VARIATIONS IN THE TALE: A STUDY OF TRANSLATED MIZO FOLKTALES

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

ENGLISH

By

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Contents

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Date: 30th. December. 2011.

This is to certify that I, Esther Lalparmawii, have carried out the research embodied in this dissertation for the full period prescribed under M. Phil., ordinances of the University.

I declare to the best of my knowledge that no part of this dissertation was earlier submitted for the award of research degree of any University.

Signature of the Supervisor

Signature of the Candidate

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an attempt to study different "folktales" of the Mizos that have been documented by both British and local writers. Writing was introduced among the Mizos by the Christian missionaries in March 1894 with the creation of the Mizo Alphabet by Rev. James Herbert and Rev F.W. Savidge. They gave the "Duhlian" language (a language used by the Lusei sub-tribe of the Mizos) an alphabet based on the Roman Script. Before this writing was unknown to the Mizos or Lushais (as they were known at that time), although one legend talks of how the Mizos had once known writing that was engraved on the skin of an animal which was unfortunately eaten up by a dog and from then onwards the art of writing was completely forgotten by them. Whether this story is true or not might never be known, but what is apparent is that the history of the Mizos is oral based and relies heavily on their customs and traditions. It is due to this fact that many of the historical writings often rely on several folksongs and folktales to substantiate certain events and arguments. The role of folktales and folksongs is therefore an important one. Collections of Mizo folktales have been made by British administrators and missionaries as well as Indian administrators and writers alike. Any writings on the early Mizos or their history invariably consist of a few folktales. These writings have been critically examined by many scholars but the role that the folktales play is hardly dealt with as a separate study. To the best of my knowledge, in recent years there have been a few critical

reviews on some of the Mizo folktales and these are mostly found in a blog called www.mizowritinginenglish.com. Translations of folktales as well as papers that have been presented on Mizo literature are regularly posted on this website. There has also been a study made by Laldinpuii titled "Tailoring the Tale: Mizo Folktales as a Means of Education" which looks at the educational aspect of Mizo folktales and how they had been used by the early British administrators and missionaries as a means of imparting knowledge as well as a means to imbibe certain values and morals among the Mizo people. Apart from these critical studies, it would be safe to say that despite their importance critical reviews on the compilations and collections of Mizo folktales are rarely available. The present dissertation is therefore, an attempt at a continuation of whatever critical work been made so far.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MIZORAM

In the colonial period, Mizoram or most of the area that is now occupied by the state, was given the name "Lushai Hills" after the dominant tribe of the region-the Lusei. It should be noted that the term "Lushai" is a British rendering of the word "Lusei" because it was easier for the colonizers to pronounce the former. In 1891, the Lushai Hills were divided into two administrative regions which were- the "North Lushai Hills" and the "South Lushai Hills" which were administered under the Chief Commissionership of Assam and the Bengal Government respectively. These two regions were then merged in 1898 as "Lushai Hills" under the administration of one Superintendent. This region had two sub-divisions with Aijal (Aizawl) and Lungleh (Lunglei) as the centres. This amalgamated region was later given the name Mizo Hills

District by an Act of Parliament in 1954. The Mizo Hills District became a Union Territory in 1971 and was eventually given the name Mizoram when it became the 27th state of the Indian Union in 1987.

NOMENCLATURE

The name "Mizoram" comes from the joining of two words which are, "Mizo" which translated into English means "highlander" or "people from the hills" and "Ram" which means "land" or "country". Therefore, Mizoram means "Land of the Mizos/Highlanders". The people who are ethnically of Tibeto-Burman origin living in Mizoram and the surrounding regions are generally referred to as the Mizos. The term "Mizo" usually refers to the hill men who are now permanent residents of the present Mizoram and fluency in the use of the Lusei language i.e. the Duhlian language is also an important criterion. However, the term Mizo is ambiguous and "is relative as one may or may not include all the hill men who are now permanent residents of Mizoram" (Nunthara 13). Nunthara writes further that the inclusion of all the tribes or sub-tribes of the region under one umbrella of the so called "Mizos" depends on contextual situations. For instance, the Chakmas who are Bangladeshi immigrants and the Reangs who are a nomadic tribe and who follow the religions of Buddhism and Hinduism respectively are now regarded as formal residents of Mizoram as far as political structure is concerned, but remain socially distinct tribes from the Mizos[1]. Christianity is often a criterion put forward to identify the Mizos, as the word "Mizo" is now considered almost synonymous with Christianity with the exception of these minor tribal groups of the Chakmas and

[1] Nunthara, *Mizoram Society and Polity,* 29-30.

the Reangs[2]. The Pawihs and the Lakhers of the southern region of Mizoram are often reported in the Census records as belonging to separate tribal groups different from the Mizos. In the social and political spheres, the Pawihs (or Lais) readily adapt themselves to the Mizo normative rules, while the Lakhers (or Maras) are less adaptive to the Mizo ways of life wherein the difference of their dialects from the Lusei language plays the main role[3].

As has been mentioned before, the Mizos may also include the Lusei-Chin tribes and other related tribes that are spread beyond the boundaries of the present state of Mizoram. These tribes may be found settled in Manipur and North Cachar Hills in India as well as across Bangladesh and Burma. They retain their distinctive cultural identity and continue to be in contact with the members of the dominant Lusei group in Mizoram. However, the differences in the dialects among these people, despite the homogenising term "Mizo", showcase the heterogeneity of the Mizos. The existence of many dialects among the people who are living within Mizoram and in the adjacent areas contest the use of the Lusei language as the *lingua franca* of all the Mizo tribes. Such contestations often led to sub-group consciousness and identity within the Pan-Mizo-tribal-identity[4].The Census of 1961 included the 18 major Mizo clans who were living in Mizoram[5]. Some of these clans who were closely related to each other both linguistically and culturally soon merged with the dominant Lusei clan. So, today, some non-Lusei clans in Mizoram, except the Lakhers, the Pawihs and the Chakmas, totally immerse themselves in the Lusei way of life and identify themselves as Duhlian or Lusei speaking Mizos. In addition to this, the territorial boundary of

[2] Nunthara, *Mizoram Society and Polity,* 35.
[3] Nunthara, *Mizoram Society and Polity,* 31.
[4] Nunthara, *Mizoram Society and Polity,* 31-32
[5] *Census of India (1961), Assam Mizo Hills,* 6.

Mizoram also serves as a means of maintaining group and social cohesion among the different clans[6].

Scholars like Vumson, Mangkhawsat Kipgen and many others prefer to use the generic term "Zo" as they feel that it is the best and most inclusive term to employ to identify these people. Hence, the people that are called the "Zo" ethnic group are those that now occupy the present state of Mizoram as well as those of the surrounding regions inside and outside of India. In his book titled *Christianity and Mizo Culture* Mangkhosat Kipgen writes:

> Another term that is used in this book which requires definition is the word "Zo". It is used to denote a tribe many clans of which inhabit Burma (where they are known as Chins), North Cachar and Manipur (where they are known as Kukis), and Mizoram (where they are known as Mizos) (Kipgen 6).

From the above, it may be surmised that the term "Mizo" applies to the people who use the Lusei language and are residents of the present State of Mizoram and to those who share a common "Zo" culture but are spread across different geographical locations. It is also understandable that the term "Mizo" would inevitably become problematic for the people who do not use the Lusei language.

[6] Nunthara, *Mizoram Society and Polity,* 239-240.

The British had divided Mizoram into two administrative units for their own convenience and even after they left these units were retained by the Indian government. The idea of reunifying the people became frequently highlighted in the post-independence political movements of the region. This can be seen in the Mizo Union political party movement which started in 1946. The movement resolved to unite all the Mizo people in the Cachar and Manipur districts of Assam, in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and in the adjacent region of Burma by amalgamating them into the then Lushai Hills, so as to designate all as inhabiting one district. The common culture, language, religion, and geographical continuity shared by all the areas and more importantly the same ethnic origin shared by them became the guiding spirit for the movement[7]. This is another indication about the gap between the political and social structure of Mizoram. As has been said, the Reangs and Chakmas are regarded as formal residents of Mizoram but they remain distinct from the Mizo tribes due to the difference in ethnicity and religion. In the 1960's, the same idea was propounded by the Mizo National Front party movement with their idea of "Greater Mizoram" which is to create a separate Mizo Nation that would engulf all the sub ethnic groups in Mizoram, Manipur, Cachar, Tripura, Bangladesh and Burma[8]. The idea of re-unification and the ethnic political movements that have surfaced in the state reflect the identity crisis which is still prevalent in the region.

According to C. Nunthara, it is the cultural affinity shared between these groups of people despite an existing heterogeneity that gives rise to an "ethnocentric valuation of tribal culture in general and scornful resentment against the plains culture" (Nunthara 234). Sangkima is of the opinion that the people seemingly appear to accept the term Zo as a common nomenclature for the

[7] Vumson, *Zo History* (Aizawl: Author, not dated), 248.
[8] Nunthara, *Mizoram Society and Polity,* 196-197.

sake of "re-unification" but how this should be achieved properly remains a different question[9]. Till today, the right term of identification remains elusive, and this difficulty is faced while writing about these people. It must be remembered that before the popularity of the generic term of "Mizo", the colonizers had constantly used "Lushai" to denote the different clans that were present in the Lushai Hills. . For the sake of convenience, and to avoid further confusion in terms of nomenclature, I will only use the terms "Mizo" and "Lushai" as and when they are appropriate in this dissertation.

RELIGION AND CULTURE OF THE MIZOS

"The entire culture – institutions, customs, stories and music – was integrated by the Zo religious worldview" (Kipgen 106). This assertion aptly sums up the place of religion in the lives of the Mizos. Before the advent of the British, the Lushais/Mizos believed in a superior being called Pathian, who was essentially a benevolent God. They also believed in "Huai" or demons that were said to inhabit every creek, hill, stream and river or even rocks and were believed to be the causes for several illnesses. Hence, the Lushais spent much of their time trying to appease these demons and employing a "Puithiam"(sorcerer) to help them identify which "Huai" was causing them trouble. McCall has listed fifteen "huais" in his book *Lushai Chrysalis* and lists them as "Ramhuais" or "spirits who were of outstanding importance in relation to specific phases of some of life's more common experiences, though the army of spirits was legion" (McCall 68). One might say the Lushai was a very superstitious person who would attribute everything to the spiritual world. Hence, concepts like "thianglo" which means "not allowed" or "it is not the thing

[9] Sangkima, *Essays on the History of the Mizos* (Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 2004), 39.

done" became central to the Lushai way of life. It is "thianglo" to shoot a gibbon, because at the Thimzing[10] a man and his wife were changed into these animals. This serves as an explanation to why the female gibbon has black hands while the rest of her body is white. It is said that during the Thimzing the woman was dyeing blue thread when she was suddenly changed into a gibbon. It is on superstitions such as these that many of the folktales are based.

FOLKLORE OF THE MIZOS

The Oxford Dictionary defines "folklore" in this manner, "The traditional beliefs and customs of a community, passed on by word of mouth"[11] whereas, the American Heritage Dictionary defines it as, "the traditional beliefs, myths, tales, and practices of a people, transmitted orally."[12] If we are to work along the lines of these two definitions, it would mean that "folklore" is one large body that comprises of beliefs, customs, myths, tales, and practices of a people which are transmitted orally. This means that folktale is one of the elements that constitute the folklore of a community. There has been a controversy on whether the term "folklore" should be used to refer to the oral literary forms of a society. William P. Murphy in his article "Oral Literature" writes about this controversy in this manner:

[10] According to the Lushai translation given by Col.Shakespear, this "thimzing" occurred right after an eclipse whence darkness prevailed and many awful things happened. Apparently, people were transformed into animals and birds and hence there were no humans left on earth. It is the general belief in Mizo Folklore that when this "thimzing" occurs bad things happen. The word itself signifies "darkness" as in "being in the midst of darkness".
[11] http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/folklore.
[12] The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition copyright ©2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Updated in 2009. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

> It sets up a derogatory distinction between oral and written forms of literature: calling the former [oral form of literature] folklore invokes connotations of something simple, crude, and less "civilized." These negative associations in the word "folklore" have adhered to the term throughout its intellectual history. Although professional folklorists argue that they use the term technically without these associations, it is an unavoidable fact that nineteenth century ethnocentrism weighs heavily on the term in its present-day usage. (Murphy 3)

One may attribute these “negative associations” to the connection that folklore has with imperialism. The interest in oral cultures or “primitive” cultures had given rise to the popularity of folklore in Europe and other colonizing countries. The oral narratives and traditions of the people in these oral societies were given the name “folklore” and were used as a means to colonize many of these societies which gave rise to these negative associations. In the case of the Mizo society, the term “folktale” is a relatively recent term being used to describe the body of oral narratives of the Mizos that has been passed on from time immemorial. It appears as if all their oral narratives are often termed as “folktales” and no classification has been made as such. This is not surprising because all of the tales, myths and legends of the Mizos come under what the Mizos call “Mizo thawnthu” which means “Mizo stories” or “Hmanlai thawnthu” which means “stories of the past”. Hence, all the stories that had been passed on to them, be they legends about men of heroic deeds or tragic love stories, they all came under one term which is “folktale”. With regard to the folktales of the Mizos, Mangkhosat Kipgen writes:

> One of the main ways in which the customs and social values of the Zo peoples was transmitted from one generation to the next was through story-telling. Some stories of a lighter nature were told by mothers to their children at bed time, but it was in the Zawlbuk that the most important storytelling was done….These latter stories had been handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. In the process a rich heritage of folk-tales had accumulated and the men-folk delighted both in telling and listening to them. (Kipgen 83)

This would mean that folktales are the carriers of the Mizo customs and social values which are at once useful and enjoyable. It is also an indication of the importance of folktales in the lives of the Mizos as well as the importance and centrality of the "Zawlbuk". The Zawlbuk may be considered as a cultural institution of the Mizos which catered to the socio-educational needs of the community. "The Zawlbuk or bachelor's dormitory was a singularly important social institution in every Zo village, with the exception of the Maras" (Kipgen 61). The features of "Zawlbuk" have been described by J. V. Hluna in the following manner:

> These buildings were for the use of the young unmarried men of the community. When a youth reached the age of fifteen he was no longer allowed to sleep in his father's house, but shared, with the other young men of the village in the Zawlbuk, which like all other Lushai houses, was built on piles, and was of great size….At the farther end the floor was slightly raised, and formed a kind of dais, upon which as well as on the

> floor round the fire, reclined some 200 or more young men. Some sang, others related thrilling stories of their ancestors, which everyone present knew by heart and yet never grew tired of hearing it repeated. (Hluna 6-7)

Since there is a close relationship between the culture, folklore, religion and social institutions of the Mizos, it is almost impossible to make a study of each one without mentioning and bringing into discussion the others. If the Zawlbuk had been the source of much of the folktales of the Mizos it would mean that there would be a connection between the ideals held up in the institution of Zawlbuk and the messages or morals carried forth in the folktales. J. V. Hluna's description of the Zawlbuk and Mangkhosat Kipgen's analysis of the oral narratives of the Mizos give one an idea that if the Zawlbuk was a place exclusively for men and if it was from here that the "most important storytelling" was done, then it would also mean that many of the tales of the Mizos might betray signs of the attitude men had towards the world around them in general and towards their women in particular. This idea would be taken up further in the next chapters.

As mentioned before, the Mizos handed down their tales from generation to generation by word of mouth because theirs was primarily an oral culture. There is a Mizo saying which says, "Unau thawnthu sawi pawh a dang thin" which translated into English would mean "Stories even told by siblings tend to have different versions". This shows that the early Mizos were well aware of how different versions can crop up in an oral tradition. It also shows that they believed that the themes of the stories were bound to change according to the teller and in an oral culture the teller of the tale would have the advantage of improvising in between thereby adding to the

delight of the audience. This saying might be applied to some extent to the written form as well because no writer writes in the same manner and likewise no collector of folktales collects in the same manner and the material collected usually depends on the writer or collector. The present dissertation is an attempt to understand how oral narratives like the folktale have been put down in the written form and how these written narratives and the different collections of these become representative of the Mizo community. The focus of this study is on the texts that have been translated into English.

Let us now take a look at the different collections of Mizo folktales that have been written down. The Mizo folktales had first been documented and written down by the British colonizers as early as 1874 with the publication of Lt. Col. T. H. Lewin's *Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai Dialect of the Dzo or Kuki Language.* This book is a study of the Mizo vocabulary and is also the first ever attempt to put the Mizo language in the written form. Apart from the different samplings of the Mizo vocabulary, Lewin included three of the more popular folktales in Mizo.[13] This work was followed by J. Shakespear's *Mizo and Non-Mizo Tales* in 1898 which contained six Mizo folktales and three non-Mizo tales. Rev. F. J. Sandy, a Welsh missionary to the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram, published *A Legend of Old Lushai* in 1919 which contained twenty two short tales. Translations into English were later made both by British and Mizo writers and were often included in larger bodies of works. Some of these are Lt. Col. J. Shakespear's *The Lushei Kuki Clans* in 1912, A. G. McCall's *Lushai Chrysalis*, S. Barkataky's *Tribal Folktales of Assam*, L. B. Thanga's *The Mizos* to name a few.

[13] Khiangte, *Mizo Songs and Folktales,* "Introduction" xiii.

In this study, references will be made to the above collections but the focus will remain on the English versions of the tales. Apart from this introductory chapter, there are three other chapters. The next chapter will discuss the different types of folktales that are found in the Mizo folktales and an attempt at a classification according to the motifs and themes will be made. The main purpose of this classification is to demonstrate the variety of folktales available and look at the ways in which these varieties of folktales can shed light on the society of the early Mizos.

The third chapter will be an analysis of the primary texts that are used for this study. It is also a study of the changes in the narrative voice of the tales according to the change in the writer/compiler/translator. These three terms are being used interchangeably because in most of the collections, the collector serves as the writer as well as the translator. In this chapter, the focus will be on the writer as translator and the means and methods that he uses in translating or "recreating" the folktales into writing.

The fourth chapter will be a comparative study between the British writers and the Mizo writers. As opposed to the previous chapter, the focus in this chapter will be on the writer as a collector. This will involve a study of the type of tales collected by the writer and the content of the collection. It will also look at what might be considered as "absences" in the content because there are some popular tales that have been missed out in most of the collections. This chapter will also serve as a concluding chapter in which I shall try to summarize the work and offer my observations of the Mizo folktales and their place in literature.

There are three appendices in this dissertation; the first one consists of a map of the present state of Mizoram with the population figures. The second one consists of title and contents pages of all the five books that have been used in this dissertation. The third appendix will have the tales selected for this study.

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CHAPTER 2

CLASSIFICATION OF MIZO FOLKTALES

In his book *Theory and History of Folklore*, Vladimir Propp writes:

> In any field of knowledge, classification is the basis for and prerequisite of in-depth study. However, classification is the result of long and detailed research. To define the object of study means to assign it correctly to a definite class, genus and variety. In folklore this work has not been done. (Propp 39)

This assigning "correctly to a definite class, genus and variety" has also not been done in Mizo folklore. It is true that while some writers have attempted to classify Mizo folklore, there are still no in-depth studies made on the subject. This is evident from the way terms such as "folklore", "folktales" or "myths" are being used interchangeably in most of the collections. For example, B. Lalthangliana in *Culture and Folklore of Mizoram* has used the term "Folklore" for the title of the book but in the "contents" he changes this to "Folktales". He further tries to make classifications among the Mizo folktales by dividing the stories into two stages – stories told before the Mizo ancestors crossed the Tiau River and stories told after the crossing of the Tiau River. This classification has been made by the author "from the names of rivers, mountains,

environment and style and mode of telling stories" (Lalthangliana 311). Similarly, Col. Shakespear has also tried to make a classification in the following manner:

> A numerous class of legends deals with the creation of the world and the first appearance of mankind thereon and other natural phenomena; another class accounts for the names of hills and rivers; a third class reminds one of Uncle Remus's tales of the doings of Brer Rabbit; but there are also a great many which are simply tales and which are generally a trifle obscene. (Shakespear 91)

In a certain sense it might be said that Mizo folklore consists of mostly explanatory tales, myths, and legends. Since there are no stringent classifications on the type of tales or stories of the Mizos they are generally known and recorded as "folktales". In this chapter, I will attempt to classify Mizo folktales in terms of the motifs and images present in each tale and through this classification try to point out the characteristics of the Mizo folktales and look at these characteristics as a representation of the Mizo society.

The following is a rough classification of the Mizo folktales according to the motifs that are present in them:

1) Origin Myths and Explanatory Tales.
2) Stories about Legendary Figures or Heroes and Urban legends.
3) Tales of Romance
4) Animal Tales and Supernatural Tales

Mizo folktales tend to have multiple motifs in them and it becomes quite difficult to categorize them as water tight compartments. This implies that there will be many overlapping tales that can fit in more than one category.

ORIGIN MYTHS AND EXPLANATORY TALES

The origin myths are the most prominent be they origin myths about how their ancestors came into existence or origin myths about how certain rivers and mountains came into existence. The Mizo origin myth tells us that the early ancestors of the Mizos emerged from the subterranean vaults of the earth or a cave called "Chhinlung". Interestingly, this origin myth about the Mizos as a race has been mentioned by Col. Shakespear alone. He mentions this myth in connection with the Lushai's idea of an eclipse of the sun or moon. According to the version given by him, it is Chhura[14] who has shaped the world by beating it out flat with his mallet. The rivers and hills and rough terrain of the land are attributed to the flood caused by the River Huai[15] who fell in love with a girl named Ngaiteii and pursued her relentlessly until all the earth was flooded. It was only when the village people decided to throw Ngaiteii into the river that the waters started to recede and it is this floodwater that cut up the surface that had already been levelled by Chhura thereby creating deep valleys and rugged high hills. Soon after this an eclipse occurred which the people called "thimzing"[16]. It was after the terrible "thimzing" that the people emerged from "Chhinlung" and thus re-peopling the world again. Other collectors have mentioned the "Chhinlung" myth only as a background source and have not dealt with the myth as a separate

[14] Chhura is a legendary character in Mizo folklore who till date is remembered for his many humorous anecdotes. In many stories, he is presented as a fool but in others he is presented as a very wise man but who because of his love for his brother Nahaia pretends to be foolish.
[15] See chapter 1, pg-6, 2nd para.
[16] See chapter 1, pg-7, 1st para.

tale that should be included among other tales. For instance, B. Lalthangliana in his introduction says, "We, the Mizo all agree that our origin was Chhinlung." Apart from briefly mentioning that the exact location of this origin is shrouded in mystery, there is no further mention about this in the tales. This origin myth also serves as an important explanation for the loquacity of a certain sub-tribe of the Mizos called the "Ralte". It is said that when people started emerging from "Chhinlung" a Ralte couple made so much noise that it made "Pathian" worry if the world should be overpopulated and hence shut the capstone and sealed the cave so that no one could come out again. One story that is also connected to the "Chhinlung" myth is the tale of "Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi". Thlanrawkpa is believed to be a very powerful person right after the re-peopling of the world. In some stories he is believed to be so powerful that he married the daughter of "Pathian". He was wealthy and powerful enough to host a "khuangchawi"[17]. Apparently in this event all the animals were invited and the sun was asked not to shine lest they should feel too hot. There was much merrymaking and dancing and the Loris[18] was the leader in all of this. The sun was soon unable to control his curiosity. So he shone much to the anger of the Loris and it is said that it is because of this incident that the Loris will not look at the sun till today. It was again during this feast that the rooster gained a knee which faced backwards. It is said that the bamboo rat who was the drummer became angry at the animals because they gave him a name which he did not like and decided to stay in his burrow with his drum. The rooster was asked to fetch the drum from the bamboo rat who out of his anger threw the drum out from his burrow which hit the rooster on the knees. It seems that the rooster was hit so hard by the drum that his knees got shifted from the front to the back. All the origin myths or tales that

[17] Khuangchawi is a celebration which can be performed only by men who have performed numerous sacrifices and hosted many minor feasts in their lives. It is believed that a person capable of hosting this celebration or feast would obtain an easy passage to the next world. This ritual came to a stop when the Mizos started to embrace Christianity.

[18] The Loris is a small, slow-moving, nocturnal primate living in dense vegetation in South Asia.

explain the beginning of things that have been mentioned are often told concurrently one tale leading to another and it becomes difficult to mention just one tale without mentioning the others.

Another origin myth that we find is the "Origin myth of the Tuichawng River" which is included in both Col. Shakepear's and B. Lalthangliana's collections. According to this tale, the Tuichawng River owes its origin to the sacrifice made by a girl named Tuichawngi for her younger sister, Nuengi. Upon her sister's insistent demand to have water in the middle of a hilltop where no water is to be found Tuichawngi changes herself into a river and Nuengi drinks from this and her thirst is quenched. The versions given by both the writers are very similar and there is not much difference even in terms of the events mentioned in the tale although the language used is considerably different. This tale would have been of a later origin because in it we find that Nuengi is married off to a Raja from Bengal which perhaps signifies the Mizos' first contacts with the plains people.

STORIES ABOUT LEGENDARY FIGURES AND URBAN LEGENDS

L. B. Thanga, especially focuses on legendary tales as he feels that this would enable the reader understand more clearly the Mizos as a race. A close look at all the collections shows that there are three legends that are very popular and have been included in at least three of the collections. These are: "Lalruanga and Keichala", "Rimenhawii", and "Thinlanga".

Lalruanga was a magician who was considered one of the best and legend has it that he had started giving advice to his mother on what the weather was going to be like even when he was still in her womb. He had learnt the art of magic from Vanhrika who had been stealing the animals which Lalruanga caught in his traps. According to the version given by L. B. Thanga, "Vanhrika was the most famous magician in those days. He promised to teach Lalruanga the best magic of the world if Lalruanga would spare his life" (L. B. Thanga 67). The relationship between Lalruanga and Keichala, the man-tiger, differs in some versions. In Col. Shakespear's records we see that the story of Lalruanga is used to demonstrate how "mankind first learned the black art" (Shakespear 108). It is again Vanhrika ("Vahrika" in this version) who teaches Lalruanga magic but there is also a mention of how he teaches this art not just to Lalruanga but to Keichala and Hrangsaipuia as well. But in the other versions such as the one given in L. B. Thanga's collection, it is only Lalruanga whom Vanhrika teaches the art of magic and that Keichala is a man-tiger and a friend of Lalruanga. This story depicts the Lushais' firm belief in witchcraft as well as their belief in transformation or transfiguration. The former is seen through Lalruanga and his magical abilities whereas the latter can be seen in Keichala, the man who could turn into a tiger at will, and all the people from his village who were all man-tigers.

There are also tales about men of heroic deeds whose bravery and modesty are told with much passion and zeal among the younger people. In the Mizo folktales, there are countless heroes that have all made their mark in history with one heroic deed or the other. One such example would be "Mualzavata", described by Shakespear as the "mythical hero of immense stature" and by B. Lalthangliana as "a giant". In most of the collections these tales about heroes are not listed under folktales because most of them are real life accounts of ordinary men who possessed extraordinary bravery. These stories serve as examples of certain traditions and

customs of which the most important is the ideal of "tlawmngaihna" which is a quality revered by the Mizos and one which every Mizo strives to inculcate in his/her life. The term itself is literally untranslatable but the nearest word that would encapsulate it would be "altruism", or simply put, being selfless and ready to serve others even in the face of hardships. Kipgen explains the qualities of a person who possesses this as in the following way:

> Putting it contextually, a person who possesses tlawmngaihna must be obedient and respectful to the elders; courteous in dealing with the weak and lowly; generous and hospitable to the poor, the needy and the strangers; self-denying and self-sacrificing at the opportune moments in favour of others; ready to help those in distress; compassionate to a companion who falls sick while on journey or becomes victim of a wild beast in a hunt by never abandoning him to his fate; heroic and resolute in war and in hunting; stoical in suffering and in facing hardship under trying circumstances; and persevering in any worthwhile undertaking however hard that might prove to be. (Kipgen 65)

Considering that one must possess the above list of qualities in order to follow the code of conduct of "Tlawmngaihna", it is no wonder that the tales of the heroes who possess them are often portrayed as hyper-masculine heroes with much exaggeration. *The Mizo Heroes* published by the Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, is a book exclusively dedicated to the stories of these legendary heroes. There are a total of 24 stories about different people. What is noticeable is that

the Mizos as a society and as a people revere anyone who they think possesses the qualities that are connected with “Tlawmngaihna”. They are easily remembered in history and again it is no wonder that stories of the “brave” are exclusively centered on men.

The story of Rimenhawii is a bit like the story of Nuengi in the origin myth of the Tuichawng River. In this story, Rimenhawii is also abducted by a King who lived down the river in a distant land. She had long, beautiful hair which she would wash in the river everyday and on one occasion one of her hair strands fell down the river and was swallowed by a fish which was caught by the king’s men. The astonished king wanted to know who the owner of such long hair was and sent his men upstream in search of Rimenhawii. This tale is told differently by each writer but there is one common aspect in each telling which is that this story serves as one of the first accounts of the Lushai contact with the neighbouring kingdom of Tipperah (the present Tripura). This tale shows the great prestige the Tipperah chief enjoyed among the Lushais, who call him “Rengpui”(Shakespear 97).

One famous urban legend of the Mizos is that of “Thinlanga” whose name literally means “one whose liver can be seen”. Legend has it that this man “Thinlanga” dwelt in the bushes near Kanghmun village and was very good at playing the flute (TRI 71). Once a girl collecting firewood from the forest could not lift her head load by herself and Thinlanga offered to help on the condition that she must not look at him because he was hideous to look at and that she would be scared by him. The girl could not contain her curiosity and looked at him upon which Thinlanga made her promise not to tell anyone what she had seen or else he would kill her and

that he could fit in any hole so she had no chance of escape. But the girl could not resist the temptation to tell the tale of her encounter with Thinlanga and told her suitors to block all entries to the house including the smallest holes. When this was done she narrated the story of Thinlanga to her bewildered audience and no sooner had she finished then Thinlanga appeared from a tiny hole which they had forgotten to block and the girl was gruesomely killed by him.

TALES OF ROMANCE

The tales of romance that one finds in the Mizo folktales are usually tragic ones that involve elements of treachery, murder or even abduction. One of the most well-known love stories in Mizo folktales is that of Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana–the tale of two lovers whose romance is doomed because of the enmity between their respective villages. This tale has been included in both *Lushai Chrysalis* and in *The Mizo Folktales*. It is about the clandestine affair between two people who come from different warring villages. Hrangchhuana gets killed by the people from Chawngmawii's village when they find out that not only was he courting a girl from their village but he was also the culprit behind the disappearance of many of the village children. Though there are differences in the narrative technique and language in general the story and the events in it are the same in the two versions. This tale presents to us an idea of what life in those olden days would have been like and shows how the people in those days valued their individual community welfare. This is seen in the way Hrangchhuana would steal young children from Chawngmawii's village on his way back from his nocturnal visits even though he was aware that he might be caught eventually. He loved Chawngmawii and would risk his life to see her every night but he would also die for his village at the same time.

Another very well-known love story is that of Chawngvungi and Sawngkhara. It is the story of Sawngkhara, a very ugly man who falls in love with the beautiful Chawngvungi who in turn detests him because of his appearance. Sawngkhara resorts to using a love potion on Chawngvungi who then falls madly in love with him and they eventually get married. When Chawngvungi dies Sawngkhara eventually dies because of loneliness. The tale brings to light a lot of the characteristics of the Mizo life such as their belief in things like a love potion which they call "Zawlaidi" and the system of bride price. Chawngvungi's insistence on receiving Sawngkhara's family's heirloom which is the special gong, shows that the women could demand their bride price.

ANIMAL TALES AND SUPERNATURAL TALES

There are quite a number of tales that centre on animals and in most instances these animals are depicted as living, as equals with the humans and are sometimes shown as changing into humans and vice versa. Animal tales such as "the bear's water hole" and "the swing and the monkey" have been documented and translated frequently. The first tale is about how the bear makes a waterhole and puts the monkey there to guard it against anyone who would dare come and drink from it. The monkey emerges as the winner at the end because the bear and the tiger fight for the water and kill each other upon which the monkey claims their bones and makes a flute out of the best bone. The most striking aspect that may be noticed in the Mizo folktale is the explanatory element that is present in almost every tale. As the name suggests, explanatory tales are tales those that explain things such as customs, certain phenomena, animals and their habits and appearances and natural phenomena. For instance, the story of "the bear's water hole" ends

with an explanation about how the quail came about having no tail. The quail had tried to steal the monkey's flute but was caught by the tail which came off when he tried to escape.

Another animal story which is explanatory in nature is "the fight between animals and birds" in which it is explained why the bat comes out only at night. The bat had apparently been a turncoat during the fight between animals and birds because when the birds were winning he would take their side saying that he could fly and that made him a bird, but when the animals were winning he would take their side and say he looked like a rat hence he was an animal. This made all the animals and the birds turn against him and he was driven away to hide from where he could come out only at night. This story also represents what may be viewed as the attitude the Mizos had towards strange creatures like the bat. It was strange to them because it looked like a bird but also looked like a rat which might have confused them and made them associate it with negative qualities. Many of the other tales that have been mentioned above are also explanatory in one way or the other. Like any other community around the world, the Mizo ancestors wanted to understand the world around them and this explanatory nature of the general body of Mizo folktales proves that they had numerous ways of trying to offer ingenious explanations for the phenomena they noticed around them. They came up with unique theories about the origin of things and such theories were in the form of imaginative stories which led to a rich heritage of folklore material.

In chapter 1, the role "Zawlbuk" plays in the dissemination of the Mizo folktales has been mentioned briefly. It has been mentioned that if many of these tales originated and were

disseminated from the storytelling of the men in Zawlbuk it would mean that a good number of these tales would in one way or another depict the attitude of the Mizo men especially towards the women. This idea cannot be ignored because for the Mizos these folktales serve as an important source of history as well. Even though folktales are sometimes considered as mere stories which may not be taken seriously it must also be kept in mind that folktales, fictive or non-fictive, are the products of the imagination of a community. For instance, one can see that in "the tale of Rimenhawii" all of the writers stress on her vanity and on her greed to possess the "nipuipar"(a type of flower) and her inability to resist when tempted by the king's men. All these suggest that it was all her fault and no one else's that caused her so much trouble. Similarly, in the story of "Thinlanga", the woman is portrayed as someone who cannot keep a secret which reinforces the stereotype of women not being able to keep secrets. In another instance, the story of "Tualvungi and Zawlpala" also gives one an idea of how women did not have a say in important matters. When Phuntiha wanted to marry Tualvungi, it was to Zawlpala that he went and the latter demanded a heavy bride price. Tualvungi had no choice but to marry Phuntiha when all the bride price had been paid. The existence of bride price can also be seen in the story of "Chawngvungi and Sawngkhara" and "The Tale of Him Who Demanded his Sister's Price". It is apparent that these examples illustrate the way women were being treated as commodities and that they are portrayed in a negative way. The fact that these stories were products of the stories told in Zawlbuk would make one speculate that it is perhaps the social reality as well as the imagination of the more powerful gender in society that bears influences on these stories.

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CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF SELECTED FOLKTALES

Storytelling is an integral part of life and one of the oldest art forms of human creativity. As such people have been engaged in the process of storytelling in all places and times. It has also been the most common form of transmission of folktales within an oral tradition. The role of the storyteller therefore is an important one which becomes even more crucial when folktales are translated[19] into writing. Upon the translation of the oral to the written form the position of the storyteller immediately gets blurred and we are left with the difficult task of trying to understand the narrative as well as the narrator.

The transition from the oral to the written entails numerous problems and in the case of the Mizo folktales there is the added problem of translating them from Mizo to English. It would, therefore be necessary to make an attempt to understand the complexities of writing a folktale and translating it. We might say that the transition from an oral form to a written form is a dynamic process from which several problems and peculiarities may arise. It is dynamic in the sense that it cannot be fixed or restricted to a single process. It is an ever changing process which gets moulded and appropriated in accordance with the person involved in the process. This in

[19] For lack of a better term I use "translation" to refer to the rendering of the oral tales into the written form throughout the dissertation.

turn produces a kaleidoscope of voices and interpretations in the written form. For example, an obvious problem that occurs in the transition of Mizo folktales from the oral to the written form is that of the voice of the narrator/compiler that tends to interfere with the narrative since every writer, and in this case every compiler, is bound to have his/her own ideology. I use narrator, compiler and translator interchangeably because in all these cases it is usually the compiler who does the translation and hence his/her narrative voice is brought forth. In order to understand this process of transition I have chosen five books as the main texts of my study –*The Lushei Kuki Clans* by Lt. Col. J. Shakespear, *The Lushai Chrysalis* by Major A. G. McCall, *The Mizos (a study in racial personality)* by L. B. Thanga, *Culture and Folklore of Mizoram* by B. Lalthangliana and *The Mizo Folktales* by Lianhmingthanga and V. L. Fimate. Other collections will also be mentioned and used when needed, but I have selected these texts because they are all from different points of time in history and have all been written or translated into English. These texts have been chosen keeping in mind that they have all been written in very different periods of time and are carried out by people who are "government employees". Both Shakespear and McCall were former Superintendents of the Lushai Hills and I felt that this aspect of their background which is that of colonizers and administrators would influence the way they collected and narrated the Mizo folktales. They are also writing in different time frames. Shakespear wrote his *The Lushei Kuki Clans* in 1912 whereas McCall wrote *Lushai Chrysalis* in 1949. Ways of writing as well as the approach towards the presentation of the Mizo folktales might have changed over time. On the other hand, we have B. Lalthangliana who is a Mizo historian as well as a teacher who works as a Lecturer in a government College. He wrote *Culture and Folklore of Mizoram* in 2005 which was published by the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. *The Mizo Folktales* is a

government undertaking which has been carried out by the Tribal Research Institute of the Department of art and Culture under the leadership of Lianhmingthanga who is the Senior Research Officer (S.R.O) and by V. L. Fimate who is the official translator. L. B. Thanga published *The Mizos* in 1978, although he might have started writing even earlier because he mentions in his acknowledgement that permission to publish his book was granted in 1969. "Permission for the publication of this book was earlier accorded vide the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi's letter No. D. O. 9/27/68-AIS (III), dated the 5th June, 1969" (L. B. Thanga "Acknowledgements"). In any case, what is clear is that L. B. Thanga wrote this book with the backing of the government just as B. Lalthangliana's *Culture and Folklore of Mizoram* and Tribal Research Institute's *The Mizo Folktales.* It is therefore, assumed that all these collections might have very similar agendas or there might also be varying degrees of dissimilarity inspite of the commonality in their basis.

Before I proceed further, let us take a brief look at the primary texts that have been mentioned.

THE LUSHEI KUKI CLANS

The Colonial administrators were the first to document some of the Mizo folktales with the most prominent of them being the folktales of Lt. Col. Shakespear. This book was first published as two books of Part-1 and Part-2 but these two books were sewn together in the second reprint. The first part of the book focuses on the Lushei Clans and is divided into six (6) chapters with each chapter dedicated to the different aspects of the lives of the Lushei clans. Since the book is essentially an ethnographic monograph on the Lushei clans, each chapter deals with those aspects that might bring out the true nature of the Lushei clans and the other clans that are

closely related with the Lusheis. Chapter 1 is a general introduction to the habitat, appearance and physical characteristics, history, affinities, ways of dressing and types of weapons of the Lushei clans. Chapter 2 deals with the domestic life of these different clans. Chapter 3 focuses on their laws and customs; Chapter 4 is a description of the religious life of the Lushei clans; Chapter 5 focuses on the Folklore of these Clans and Chapter 6 is dedicated to the study of their language which is Lushai or Duhlien. The writer was the Superintendent of the erstwhile Lushai Hills and also the first Superintendent of the amalgamated North Lushai Hills and South Lushai Hills in 1898. He had wanted to write a monograph dealing with the people who inhabited the Lushai Hills and to make "as accurate a description as possible of the people, their habits, customs, and beliefs"(Shakespear, Introduction). Though the accuracy of the descriptions made in the book is debatable, it is rather useful in that it is the first of its kind and it is one of the earliest writings on the history of the Mizos which covers major aspects of the lives of the people such as their domestic life, customs and laws, their language etc. It is perhaps because of this that the book has served as one of the most widely used in the reading and writing of Mizo literature and history.

Since the focus of this project is on the role played by folktales in Mizo writings, I shall focus on chapter-5 which is titled "Folklore". There are nine folktales mentioned in this chapter which are: "the story of the eclipse", "the origin myth of the Lushais", "origin myth of the Tuichawng river", "the tale of Granddaddy bear and the monkey", "the Bear's water hole", "Rimenhawii", "the tale of him who demanded his sister's bride price", "Chawngchilhi and the Rulpui", and "Lalruanga and Keichala".

Apart from these tales, certain practices and superstitions are also mentioned and most of the folktales described are used as examples of these practices and superstitions. For example, the story of *Chawngchilhi and the Rulpui* is written in order to explain the abundance of snake imagery in many of the Lushai tales and to show the origin of the 'Rulpui' i.e., the big snake. "The Lushais do not worship snakes, but there are many tales of 'Rulpui'" (Shakespear 104). Similarly, the story of Lalruanga and Keichala is reproduced by Shakespear as an example of the Lushais' firm belief in witchcraft. "The Lushais are firm believers in witchcraft." (108).

LUSHAI CHRYSALIS

Major A. G. McCall's *Lushai Chrysalis* appears to have the same purpose as Col. Shakepear's *The Lushai Kuki Clans* which is to give a detailed study of the kind of people they were dealing with. Perhaps understanding the people better would help in the process of administration. Reminiscent of Col Shakespear's work, Major McCall vividly describes the practices and traditions of the Lushai people. This book is divided into 11 chapters and contains a chapter titled "Spirit Glimmerings" in which we find a collection of tales whose object according to Major McCall is "to clarify the real feelings and hearts of the people, rather than to give a scientific or anthropological disclosure of the technique of Lushai expression."[20] It is therefore keeping this in mind that a select few of the more "popular" tales have been recorded and put in print. These tales are –"How the mushroom started", "Chhura and Chengkek", "Chawngchilhi", "Chemtatrawta", "Pawla and Sanui", "The Widow's son", "Chawngmawii and Hrangchhuana",

[20] Major A.G.McCall *The Lushai Chrysalis*, Reprinted in 1977 by Tribal Reasearch Institute, Aizawl. P- 76.

"Sibuta and Dari", "Monkey and Bear", "Hunting party to tan", "Zaphunga", "Thinlanga" and "Hmuichukchuriduni".

THE MIZOS: A STUDY IN RACIAL PERSONALITY

The Mizos: *A Study in Racial Personality* (1978) by L. B. Thanga devotes a chapter on folktales in which he states that the tales that he has documented are confined to the legendary characters. He writes that there is a possibility that not all of these were just creations of fiction and that it will be difficult to make any conclusions towards this view and in the absence of any authority to support his view he takes full responsibility for whatever views expressed in this chapter. The tales mentioned in this chapter are: the story of Chhurbura which contains 10 different stories about Chhurbura and his adventures, "Liandova and his brother", "Lalruanga and Keichala", "Tualvungi and Zawlpala", "Chawngvungi and Sawngkhara", "Rimenhawii".

CULTURE AND FOLKLORE OF MIZORAM

B. Lalthangliana in the preface to his book *Culture and Folklore of Mizoram* (2005) states that the purpose of writing this book is to make the younger generation aware of the old system i.e., their culture, tradition and folktales.[21] This book appears to be a translation of the writer's previous works which have been brought together in one single book. It is divided into two sections with the second section being devoted entirely to folktales consisting of sixty (60) tales. It is evident from this immense list that the content of *Culture and Folklore of Mizoram* is larger than all the other books in terms of quantity and it certainly shows that the writer has made a lot of effort in bringing out as many folktales as possible. In the introduction to the section on Folktales, the writer has made specific categorizations of the type of Folktales he has collected

[21] . B. Lalthangliana, *Preface* Culture and Folklore of Mizoram, New Delhi, 2005. iv.

making an attempt to present them in an orderly manner and in the process point out certain aspects of these folktales which might shed light on the lives and worldviews of the Mizo ancestors. For example, the writer briefly mentions "interesting elements and objects found in them". These interesting elements and objects range from the naming of different animals, birds and insects to the belief in life after death and to the introduction to the word 'Vai' which is a term used to identify a non-Mizo. We can see that the writer has selected a vast range of Folktales in order to bring out all these elements which might help in understanding the history of the Mizo society.

THE MIZO FOLKTALES

The Mizo Folktales (2006) is a compilation of folktales by The Tribal Research Institute (under the Department of Art and Culture, Govt. of Mizoram). The compilers are Lianhmingthanga who is the Senior Research Officer at TRI and V. L. Fimate. There are a total of thirty two (32) tales collected from different sources mainly from the book *Mizo Thawnthu* published by TRI in 1994.[22] It therefore appears that many of the tales are translations of the Mizo versions found in *Mizo Thawnthu*.

This study would be based on what Alan Dundes calls "identification" and "interpretation". In his article titled "The Study of Folklore in Literature and Culture: Identification and Interpretation", Alan Dundes talks about these two concepts as follows:

[22] *The Mizo Folktales,* Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, 2006.

> There are only two basic steps in the study of folklore in literature and in culture. The first step is objective and empirical; the second is subjective and speculative. The first might be termed identification and the second interpretation. Identification essentially consists of a search for similarities; interpretation depends upon the delineation of differences. The first task in studying an item is to show how it is like previously reported items, whereas the second is to show how it differs from previously reported items – and, hopefully, why it differs. (Dundes 136)

With regard to the present study, "Identification" will be in terms of similar folktales found in different works that are being studied and "Interpretation" would be the search for differences in similar folktales and a possible answer to why they are different.

In *The Lushei Kuki Clans*, the introduction given at the start of each of the tales is noteworthy as each of them is mostly described as "a Lushai account" of the tale. In the introduction to the book, Shakespear explains the term "Lushai" as well as "Kuki". The early colonial writers often use these two terms interchangeably and sometimes cause much confusion to the reader. From the explanation given by Shakespear we come to an understanding that these early British writers as well as the British administrators had given the name "Kuki" to the people inhabiting the interior hills beyond the Chittagong Hill tracts and that in the Lushai hills the term "is hardly ever employed, having been superseded by Lushai." It is also mentioned that the Lushais were a great many clans who rose to prominence in the eighteenth century. It is therefore understandable that the term "Lushai" has been used loosely to describe the Lushais as well as

many other clans that were assimilated by them. S. Barkataky in his book *Tribal Folktales of Assam* has classified the story of "Lalruanga and Keichala" mentioned in Shakespear's book under "Pawi" stories and not "Lushai".[23] The Pawis as we know it are a clan who were not assimilated by the Lushais but were instead a longstanding enemy of the Lushais. Whether or not it is truly a "Pawi" story is unsure but it does give an instance of how certain stories prevalent among the hill tribes were often documented as belonging to the Lushais and perhaps even originating from them. It is also an instance of how oral narratives are subject to distortion when translating them into writing. It is true that there cannot be any original folktale per se because of the variations that we find even among the so called original tales. But for want of a better alternative we could consider the more popular versions of the tales that are found among particular communities as the "original folktales". So in the case of folktales that are translated into English or any other language, the tales would have gone through a number of narrators and hence may contain several views and ideologies. This is somewhat similar to what Francisco Vaz da Silva says of the nature of folktales: "Every narrative presents a worldview, and since folktale texts contain many layers of changes within them, this worldview is supposed to be that of many people" (da Silva 755). In a sense we have multiple narrators because the process of storytelling is never-ending with one narrator passing it on to another narrator and so on and so forth. Da Silva further states that representation and perception "are shared between the narrator and the listener and have the potential to be spread further" (da Silva 755). In the case of the Mizo folktales this problem is twofold as one has to convert tales from the oral to the written and also translate the language. For example, colonizers such as Lt. Col. T. H. Lewin who first documented the Mizo folktales wrote the tales "very briefly as told by Chama, a fourteen year old boy from the village of chief Rothangpuia" (Laltluangliana xiii). We can see from this that

[23] S. Barkataky *Tribal Folktales of Assam,* Publication Board, Assam, 1970.

they had first to be told in Lushai and then translated into English. This is not to say that the Mizo versions would be free of different variations. As I have stated in the beginning of the chapter, the narrative voice of the compiler/writer/translator tends to interfere in many of the tales in this collection. For example, when Shakespear talks about the different types of tales he compares the tales that deal with animals with Uncle Remus's tales. He refers to them as "a third kind that reminds one of Uncle Remus's tales of the doings of Brer Rabbit". (Shakespear 91). Similarly, in another instance when he talks about another version of the ending of Rimenhawii's story, he likens it to the story of Abraham and Sarah: "According to one version, they resorted to the same subterfuge that Abraham and Sarah employed when entering Egypt and lived happily, till the king's suspicion being aroused, Zawlthlia was summarily slain." (97) Now, what is apparent from these instances is that Shakespear had a definite readership in mind which would consist of all the people who had an interest in this area of study and who belong to the same background as Shakespear. A person from a different community with a different religious background might not be able to understand his references. I would like to look at this narrative technique of the translator as a kind of "recreation" of the oral folktale. Recreation because the translator is no longer translating what is presented to him but is producing and recreating a folktale that would suit his readers. This would also probably serve as an answer to why there are differences among the same tales that have been "recreated" by different writers.

McCall's introduction to the chapter "Spirit Glimmerings" is a description of the Lushai's association with the spiritual world and how this association shapes their worldview which leaves a considerable impact on the belief system. At the beginning of this chapter McCall describes the Lushais' close affinity with the spiritual world in this way: "His mind cannot easily

dwell objectively on a problem concerning a person or an institution without subconsciously contemplating the spirit association" (McCall 68). This association becomes his basis for the claim that the Lushai "is a highly cultured man rather than a savage" (68). Major A. G. McCall was the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills for 13 years. Suhas Chatterjee in his book titled *Making of Mizoram: Role of Ladenga*, describes Major McCall in this manner: "He was the only superintendent with a liberal frame of mind and much needed modern outlook. He disliked the mindless ways of the Church in destroying the indigenous Mizo culture and recommended its revival"(Chatterjee 209). It is perhaps because of this eagerness to "retain" and "revive" the indigenous Mizo culture that McCall terms the Lushai "a highly cultured man". However, McCall contradicts himself in this regard. For example, in the "General Theme" of *Lushai* Chrysalis, he calls the Lushai Hills a "backward area of India". He also points out the problems that are faced in trying to rehabilitate a "backward people" for their own development. He also describes different practices such as sorcery which is explained in detail with the use of a tale each which is presumably a real life incident where it is seen that the Lushais were not exactly firm practitioners of sorcery but were rather victims of other clans who practised it.

Each of these tales ends with a note titled "Remembrance in Posterity" by McCall which is an attempt to direct the reader to understand the kind of moral the tales he was trying to impart. What made McCall write these notes at the end of every tale? It is quite possible that he had a specific readership in mind which consists mainly of foreigners like him who would have an interest in the Lushai hills and the people who inhabited this area. Therefore, the need to explain every tale in order to present a particular aspect of the people that might come of help to strangers and enthusiasts in general. For example, he sums up this particular chapter by saying,

> It is interesting to note that these stories bring out the conception that the late Mr. N. E. Parry, I. C. S., formed of the Lushai moral code known as TLAWMNGAIHNA, about which he once wrote, that it encouraged the Lushai to be courteous, unselfish, courageous, and industrious, always ready to help others, even at considerable inconvenience to himself, and that he must try to surpass others in doing his ordinary daily tasks efficiently. (94)

This ending explains in a certain way, why McCall felt the need to write down at the end of every tale the moral of the stories. As has been mentioned, it is also McCall's attempt to shed light on the nature of the Lushais to the targeted readership.

> In recording the tales below, the indigenous staccato-like and sporadic form of utterance has been modified to read as smooth narrative in our own form, the object in giving these tales being to clarify the real feelings and hearts of the people, rather than to give a scientific or anthropological disclosure of the technique of Lushai expression. (76)

Not only do the above lines illustrate the motive McCall had in writing this book but they also show that when oral forms are translated into the written form there are certain things that are involved in the process. In the context of the folktales collected by McCall, it is the "Lushai expression" that has been compromised and in its place we find what McCall says is "a smooth narrative in our own form". In a certain sense, we might say that the very essence of the Mizo folktales has been compromised since it is the way in which the tale is told and re-told that makes the folktale what it is. "The indigenous staccato-like and sporadic form of utterance" has been taken and polished to give it a new shine so as to make it more presentable to the reading

public. This is perhaps the reason why McCall has greatly romanticized the Mizo folktales in his collection by choosing to give it the title "Spirit Glimmerings" in the first place and by reworking the folktales to read as an indigenous counterpart of the European fairytale. For example, McCall's rendering of the story of "Chhura and Chengkek" goes like this:

> In Lushai Hills there is a tree which goes by the name of Chengkek. This tree does not grow very tall but its fruit is beautifully red, the outer cover, however, being sour to the taste, though the pulp is juicy and sweet. One day a man called Chhura, who was very famous in legendary Lushai, was passing by this tree and he became very pleased when he anticipated the taste of the fruit which should be his. (McCall 77)

It can be seen that there is a need felt by the writer to explain what the Chengkek fruit is to the reader but in the process he also introduces Chhura who would definitely have not needed an introduction to the Lushais. This clearly shows that the writer is a stranger and that he is obviously addressing others of his own kind. Furthermore, the phrase "once upon time" is often used in many of the tales which greatly reflects the writer's purpose which is to make the folktales read along the lines of a western fairytale. The saying "Unau thawnthu sawi pawh a dang thin" (Stories even told by siblings tend to have different versions) might be applied here as well because it is McCall who has improvised while writing this particular tale thereby bringing out his own version of the tale. What is being suggested here is that "recreating" folktales is not an appalling thing to do but rather it is an inevitable one because there is no other way around it. What is more important is how these folktales are being "recreated" by different persons at different points in time and space. Let us take as an example of the story of "the bear and the monkey" which has been included in Shakespear's, McCall's and B. Lalthangliana's collections.

The main theme of the story which is basically about how the monkey tries to outwit the bear and kills him so that he can feast on him, appears to remain the same in all the versions but with slight variations in the narrative structure and in the ending of the tale. In Shakespear's version it is titled "The Tale of Granddaddy Bear and The Monkey" and ends with the monkey offering his cooked rice to Granddaddy bear who had not died from his fall from the swing. Whereas in McCall's version, it is titled "Monkey and Bear" and in the end it is shown that the bear knew of the monkey's cruel intentions and teaches the monkey a lesson: "So the bear adequately turns the tables on the monkey for his wickedness"(McCall 88). B. Lalthangliana's version is titled "the swing and the monkey" and does not have a very happy ending for the bear because the bear gets the hair on his belly burnt as the monkey told him to use his belly as a cup for the broth that the monkey had prepared. These different versions show how narratives change according to the writer/translator. Shakespear would appear to be the first one to document this tale among the three of them and it is interesting to see how the tale changes according to the person involved and the time frame in which he writes. McCall gives a very detailed narrative of how the story unfolds and even gives an endnote in which he states the moral of the story which is, "To cheat those who wish us no harm is to make trouble for ourselves needlessly" (McCall 88). The moral element is present in both the versions presented by Shakespear and McCall and one might say that this is completely absent in B. Lalthangliana's version.

The story of "Chawngchilhi" is another such tale which is found in *Lushei-Kuki Clans, Lushai Chrysalis* and in *Culture and Folklore of Mizoram.* Chawngchilhi and her sister used to go to work in their Jhum fields in the afternoons. They were given lunch every day but the younger sister grew thinner and thinner which worried the parents. Apparently, Chawngchilhi had a

serpent lover who used to eat up the younger sister's entire share of lunch. When their father found out about this he became angry and killed both Chawngchilhi and her serpent lover. Since Chawngchilhi was pregnant when her father killed her several small snakes came out of her body when she died and her father managed to kill all except one which became a giant serpent that would terrorize people. The treatment of the ending of the story is again different in all of the versions mentioned.

In *Culture and Folklore of Mizoram*, the story is titled "Chawngchilhi" and it is written that this snake which escaped the clutches of Chawngchilhi's father became a terror for the villagers so they decided to kill it and after many attempts they finally succeeded in killing it. The meat of the snake is then divided among them where the head is given to a widow. When she tried to cook the head it warned her not to touch its eyes. This terrified her so much that she threw the whole thing out of the window after which there was a big landslide that caused everyone's death except of the old widow because she had not eaten the meat of the snake. In both *Lushei-Kuki Clans* and in *Lushai Chrysalis,* the tale serves as an explanation of certain geographical sites in Mizoram that are associated with snake imagery like the "Rulchawm Kua" which is a hole or cake found in the village of Rulchawm. Shakespear's version states that the people of the village used to feed this snake with goats and pigs but the snake became greedy and demanded children. It was a Chin who killed the snake and Shakespeare writes that it was the Biate or Bete who claim to have been the people who fed the snake (Shakespear 107). Although Shakespear states that the Lushais do not worship snakes, the rendering of the story given by him seems to almost suggest that the snake had acquired a devil-god status among the Lushais and that the people had no choice but to feed it even if it meant the loss of innocent lives, whereas in the version given

by B. Lalthangliana the snake causes trouble by feeding on the livestock of the villagers but does not in any way "demand" to be fed. This is one marked difference that one can find in the different versions of the story. Furthermore, Shakepear's version which is titled "Chawngchilhi and the Rulpui" is given as an example of the popularity of "rulpui"[24] in stories told by the Lushais. Apart from offering explanations for geographical sites, McCall's version highlights the moral of the story. As has been mentioned, McCall writes down the moral of each tale and in this story the moral is: "A man's honour is worth more to him than life or possessions" and "A man's love for his child is such that he would do things which otherwise he could not even think about." The version given by B. Lalthangliana on the other hand does not offer any of the associations that are made with the story of Chawngchilhi. It instead shows us that the early Lushais might have been indifferent towards widows as they had given the least wanted portion of meat to the widow in the tale.

The story of "Sibuta and Dari" which is believed to be a true story has been included in both *Lushai Chrysalis* and *Culture and Folklore of Mizoram.* This is the story of a powerful chief whose cruelty is remembered in history because of the punishment he meted out to a woman named Darlalpuii or Dari. It is said that when Sibuta's village was celebrating a festival, he included Dari among the sacrificial oxen. Dari was driven around the village like an animal and was refused water and was ultimately killed like one of the oxen with a spear. Since this story appears to be more of a historical event, not many writers and collectors have included it in their collections. There are also many variations as to why Sibuta would do such a thing to Dari. McCall and B. Lalthangliana have also given very different reasons for this. In *Lushai Chrysalis,*

[24] Rulpui means "the big snake"

the story is titled “Sibuta and Dari” and it is written that it was because Sibuta was rejected by Dari that he committed such a heinous crime. “But the fatal day came when Darlaii rejected his approaches, which angered him very much, and he vowed a deep vengeance” (McCall 86). It is also because of his arrogance and selfishness to possess Dari that angered him all the more when he was rejected. “It was not that he was capable of a great love for her, a desire to make her his wife, and to make her as queen in his home, but he wished to ravish her” (McCall 86). On the other hand, in B. Lalthangliana’s version it is written that Sibuta was a slave child who grew up in the house of Darlalpuii’s father, the Chief Darpida. Darlalpuii used to bully the child by “stabbing him with her big brass hairpin” (Lalthangliana 369). When the chief died Darlalpuii and her mother became poor whereas Sibuta had become rich as he had worked very hard and the widow and her daughter had to seek refuge in Sibuta’s village. This was when Sibuta decided to exact his revenge on Darlalpuii. The contrast in the treatment of the story by the two writers is interesting because they are both from different backgrounds which is reflected in the way they “recreate” the story. One might say that B. Lalthangliana’s version shows the side of the Mizo folktales which portrays women protagonists in a very negative light and one that often refuses to put the blame on male protagonists, whereas McCall’s version strengthens his stance as an outsider who tries to romanticize the Mizo folktales. This is so because of the details he incorporates into the story such as the “sparkling and ferocious fireballs that appeared in a terrifying manner all along the roof and all the ceremony had to be stopped, for all were afraid of great evil” (McCall 87). It is not clear as to which versions of the story is true and it is also unsure whether such fireballs appeared or not but what is obvious is that McCall has made sure that these details are included in order to grandly present to the reader the moral of the story which is that no one cannot escape retribution for evil and cruelty.

There are also other questions that arise from the translated tales by the Mizo writers such as why they have been translated into English in the first place or what could be the motive behind such translated works? These are relevant questions because they give one an understanding of the place of "English" as a language and as an important medium of education in Mizoram. English, being the language of the colonizer, is much revered in Mizoram as in other places in India and a mastery over the language is often considered as a marker of a person's intelligence. For the Mizos, English is not just the language of the colonizers, but the language of the missionaries who are somewhat idolized, and hence the impact this has on the education system is intensified so much so that in the present scenario many parents prefer to send their children to either private English medium schools or Church run schools where emphasis is laid on English education. This has resulted in a decline in enrollment in the Mizo medium educational institutions run by the State government. The decline in enrolment has further resulted in the gradual transformation of the government run primary schools and middle schools from Mizo medium schools into English medium schools. This transformation is an ongoing process which started from the 8th of May 2002 and continues till date. In such a scenario, it is not surprising that there is always a need and demand for the English versions of the Mizo folktales whether it is in the form of school textbooks such as "Selected Mizo Folktales" produced by the SCERT or "The Mizo Folktales" and "The Mizo Heroes" both produced by the Tribal Research Institute.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Alain Ricard, in his article titled *From Oral to Written Literature* writes: "The first history to be made should be of collecting, of the epistemology of collecting: writing orality; in other words: writing culture" (Ricard 194). Although the writer here is talking about African Literature at the beginning of the century, I believe that the same holds true for any oral culture and especially so for the Mizo culture because writing in this culture has only been a hundred odd years or so old and there is much to be studied and re-examined on the collections of oral texts that have so far been made.

It is interesting to note that in each of the collections that have been studied, each writer gives importance to certain tales and feels compelled to document these as "representative" tales of the Mizos. The claim that the collection is made with the object of bringing out tales that are popular is prominently presented by each and every writer. It is true that all of these writers have written their respective folktales within different time frames and that the notion of the popular and the popular itself are bound to change with the passing of time. However, as we have seen it, it is understandable that personal views on the popular and the idea of what constitutes a "representative" tale are all too perceptible in all of these collections.

As we have seen, folktales are to be found in the written form essentially in collections and some of the texts that have been discussed are texts that are dedicated entirely to folktale collection whereas some of them are collections found as a part of bigger texts. I have discussed how the narrator's voice plays a prominent role in translating folktales and also discussed in brief how this narrative voice is prominent in any collection of folktales. Given that of the five texts discussed the first two texts are written by British writers and the rest by Mizo writers, it is inevitable that a distinction be made between them. The focus would now turn to the differences and possibly the similarities between the British writers and the Mizo writers. These differences would largely be based on the content, in terms of quantity and quality, and the way the translations have been carried out. In short, the way collections of oral texts have been made by them. This would include the type of folktales collected and what folktales have been excluded or censored, if any. I shall attempt to show the writer as a collector and the type of collections he makes.

Some collectors tend to bring out only a certain type of tale whereas others tend to collect tales which they think would best depict the Mizo nature. Col. Shakespear and Major McCall as we know were administrators/ colonizers in the erstwhile Lushai Hills. They were also avid anthropologists who claimed to have written their books in the most "objective" way possible. There is a possibility that the constraints of time and space might have hampered their work but in any case, their position as colonizers does interfere with the objectivity of their works.

In *The Lushei Kuki Clans*, we find that Shakespear is constantly trying to find similarities between the different clans present in and around the Lushai Hills. This attempt can be seen in the way he chooses the tales that are common among the different clans and ultimately presenting them as Lushai versions. The Lushais were indeed the dominant clan during that time but I am obliged to think that this representation of different clans through the Lushais is an attempt by the colonizers to club together different clans under one generic name so as to make their administration easier and possibly to intensify the superiority of the Lushais among other clans. Another aspect of these collections by the British writers is in the importance they give to folktales or folklore and in the role they play in the very shaping of their respective books. Both *The Lushei Kuki Clans* and *Lushai Chrysalis* are anthropological in nature and in some cases they can be read as travel narratives. The very fact that these works are anthropological makes it imperative that the folklore of the people being studied should be included in them. Shakespear has stated very categorically in his introduction that he will not use any theories or draw conclusions from what he has collected. "I have purposely avoided enunciating any theories and making deductions" (Shakespear "Introduction"). McCall has basically done the same and has, in fact given it a more personal touch to it by providing background information about whatever he is about to explain and also by drawing conclusions about whatever is being discussed. For instance, in the chapter "Spirit Glimmerings" he gives a very detailed description about how the Lushai is an animist and talks at length about what animism is. And as has been mentioned before, he narrates the moral of each and every at the end under the title "Remembrance for Posterity".

On the other hand, L. B. Thanga, in his introduction writes,

> Perhaps, a study of these may help one to get a better insight into the peculiar traits of a Mizo character, and through it a better appreciation of his aspirations. It is also hoped that administrators and policy-makers in governments may, from a reading on the selected historical and legendary figures, find useful guidance to evolve a sounder philosophy and gain a clearer perspective in matters relating to Mizoram. (L. B. Thanga xvi)

It is evident that he feels the need to dispel misconceptions on the preconceived notions that might have been prevalent when this book was written. It must be understood that this book was written during the time when the Mizo National Movement[25] was at its peak. There is no denying that the writer's ideas and style would have been influenced by the turmoil spread around the Mizo Hills. The motive of the writer, therefore, seems to be to dispel myths about the character of the Mizos and to negate any feelings of exclusivity among the Mizo people which he terms as the propaganda of the "misguided elements". He ends the introduction by writing as follows:

> In the chapter on "The Advent of the British" which is specially addressed to Mizo readers, I have attempted to dispel any misconception that the Mizo Hills is not a part of India, which has been the propaganda of the "misguided elements". This chapter establishes beyond all doubt that the Mizo Hills, formerly called Lushai Hills, was a part and parcel of British India at the time of transfer of power, and is, therefore, a part and parcel of the Republic of India. (L. B. Thanga xvi)

[25] The ethnic national movement started by the MNF (Mizo National Front) on 1st March 1966 and lasted for about two decades until the Peace Accord was signed on 30th June, 1986 with the Indian government.

In a sense he has an agenda which is firstly, to clarify any misconceptions that others would have of the Mizo people and secondly, to make the Mizo people believe that they are a part of India and to discourage ideas of a separate nation which were being propagated by the MNF. It appears as if he is completely against the "movement" because L. B. Thanga was an IAS officer and evidently his position as an employee of the Indian Government would definitely have contributed to his opposition towards the movement. This is also possibly one of the reasons why he has chosen to collect folktales that are centered only on legendary figures. If we take a look at the tales that are collected by him we can definitely see that almost all of them are descriptive. There are a total of six folktales in this collection and this may be because the writer wants to bring out the characteristics of Mizo life as best as possible through a limited number of folktales. The collector does not deny this, but, in fact states it very categorically at the beginning by saying that this collection is by no means meant to be exhaustive but instead to be representative. A striking feature of the tales in this collection is that they are all descriptive. This is very different from what we normally see in other Mizo folktales. As has been stated, all the tales mentioned are tales that are centered on legendary characters. In this case, the story of Lalruanga and Keichala is narrated in such a detailed manner that in some parts it sounds like a history lesson and not a folktale. It is obvious that the translator has taken time and space to include many of the different versions available and to give his readers a very detailed story of Lalruanga and Keichala.

One noteworthy aspect in the writings of B. Lalthangliana is the enthusiasm with which his work is carried out, an enthusiasm that nearly borders on the ethnocentric, which is hard to dismiss. In the Preface to *Culture and Folklore of Mizoram*, the writer mentions the two motives

he had in writing this book. One is to make the younger generation aware of their culture, tradition and folktales and the second is the need for a Mizo to write a book on their culture and tradition. He stresses on the need for a re-writing of the history of the Mizos and preferably by one that belongs to the community.

> Secondly, before the year 1950, the Mizo History, Culture and Tradition were all written by the British administrators and Missionaries between the years 1965 and 1985. This trend is changed after 1985 when educated Indians published books on different aspects of the Mizo tribe. We are thankful to all for providing us well-written records. There was a feeling that they are incomplete because the documents were all written by one who is not part of Mizo society. Thus, it was felt that a book written by a Mizo would be the best in the study of our own culture and tradition. (Lalthangliana, Preface)

Even though the term "ethnocentric" might be too strong a term to use for the stance taken up by this writer, there is no denying that there is a hint of ethnocentrism in it. We might also look at it from a postcolonial perspective wherein the writer tries to "write back" to the tradition of writing which until then had been written by "colonizers". It appears as though he is making an effort, not unlike L. B. Thanga, to set things in order and to make clarifications on any misunderstandings that might have been perceived from the body of work given by the "colonizers". However, his approach is considerably subjective in that many a time he emphasizes incessantly on the need for a homegrown person to write Mizo history which is suggestive of a negative attitude towards previous writings.

Another significant feature of these collections is the way some very "popular" stories that are found in most Mizo oral versions are missing in any of these collections. I use the term "popular" here for want of a better term and might be a bit subjective because while these tales might seem very popular to me they might not be so popular for others. In the same manner, many of the collectors that have been studied have also used "popular" and this also shows to some extent their personal opinions about the Mizo folktales. Examples of such tales are the story of "Keimingi and Khualtungamtawna" and "Mauruangi". Both these stories are to be found in *Serkawn Graded Reader* by Nuchhungi and in *Mizo Thawnthu* by the Tribal Research Institute. It is especially peculiar that they are not included in *The Mizo Folktales* by TRI because its compilers claim that it is a translation of *Mizo Thawnthu.* "These folktales are collected from different sources; they are mainly from the book "Mizo Thawnthu" published by us in 1994" (TRI vi). The first story is about a woman-tiger named Keimingi and her husband Khualtungamtawna and the relationship between the man-tiger community and the human community. The story again ends in an explanation of why the fox always leaves out the kidney and heart of his prey. "Mauruangi" is the story of a selfless young girl who despite the harsh treatment meted out towards her by her father, stepmother and stepmother, and who does not complain and suffers in silence but triumphs in the end. In one way, this story is a very good example of how women are portrayed in the Mizo folktales and in another way, it also throws light on the possible condition of women in early Mizo society. Is it possibly because these tales are centered on women protagonists and would in some way or the other show the situation of women in the Mizo society that they had been excluded by both British and Mizo writers alike? The fact that all the collectors of the folktales are men makes it all the more significant.

On the whole, what has emerged from this study of the Mizo Folktales is that folktales or oral narratives of the Mizos are intrinsically connected with the customs, traditions and religious beliefs of the people. This is why they are often used as sources to help one understand the past society of the Mizos. Another observation that has been made is the role of the Zawlbuk as an originating place of many of these tales and as an important tool in the diffusion of these tales. This observation explains to an extent why in so many of the tales women are often portrayed in a very negative manner because it would have been the collective male imagination that brews many of the stories. Looked at from another perspective, the Zawlbuk may also be considered as one of the first educational institutions of the Mizos where the men were taught everything that was needed for their survival and prosperity in society. In spite of this, it has also been observed that several features of these tales can become representative of the past and present Mizo society.

The Mizo folktales had been collected by different people from equally different backgrounds and such diversity in collectors and the ways in which they write down oral narratives results in various versions as well as readings of the tales collected. In terms of the multiplicity of different versions of the same tale, I would like to point out that just as writings can come in different versions, it is also possible that reading of the tales can differ from person to person. Hence, the observations that have been made in this study may not be the same for other readers.

The role of folktales in education in general and in English education in particular must be stressed upon because, as has been mentioned earlier, the folktales are important knowledge

systems that provide one with an understanding of the past culture of the Mizos as well as their society. They are also steadfast carriers of the morals and traditions of the Mizo community. I believe that the Mizo folktales are beginning to be taken seriously as subjects of scholarly interest among the writers and researchers and rightly so because there is much more work that needs to be done because of the lack of adequate critical material available especially in English.

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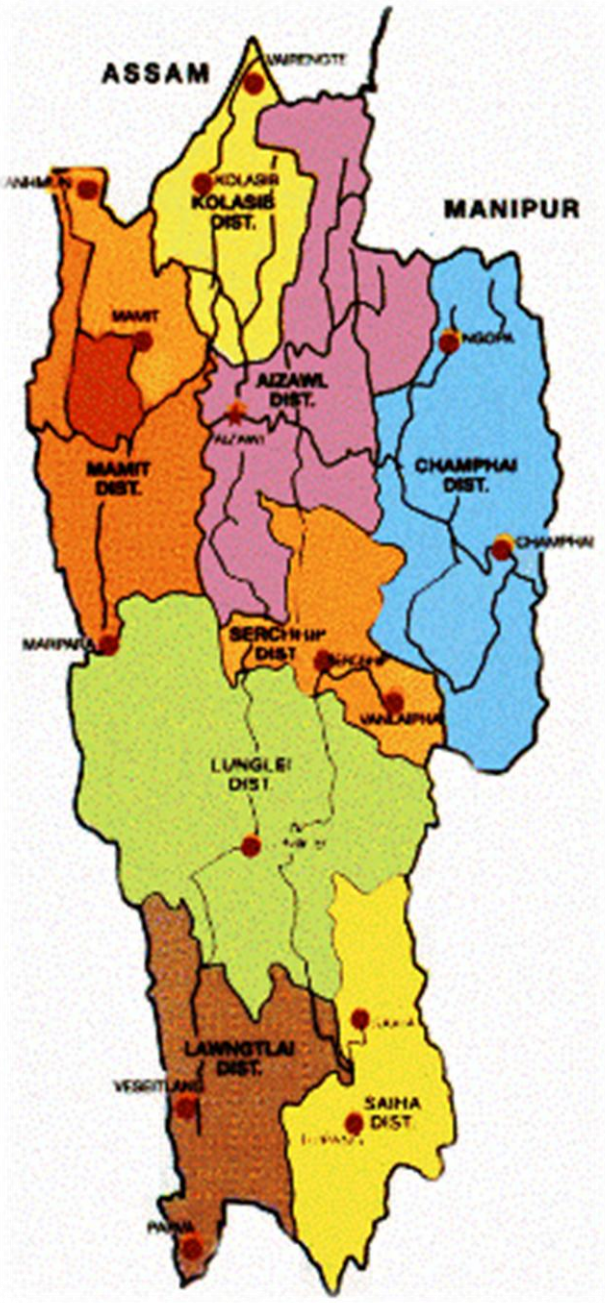
Appendix I

MAP OF MIZORAM

Source: http://www.novamining.com/mining-database/state-wise-data/india-mining-mizoram/

http://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/mizoram.html

Description	2011	2001
Approximate Population	10.91 Lakh	8.89 Lakh
Actual Population	1,091,014	888,573
Male	552,339	459,109
Female	538,675	429,464
Population Growth	22.78%	29.18%
Percentage of Total Population	0.09%	0.09%



Appendix II

Title and Content pages of Primary Texts

II. a) ***THE LUSHEI KUKI CLANS*- LT. COLONEL J. SHAKESPEAR.**

Part I – The Lushei Clans.

Part II – The Non-Lushei Clans.

II. b) ***LUSHAI CHRYSALIS*- MAJOR A. G. MCCALL.**

- Lushai Small Talk – 287 - 303.
- Farewell Lushai – 304 - 311.

II.c) ***THE MIZOS*- L. B. THANGA.**

- Early History – 1 - 14.
- Customs and Religion – 15 - 34.
- Folklore, Famous Composers and Tunes – 35 - 48.
- Folk Tales – 49 - 85.

i) Chhurbura – 49 - 56.

ii) Liandova and his brother – 56 - 63.

iii) Lalruanga and Keichala – 63 - 75.

iv) Tualvungi and Zawlpala – 75 - 80.

v) Chawngvungi and Sawngkhara – 80 to 82.

vi) Rimenhawii – 82 - 85.

- Patriots – 86 - 107.
- Advent of the British – 108 - 165.
- After Independence – 166 - 175.

II. d) ***CULTURE AND FOLKLORE OF MIZORAM*- B. LALTHANGLIANA.**

Part – I: Culture

- Mizo Village – 54
- Mizo Family Life – 56
- The Chief and His Subjects – 61.
- System of Cultivation – 88.

- Pi Hmuaki is remembered for her songs – 372.
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- Kungawrhi and the Goblins – 375.
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- Sazaltepa and Bakvawmtepu – 380.
- Ngaiteii saved her native village – 380.
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II. e) ***THE MIZO FOLK TALES*- TRI.**

- The Dog and the Goat – 1.
- The Tortoise and the Monkeys – 2.
- Chawmtatrawta – 5.
- Chhura and Chengkek – 7.
- Samdala – 8.
- A Girl and a Monkey – 10.
- Chepahakhata – 12.

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- Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi – 88.

Appendix III

In this appendix I have included six of the folktales including their different variations which were used in this dissertation. I have not made any corrections and each of them is presented as the collectors have written them.

"The Bear and the Monkey"

1. The Monkey made a swing and was always swinging in it. One day Granddaddy Bear saw him and said, "Oh. Monkey, let me have a swing." The Monkey replied, "Wait a minute till I have hung it more securely." Then he climbed up and bit the cane nearly through and jumped down again crying out, "Come on, Granddaddy Bear, have a swing." The bear got in and swung, the cane broke, and he fell down. The Monkey, intending to eat him, had gone and fetched some cooked rice(to eat with the bear's flesh). But though Granddaddy Bear fell down he was not killed. The Monkey, being terribly afraid, said, "Oh, Granddaddy Bear, hearing you had fallen I brought some rice for you," and gave him all he had brought. (Shakespear: The Tale of Granddaddy Bear and The Monkey)

Once upon a time there lived a monkey whose great delight was to swing merrily in the air, even at the cost of his meals. One day while he was swinging away whith his little eyes blinking, looking here and there, the whites showing up clearly when in ecstasy he would be a'swinging high then low, a big cumbersome bear appeared near the swing.

So, seeing the joy which the monkey was experiencing, he asked the monkey – "Monkey, will you please let me sit on your swing that I may enjoy myself for a little."

The monkey replied quite politely: "I am afraid my swing is hardly strong enough to hold such a big man as yourself. Before you could get on I must climb up to see if it is securely fastened on to these two trees."

But the monkey, when he climbed to the top, secretly gnawed through the ropes in such a way that the swing ropes would not stand much weight. However, when the monkey came down he said to the bear in quite an off hand way: “Now I think you can have a try.” So the bear got on.

As soon as the bear got on, the monkey, already counting his chickens before they were hatched, started to prepare for himself a big meal, saying to himself: “Soon the bear will swing too high and come down with such a bad that he will surely kill himself, and he will make for me a very sweet meal, as all bears taste so rich and sweet.”

It was not long before he heard the bear falling and he at once raced to the swing only thinking of the meal he hoped to have very shortly. When he got there, instead of finding a bear which was dead, he found one which was furious and angry. To try and hide his own discomfiture the monkey said to the bear: “I heard you falling from my swing and so I came running to help you and have brought some food.”

The bear, however, had seen through the monkey’s wicked device. Lunging at the monkey he only just missed him, but the monkey had to make up to the tree tops and there wait while he saw the bear eat up the carefully prepared meal he had intended for himself and neither could he now swing. So the bear adequately turned the tables on the monkey for his wickedness.

REMEMBERANCE FOR POSTERITY

To cheat those who wish us no harm is to make trouble for ourselves needlessly. (McCall: Monkey and Bear)

2. A monkey made a swing and spent almost all time riding it with a song. A bear saw it and asked for permission to try it. The monkey told it to wait while it checked the ropes so that they could stand the weight of the bear. In fact it bit them and made them weak. When the bear rode the swing the ropes snapped and it fell. The monkey thought the bear was dead. It had a broth ready and with an intention to take it with bear meat it went to what it thought was the remains of

the bear. As soon as it came close to it, the monkey knew that it was mistaken. The bear was alive.

"I'm so sorry that you had this trifle accident, take this hot broth."

"Well, we haven't any cup to put the broth, have we?"

"Get your belly flattened and extend it a little. I shall pour the broth on it."

The broth was very hot indeed. When poured on the belly of the bear, it burnt all the hair on it. (B. Lalthangliana: The swing and the monkey)

"Rimenhawii"

Rimenhoiyi[sic] married Zawlthlia. Their house was of iron. They had an eight-fold iron door. They beautified the inside with iron and brass things. They also had a window (i.e. Zawlthlia was a Thangchhuah) and a platform to sit on – in fact they wanted for nothing.

Rimenhoyi planted flowers, but there was one flower she had not, called "nipuipar" (bright sun flower – a creeper with scarlet flowers). When her husband was about to go in search of it he said to her, "Please don't go outside the house," and having filled the brass vessels with enough water to last her many days, he went off. However, the supply ran short and the lady went to the stream to wash, and one of her hairs was carried down and swallowed by a fish, which was caught by the cook of the king near the mouth of the river; and from out of the fish the cook pulled this immensely long hair, and it filled the winnowing basket. The king sent for the owner of the hair, and after many episodes she was brought to him. Zawlthlia returning found his wife gone, but with the help of the domestic animals he traced her, and, on arriving at the foreign king's village he saw slaves fetching water; and, ascertaining that it was for the new queen, he put one of the nipuipar into the vessel, so Rimenhonyi knew he had arrived. According to one version, they resorted to the same subterfuge that Abraham and Sarah employed when entering Egypt and lived happily till, the king's suspicion being aroused, Zawlthlia was summarily slain. According to another, Rimehoyi married them both, but as she showed a preference for Zawlthlia the king killed him.

With the help of a wise woman learned in charms Zawlthlia was brought to life in a more beautiful form, and the king was so struck by the improvement in his appearance that he asked to be allowed to undergo the same treatment and was duly killed, but, unfortunately for him, was by some accident restored to life in the shape of a dog; but in this shape he seems to have found more favour in the fickle fair one's eyes, and a child called Uithovi was born, who, being very poor, begged for some land of Zawlthlia, who had become king of the Tipperahs, and was told to take as much as a buffalo hide measured. By cutting the hide into a very thin strip he was able to measure a considerable area of ground, but, not content with this he voyaged far till he reached the place where money was to be found, and he became very prosperous. (Shakespear: Rimenhoyi)

"Origin of the Tuichawng River"

1. The little sister Nuengi was somewhat a spoilt child because her elder sister Tuaichawngi[sic] always tried to please her at any cost. One day they were walking on a ridge of water divide where the rivers have their sources. It was a very hot day. Suddenly Nuengi demande:

"Water! Water! I shall die of thirst."

"Dear child, wait until we get to a village over there."

"I can't wait till then."

"Look dear. I can change myself into a river and you can have your fill of water. Remember I shall then be lost to you for ever."

"Remember without water, I shall die and you being human or river is nothing to me."

"Drink water and be satisfied. Goodbye."

So saying big sister Tuaichawngi [sic] became the Tuaichawng[sic] river and flowed down to the land of Bengal. The king of that land was much surprised to see a big man to find out where

it started and how it started [sic]. When they came to the source they found Nuengi, a frightened child. They took her back to their king who took her as a member of his harem.

Some years later she blessed with a son [sic]. The chief Queen who had no child, was afraid that Nuengi would become the king's favourite. She let one of her servants to take the baby and throw it on the river [sic]. Tuichangi still remembered her young sister very well and knew that the boy now discarded was her son. The boy was saved and was brought up into manhood. Six more sons were discarded in the river and they were all saved and brought up together. Tuaichawngi[sic] then told them that they were the sons of the king and they were sent to dance on the palace roof. The king heard the commotion on the roof and on investigation he knew that they were his seven sons of Nuengi,. As a result the chief Queen was executed and Nuengi was made as the chief Queen. (B. Lalthangliana: Origin of the Tuaichawng[sic] River)

2. Nine miles from Demagri, on the Lunglei road the traveler has to cross the Tui-chong river, one of the largest tributaries of the Kurnaphuli, on which Chittagong stands. This river, according to the Lushais, owes its origin to the self-denial of a girl called Tui-chongi, who, with her little sister Nuengi, was walking on the hills whence the river rises. It was April, and the sun blazed down on them. Nuengi began to cry for water. "How can I get you water on the top of a hill? Don't you know that all the springs are dry, for are not the jhums ready to be burnt?" "Water, water, or I shall die," wailed Nuengi. "Would you rather have water than me?" asked Tui-chongi. "If I don't get water, I shall die, and then of what use would you be to me?" replied the spoilt child. So Tui-chongi, to satisfy her youngest sister's thirst, changed herself into a river, and Nuengi drank and was satisfied. But the water flowed down among the hills and burst its way into the country of the Bengalis. The king of the Bengalis was astonished to see so mighty a river flowing past his palace, and sent some of his people to find out whence it came. They journeyed many days, till at length they reached the source of the stream; and there sat Nuengi, who, now that her thirst was satisfied, would gladly have had her sister back again to show her the way home. The explorers were astonished to find so beautiful a maiden sitting thus in the middle of the jungle, and decided that it would be wise to take her back to their master, who liked pretty girls. So Nuengi was added to the harem of the king of Chittagong, and in time became the mother of a most lovely boy. The king's chief wife, on seeing the child, thought to

herself, “If my lord sees this jungle woman’s brat, he will assuredly love her more than me who am childless.” So she had the child thrown into the river, which flowed under the palace windows, and frightened Nuengi into keeping silence on the matter. Thu-chongi[sic] however, in spite of the change in her circumstances, remembered her little sister, and cherished the child so that he grew and throve. In the same way six more children were born and thrown into Tui-chongi’s fostering arms. When they were grown up Tui-chongi told them the circumstances of their birth, and sent them to dance on the roof of their father’s palace, who, hearing the noise, came out to see the cause of the disturbance. When he saw seven handsome young men he was much astonished, and asked them who they were. “We are your sons” they replied. “Why do you lie to me?” said the king; “liars have short lives in my kingdom.” “Nay, O king, we lie not; we are Nuengi’s sons,” and they told him their story. So the king smote off the head of the bad queen, and installed Nuengi in her place. (Shakespear: Origin of the Tui-chong river)

“Chawngchilhi”

1. Chawngchilhi had a younger sister and the two of them were wont to go to the jhums in order to keep a watch over the crops and to drive away the birds which used to collect nearby to nip off the first ears of te ripening crop. Their father, who was always felicitous for his daughters’ welfare, used to arrange for them to have a nice tasty tiffin fit for those who were doing such good work every day. Nevertheless, the younger sister seemed to be getting thinner and thinner which greatly worried the indulgent father. So one day he asked the sister of Chanwgchilhi what she thought was the reason for her sister getting so thin. But the younger girl asked to be excused on the ground that she dare not say. “I know she will give me a whipping with the green cane on which she hangs her bedding,” she said timidly to her father. But the father, thereupon, became insistent and commanded the girl to tell him the truth however distasteful it might be. Shyly and with great shame the younger sister disclosed the astounding fact that Chawngchilhi was wont to allow a serpent dragon to embrace her and that she would even unclothe herself that the serpent might enjoy her to the full. The father became, of course, very distressed and decided to go to the jhum, it being arranged that the younger sister would call the dragon as she had called him when Chawngchilhi desired the embraces of this animal. On arrival at the jhum, as planned, the younger sister called out:-

“Oh, Lover of Chawngchilhi, Oh Lover

My Mother wishes you so to come,

My Father wishes you so to come."

On hearing the voice of the young sister the serpent gave utterance in romantic and arrogant song singing:-

"Very soon I shall be coming

Beautifully my hair am I dressing

Exquisitely my turban am I tying

For the joy of your arms I am dying."

Then out he came, gliding confidently and gracefully from the jhum with the litheness that had overcome Chawngchilhi. But instead of the embraces of Chawngchilhi, for which he had come, he found himself set upon unexpectedly, the father cutting him in two with his strong hunting dao. The father, now knowing that all was really true, went home and straightaway killed his own daughter, Chanwgchilhi. Poor Chawngchilhi had already conceived and was about to bring forth the progeny of her unnatural lover so that when she lay dying many small snakes appeared and started to glide with lissome towards the open jungles; but the father fought with spirit in righteous anger and succeeded in killing all but one which got away. This one grew to a large size and in its hate used to eat up men very frequently. Its cave is known to this day and is situated on the main bridle path out towards Champhai at a place called Ruallung, where even now there is a large hole to be seen.

REMEMBERANCE FOR POSTERITY

A man's honour is worth more to him than life or possessions.

A man's love for his child is such that he would do things which otherwise he could not even think about. (McCall: Chawngchilhi)

2. In their slashed and burned cultivation plot, Chawngchilhi and her younger sister worked. They were given food by their parents to eat at during the course of their work. Yet, the young girls got more and more thin. They knew it was starvation and they checked why this happened. The young girl said that the elder sister had a snake for a lover and she sang a song the snake appeared and ate all their food [sic]. The father was angry, he went to the cultivation plot with the young daughter. There he told the girl to sing and entice the sake to come.

When it came, the father cut it into three pieces and killed it. They did not tell that to Chawngchilhi. Next day she went to their cultivation plot and called the snake by a song as usual. It did not come and she went to look around. She found her lover being cut up into three pieces. She brought these pieces home. Their father was sleeping at the entrance to the house, one piece of dead snake fell on the chest of the father. He got up with anger and cut up Chawngchilhi into several pieces. As she was killed, several small snakes came out of her womb. Her father also killed them except one. It escaped into a crack in the earth and it grew into a big snake. It swallowed chickens. Then it swallowed dogs.

The villagers one day tried to catch it by a noose. But it slipped into a hole. People tried to draw it out but failed to do so. At last they dug up the hole and cut it to several pieces. The pieces were then cooked and eaten. Its head was given a widow. She put it in a pot a boiled it. When she touched it with a ladle it shouted at her to be careful so as not to spoil its eyes with it. She was so frightened with it that she threw it out. It fell on a field for gourds and one gourd grew as big as a house. When night fell, cocks warned by crowing that all strangers should leave that village. Soon there was a big land slide from the nearby hill and except the widow, all villagers who ate the snake got killed. (B. Lalthangliana: Chawngchilhi)

3. Once upon a time there was a girl called Chhawng-chili, who was in her father's jhum. At the bottom of the jhum in a hollow tree a snake had its nest, and the snake loved Chhawng-chili very much. Whenever then went to the jhum she used to send her younger sister to call the snake, who used to come up and coil itself up in Chhawng-chili's lap. The little sister was very much afraid of the snake and did not dare tell her father. When the girls were going to the jhum, their parents always used to wrap up some rice and vegetables for them to take with them. On account

of her fear of the snake, the little sister could not eat anything. Then her sister and the snake ate up the rice and the vegetables, and the little sister stayed in the jhum house all day and got very thin, and her parents said to her, "Oh, little one, why are you getting so thin,?" but she always said, "Oh, father, I can't tell you"; but her parents pressed her to tell them and at last she said, "My sister and the snake make love always; as soon as we get to the jhum she says to me, 'Call him to me,' and I call him, and he comes up and coils himself up on her lap, and I am so frightened that I cannot eat anything, and that is why I am so thin." So they kept Chawngchilhi at home, and her father and younger sister went to the jhum, and her father dressed himself up to resemble Chawng-chili, but he put his dao by his side; then the little sister called the snake, who came up quickly and curled itself up in her father's lap, and he with one blow cut it in two, and then they returned to the village. On the next day Chhawng-chili and her sister went to the jhum and her little sister called the snake, but her father had killed it. So they came back to their house, and found their father lying on the floor just inside the door sill. Chhawng-chili said, "Get up, father, I want to scrape the mud off my feet" (on the door sill), but her father would not move. So chhawng-chili scraped off the mud from her feet, and stepped over the sill, and her father struck up and killed her. In her stomach there were about 100 small snakes. They killed them and killed them, but one escaped and hid under a dry patch of mithan dung, and grew up and used to eat people, and when it got bigger it wriggled into the "Rulchawm kua" i.e. – "feed snake hole" – and people of all villages used to feed it. After a time it was not content with goats and pigs, but demanded children. One day a chin who was travelling noticed his host and hostess weeping, and on asking the reason was told it was the day for giving a child to the snake, "I wll kill the snake," he replied, and, being provided with a goat, he slew it, and wrapped it flesh round his dao and forearm and offered it to the rulpui. When his forearm has been swallowed, by a quick turn of his wrist he disemboweled the monster. The place where this took place is on the Aijal-Champhai road, some forty miles from Aijal. The Biate or Bete claim to have been the people who fed the snake.(Shakespeare: Chhawng-chili)

"Sibuta and Dari"

Once upon a time there was a powerful chief who was accustomed to be denied nothing. He was arrogant, selfish, and a bad man, very powerful.

On this occasion he coveted a beautiful girl named Darlaii who lived in his village. It was not that he was capable of a great love for her, a desire to make her his wife, and to make her as queen in his home, but he wished to ravish her, so much did the beauty of her face and the graceful movement of her lithe body attract him. But the fatal day came when Darlaii rejected his approaches, which angered him very much, and he vowed a deep vengeance.

Sibuta, the Chief, decided to hold a Khuangchawi ceremony, which is one of the most important feasts that the Lushais performed. On the first night a large gayal was killed and there was much merrymaking and Zu drinking in the Chief's house, where Darlaii also was a guest.

The next morning Sibuta, to wreak his vengeance on Darlaii, ordered the young men to seize her and, bind her and to lead her up and down the village streets like the gayals are lead before they are killed. Having nothing whatever to show against Darlaii, the Chief Sibuta gave it out that when he was a young man Darlaii's father had stuffed fowl's dung into his mouth, which, of course, was quite a lie.

As Darlaii was being led up and down the streets of the village her mother was beside herself with grief, and tried to allow her water, but Sibuta twisted the mother's hands and away went the precious water. Sibuta ordered the young men to remove much of her clothing and to beat her with cruel canes and sticks. The young men themselves were very distressed but dare not disobey. They gave her water when out of sight of Sibuta and also procured cool leaves for her to relieve her stinging body.

But there was worse to come for the next day Sibuta himself with a spear came up to Darlaii, bound helpless as she was, and pierced her to death at the Seluphan, where the gayals for sacrifice are always killed.

Darlaii's mother was so grieved she was beyond comfort. But no such cruelty can escape retribution and that very night, in the Chief's house sparkling and ferocious fireballs appeared in a terrifying manner all along the roof and all the ceremony had to be stopped, for all were afraid of great evil.

In due course, not long after, Sibuta died an indescribable death shortly followed by his wife.

REMEMBRANCE FOR POSTERITY

For evil and cruelty we cannot escape retribution. (McCall: Sibuta and Dari)

"Lalruanga and Keichala"

Once a new-born girl was found in a village forge. Everybody was surprised. In spite of every attempt, the villagers failed to trace the parents. In the absence of any claimant, therefore, the chief took charge of the baby. He called her Kelngoteii, which means beloved-white-goat. The only domestic animals the Mizos had in those days were mithuns, pigs, dogs or goats. In giving this name to the baby, the chief felt that if she was not the child of any person, she could even be the child of any of the domestic animals including a goat.

Kelngoteii grew up to be one of the most beautiful girls in the village. In those days, there was an expert goldsmith in another village. He was specially skilful in making gold bracelets. His reputation spread far and wide, and girls from distant villages came to have their ornaments made. Kelngoteii and a friend also decided to get their bracelets made by him. Accordingly they proceeded to his village. In return for his services, the goldsmith demanded to sleep with the girls. Kelngoteii refused, but her friend did not object saying that having come so far, she would not like to return home empty-handed. As a result, the goldsmith gave Kelngoteii a false bracelet made of clay but painted in golden colours. On the way home, her friend washed her bracelet in a stream to make it look brighter. Kelngoteii did likewise, and her bracelet melted away. She was so sad that she cried bitterly and her eyes were swollen and she was carried home in turns by the male fellow travellers who would sleep with her at night. She became pregnant. So also her friend. In due course, Kelngoteii had a boy and her friend a girl. The two became lovers. It was even said that they had fallen in love when they were in their mother's wombs. Kelngoteii's son was named Zauhranga, meaning wide field. He was so named because his mother could not identify his father, having slept with so many men at the same time. Her friend's daughter was called Zawltleipuii, meaning contented lover. She was called as such because of her love with Zauhranga even before birth.

In course of time, Zauhranga and Zawltleipuii got married. One day, Zauhranga went on a journey to a distant land, and he stopped in the house of an old couple who were then looking for someone who would look after them till death in return for inheritance of wealth. After discretely finding out their wealth and learning that one Tuirang gong with multiple sounds belonged to them, Zauhranga volunteered to look after the old couple. He also calculated that the old couple had not many days to live. From his village, he sent roasted or dried meat, mainly of birds; but the old couple were in good health and they lived much longer than Zauhranga was prepared for. At last, he sent then poisoned meat and the old couple died. Zauhranga came and dutifully performed the death ceremonies. He then went home carrying the best property of the old couple, namely the Tuirang gong. Earlier Zauhranga had a dream in which the guardian of the gong warned him not to ring it till he reached his village. Zauhranga heeded this warning and carried home the gong without ringing it. On reaching the outskirts of the village, he sat down to rest. He thought to himself, "It is now as good as reaching home. There should be no harm in beating the gong."

The gong was most unusual in that it had three notes; and Zauhranga began to beat the three notes one after another. The people in the village heard the sounds and they knew that Zauhranga had returned. Accordingly, they came out of their houses to meet him. Unfortunely, however, while trying the different notes, the gong slipped from Zauhranga's fingers and began to roll downhill. At first, it was rolling slowly and Zauhranga hoped to retrieve it easily. But the gong moved faster wherever Zauhranga came nearer. Thus the gong went on rolling with Zauhranga pursuing it. Ultimately the gong fell into Tuiruang (Barak) river. He could see the gong through the clear water of the river, but when he dived to discover it, he could not find it. In desperation, Zauhranga went home to seek the help of his villagers, who all volunteered readily to help in the search. The best swimmer in the village was Vanzema. When they reached the place, Vanzema dived to the bottom of the river and found the gong guarded by a big snake. There was also an old man nearby who warned Vanzema saying, "My son, go back immediately and do notcome back. If you do not listen to me and come again, you will never return to the human world."

Vanzema came out and told the villagers what he had seen, but they were not convinced and they accused Vanzema of lying. They also teased him and edged him to repeat his performance. Vanzema did not want to be taken as a coward. He told the villagers to tie a long rope round his

waist. He would go down again, but he was in danger, he would pull at the rope as a signal and the villagers should pull him out at once. Thus saying, he again went to the bottom of the river. In a short while, his friends got the signal. Without losing a moment, they hauled him out only to find his head already severed from the body. At the tragic loss of the best swimmer in the village, the villagers returned home disappointed and unsuccessful.

In course of time, Zauhranga and his wife got a son, but the boy died soon after birth. Greatly grief, Zauhranga was displeased with the gods and he pursued the spirit of his dead baby, and succeeded in capturing him. Only after the spirit assured him that in a short while he and his wife would have another son, Zauhranga allowed the spirit to proceed to the dead men's land. The spirit also told him that his next son should be called LALRUANGA. It was thus, as foretold, that Lalruanga was born.

Lalruanga was a queer character even before birth. While in his mother's womb, he used to forecast the weather and advised his mother whether she should take a rain-proof or not when going to jhum-fields. He was an usually strong child and soon after birth, he caught a rabbit. He was also very fluent with his tongue. Fearing that he would became a chatter-box, his father chopped off the tip of his tongue when he was an infant. Most of all, he was an extremely intelligent boy. One day he followed his father in the jungles and asked his father, "Daddy, is a rat bigger than a deer?" His father replied, "a deer is bigger."

Lalruanga said that in his view the rat is bigger. Very soon Lalruanga got an opportunity to project his theory. His father had killed a deer, and he was carrying it home without cutting it. On that day, Lalruanga also caught a rat and he was taking it home without killing it. On reaching the village, people came out and said, "Lalruanga's father brought home such a nice little deer." A little later when they saw Lalruanga running in with his rat, they said, "Look, Lalruanga is running in with a big rat". Lalruanga then said to his father, "Look, Daddy, everyone had called your deer a nice little deer whereas my rat was considered big by everybody. Hence my theory that a rat is bigger than a deer is correct."

On another occasion, Lalruanga asked his father which was the more valuable of the two between a vension and a wild fruit called zawngtah. This food is eaten as chutney, and is a favourite with all. When Lalruanga's father again killed a deer and carried home the meat,many

people saw him, but none ever thought of asking him for the share. On the other hand, Lalruanga who carried home a large bunch of zawngtah was approached by everybody with request to give them some. Proudly Lalruanga pointed out to his father, "I am again right. A zawngtah is more sought after- hence more valuable than a venison."

Still on another occasion, Lalruanga asked his father whether shouting from the top of the hill would be louder than shouting from the bottom of the valley. His father said that to shout from the top of the hill would be louder. To prove his point, he climbed a hill top and shouted with all his might. It was very loud but no one seeme to take notice of it. Then Lalruanga went down to the bottom of the valley and shouted from there. Immediately, the echo resounded from one end of the valley to the other. Birds in the bushes and wild animals in the forests came out of their hiding places on hearing the echo of Lalruanga's voice. This time also, Lalruanga proved his point against his father. Lalruanga's father never ceased to wonder what kind of person his son would be. He only knew that whatever line he took, Lalruanga would reached the top.

In course of time, Lalruanga grew up and could go hunting on his own. He noticed however that the animals caught in his traps were invariably stolen and he decided to find out the thief. He waited for the whole day and night. Early in the morning, a man came to take away the deer caught in his trap. Before the thief could run away, Lalruanga came from the rear and seized the man. This man was Vanhrika, the worm of the heavens. Vanhrika was the most famous magician in those days. He promised to teach Lalruanga the best magic of the world if Lalruanga would spare his life. Lalruanga agreed; and Lalruanga became, in his turn, the greatest magician of his day. Lalruanga never knew that his tongue was abnormal till a girl friend told him one day that it had been cut short by his father to prevent him from becoming too talkative. Lalruanga enquired of his father as to where the severed portion had been thrown; and when it was found, Lalruanga joined it to his tongue again, and thus accomplished his first act of magic.

At another time Lalruanga and his father caltivated jhums separately; Lalruanga in the hill top and his father in the valley. When the harvesting season approached, the father and son both cmped in the jhums to protect the crops from wild birds and animals. At night, a tiger prowled about the fahter's jhum and he could not sleep. He, therefore, asked Lalruanga to change places. Lalruanga readily complied with his father's request. When he went to the jhum in the valley, Lalruanga took with him a drum and many kinds of musical instruments. With these, he made as

loud noises as he could. The tiger knew that Lalruanga had come in place of his father, and he concluded from the noise that Lalruanga must have come with many friends. The tiger was in fact a tiger-man, KEICHALA by name. He asked Lalruanga if he had company. Lalruanga told him that there were many men with him. In order to verify, Keichala asked Lalruanga to show him their lunch packets. Though Lalruanga had only one, he showed through a hole in the wall the same packet over and over again and said, "See this, and this and this."

The tiger-man had no further grounds for doubt, and he offered to befriend with Lalruanga. Lalruanga agreed. They further agreed to tie a bond friendship. To make sure that neither side played any trick, they decided to meet in a neutral ground. When they met, Lalruanga suggested that they should have a trial of strength. There was a big stone nearby and Lalruanga invited Keichala to break the stone with his teeth. Try as he might, Keichala succeeded in making only a few scratches here and there. Lalruanga then took out his bow and arrow, and taking careful aim, he hit the stone. There was already a crack in one portion of the stone and Lalruanga made sure that his arrow entered exactly in the cracked portion. Then he asked Keichala to help him to pull out the arrow. Lalruanga then pulled it out himself, and told his friend, "As you can now see, where you have failed, I have succeeded in making a crack in the stone. I have also pulled out the arrow all by myself though it was not possible to do so with our combined efforts. Hence, no further proof of our relative strength is necessary." Thereafter, the two became close friends.

One day, Lalruanga suggested that they should be introduced to their respective parents. Keichala did not welcome the suggestion and told Lalruanga that his parents were not worth introducing to him. However, he invited him to visit his village; and the two friends set out towards Keichala's village. On the way they came upon a high forest of wild plaintains. Lalruanga said, "This jungle seems to be an ideal place for sport." Keichala replied, "Why don't you play?" Then Lalruanga suggested that they begin and Keichala should give him a warning when he came too near. Lalruanga started from the foot of the hill cutting down all the banana trees as he came up. When he reached the one where Keichala had taken position, Keichala told him that was enough. Pretending that he did not hear, Lalruanga cut the one on which Keichala was sitting and Keichala fell and almost hurt himself. But Keichala forgave him because of their bond of friendship.

After days of travelling, they came to a forest full of tall elephant grasses. This time Keichala said that the forest was ideal for his kind of sport. Lalruanga agreed to wait while he played. Keichala gave a piece of stone to Lalruanga so that he could warn him in case he came too near him. Lalruanga changed the small piece of stone for a big one, and hit Keichala when he came near him. Their friendship was almost broken at this but for the consideration made by Keichala.

One evening, when they were about to retire for the night, Lalruanga suggested that Keichala should go to fetch water while he would fetch a light to make fire and cook. Keichala went downhill to fetch water in a bamboo container. As soon as he left, Lalruanga produced his magic box, lighted a fire and prepared food. By the time Keichala returned, he had everything ready. Keichala was surprised and asked wherefrom he obtained water to cook. Lalruanga replied, "I cut open the tip of my fingers and poured out water therefrom for cooking meal."

Further on their journey, they met a large herd of wild boars. While Lalruanga stood at one end and killed those which fell away from the main body, Keichala went to the other end to drive out the herd. Lalruanga killed many boars but before Keichala could rejoin him, he concealed the marks of his arrows in the carcasses skillfully so that the spots where they were hit could not be seen. When Keichala saw the dead boars, he was surprised and asked Lalruanga how he managed to kill them. Lalruanga said, "As soon as the boar came out of their hiding, I pointed my finger at them and they collapsed and died." Keichala attempted to do likewise later, but failed as no boar can be killed merely by pointing a finger at it. Similarly, Keichala stayed back in the camp while Lalruanga went downhill to fetch drinking water. He had hurt his finger badly in trying to draw out water as Lalruanga said he had done before. He did not know Lalruanga was a magician.

On the day of their arrival in Keichala's village, he asked Lalruanag to wait while he himself entered the village. Llaruanga was intrigued and secretly followed to see what Keichala was up to. In the village, Keichala warned his relatives, friends and neighbours to hide their tales so that Llaruanga would not know their true character. Lalruanga who had seen all that Keichala had done, kept quiet and followed Keichala into the village as if there was nothing unusual. Hardly had they rested and taken some food when Lalruanga asked Keichal to take him to his parents. Keichala wanted to avoid, but Lalruanga had already noticed his parents hiding in one corner of the house, and without saying anything else he began to clean their paws. Keichala's parents

were highly pleased. Keichala's father happened to be the chief of the village and he decided to adopt Lalruanga as one of his sons. He also said to Keichala, "You have found a true friend. You must protect him from the other villagers. He appears to be a modest and well-behaved person. When you offer drink or food, and he happens to take little, you must know that it is because of his modesty and you should serve him plenty. Give him also the best presents before he returns home."

Thus Lalruanga was treated generously while he stayed in Kiechala's village, and before he returned home he was given the best of ornaments for his wife and children. All these presents were put by Lalruanga in his magic box so that he could carry them home with ease. Keichala knew that on the day of his departure, Lalruanga would be challenged by many of his villagers to a wrestling. He asked Lalruanga to start early before dawn. He also gave Lalruanga a packet as present and told him to open the packet only after he reached his village.

When the day of departure came, Lalruanga left long before dawn. After dawn, many of Keichala's neighbours came to him and said, "We want to wrestle with your guest." Keichala replied, "He is washing his hair."

They came again and Keichala said, " He is having a bath." A third time they asked for him, he replied," He is having his food." Next time, he said that he was packing his things. On one excuse or another, Keichal aput them off till it was midday. By that time, Llaruanga had gone a long way; and curious to find out what was in the packet given to him by Keichala, he opened it. Immediately, a pleasant breeze blew and treavelled fast to Keichala's village. Keichala understood this as a message from Lalruanga. He had no reason to doubt that Llaruanga had not followed his instructions, and Keichala assumed that he must have reached his village safely.

When, therefore, his neighbours clamoured again for a wrestle with Lalruanga, Keichal told them that he had gone. The tigers roared in anger and immediately ran in pursuit of Lalruanga. Keichala also ran with them in case his friend would need help. Without difficulty, he out-ran all his neighbours and came upon Lalruanga who was taking a rest. Fortunately for him, there was a small cave nearby and Keichala asked him to hide inside the cave. When the other tigers arrived, Keichala advised them that as he himself, who was the fastest, could not overtake Lalruanga, there was no point in further pursuit. They all agreed to return.

While taking rest before they returned, Keichala asked each of them what in their opinion was most dangerous. There was an old blind tiger in the group. He was asked to speak first and he said, "A thick cloud, followed by a heavy hailstorm, rain and Lalruanga would be most dangerous to me." All others dittoed this view. Lalruanga who could overhear all these conversations then produced with his magic a big cloud of heavy rain and a thunder-storm with hail. Everyone began to think that Llaruanga had indeed returned and they all fled away leaving the blind tiger. Then Lalruanga came out of his hiding and gave a good thrashing to the old blind tiger who, on his return to the village, told his neighbours, "I saw Lalruanga after you had left. I caught him and gave him a good beating."

Lalruanga returned home safely to his village. When he had set out on his journey with Keichala, Lalruanga's wife was pregnant. When he returned home, his wife had not only given birth but the baby girl was already in her teens. Naturally, neither Lalruanga nor his daughter could recognize each other and Lalruanga had almost asked the young girl to be his wife before they were introduced by his wife.

On learning about his exploits, Lalruanga's younger brother wanted to emulate his achievement. But Laruanga advised him against it. His brother would not listen and he proceeded to Keichala's village. True to Lalruanga's apprehension, his brother was neither tactful in his dealings with keichala and his relatives nor was he skilfull[sic] in magic. Worst of all, he displeased Keichala's parents because of which even Keichala would not come to his help. Without Keichala's protection, he was soon killed and eaten by the other tigers.

Worried about his brother's safety, Lalruanga had followed him, but by the time he reached Keichala's village, his brother was already dead. Keichala faithfully told him all that happened and how his neighbours had killed his brother because of his indiscretion. Lalruanga then requested Keichala to call all his neighbours and he requested each one of them to return the flesh of his brother they had consumed. When this was done, Lalruanga put the pieces together and had the body whole. He tried to put life in him but failed. He reexamined the body carefully and found that the piece of skin under the armpit was missing. A search was again made but in spite of all efforts, they could not find out who had consumed it. Lalruanga then patched the spot with the skin of a rat. He tried his magic again, and this time he succeeded. When his brother came to life, he did not believe that he had died and Lalruanga had to point out to him the change

in his body. Scornful of a rat skin in his person, he pulled it out and threw it away. As soon as he did so, he fell dead. Even Lalruanga could not bring him back to life again.

When Lalruanga departed from Keichala's village, the two friends parted as enemies. Both of them realized that when they met next, one of them was sure to be overpowered and killed. Accordingly they made a promise that whoever died first should be buried by the survivor with the full honour of a brave man and with the sacrifice of Hrangsaipuia's *mithun* in the funeral ceremony. The *mithun* had double horns, and was an object of envy for everyone in those days.

Keichala was no match for Lalruanga in resourcefulness, and Lalruanga had no difficulty in killing Keichala while the latter was waylaying him in his *jhum.* Before breathing his last, Keichala reminded Lalruanga that he was to be buried with full honours with the sacrifice of Hrangsaipuia's *mithun;* and Lalruanga re-affirmed that he would keep his promise.

Hrangsaipuia was as good a magician as Lalruanga. He knew beforehand that Lalruanga would come for his *mithun.* Accordingly, he was prepared for the contest. He sharpened his wits and waited for Lalruanga. When Lalruanga arrived, Hrangsaipuia invited him to stay in his house, and they immediately began the combat. After many days of trials, Hrangsaipuia admitted defeat, and he could find no more excuse to withhold his *mithun.* When Lalruanga had tied the *mithun* and was taking it home, Hrangsaipuia made a last desperate effort to stop him. He called the animal by all his pet names. The *mithun* halted, but this only delayed them as the *mithun* moved on as soon as Laruanga shouted at it. Thus he took the *mithun* home, and with it Lalruanga performed the last rites of Keichala as he had promised.

Hrangsaipuia had a sister named Zangkaki. She was a greater magician than her brother. She was also clever. After Lalruanga had gone back to his village with Hrangsaipuia's *mithun,* Zangkaki sent a message to him requesting him to visit her as she had become pregnant throught him. This was, of course, false. But Lalruanga did not know how to disprove it. He made preparations to visit Zangkaki in spite of the advice of all his relatives that this was clearly a ruse to take revenge for her brother's death. Lalruanga was, however confident that none could beat him.

On the way to Zangkaki's village, he had to cross Tuiruang(Barak) river. It was summer and very hot. Lalruanga took rest and had a swim in the river. Accidently, he dropped the box

containing his best magic art. As soon as he detected the loss, he sent a rat famous for his nimbleness after it. But before the rat could overtake it, the box drifted to a village in the plains. The plains-men picked up the magic box, and they also captured the rat with the leaf on which the rat sailed on the river. It is said that because of this a plains-man is a better magician today than a Mizo; and it is from the rat that the plains-men learnt the art of rowing and the art of building boats.

On arrival at Zangkaki's village, therefore, Lalruanga was without his best magic, and Zangkaki succeeded in defeating him. She would take Lalruanga in her lap, and would make him sleep singing lullabies to him. When he woke up, she would ask him of his dreams; and she would continue this till Lalruanga was fully bewitched and unable to recollect his dreams. Zangkaki then know that he was beaten. Dropping him from her lap, she immediately built a stone fortress around Lalruanga from which there was no escape. All attempts by him to break the stone wall were defeated as Zangkaki's magical power was greater. At last, Lalruanga gave up hope and the struggle. There was a small window through which Zangkaki had made good her exit; and through this hole Lalruanga was fed. After a time, he refused to take food because his room had become so foul and he did not want to add more filth which could not be cleared and would rot there.

And so Lalruanga died. (L.B.Thanga:Lalruanga and Keichala)