a gayal was slaughtered for the feast, *Tanupi* from both sides were given a portion of the ribs and the wife-receiving group was given a part of the shoulder of the animal slaughtered. The rest of the meat was roasted and partaken by both the groups. There were cases where each member from both sides was given one share of meat depending on the sufficiency of the meat.

Apart from partaking meat, drinking of beer is also an important element of the feast. The following is the traditional division of beer in the feast:

- |       |  |                      |
|-------|--|----------------------|
| i.    | <i>Thallouh</i>  | One <i>Phelpi</i>    |
| ii.   | <i>Pupi</i>  | One <i>Phelpi</i>    |
| iii.  | <i>Punau</i>   | One <i>Belkhenei</i> |
| iv.   | <i>Tanupi</i>  | One <i>Phelpi</i>    |
| v.    | <i>Tanunau</i>   | One <i>Phelpi</i>    |
| vi.   | <i>Tanu Thumna</i>   | One <i>Dawntou</i>   |
| vii.  | <i>Thallouh Thusa</i>  | One <i>Dawntou</i>   |
| viii. | <i>Hanzutung</i>   | One <i>Dawntou</i>   |
| ix.   | <i>Behval</i>  | One <i>Belkhenei</i> |
| x.    | <i>Zawl</i>  | One <i>Belkhenei</i> |
| xi.   | <i>Peng Simte</i> (partakers of the meal other than the family members of the Inndongta) |                      |
|       | One <i>Belkhenei</i> each.   |                      |

Any ceremonial drinking was known as *Zu lup* and the beer was referred to as *Bangkawzu*. The beer borne by *Thallouh* was known as *Bangkawpi* and subsequent beers were *Bangkawzawm*. An average of seven pots was arranged in such a way that the *Pupi* starts with *bangkawpi*, followed by *Punau* with *bangkawzawm*, *Pu thumna*<sup>39</sup>, *Thallouh*, *Behval*, *Zawl* and

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<sup>39</sup> The *Pu thumna* mentioned here are those household to which the householder is *Tanu*.

*Behbul*.<sup>40</sup> Aside these arrangements, two more pots were served for the *Tanupi* and *Tanunau*. The first drinking of beer was done before food was taken and after which food was taken. After food, bridal goods were handed over to the wife-receivers which was done in the presence of all *Inndongta* members from both sides as well as those who graced the occasion.

Another round of drink was held after food was taken known as *Zu khaihsa hawmna*, distribution of sieved beer, where beer was distributed in a specific cup made from the horn of gayal. There were three types of cups: *Haipi* (the biggest cup), *Khawnsin* (the medium) and *Hailawn* (the smallest of all). In this case, *haipi* and *hailawn* were used to distribute beer. Usually, the householder offered drinks to his *Thallouh* group with *hailawn*, followed by the *Pu* group with the same size of cup. Then, *Haipi hawm*, distribution of beer in *haipi*, was started where the beer was distributed in *haipi* among members of both *Inndongta* who drank with their member-counterparts. In *Haipi hawm*, both *Inntek* from the institutions started the drink and the others were called to drink in succession.

After *Zu khaihsa* was finished another round of drink followed. It is known as *Tapkuang zu*, for it was being placed in the hearth (*Tapkuang*). The beer was to be borne by the wife-giver in one *Dawntou*. By the time the beer was served, it was usually late at night and the usual norm of distributing the beer could not be made. As such, the beer was left as it was which was used to be drunk by those who were hooked to drinking in the morning.<sup>41</sup>

As mentioned in the functions of the institution, each member had a role to perform in the feast. The *Tanu* group was engaged in cooking, the *Thusapi* poured the beer while the *Thallouh* received the beer and the *Tanu* group distributed the same.

There were other feasts that were attached to marriage feasts which were *Tunsa* and *Tanu Sagawh*. *Tunsa* literally means the meat slaughtered for the bride for having reached the groom's house. It was organized by the wife-giver on the event of his daughter leaving their home. Basically, both *Tunsa* and *Sialkhumsa* were organized on the same day and was subject to local practice where either the two or both were organized simultaneously. *Tanu Sagawh*, on the other hand, is a feast organized for the married off daughter in case her father did not allot her the

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<sup>40</sup> *Behbul* can be any person from the same clan as the householder who is an important person to the latter but is not given any office in the *Inndongta* organization.

<sup>41</sup> Gouzanang, p. 27.

share of meat on the occasion of *Sialkhumsa* feast. It is not a compulsory feast and it is subjected to the discretion and resources of the bride's father.<sup>42</sup>

Given the norms that drove the social structure and the role that was anticipated of each member of the institution, exchange of material goods and services could be witnessed from this account of marriage ceremony. Besides the mutual dependence in this case, marriage was also an extension of kinship structure. Patrilineage was followed among the Paites and descent and heredity was accounted from the male side. This also meant that a woman did not have clan affiliation until marriage; they were rather referred to as daughter of a Guite, a Ngaihte, a Tonsing and likewise. By getting married, a woman became a member of her husbands' clan. The point here is to note the extension of kinship structure as married women were appointed as *tanu* in their natal home with respect to birth seniority, which is also rather a form of reciprocity.

A woman getting married to a man of another clan or within the same clan as her father did not mean that the family and relationship tie that bind the father-daughter or brother-sister relationship was broken. Instead, a new relation was built by apportioning a married daughter or sister as any one among the *Tanu* group, which was always the first choice of a father or a brother in appointing any *Tanu* member. Since a daughter or sister was apportioned as one, her husband as well as his family was also indirectly engaged in the membership. This tendency caused to enlarge and extend kinship ties. In a society characterized by communality, individuals interdependent upon each other and hence, exclusivity to kinship organization cannot be assured profoundly as *Inndongta* activity involved the participation of non-kin members, particularly with the *Tanu* group and their respective roles and responsibilities.

### **3.2.2 Tousa**

A customary feast was organized on the event of a married younger brother separating himself from his parental home after establishing his own household. This feast is known as *Tousa*, *tou* is a term used by the younger brother(s) to show respect and honor for the eldest brother and *sa* means meat, or *Tousa Gou*, the act of organizing the feast. The feast was usually organized in the house of the eldest brother. It was also known as *Sa leiba*, an indebted feast, and which is why there were occasions where parents asked their younger sons to perform the feast even before leaving their parental home. In this way, they cleared the feast due of them to

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<sup>42</sup> For more details on both the feasts, refer Kamkhenthang, pp. 104-105, 108.

organize. The reason behind this is that parents wanted to witness the feast before they passed away even if their sons were not married. It is a way of witnessing an obligated tradition being performed. Moreover, it is subjected to the practice of different clans and their different settlements. In this case, the animal slaughtered was also contributed by the parents. The other way of organizing the feast demands that the animal must be borne by the younger brother(s), he must be married and be capable of surviving on his own. As such there were also cases where the mentioned feast organized before leaving parental home were not considered as *Tousa*.<sup>43</sup>

As the saying implies *Khuk in kha khel lou*, which means “a knee can never be higher than the chin”, the biological position of a younger brother cannot be altered so as he becomes the eldest brother and vice-versa. The validity of the saying implied throughout the society but its usages in *Inndongta* was more emphasized. The practice signified the unchanging position of the eldest brother that he was always higher in position to his younger brother(s). The eldest brother would bear all the bride price of his younger brothers and he had to be the *Thallouh* in their *Inndongta* organization. By being the *Thallouh* in their *Inndongta*, he also received *Thallouh Zu*, beer for the *Thallouh*, and also received the head, heart and lungs of an animal killed in game hunt by his brothers. In case if a younger brother would like to apportion the position of *Thallouh* to any person other than his eldest brother, it was done only with the permission and approval of the eldest brother. The success of a younger brother in game hunt indirectly revealed the position of his eldest brother as the head of any animal he killed had to be the share of his eldest brother. He eldest brother enjoyed the privilege to have a share the success of game hunt. This is another reflection of the eldest brother as *Tou* to his younger brothers. Failure to do the same does not invite punishment or penalty but the principle of relationship between two brothers would be shaken as it would be a means of showing disrespect to the eldest brother.

Moreover, the feast could be performed more than once depending on the resources of the performer. If it was performed once, it was not an obligation on the part of the eldest brother to give gifts, but he could do the same on his discretion. Subsequent performance meant that the eldest brother was obliged to give gift to his younger brother in the form of a gayal, a cow or a *taubel*. On the day of the ceremony, the eldest brother took the initiative in setting an *Inndongta* for his younger brother. Failure to organize the feast meant showing disrespect to the elder

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with H. Kamkhenthang, 21 September 2017, Imphal.



brother but at the same time no fine or penalty whatsoever was imposed upon the younger brother.<sup>44</sup> Although there was no mention of fine, it was obligatory for the younger brother to perform the ceremony on the ground solely based on societal norm.<sup>45</sup>

In *Tousa* feast, the organizer usually brought his wife-giver, *Sungpa*, as his *Thallouh* who was responsible for bringing in the animal, either a pig, a gayal or a cow, to the house of the host and his male *Tanupi* would bring one *Phelpi* and one *Dawntou* of beer each for *Zukhaih* and *Tapkuang zu*. The organizer also bore one pot of rice the occasion. Pig was the most common animal slaughtered and the division of meat was as follows:

- |       |                       |  |
|-------|-----------------------|--|
| i.    | <i>Inntek</i>         | The head, the heart, the liver, and the <i>zang sa</i> . |
| ii.   | <i>Thallouh</i>       | A larger portion of the hind leg.                        |
| iii.  | <i>Thallouh Thusa</i> | A portion of the shoulder with the leg.                  |
| iv.   | <i>Thallouh Mang</i>  | One <i>Sabak</i> .                                       |
| v.    | <i>Thusapi</i>        | Half of the nape of the head.                            |
| vi.   | <i>Tanupi</i>         | A larger portion of the ribs.                            |
| vii.  | <i>Tanu Nau</i>       | A portion of the shoulder.                               |
| viii. | <i>Tanu Thumna</i>    | One <i>Sabak</i>   |
| ix.   | <i>Pupi</i>           | Lower portion of the spine.                              |
| x.    | <i>Punau</i>          | One <i>Sabak</i> .                                       |
| xi.   | <i>Zawl</i>           | One <i>Sabak</i> .                                       |
| xii.  | <i>Beh Val</i>        | A portion of the rib.                                    |

As in *Sialkhumsa* feast, the partakers were divided into two groups: the host and his *Inndongta* formed one group and the organizer and his representatives formed the other group. Since the organizer brought a *Thallouh* and a *Tanupi* for the feast, which is referred to as *Thallouh ken* and *Tanu ken* respectively, they are given the same share of meat as their counterpart in the host *Inndongta*. After dividing the meat, all that was left was cooked for all the participants of the occasion.

On the occasion, the following beers were borne by the members of the institution:

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<sup>44</sup> Gouzanang, pp. 27-28.

<sup>45</sup> Cristina Bicchieri and Ryan Muldoon, "Social Norms", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/social-norms/> (accessed 29 July 2017).

- |       |                       |                            |
|-------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| i.    | <i>Inntek</i>         | One <i>Phelpi</i>          |
| ii.   | <i>Thallouh</i>       | One <i>Phelpi</i>          |
| iii.  | <i>Pupi</i>           | One <i>Phelpi</i>          |
| iv.   | <i>Punau</i>          | One <i>Belkhenei</i>       |
| v.    | <i>Tanupi</i>         | One <i>Phelpi</i>          |
| vi.   | <i>Tanunau</i>        | One <i>Dawntou</i>         |
| vii.  | <i>Tanu Thumna</i>    | One <i>Dawntou</i>         |
| viii. | <i>Thallouh Thusa</i> | One <i>Dawntou</i>         |
| ix.   | <i>Hanzutung</i>      | One <i>Belkhenei</i>       |
| x.    | <i>Behval</i>         | One <i>Dawntou</i>         |
| xi.   | <i>Zawl</i>           | One <i>Belkhenei</i>       |
| xii.  | <i>Peng Simte</i>     | One <i>Belkhenei</i> each. |

Arrangement of drink was made in such a way that the host and the organizer shared the same pot, the host's *Thallouh* and the organizer's *Thallouh* and both *Tanupi* from both sides. Distribution of beer was the same as that in *Sialkhumsa* but in *Tousa*, *Khawnsin* was used in place of *Haipi*, which is used in *Sialkhumsa*. And, as in *Sialkhumsa*, *Tapkuang zu* was served at night and the beer was supplied by the organizer.

The feast was repeated the following day. The share of meat given to the householder was cooked in porridge and was consumed by members of his *Inndongta*. With regard to this feast the host house is referred to as *sa ek buakna phet* which means that all the shares of meat given to the host is consumed by his *Inndongta* without leaving anything for them. As in other meat divisions and feasts, each member had their own share and in case the feast was continued the following day, another animal was slaughtered for that purpose. Here, the share of meat for the host was in name only.

### 3.2.3 Death

The sound of a gong, other than that sounded by those who were buying gongs or in a feast and drink ceremony, or the sound of gunshots suggested that death befell a village.<sup>46</sup> When a person died, whatever social status she/he might hold, the body was not buried right away. The corpse was usually kept at least for a week; in case of a commoner; a month or two, in case the

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<sup>46</sup> Gouzanang, p. 77.

person was socially eminent. Death comes unexpectedly and no one was readily prepared to witness death. A cloth to shroud the corpse with had to be woven only when a person died and it usually took a couple of days to complete the weaving and *Zu*, beer made from fermented rice, had to be fermented. Messengers were sent to other villages to inform the relatives of the bereaved family and they were waited for the burial rituals. These relatives also did not come empty-handed. They first prepared beer, collected all necessary items required for paying homage to the dead and only after which they could attend the funeral ceremony of the dead.<sup>47</sup> Only after the completion of the mentioned, the last rites of the dead could be performed.

*Inndongta* members of the bereaved family came with beers to the household and matters relating to the dead were discussed. Be it death, festival or feast, *Zu* occupies an important place in the society and such occasions were considered to be incomplete without *Zu*. The first drinking of beer over death could be witnessed here and it is called *Laitah Zu*. Literally, *lai* is the umbilical cord and *tah* means to cut or disconnect, although the umbilical cord was already cut at birth. Here, the drink is called *Laitah Zu* because the death of a family member signify that the living relationship between the deceased and its family was cut eternally and for which the beer was drank in order to decide the ceremonies to be conducted upon the dead and so also its disposal. When the death of a person occurred during daytime, the drinking was conducted on the same day. However, in case if it fell at night, the drink was conducted the following day.

The deceased's *Pu*, the wife-giver to his/her father, would bring one tail feather of a hornbill known as *Vaphual Mei* and one red-dyed hair of a male goat, *Sawnkai*, and stuck in a calabash filled with beer lees, known as *Thawlthuan*, which is a little bigger than the size of a fist. The calabash was kept adjacent to the head of the dead.

The beers brought by the *Inndongta* members were:

- i. *Tanupi*                      One *Phelpi*
- ii. *Tanunau*                    One *Phelpi*
- iii. *Thallouh*                  One *Dawntou*
- iv. *Pupi*                         One *Dawntou*
- v. *Thusapi*                    One *Belkhenei*
- vi. *Thallouh Thusa*        One *Belkhenei*

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with T. Vungkholian Guite.

- vii. *Hanzutung*            One *Belkhenei*
- viii. *Behval*                One *Belkhenei*
- ix. *Zawl*                    One *Belkhenei*
- x. *Tanu Thumna*        One *Belkhenei*

The beer pots were arranged from the biggest to the smallest followed by the pots brought by relatives, friends and neighbors. Among the members, arrangement was made in such a way that the *Tanupi* and the *Inntek* shared the same pots followed by the *Tanunau* and the *Thallouh*, *Behval* and *Pupi*, and so on. The matters usually discussed during drinking were:

- i. In case the deceased was an infant, not more than one month, no *Kosah* (discussed in the succeeding texts) was done. The corpse was buried underneath the floor of the house by wrapping it with a piece of cloth and put inside a pot. This type of burial is called *Kunvui*. Here, the case is usually death at birth known as *Lamzuih Sih*. Even the death of an infant within a week was considered as *Lamzuih Sih*.
- ii. If the deceased was older than a month, it was kept for a day or two during which young men and women mourned the dead at night. In this case, *Naupang Sigal La*, a song sung on the death of an infant, was sung at night which was similar in tune with *Nau-awih La*.
- iii. The body of an adult was usually kept at least for a week. This was because the shroud for wrapping the corpse was woven only when the person passed away and took days for preparing the cloth. At the same time, it also depended on the social position of the person who passed away. Funerary practice for the death of a commoner usually lasts for a week, while the more socially acknowledge and the rich were kept for a month or two. A dance known as *Silam* (discussed in the succeeding texts) was inevitably performed on the death of a person who organized *Tawn*, even though the corpse was kept for long or not.

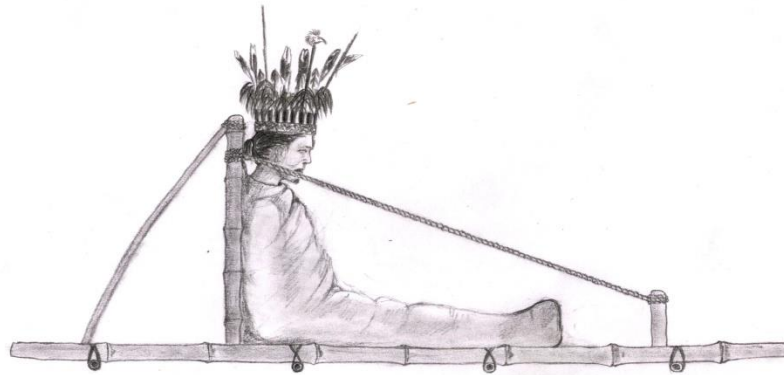
A bier known as *Lang* and *Akgesawm*, a chaplet, was prepared for the dead body. *Lang* was made from either bamboo or wood with a support to keep the corpse in a sitting position and a rope with nine *lam*, the distance between the tip of the middle finger on the right hand to the same on the left with the arms extended or stretched sideways, was used to tighten the bier and the left over was hang loose. This rope was known as *Gun Khau*— *gun* means river, not

specifically the Manipur River which was known by the people as *Meitei Gun* and *khau* means rope, to be used by the dead when it crossed the river that divided the living and the dead when approaching the abode of the dead. *Akgesawm* was a chaplet decorated with the following:

- i. *Vaphual mei*: The tail feather of a hornbill that was kept over a dead body's head was included in the chaplet and means that the hornbill would accompany the soul of the dead from above when it approached the abode of the dead.
- ii. *Akgia*: It is the outstanding one or two tail feather at the tip of a fully grown adult male chicken that was worn around the neck of a new born. It was a symbol of ownership by the living by claiming that the baby belonged to them and not to the evil spirits. As such, this item was also included in the chaplet.
- iii. *Sawnkai*: It is a red-dyed hair of a male goat and was used to mark the number of big animals killed by the dead. The more big animals the dead killed during its lifetime, the more *sawnkai* was placed on the chaplet on its death.
- iv. *Sawnbung*: *Sawnbung* and *Sawnkai* are the same material but the only difference is that in *sawnbung* the tip of the hair is cut. It was used to mark the number of victories over war a man achieved during its lifetime.
- v. *Tukpak*: It is a combination of different colors of dyed cotton yarn used to mark the number of captives of war.
- vi. *Vakulgia*: It is the outstanding tail feather of a black tropical bird bigger than a drongo.
- vii. *Khankhagia*: The outstanding tail feather feather of *Khankha*, a black drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*), was also attached to the chaplet.
- viii. *Vali mei*: It is a wildfowl considered to be similar to domestic fowl and as such the tail feather of this bird was also used.
- ix. *Sakuhgia*: A long hair-like bristles but softer than the erectile bristles of a porcupine is considered as *gia* and was used in the chaplet. Although a porcupine is neither a bird nor a big animal, it was considered worthy to be counted as animal in game hunt and for that it was included in the chaplet.
- x. *Vagik lu*: It is the head of a black pheasant and was considered to be no less different from domestic fowls. More so, the head of the bird was considered more beautiful

than other birds. As such it was also attached in the chaplet given the beauty of its head.

- xi. *Hai keng*: It is a crooked dried calabash specifically made as a beer cup for men who organized feast of victory over war or game hunt that was used in big drink ceremonies. Apart from the usual gayal horn cups, this particular cup was used by men to show that they achieved great feat than the average men. As such it was also included in the chaplet.<sup>48</sup>



Corpse placed in a sitting position in *Lang* (bier) with *Aksesawm* on his head

*Kuang-uk* was practiced during the pre-literate stage where the corpse was kept in a hollowed out tree-trunk and fire lit below it.<sup>49</sup> Besides *Kuang-uk*, N. Gouzanang stated that for a deceased to be kept two to three months, *Kuang-uk* was not done. A hollowed out tree-trunk for keeping the corpse was prepared right away with a bamboo pipe fixed underneath so that the body fluid of the dead would drip. A pit was dug below the floor of the house to which the body fluids from the pipe dripped.<sup>50</sup>

Since the corpse was kept for a long period of time, the community gathered around the dead from the night *Laitah Zu* was drunk till the night when the body was buried. They were known as *Misi gal* or *Si gal* in short. They were served one pot of beer each night which was borne by the bereaved household and their *Inndongta*. Songs were sung and amusements were conducted to hold a wake for the dead. Some of the songs that were sung on occasion of death

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<sup>48</sup> Thawngzanang, pp. 26-29.

<sup>49</sup> TRI, p. 107

<sup>50</sup> Gouzanang, p. 81.

were *Simai La*, *Silap La*, *Tanu La*, *Naupang Sigal La*, *Lapi* and *Lakawi La*. They are requiems composed and sung (or chanted) only on occasions of death and are rhythmic in nature. They were considered a taboo since the mention of the name itself was believed to cast misfortune to those who mentioned the same. The time for singing or chanting was decided by the deceased's family and the person to start the song and beat the drum must be offered a cup of beer to do the same. Moreover, each clan had their own song which was not shared with other clans. This means that the requiems were exclusive of a clan. Generally they were composed for men who achieved outstanding feats and for the adult members of the clans, except for *Naupang Sigal La* (a requiem composed and sung when an infant died). The *Tanu La* was different from the other sets of songs as it was composed and performed by the natal families of a married daughter when the latter passed away.<sup>51</sup> When Goukhawthang Guite died at Imphal jail as a captive of the Meitei king Sanakoireng in April 30, 1872, his cousin sister Ningkham composed a *Lapi* for him. An extract of the requiem goes:

*Dou gamzang a lunmang kha kia aw,*

*Lung a na ngaih teng tawh,*

*Simlei lumsuang in na pou ve aw,*

*Simlei lumsuang in na pou ve aw,*

*Mi sing tan lambang hawn vel hen aw,*

*Tuan simthu'n leibang hawn lel hen aw.*<sup>52</sup>

Free translation:

You great soul who had fallen on the enemy land,

With all your loved ones,

May your gravestone be raised.

May your gravestone be raised,

May that be observed by a great many,

May your story be told.

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<sup>51</sup> Thawngzanang, pp. 16-18.

<sup>52</sup> T. Gwite (ed.), *Khawching Nu Khupniing Aibulawn Hausanu Khivui*, Imphal, Chhungi Gwite, 2002, pp. 60-61.

One such amusement was called *Lumsuih* which was a kind of dance performed by sitting and holding out both arms starting from the door step of the house to the back yard and the person who did the most number of rounds was considered as a strong and stiff person. The tradition was also an act of testing the strength of individuals.<sup>53</sup> Apart from the family and relatives of the deceased, young men and women also attended during such nights. At late night, the young men would leave the house and went to their respective *Ham* to spend the night.

Besides the men and women accompany the bereaved family, the *Sisawm* was the principal attendant of the corpse. *Sisawm* is the other name of *Tanu Thumna*, a married sister or daughter, of an *Inndongta* institution who attended the corpse. She bathed the corpse, washed its cloths, combed its hair and dressed the corpse.<sup>54</sup> The *Sisawm* was obliged to take care of the corpse all this time until the corpse was buried. Specific attendant to the corpse was required since the corpse was fumigated or heated from below with fire. By doing so, the body was left to shrivel, the body fluids gradually began to drip and the skin began to crack. The *Sisawm* peeled off parts of the deceased's skin that were likely to fall and kept it in a gourd bottle and hang it at the back yard of the house.<sup>55</sup> The role of attending the corpse was specifically given to her as well as the collection of firewood and attending the fire too. She could also bring her *Sisawm* from her *Inndongta* had she found the necessity.

The longevity of the practice is commented by J. Shakespear as a “disgusting performance [that] goes for a month or more according to the social position of the deceased.”<sup>56</sup> Could it be that Shakespear was ignorant of the norms of the society, or that he literally felt the practice disgusting? Beside the preparations needed for burial there was also a belief among the people regarding the longevity of keeping the corpse. N. Gouzanang wrote that it was a belief among the people that retention of the corpse meant the family as a whole remained complete and burying the dead meant complete separation of the dead and the living. According to him, the Paites regarded that those families who buried their dead hastily were seen as not having any affection for the same during its lifetime.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Gouzanang, p. 79.

<sup>54</sup> Kamkhenthang, p. 21.

<sup>55</sup> Gouzanang, p. 80.

<sup>56</sup> Shakespear, *The Lushei-Kuki Clans*, p. 142.

<sup>57</sup> Gouzanang, p. 81.



After necessary requirements were made and all its relatives from other villages arrived, the time for burial was discussed over again. A ceremony called *Langkhen* or *Langkhet ni*, beating of the bier or the day of beating the bier, was performed where the deceased' *Pu* literally beat the bier.<sup>58</sup> The corpse was placed to sit on the bier with *Akgesawm* placed on its head. The ceremony was performed to every grandson who lived separately from their parental house and *Pu* slaughtered a barrow on the day. But he could not beat the bier unless he contributed the barrow.<sup>59</sup> However, *Pu* took *Gunman* only from his eldest and youngest grandson. *Gunman* is the property of the deceased, a tinder-box, a spear or a knife, which the *Pu* was obliged to take; if the spear was chosen, the same was planted in the front yard of the house in the evening and from where the *Pu* would take.<sup>60</sup> On the day, there was another beer drinking and the burial process to be followed the next day was discussed.

The beer pots brought by the *Inndongta* members were:

- |       |                       |                      |
|-------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| i.    | <i>Pupi</i>           | One <i>Phelpi</i>    |
| ii.   | <i>Tanupi</i>         | One <i>Phelpi</i>    |
| iii.  | <i>Tanunau</i>        | One <i>Phelpi</i>    |
| iv.   | <i>Thallouh</i>       | One <i>Dawntou</i>   |
| v.    | <i>Thusapi</i>        | One <i>Belkhenei</i> |
| vi.   | <i>Thallouh Thusa</i> | One <i>Belkhenei</i> |
| vii.  | <i>Hanzutung</i>      | One <i>Belkhenei</i> |
| viii. | <i>Behval</i>         | One <i>Belkhenei</i> |
| ix.   | <i>Zawl</i>           | One <i>Belkhenei</i> |
| x.    | <i>Tanuthnumna</i>    | One <i>Belkhenei</i> |

The usual drinking position of the members was not followed in this case. Arrangement was made according to the following:

- i. *Inntek* and *Tanupi*
- ii. *Thallouh* and *Tanunau*

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<sup>58</sup> Interview with G. Chinzam, 24 September, 2017, Pearsonmun.

<sup>59</sup> Kamkhenthang, p. 199.

<sup>60</sup> Gouzanang, p. 7.

- iii. *Sisawm/Tanu Thumna* and *Sisawm* of *Pu's Inndongta*
- iv. *Thusapi* and *Tanupi* of *Pu's Inndongta*
- v. *Hanzutung* and *Pupi*
- vi. *Behval* and *Tanu Thumna*
- vii. *Zawl* and *Tanu Lina* (in case there was no position apportioned for this, any married sister or married woman from the clan whosoever was available would be used for the occasion)

In this case, the *Inndongta* members of the *Pu* were given specific position because the occasion was solely done with the initiative of *Pu* and for that reason they were also given a place in the drinking ceremony. Mourning the dead was perked up the night when *Langkhen* was performed as the corpse would be buried the following day.

Another ceremony was performed before actual burial took place which is called *Kosah*. It is a ceremony in which the *Pu* provided the dead to be brought to the abode of the dead. The *Pu* slaughtered a barrow where the vital parts, that is, the heart and the liver, were given the dead and the other parts were partaken by the *Inndongta* members and the village community. The bereaved family had to bear one quadruped for the feast, may be a gayal or a barrow and members of their *Inndongta* one barrow each. The feast was organized in order to please the spirit of the dead while at the same time it was believed that they would become the herd of the deceased in the afterlife.<sup>61</sup> Burying the corpse without this feast was unusual, except death at infancy, and was considered to be inevitable for adult members of the society. The following was the meat division over *Kosah* animal(s):

- |      |                       |  |
|------|-----------------------|--|
| i.   | <i>Thallouh</i>       | The hind thigh (gayal); the fore leg (pig)             |
| ii.  | <i>Tanupi</i>         | The thigh  |
| iii. | <i>Tanunau</i>        | The shoulder   |
| iv.  | <i>Tanu Thumna</i>    | The portion between the hind legs                      |
| v.   | <i>Thallouh Thusa</i> | The front leg  |
| vi.  | <i>Thusapi</i>        | One <i>Sabak</i> (gayal); a portion of the thigh (pig) |
| vii. | <i>Hanzutung</i>      | One <i>Sabak</i>                                       |

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<sup>61</sup> Kamkhenthang, p. 196-197.

- viii. *Behval* One *Sabak*
- ix. *Zawl* One *Sabak*
- x. *Siampi* (the village priest) A portion of the shoulder of the pig slaughtered by the *Pu*.

Depending on the number of animals slaughtered, members of the institution got their share of meat from all the slaughtered animals. Apart from these animals, a barrow was slaughtered by the *Pu* where the vital parts was placed in both the palm of the dead, known as *Sasin tawi*; the meat that was placed in the left palm was for the person whom the deceased first met when she/he reached *Misi khua*, obviously for *Sahnu* (a female deity) who stood at the threshold of the abode of the dead and the other one was for her/his family.<sup>62</sup> Only after *Sasin tawi* was done could the mortuary feast be partaken.

Digging of the grave was specifically done by the male members of the *Inndongta* under the supervision of the *Thallouh*. The grave was dug in such a way that a hole was burrowed out either from the length or width of the grave to place the corpse. It usually took considerable length of time to complete digging of the grave. So also was the making of casket for keeping the corpse. Soft trees were usually preferred as it took less time in hollowing out the inside. The most preferred wood is *Pang* tree, a thorny species of tree that could grow into a big size. The tree was splitted in the middle and hollowed out on both sides or another tree was cut to make the casket cover. Those who are involved in this work were offered separate beer that was borne by the householder and the *Pu*.

When it was dusk, the actual burial took place. There are two types of burial practices: viz., *Dakvui*, done only after *Kosah* was performed, and *Kunvui*, burial of infant under the floor of the house. *Kunvui* was performed in a simple way where the corpse was wrapped in a shroud and was buried with broken beer pots. No *Kosah* was performed over the second type.<sup>63</sup> Before bringing out the corpse from the house, it was put in a coffin and the corpse was wrapped with clothes by her/his family, relatives and friends. It was conventional that the *Tanupi* as *Tuampi* should be the first to wrap the corpse in case the deceased was either the mother or the father. She wrapped the corpse with *Puandum* in case a gayal was slaughtered for the deceased *Kosah*,

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<sup>62</sup> Gouzanang, p. 87.

<sup>63</sup> Kamkhenthang, p. 191.

and *Puankang*, in case a pig or cow was slaughtered. Had the *Tanupi* wrapped the corpse with *Puandum*, the *Tanunau* followed by covering it with *Puankang*. In case the *Tanupi* wrapped the corpse with *Puankang*, all the other also used the same type of cloth. Moreover, had the *Tanupi* wrapped the corpse with *Puandum* a feast was organized on her name known as *Sithou* where she received a portion of the shoulder of the animal slaughtered for the role she performed. *Sithou* was considered more or less the same with *Sa-aih*, a feast performed after success in game hunt, but the only difference was that *Phit Lam* was performed in the latter; *Phit* is a musical instrument made of three small bamboos with different sizes and lengths and the dance performed by blowing the instrument is known as *Phit Lam*.

When the corpse was ready to be buried, it was carried out from the house. The grave was shot with a blank fire in order to drive the out evil spirits that may disturbed the dead.<sup>64</sup> Then burial took place. The *Thallouh* with the help of other *Inndongta* members and the *Thallouh* from his *Inndongta*, who was known as *Sisial* on occasion of burial rituals, placed the corpse in the grave. The burrow to which the corpse was placed was closed with either flat stones or woods and the whole pit was filled with earth. After the burial was done, a branched-wooden pole called *Sawng* was erected on top of it where the *Akgesawm*, the heads of the animals slaughtered in *Kosah* and a roasted chicken and gourd bottle kept in a bag were placed.

What is peculiar about beer drinking on the day of burial is that there was specific beer drinking solely laid aside for the womenfolk called *Numei Zu* (beer for the women). Depending on the wealth of the household, pots of beer were given for the women of the *Inndongta*, that is, the wives of the members, apart from the Tanu group who were also obviously included. These beers were taken from among those brought by people who came for the event.

The following day was observed as *Siatvat ni* or *Han dal ni*, where members of the *Inndongta* and relatives of the family organized beer drinking. There was a belief that the soul of the deceased did not leave for *Misi khua* until the next full moon after burial and the spirit used to visit her/his house for food and drink. As such, it was the responsibility of the *Tanupi* to offer food in a basket and a bottle of beer near the pole in the middle of the house known as *Sutpi*. The food and beer that were kept for the soul was known as *Si-ansiah* and the same was replaced

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with T. Vungkholian Guite.

with a new one every morning. When it was full moon another ceremony was organized in order to mark the end of funeral process. The ceremony is known as *Silouh paih* where members of *Inndongta* would bring pots of beer and ceremonial drinking was held. Glutinous rice was cooked for the ceremony and it is called *Khen an*, the food for separation, as it was believed that the departing soul of the deceased ate with them. *Silouh paih* marked the eternal separation between the dead and the living and the soul departed for *Misi khua*.<sup>65</sup>

One Hrangdawla wrote in 1907 regarding the disposal of the dead among the Lamzang group of the Paites. It seemed he was taken aback by the custom regarding death rituals and went to the extent by commenting that:

“I do not believe, ladies and gentlemen, that such normativity had ever existed in our land (Mizoram).”<sup>66</sup>

From the mentioned social and cultural life of the people it can be seen that *Inndongta* serves as the means of performing action. The individual actors were mutually interdependent over one another as well as the same was also realized between the different traditions and the institution. Mutually interdependent, here, would mean that the responsibility of one member was performed so as to realize the performance of the other member. It can be said that the notion of compartmentalizing roles and position was taken to the extent that a member failing to accomplish her/his responsibility did not receive any help from the other members. This is evident from the sayings *Tanute, na mei uh vil un!* (Members of *Tanu*, attend to your fire), *Thallouhte, kua zu tep hun hiam na zobel uh vil un!* (Members of *Thallouh*, attend to your beer pot and see whose turn is it to drink) and *Thusate, na zu uh hawm un!* (Members of *Thusa*, serve your beer).

Regardless of the roles and responsibilities performed by the individuals in the organization, the very same act was guided by the traditional norm. In every division made in meat and drinks, each individual received their own share; should an individual be missed out, she/he would refrain from involving in the activities of that particular *Inndongta*. By being a member of one organization, an individual was already bound by certain roles and

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<sup>65</sup> Gouzanang, p. 94.

<sup>66</sup> Hrangdawla, “Lamzang Thih Dan: The Lamzang Dead”, *Mizo Leh Vai Chanchin Lekhhabu*, August, 1907.

responsibilities and in return received a share of meat and drink in any feast. In any drinking ceremony, the specifically arranged drink position of the members of the organization also reflected reciprocity to an extent. For instance, when two *Inndongta* came together over any social activity, members from one side offered beer to their immediate counterparts. When a *Thallouh* from one *Inndongta* offered a cup of beer to his counterpart, the latter returned the same with twice the amount of the beer he received. It means that a beer offered in *Khawnsin* when returned was equal to the amount of beer offered in *Haipi*.<sup>67</sup>

Likewise, the meat and drinks that characterized the feasts and ceremonies can be seen as mutual exchanges of the roles and responsibilities played by individuals who participated in any of the organizations. The enormous consumption of beer and the numerous numbers of animals slaughtered was something that was lavishing. The social position of families was different from one another; the richer households could afford to offer meat and drinks abundantly while the common households would find it hard to afford the same but still wanted to perform the rituals. Each member contributed whatever resources that was required for a ritual to be performed. Be it in goods or service, any household was assisted by its *Inndongta* members when it faced difficulties in coming up with the necessary preparations. The household who was aided would again return back the same benefits that it received to household where it was a member. Thus, there was a structural relationship within a village entity that went hand in hand with different functions.

### **3.3 Objects of Intercommunication and their Representation**

The organization, the participant members and the significance of their positions can be best understood with the existence of a share for each member certain objects which are cultural signs prevalent within the shared set of norms. These objects are signs that symbolize the abstract values of their cultural norms through which meaning is communicated between individuals.<sup>68</sup> *Zu* and *sa* predominantly represented the objects of their communication, however, with different significances particularly with meat. Whereas there was no such specific exchange ceremony as in the potlatch among the Paites, exchange did occur and only during festivities and

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<sup>67</sup> Interview with T. Vungkholian Guite.

<sup>68</sup> Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick, *Cultural Theory: The Key Concepts*, London, Routledge, 2008, Second Edition, p. 347.

other occasions. Exchange of goods and services beyond these conditions did occur but the focus laid out will be concerning *Inndongta* and its activities.

Meat division during any *Inndongta* activity was an important element where specific share of a portion of meat was already laid out for each member. In his study of feasting and meat division among the Zahau-Chins of Burma, H.N.C. Stevenson stated:

“Enquiry revealed a wide variety of recipients of meat, and I found that this system was thoroughly institutionalised, specific divisions being made among varying groups on different occasions.”<sup>69</sup>

Stevenson divided the recipients of the meat into different groups. The first group was what he called the “kinship dues” in which shares of meat were given to direct kin members of any feast giver. The second group comprised of the two best friends of the feast-giver. The third group comprised of other persons such as people who had already given such feasts, helpers of the feast, and others those that were related to the feast. The fourth group comprised of the permanent recipients of any feast and they were the headman and the blacksmith.<sup>70</sup>

It was a thoroughly institutionalized division as each share of meat given to a specific position had different meanings attached to it. Stuart Hall wrote,

“Representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our kinds through language...we are able to communicate because we share broadly the same conceptual maps and thus make sense of or interpret the world in roughly similar ways. That is indeed what it means when we say ‘we belong to the same culture’.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> H.N.C. Stevenson, ‘Feasting and Meat Division Among the Zahau-Chins of Burma’, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 67 (Jan. - Jun., 1937), p. 16. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2844167>, (accessed 7 February 2017).

<sup>70</sup> Stevenson, “Feasting and Meat Division”, p. 21.

<sup>71</sup> Stuart Hall, “The work of Representation”, in Stuart Hall ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Sygnifying Practices (Culture, Media and Identities Series)*, London, Sage Publications Ltd., Second Edition, 2013. pp. 3-4.

Similarly, among the Paites, shares of meat, thus, represented specific meanings. The *Thallouh* group and the *Thusapi* were usually given the thigh and the shoulder and they were the portions of the flesh where much energy was used by the animal itself. This is because these members stood for the household as hand and foot and also spent much of their energies for the household. They were supposed to stand on behalf of the householder. The shares of meat of the *Tanu* group represented their role of giving comfort and solace to the household in times of woe and festivities. Depending on the choice of the *Pu*, the share of meat varies viz., the ear (*Sa bil*), the neck (*Sa ngawng*) and the lower back spine (*Sa ngum*). Firstly, the ear is the organ of hearing and equilibrium and it represented the position of *Pu* as keen of hearing or keeping watch over his grandchildren. Secondly, as the neck is the bridge that joins the head and the body, the position of *Pu* as the wife-giver was reflected here. Thirdly, the tail prevents the body from flies and other stinging insects as such this share of meat represented *Pu* as the guardian of his grandchildren.<sup>72</sup> Shares of meat given to other members could also be interpreted as a token of gratitude to the roles they played in any *Inndongta* activity.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

By looking at the nature of the feast and ceremonies observed within the community, it can be said that the traditional Paites observed and performed the mentioned norms only on a communal basis. No individual is independent of each other and the action performed by any individual is guided by the norms of the society. This in turn connotes the interdependency of individuals in the social system. As such, the norm of reciprocity plays a significant role in the social well-being of the households of the village and the people to a large extent.

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<sup>72</sup> Ngaihte, p. 5.



The history of the Paites in Mizoram dated back to the time when the Palian chiefs crossed the Tiau River and entered present-day Mizoram. No specific time period could be given but a significant number of Paites under Sianthuam Guite had entered Mizoram along with the Palian chiefs. Historical records had shown that the Paite entrance to Mizoram did not occur at once and ended, rather it occupied a long period of decades till the middle of the twentieth century. Moreover, though many of them permanently settled in Mizoram, a good number of them move to other places like Manipur and Assam. Like other Mizo ethnic groups who entered Mizoram and settled there, the Paites were also one among them.

Chimnuai, now becoming a legendary settlement, was considered to be the origin of the Paites. Because even oral tradition could not go beyond their settlement at Chimnuai, their history was read from there. However, it can be maintained that settlements other than Chimnuai, earlier or contemporaneous, did exist and the Zo people as a whole who are now divided by geo-political boundaries were one and the same people. Change of settlement in time led to the development of identities determined by their location. As such the name Paite itself came to be an identity of a group who were hitherto a number of clan identities.

For an institution to be systematically organized characterized by frequent change of settlement given the agricultural practice and raids and counter-raids between villages, it can be said that the practice required certain degree of sedentariness in their settlement. This sedentariness could be attributed to their antique days during their settlement in Chimnuai since the available sources mentioned that twenty-two generations lived in that settlement and only during the twenty-third generation that the settlement at Tedim was established. Earlier or while in this settlement the norms of the society began to develop into a communal practice and that was brought along with them in their course of migration. The institutions of chieftainship, marriage, kinship, belief system, *Inndongta* and *Ham*, among others, were such normativities that determine the society and culture of the Paites.

Certain norms of the society developed in historical time and space and many of them evolved till present-day, apart from modifications of the existing ones to suit the present condition. With respect to the Paites, one such development that can be seen was the practice of *Inndongta*. It can also be said that the development or evolution of the institution took a long

period of time to become a continual practice. The institution is based on kinship for the most part, with the inclusion of non-kin members within one village entity. By looking at the nature of the institution and apportion of members, it reflected a systematically organized institution.

While it can be said that the institution reflected a systematic organization, the institution being based on kinship also suggested that kinship and kin affiliation was given due importance in the Paite society. This is evident from the nature of their continuous change of settlement until the British arrived as it was always kin-based. When a married man settled in a village with his families where there were no near relatives, not to mention the usual selection criteria, to apportion for his institution, he could invite any man or woman from his kin to participate in his institution. Had the criteria been unable to be fulfilled, he could invite able men and women other than his kin members in order to organize the institution. So, the first choice always fell upon the same clan. The importance given kinship among the Paites can also be seen in their folk songs particularly with that related to death. Each kin group had their own way of composing and singing requiems which were exclusive of their possession.

The existence of social norms in every society is not disregarded at the same time, and that the notion of philanthropy is itself guided by the norms of the society. However, philanthropy cannot always function in the society and has limitations in its performance from the smallest to the largest actions. The existence of certain framework or platform through which individual actors performed their actions, guided by the norms of the society, was much realized in the *Inndongta*. Individual choice was kept aside when it comes to social activities. Superficially, the services lent by individual members that can be seen in the institution was selfless and for the welfare of the owner of the institution. Profoundly, the notion of selflessness and the intended welfare rather pointed toward an obligation to be returned between individuals or between two institutions. At the same time, the roles, the actions performed and the objects of intercommunication between members in the institution were symbolic. The position of *Thusapi* and *Zawl*, among others, exemplified the wholeness of the institution because they were non-kin members who were supposed to speak on behalf and mediate on any occasion that the institution faced. On this standpoint, they can be considered the symbol of the institution. The arrangement made among the members when it comes to drinking beer suggested the practice of performing different feasts and rituals and to which the importance of the positions of the members could be

seen through the event. So also is the case with the division of meat as each share represented the importance of the members.

The notion of reciprocity is significant with the practice of the antique custom. Services and goods, in the form of materials objects, formed the basis of the exchange system. These material objects represented the interaction between social actors in a way in which the objectified actions of an individual was responded with the same by the other individual who was a beneficiary to it. As per the distribution of meat in any feast, there were shares of meat given to members of the *Inndongta*. These shares of meat surmounted the interaction between members of the institution for the roles and responsibilities that they played for the owner of the institution. Moreover, each share of meat represented meanings that signify the importance of the roles and responsibilities of the members. Disproportionate distribution of meat or failure to give a member her/his share also meant a break with the established custom. This means that a member who was subjected to such shortcomings was likely to refrain from the activities of the household to which she/he was a member of their institution. Therefore, the particular member no longer participated in the activities of that institution in an act of showing discontentment toward the household. Arising to such environment could break social relationships between the individual and the householder of the institution.

At the core of the functioning of the institution was the norm of the society that guided the behavior of the members who were involved in the institution. The expected behavior of the members was not an end in the institution rather it was extended at large to the whole village community. Although social events or rituals were performed with the established frameworks of the institution, such events were also attended by the village community in most cases. And, cases or events that were related to the establishment of social relationships or those that were likely to disrupt social relationships were usually taken up and solved through the institution. Matters beyond the discretion of the institution were only referred to the higher authority of the village, i.e., the chief's court. As such, the chief's court had minimal involvement in the dealings of the institution, which can be interpreted as the institution of chieftainship and the *Inndongta* were different entities in the social realm. What is to be noted here is that each household within a village community had their own institution.

The social and cultural implications of the institution also reflected the economy of the pre-literate Paites. The interrelationship between society, culture and economy was deeply rooted so much so that they determined the life of the people. In order to perform the numerous ceremonies and rituals, the economic standing of a household determined whether it could perform such normativities or not. The consumption of meat and beer was considerably high when feasts or rituals were conducted. As such, it required a sound economic base. With that requirements came the different social positions of households within a village. While there were households who could meet easily the requirements, there were also households who could barely come up with the same.

Coupled with the above mentioned is the belief system of the Paites particularly with death and the afterlife. The earlier Paites believed that the spirit of a person who died entered a new destination called *Misi khua*, the abode of the dead. As such, they took great care of the body of a dead person. Retention of corpse varies from a week to a month or two in the case of an adult but infants were immediately buried. Whether a corpse was buried early or late, items such as meat, egg and cloth were usually buried along with it. These items were for the spirit of the dead to be partaken while it approached the *Misi khua* and for *Sahnu* who was considered as the gatekeeper of the destination. It was also believed that the heads of the animals slaughtered in mortuary feast known as *Kosah* that were attached to the pole above the grave would become the herds of the spirit in its afterlife. What is significant about the belief system of the people regarding burial is that the evil spirits that entered the grave were driven out with gunfire before actual burial took place. This was done because it was a belief among the people that such spirits would disturb the spirit of the dead when it approached the abode of the dead.

Apart from the mentioned practices, what is remarkable about the drinking of beer is that women enjoyed a drink for their own specifically consecrated for them. Despite both men and women partaking beer and meat on every occasion, on the day of burial of a dead, the womenfolk enjoyed the opportunity of drinking beer without the menfolk. It was known as *Numei zu* which means 'beer for the women'. They comprised of the wives of the male members along with the *Tanu* members and usually eight pots of beer were given for them. These beers were contributed by the bereaved family and also taken from those brought by the community who participated in the rituals.

Although the tradition of *Inndongta* is subjected to change and continuity even before the advent of the British in Mizoram, it can be stated that the social and cultural history of the Paites was reflected in the institution. Moreover, the institution being owned by every household in a village suggested that the institution played a significant role among the people. Thus, it can be said that *Inndongta* was vital to the socio-cultural life of the Paites.

## Glossary

<i>Akgesawm</i>	A chaplet made for the dead
<i>Bel khe nei</i>	A beer pot that can contain 5-10 liters of beer
<i>Buh sek</i>	Conveying paddy
<i>Buh tuh</i>	Seed sowing
<i>Buh vua/vuak</i>	Threshing paddy
<i>Dakbu</i>	A set of small gongs (three in numbers)
<i>Daktal</i>	One among a set of small gongs
<i>Dakvui</i>	Burial that only takes place by performing <i>Kosah</i>
<i>Dawntou</i>	A beer pot that can contain approximately 30 liters of beer
<i>Gun man</i>	Property of the deceased either a tinder-box, a spear or a knife that is to be owned by <i>Pu</i>
<i>Ham</i>	Young men's dormitory
<i>Hausa</i>	A village chief
<i>Innbulhel</i>	The tradition of wooing a girl's hand in marriage by members of the groom's <i>Inndongta</i> by bringing alongwith a pot of beer
<i>Innpi/Innpipa</i>	Ancestral home/Head of the ancestral home
<i>Inntek</i>	Householder (the head of the family)
<i>Inn lam</i>	Constructing house
<i>Khuang</i>	Drum
<i>Kosah</i>	Mortuary feast; usually a barrow is slaughtered
<i>Kunvui</i>	Burial without performing mortuary feast
<i>Lang</i>	A bier used to put a dead body in sitting posture
<i>Langkhen</i>	Beating of the bier
<i>Lou khou</i>	Weeding
<i>Lou vat</i>	Clearing forest for cultivation
<i>Mang-kua</i>	'Nine chiefs'. In the pre-literate days each village was under a chief who was known as <i>Hausa</i> and a <i>hausu</i> is entitled <i>Mang</i> when he held overlordship over a number of villages.
<i>Misi gal</i>	The village community who gather to mourn a dead; condolence party
<i>Misi khua</i>	Abode of the dead
<i>Mou man</i>	Bride price
<i>Phelpi</i>	A beer pot that can contain 50-100 liters of beer

<i>Phit lam</i>	A dance performed with a woodwind instrument called <i>Phit</i> that is made from small bamboos and blown through the lips
<i>Pu</i>	Maternal uncle
<i>Puandum</i>	Traditional shawl dyed with indigo
<i>Puanngou</i>	Cloth or white linen
<i>Sa</i>	Meat
<i>Sahnu</i>	A female deity who stood at the threshold of the abode of the dead
<i>Sawm</i>	Members of the <i>Ham</i>
<i>Sawng</i>	Branched wooden pole where heads of animals killed in game hunt or slaughtered during mortuary feast are fixed
<i>Sialki</i>	Horn of a gayal
<i>Si-ansiah</i>	Food and beer kept for the spirit of the dead after burial
<i>Silouh paih/</i>	Food that is taken to mark the separation between the dead and the living
<i>Khen an</i>	
<i>Sisan pal</i>	Deliver a child
<i>Tanu</i>	Daughter
<i>Thachial</i>	Invited labor
<i>Tha man</i>	Labor price
<i>Tuk</i>	Diameter of the thorax of a gayal or pig measured by means of the width of the fist of a grown up man
<i>Zampi</i>	Gong
<i>Zu</i>	Rice beer

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