

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIA IN MIZORAM:

A CULTURAL APPROACH

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD

FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

COMMUNICATION

BY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis, titled ***HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIA IN MIZORAM: A CULTURAL APPROACH*** submitted by Ms. C. Lalrozami for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication is a record of research carried out under my supervision and guidance in the Department of Communication, Sarojini Naidu School of Arts and Communication, University of Hyderabad.

The thesis or parts thereof has not been submitted for any other degree or diploma at this or any other University.

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I hereby declare that this thesis titled ***HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIA IN MIZORAM: A CULTURAL APPROACH*** submitted to University of Hyderabad for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication is a record of research done by me under Dr. P Thirumal, Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad. This work has not been submitted in part or in full for the award of any degree or diploma at this or any other University.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of many people. First and foremost, I thank my supervisor Dr. P. Thirumal for his help, support, guidance and encouragement throughout the journey of the dissertation. My sincere thanks go to Prof. B. P. Sanjay and Dr. M.N. Rajesh for their valuable comments and suggestions as members of my Doctoral Research Committee. I would also like to acknowledge and extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the faculty members and staff of the Department of Communication.

My gratitude goes to the journalists and media persons of Mizoram including Robert Lalchhuana, David M. Thangliana, Antony Chhuanvawra, Lalsawmliana Pachuau, R.K. Lianzuala, Vanneihluanga, K. Sapdanga, Lalrosanga, Lalkhawliana, Lalhmerliani, D.R. Zirliana, Lalawmpuia (L), Lalhmangaihzuale and other important personalities and academicians like Lalhangfala Sailo, Dr. C. Lalhlira, Dr. Lalrinawmi Ralte, Prof. Laltluangliana Khiangte, Dr. R.L. Thanmawia and Dr. Margaret Ch. Zama with whom I have obtained valuable information for my research. I also thank Mr. Hmaa, Mr. K. Lalruala and all the staff of Mizoram State Archive, State Library, Synod Archive, Aizawl Theological College Library and Archive and Baptist Church Archive for their assistance in locating documents.

It gives me great pleasure to thank K. Malsawmdawngliana and Mr. Lalthatluanga for translating several of my primary sources to English which formed a very crucial part of the research. My heartfelt thanks go to Taia, Azuali, Pusa, Malsawma, Nunui, Zara and Achhuana for sharing their books, journals and other materials and for

their friendship. I also thank Laldinpuii, Benjamin Lalfakzuala, Dr. Sharmila, Dr. Nikhila, Dr. Vijay, Harini, Priyanka and Viju for going through my drafts. My heartfelt thanks go to Maenga, Zartea, Zothanpara, Remruata Renthlei, Dawngtea and Justin for their active participation in discussing and providing materials during my research.

My deepest gratitude goes to my father, Lalringliana, my mother, Vanlalchhawni, my grandmother, Thankungi and all the members of my family for their untiring support, prayers and encouragement without which this thesis would not have been completed. I thank Nu Saii, Pa Zohminga, Azaii, members of Hyderabad Mizo Christian Fellowship and MPGSU for their constant prayers.

Finally, yet most importantly, I thank my Savior, Jesus Christ who blessed me with all the above mentioned people and for letting me experience His presence in all the walks of my life.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The dominant history of literature, journalism and performative arts has been written from the perspective of the Indian Nation State, colonial moment or a civilisational past. In this study, an attempt is made to narrate the cultural history of the borderland region, Mizoram which shares its boundary with Burma in the East and Bangladesh to the South, from the perspective of the fragment rather than the colonial or the postcolonial whole.¹

This thesis examines three related issues namely the theoretical debates regarding media historiography, formulating questions regarding cultural history through culturally acknowledged registers obtained in the former Lushai Hills District of colonial India and the present federal state of Mizoram in postcolonial India, and identifying sources, critical events and providing accounts in relation to the negotiating space carved out of the tension between the culturally acknowledged registers and the dominant registers introduced by the colonial state followed by the postcolonial Indian state.

¹ The idea of fragment has received a complex treatment in Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* but the effort of this dissertation is to make a distinction between cultural histories written from postcolonial Nation States, colonial state and from the perspective of the Indic Civilisation. This is not to suggest that there is absence of linkage between the fragment and the postcolonial Nation State/colonial state or the Indic Civilisation. See Ronald Beiner, *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy of History* in *Political Theory*, Vol 12, No. 3, (Aug, 1984) pp.423-434

In effect, the study puts forward a series of theoretical proposals: media history² from the perspective of the fragment, offers culturally acknowledged registers (historically received cultural models of communication and expression) through a theoretical innovation that helps it to carry a cultural load and also accounts for variety of pre-colonial forms and their history over the last hundred years and flag off critical events that mark co-habitation and negotiation of the dominant registers that colonialism introduces.³ For the purpose of this dissertation, these cultural registers are theoretically endowed with dynamic powers to identify and differentiate communicative forms and practices, and account for cultural differences including distinct orientations towards reality and the imagined world. This intervention posits two culturally acknowledged registers namely, '*thawnthu*' and '*chanchin*' which operate as 'super registers' that encompass all other communicative and expressive forms of indigenous variety and those genres that came along with colonialism and the postcolonial Independent Indian Nation State. The need for these registers stems from a need to offer historical continuity to an otherwise atemporal existence of indigenous models of cultural forms and practices. Most writings of history on Northeast regions begin with colonialism and the advent of missionaries.

² The term 'media history' is used in an expansive form to include literary, journalistic/technological and performative media.

³ As of now, these culturally acknowledged registers are derived through a certain interpretation of literary, technological and performative media of the region. The study assumes that this theoretical proposal allows for framing the growth of textual, technological and performative media, both spatially and vertically.

Review of Literature on Media Historiography

Towards a theory of the fragment:

As previously mentioned, theoretical approaches concerning cultural history rarely signal the fragment. Before positing a tentative formulation announcing the fragment, the section below will briefly review existing theoretical models for writing the cultural history of mainland India. It also includes some general observations regarding the cultural history of Western liberal societies along with the recent formulation of James Scott's conceptual grid referred to as 'Zomia' in his provocative work, *The Art of not being governed: An Anarchist history of Upland Southeast Asia*. The last mentioned work theoretically allows for mapping Mizoram not merely on to the Indian Nation State but on to a far more elaborate cultural and historical context of South Asia itself over a millennium. In examining these broad approaches, this thesis highlights the inadequacies of these formulations and offers a space to situate the fragment.

The arrival of modernity roughly corresponds to the emergence of journalism, literary and expressive traditions as universal culture initially in Western liberal democracies.⁴ Postcolonial societies import this universal culture through a colonial state and later through inhabiting the postcolonial moment. Notwithstanding the critiques of this dominant strand of media history, the Nation State and citizenship happen to become the default narratives for staging this hegemonic form of cultural

⁴ In US, the First Amendment of the US Constitution is cited as an important moment inaugurating the growth of journalism in particular and the literary public sphere in general. In UK, the history of journalism is supposedly flagged off by the Cromwellian Revolution.

history. For borderland regions like Northeast India, the progress of liberalism from colonialism to nationalism through anti-colonialism may not be obtained and the history of culture including media history requires frames outside the Indic civilization, colonial and the post-national context.⁵

The origin of 'universal culture' as a de-contextualized a-historical product in the Western liberal democracies has been interrogated on several planes especially with regard to race, class, gender, sexual minorities and so on. Studies have pointed out the history of journalism has had a close relationship with the march of the liberal emancipatory project. The growth of the press is supposed to have provided a check on both the state and the market.⁶ The expansion of the bourgeois cultural formation has been well documented and alternate histories of the contestation of the 'universal culture' have received attention from a critical social science perspective and more recently from a cultural studies and postcolonial studies perspective. While it is necessary to pose a critique of the 'universal culture,' recently scholars have been careful to argue that media histories

⁵ See Dipesh Chakrabarty's, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton University Press, 2000.

⁶ The conditions of either the state or the market has not been obtained during colonial period in the former Lushai Hills District and therefore journalism or literary public sphere cannot be charted against the state or the market. It is only the presence of the missionaries which mark the conditions for linguistic, literary and journalistic growth during the colonial period. Hence, a liberal approach to media history will not be obtained during the colonial period. Even during the postcolonial period, for almost more than two decades the region experienced a state of exception with no guarantee of Fundamental Rights to life or expression.

of Western societies have to be narrated in conjunction with the dominant conception and practice of liberal culture of capitalism.⁷

In postcolonial studies, following Edward Said, a number of exciting alternative approaches including the Subaltern Studies programme took shape.⁸ One of the critics of the Saidian approach has been the construction of the monolithic 'Other.' It is true that the Subaltern Studies group posited culturally recognized plural entities that contested and negotiated both colonialism and nationalism. However, scholars persuaded by the Cultural Studies paradigm have rarely pluralized India in a manner that accounts for situating the borderland regions of Northeast including Mizoram as an autonomous and negotiating historical cultural entity. There are important exceptions to this rule. The work of some scholars including Yasmin Saikia, Jayeeta Sharma, Indrani Chatterjee and Bodhisattva Kar point towards this positive aberration.⁹

More recently, scholars working on the 'early colonial period' have found it necessary to look at a far more dynamic historical process that shaped the cultural

⁷ See important historical and theoretical work with regard to race and gender. In post colonial studies, Homi Bhabha intervention and his formulation of the category 'hybridity' in *The Location of culture*. Also, see Anupama Rao's work, *The Caste Question- Dalits and the politics of Modern India* for looking at liberal thought and institutional life as a ground for conceiving a revolutionary subject.

⁸ In his paradigmatic work, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Edward Said reshaped the programme of both Humanities and Social Sciences for postcolonial scholars.

⁹ See Yasmin Saikia's *The Tai-Ahom Connection*, Jayeeta Sharma's *British Science, Chinese Skill and Assam Tea: Making empire's garden and Lazy Natives, Coolie labour and the Assam Tea Industry*, Indrani Chatterjee's *Captives of enchantment? Gender, genre and transmemoration* and Bodhisattva Kar's *Incredible stories in the time of credible histories: Colonial Assam and translation of vernacular geographies*.

interaction between the colonial power and the colonies.¹⁰ In mainland India, dominant vernacular regional formations precede the arrival of colonial rule. Scholars have pointed out the emergence of regional political geographies and cultural formations from the beginning of 1000 A.D. There is a tradition of enquiry that suggests the existence of a pre-print literary and oral performative culture that sets the background against which the colonial cultural formation emerges. In many parts of Northeast India, there is clearly an absence of archival material because of the lack of a script among many important communities. Along with a lack of script, the denizens of the hills practiced jhum cultivation (common practice of slash and burn agriculture on South Asian Uplands including Northeast India) allowing for the production of a negligible surplus and lacking incentive for collecting taxes from the producer leading to the existence of small patrimonial clan dispensations rather than the construction of elaborate state structures. Since such elaborate state structures did not exist in border regions, cultural apparatus like script, accounting practices, literary and artistic pursuits to aesthetize and legitimize the state did not emerge. In other words, research on early colonial India in some of the border regions including the Lushai Hills District using this theoretical formulation may not yield the results that have been obtained from dominant linguistic and cultural regions of mainland India.

Research on languages and literary cultures in South Asia including India have been conducted on a much broader canvas encompassing the Indic

¹⁰ See Trautman's *Madras School of Orientalism: Producing Knowledge in colonial South India* and the work on *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India* by scholars like Velacheru Narayanrao, David Schulman and Sanjay Subramanyam.

Civilization as the temporal anchor rather than confining history of culture to merely the colonial and postcolonial moment.¹¹ Though scholars like Sheldon Pollock have looked at the cultural formation of South Asia through the idea of Sanskrit Cosmopolis during the 1st millennium and Vernacular Cosmopolis during the next millennium, the border regions across the national cultures of Upland South Asia has not been given due attention.¹² Among other things, in his paradigmatic work, *Language of Gods in the world of men: Sanskrit, culture and power in premodern India*, including his other writings, Pollock seems to foreground the presence of manuscript culture and alludes to a sacral geography¹³ informing the political geography which shapes the making of colonial and contemporary India. Such a derivative is less appealing theoretically or experientially for mapping the Northeast region.¹⁴ While a vernacular geography is still in the making, this thesis suggests a corresponding media culture needs to be flagged off against or in negotiation with the national political geography derived from a sacral geographical lineage.

¹¹ The monumental work of Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, culture and power in premodern India* is extremely informative and provocative.

¹² See *On the Discursive and Material context of the first handwritten Lushai newspaper, 'Mizo Chanchin Laishuih', 1898* on *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Sage Publications, New Delhi. July-September 2010, Vol.-XLVII No.3. p.381

¹³ It is possible to interpret his history of literary cultures in South Asia from this vantage point too. For the communication scholar, Pollock is making this interesting digression of connecting manuscript to nationalism instead of the emergence of print capitalism to nationalist consciousness. Even this departure fails to account for the historical fact obtained in the then Lushai Hills District where print and manuscript appear simultaneously.

¹⁴ For a departure from this perspective, see Bodhisattva Kar's *Incredible Stories in the Time of Credible Histories: Colonial Assam and Translations of Vernacular Geographies*. In this piece, Kar makes an interesting move by looking at the non-sacral, non-Brahmanic, tantric Hindu source for locating the vernacular geography of Assam and the Northeast. Even as Assam may fit into an alternate Hindu sacral geography, regions like Lushai Hills District, Naga Hills and several other upland communities and geographies may not clearly correspond to the Hindu sacral geography.

Apart from these broad theoretical approaches, it is necessary to point out that there is certain validity to James Scott's conception of Zomia in his work, *The Art of not being governed: An anarchist history of Upland Southeast Asia*. This exciting work posits a large tract of South Asia including the Northeast region of India as a region that has escaped State formation as a political choice for more than a millennium. In effect, Scott suggests the inauguration of a vastly different cultural process with regard to religious, political, literary and aesthetic traditions including economic and material practices. Unlike this historical normative description of the Zomia, this dissertation finds it useful to situate colonial Northeast region including the Lushai Hills District in an amorphous relation to the pre-colonial State formations like the Burmese, Tripura, Manipur, Cachar, Ahom State, including the later Colonial State.¹⁵

Situated within and against these broad historical and theoretical moves mentioned above, this thesis foregrounds cultural formation relating to media history of the Lushai Hills District during the colonial and the present State of Mizoram in the postcolonial period. The space for the history and culture of the fragment needs to be located within the disjunctures and conjunctures wrapped within the folds of these broad theoretical descriptions and explanations.

¹⁵ The Rajamala Chronicles of the Tripura Kingdom appears to have mentioned the Luseis in a number of contexts and situations. See Indrani Chatterjee's "*Genealogy, History and the Law: The case of the Rajamala*" in *History and the Present*. p.119

Culturally Acknowledged Registers:

The history of media in Mizoram requires identification of sources, critical events and interpreting the critical events through the theory of the fragment whenever required. This thesis attempts to highlight some important milestones in the 'connected history' of speech, script and print medium over the last hundred years. From being a speech community to acquiring literacy through technological media namely print media and very recently electronic media, this thesis traces the Mizo society's media history in a limited manner.

The term 'connected history' is used in order to bring out the continuities and the discontinuities between the speech community and the contemporary literate society of Mizoram. The term 'speech community' loosely refers to the location of the non-existence of script among the Luseis prior to colonial contact. The introduction of writing along with the emergence of Christianity appears to have promoted some novel cultural forms along with the pre-existing ones, modifying and redefining both the forms in the process. This thesis identifies two broad registers through which the journey of language, literacy and performances of both the speech community and the literate society may be mapped.¹⁶ These two registers are known as '*thawnthu*' and '*chanchin*' and they may be treated as 'super registers' which allows for accommodating a variety of mutually inclusive and exclusive cultural forms or genres. On a larger plane, they may be comparable to what some Indian scholars have termed the '*marga*' and '*desi*' tradition as informing the cultural

¹⁶ For understanding of registers, see Asif Agha's *Registers of Language* in *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, Edited by Alessandro Duranti. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004. pp.23-45

production of ancient and medieval India. '*Thawnthu*' stands for the mythical and the performative while '*chanchin*' stands for the literal and the historical. Even as the thesis identifies these two culturally acknowledged registers, it does not closely examine on the diverse ways in which social practices like religious, educational, law, scientific, literary or aesthetic are negotiated and the differential evaluations of these two registers are obtained.

In many ways, the history of media in Mizoram has been the expansion of the social domain of the Church. From instituting a script and formalizing grammatical and lexical conventions to fashioning musical traditions, the Church bequeathed a specific linguistic, literary, journalistic and performative heritage during the first sixty years of colonial rule. On one hand, this thesis examines the linear evolution effected by the Church, its intervention in terms of raising a speech community to becoming a script and print community, on the other hand, it deals with the tensions that this linear evolution faced in terms of the socially reflexive registers that the speech community already possessed. The progress of Christian literacy is built around its effort to negotiate and domesticate these two cultural models of communication and expression, namely '*thawnthu*' and '*chanchin*'.¹⁷ It is the contention of this thesis that Christian literacy including journalism, literature, history, musical traditions and performative arts have been facilitated or regulated

¹⁷ The term 'Christian literacy' denotes the trajectory of the growth of literary, media and performative traditions where there has been a dominance of Christian meaning making process. It has accentuated some forms, content and a clearly visible orientation towards this world and afterlife too. The history of hundred years of the speech, text, image and bodily kinetics has to be understood as informed by the Church's imposition of discipline on Mizo culture and psychic life. Occasionally this subjection towards the authority of the Church has been questioned.

through its emphasis on '*chanchin*' rather than '*thawnthu*'. Originally, '*thawnthu*' appears to have resided largely in the oral medium, kinesthetic movements/dance forms, music performed through traditional wind and percussion instruments. This differential incentive for promoting '*chanchin*' and overtly or covertly regulating '*thawnthu*' has been the trajectory of the growth of performative media history of Lushai Hills District during the colonial period and Mizoram in the postcolonial period.

The white missionaries in the colonial period severely discouraged several kinds of songs, dances, rituals and chants associated with the shamanic tradition of the Lusei priest and healer '*Puithiam*'. Performances like the recitation of '*Hla Do*' which was performed after the hunting of wild animals started with ecstatic shouting by the hunters followed by chanting and firing of guns in the air. In a similar manner, war songs or 'war cry' known as '*Bawh hla*' was performed by the victorious warriors. Also, '*Salulam Zai*', songs accompanied by bodily movement of both men and women were performed announcing the celebration of a successful hunt of wild animals.¹⁸

'*Thiam Hla*' was the shamanic chant that was used for the invocation of the spirits representing the celestial and nether world. '*Dawi Hla*' was used for performing special magical rites to appease evil spirits. Lalrinawmi Ralte, a woman theologian has written about the need to retrieve some of the dance forms that were

¹⁸ See R. L. Thanmawia, *Heritage of Mizo Traditional Song and Music* in Indian Folklife, November, 2009, Serial No. 34, pp.17-20

performed by women and which were banned by the Church because the dance forms embodied and expressed spiritual desire for women.¹⁹ Since *'thawnthu'* seems to codify these cultural forms and practices, the register of *'thawnthu'* itself appears to be irreducible to historical or mythical, sacred or secular, good or evil, the early white missionaries had to clearly demarcate and regulate this unwieldy, amorphous cultural register. The missionaries argued that all these practices encoded within the *'thawnthu'* are irrational and superstitious and they act against becoming good Christians. At some level, *'thawnthu'* signals an enchanted world experienced and imagined and *'chanchin'* allows for those forms where reason and logic gets precedence. The regulation of *'thawnthu'* was/is an attempt by Christianity to disallow enchantment in the experience of the Lusei world then and the Mizo world today.

It is likely that the media history has to take the form of *'chanchin'* and the sources of media history located within the register of the *'chanchin'*. The entire philological tradition of grammar, dictionary and other pedagogical materials produced by the missionaries and the colonial officials laid ground for providing cultural infrastructure that was needed for the production of literary and non-literary genre or genres. However, this theoretical conception of *'thawnthu'* and *'chanchin'* need not be seen as offering rigid indigenous taxonomic mechanisms.

¹⁹ See Lalrinawmi Ralte's article, *Dance Theology* in *Doing Tribal Women's Theology*. Journal of Asian Women Resource Centre for Culture and Theology. Vol 19. No.4, December 2000. p.37

The cultural event of '*Puma Zai*' organized by Lusei chiefs over a couple of years from 1908 to weed away the recent Christian converts through an assemblage of festivals, invocations and incantations through songs and dances, orgiastic drinking bouts and experience of altered states of being may count as a major critical performative event from the register of '*thawnthu*'.²⁰ This form of looking at history allows for incorporating the experience of enchantment which is irreducible to formal knowledge or historical material artefacts. In other words, '*chanchin*' has a disposition to connect itself to epistemological concerns and '*thawnthus*' disposition is directed towards ontological possibilities.²¹

This leads to yet another distinction between '*chanchin*' and '*thawnthu*'. It appears that the former culture register (*chanchin*) has a tendency to designate the world but the latter culture register (*thawnthu*) appears to simultaneously reveal and hide the world. '*Thawnthu*' generally facilitates a cryptic engagement with the experienced and the real world. Over the last hundred years, it has been the contention of the thesis based on limited evidence that there has been code switching between these two cultural registers and the emphasis has been to designate rather than be cryptic about the world giving rise to cultural differences and philosophical orientations towards the real and the imagined world.²²

²⁰ See R.L Thanmawia, *Mizo Poetry*, Din Din Heaven, Aizawl, 1998. pp.99-100

²¹ Perhaps, it is for this reason that the early philologist, Brojonath Saha (1884) while preparing the Dictionary remarked that there were more verbs than nouns in the Lushai language.

²² The title of the literary journal *Thu leh Hla* is an indication of the tension between the word and the sound with the sound standing for song or music. The prefixing of 'Thu' meaning 'word' prior to 'hla' or song is a pointer towards the prioritizing of the text rather than the utterance.

This study suggests that prior to the formation of the Mizoram state, the region experienced lack of state intervention, commercial enterprise and urban growth leading to fuzzy demarcation of discursive domains like literature, journalism, academic and performative traditions. The non-autonomization of these fields is further compounded by the fact that the Mizo language is still going through a process of formal standardization. Burdened with the simultaneous history of script and print, literacy and literature, the trajectory of the linguistic and the literary aesthetic including the journalistic requires a narrative that does not hierarchize media growth in terms of an evolutionary and anthropological framework or an hierarchical relationship between '*chanchin*' and '*thawnthu*'. This intervention empathizes with such a non-evolutionary and a critical anthropological approach.

The register of '*thawnthu*' was unconsciously scripted into the understanding and performance of everyday life of the Luseis prior to the arrival of colonialism and Christianity. '*Thawnthu*' denoted much of their traditional world which included frequent wars, hunting, *jhum* cultivation, village, household and community. The early white missionaries who were keen on marking a distinction between the sacred and the secular, enchantment and disenchantment, this worldly and other worldly, saw in the communicative and expressive practices of the Luseis the embeddedness of this cultural register and sought to regulate and occasionally ban some of those practices. It is true that they did not identify the culturally acknowledged register (or an indigenous model/theory of classifying forms, orientations and social conduct) but only were witness to the range of forms and practices including the orientation of these practices which were clearly not in correspondence with Christian practices or

doctrines. In other words, the pre-Christian authority structures supported and patronized a range of cultural forms and associated practices in order to reproduce differences within the clan ordered community based on a non-sedentary form of agricultural economy and polity. In traditional Lusei society, not everyone was allowed to perform the 'ai' ceremony which was conducted for varied reasons. This involved animal sacrifices conducted to appease the spirits for purposes of hunting, agriculture and healing.

The practices recognized within the register of '*thawnthu*/'*chanchin*' were distributed across the community with differential incentives for their performance and reception. With hundred years of sedentarization of the Mizo society, many of the changes in the practices relating to agriculture, social relations, kinship patterns, religious beliefs, property relations, urbanization, intensity of exposure and dependence on mainland regions for material and cultural goods, have taken away the significance and a general amnesia of the forms and practices which traditionally came under the register of '*thawnthu*'. Other factors contributing to the decline of this register includes the erosion of traditional authority, the rapid conversion into Christianity, the spread of modern education and more fundamentally, the absence of patronage for the forms and practices relating to '*thawnthu*'.

Even as '*thawnthu*' is not easily available for presentation in a tabular form, it is necessary to list out the historic forms, the context of their practice, and the perpetuation of the cultural differences through the performance of these practices.

In the popular imagination, ‘*thawnthu*’ merely refers to a traditional style of storytelling.²³ In current academic writings too, the form has been referred to as ‘folktales’ but the term ‘folktale’ in its generic sense may not be able to capture the complex forms of cultural dissemination. This intervention invests ‘*thawnthu*’ as a historically specific cultural register or model that accounts for a reflexive semiotic process through the operation of a number of cultural forms. Here is a table depicting some of the forms and their communicative expressive functions associated with the culture register of ‘*thawnthu*’.

Table 1. Forms Associated with *Thawnthu*

Medium /channel/form	Context	Theme	Audience
Bawh Hla Performed by warriors -Pasaltha	Announce victory in a war	War	Village community including slaves who have been captured
Hla do Performed by brave hunters- Pasaltha	To Announce the arrival of the hunters from the forest	Hunting	Villagers
Salulam Zai Performed by community	In celebration of a successful hunting of wild animals	Hunting	Villagers
Chhura Folktale	Varied context of ordinary everyday life which involves making judgements of situations	Emphasis on ends rather than means, an effort to emphasize the pragmatic rather than the normative or the customary	Children and adults/undifferentiated audience
Puma Zai Cultural Movement started in 1907 till 1911 by traditional	Cultural resistance against the nascent but rapid conversion that	Revive the pre-Christian cultural forms, practices and traditions	To restrain the potential converts and to weed away the early converts to pre-

²³ Margaret Ch. Zama laments that folktales and folklores are an intergral part of the Mizo culture but its status has almost withered away and is seen only as “show-pieces for museums or the archive”. See Zama’s editorial, *Wither Folklore? The Mizo Context* in *Indian Folklife*, November, 2009, Serial No. 34, pp.3-4.

chiefs and authority figures	was taking place in early decade of 20 th Century	associated with singing and chanting, ritual and ceremonial life, ritual drinking of rice beer and performance of animal sacrifices	Christian cultural forms and practices located within the register of ' <i>thawnthu</i> '
'Ai' ceremony Associated with animal sacrifice organised by authority figures like the traditional Lusei chief, Ministers or <i>Upas</i> and other powerful people like <i>Thangchhuah</i> or the brave warriors /hunters	In the non-sedentary context of jhum cultivation and hunting gatherers economy, the ceremony acted as a social redistribution of wealth. Also, the 'ai' ceremony apparently gave a sense of psychic identity, personhood and cultural continuity	Of explanatory value, ethical and normative possibilities, religious and mythical significance	For the reproduction of the sedentary lifestyle and for maintaining the authority and legitimacy of the powerful people in the traditional Lusei community, the ai ceremony became a bridge between the rulers and the subjects with the priest mediating in between the spirits and the human beings for fees.

In order to amplify the difference, it is possible for the sake of academic understanding to reduce '*chanchin*' to text where '*chanchin*' becomes a site for institutional appropriation through normative mechanisms like subjecting language to lexical, grammatical and philological process. It is this institutional appropriation of '*chanchin*' that allows for further elaboration and flowering of genres that are at once borrowed and assimilated. The genres include history, literature, journalism, musical traditions and sub genres like novels, plays, newspapers, magazines and literary journals. For the practice of each one of these genres, there is a necessary and sufficient condition for minimal existence of state, market, urbanization and associated forms of personhood and identity. Given below is a tabular form listing out important milestones in the evolution of genres under the register of '*chanchin*'.

Table 2. Forms Associated with *Chanchin*

Medium /channel/form	Context	Theme	Audience
Lusei Script/writing/textual form of knowledge dissemination and consumption	Depersonalized communication supporting a thin colonially mediated state system and the near absence of a bureaucratic apparatus. However, it was the missionaries who shaped the image of the Lusei word to spread the Word. The Lusei script was produced in 1894.	History, science, literature and philosophy or the Luseis entry into modern domains of knowledge	Initially, potential converts from the early Lusei school educational system, colonial subjects of the excluded territory with no representative institutions but some semblance of public information through state/missionary mediated magazines exuding the rhetoric of modern journalism, experiments in textual production and the growth of religious literature in the Lusei language for expanding the social base of the two Protestant Churches namely, The Presbyterian and the Baptist. It is possible that the early printed literature in the Lusei language is a product of a healthy competition between these two Churches.
Mizo Chanchin Laishuih Newspaper	The first manuscript newspaper in the Lusei language brought out by the most powerful colonial official, Shakespear in order to reconfigure the hills in the image of the plains. This newspaper was written exactly four years after the Lusei dialect acquired a script. The co-authors include the	This newspaper seeks to orient opinion leaders regarding the benefits of the practices relating to plain's agriculture, modern health system, irrational and superstitious practices	Apparently, it was circulated among the thin colonial bureaucratic network which in turn was supposed to conscientize the native subjects about the envisioned changes in the administrative and economic practices of the new colonial authority.

	native Lusei chief Khamliana and a commoner, Suaka who worked for the colonial state. The handwritten newspaper was produced in 1898 and over two years, four issues appeared.	relating to child rearing and some anecdotes from Aesop's fables	
Letter Khamliana	This letter is historically received as the first letter written by a native chief, Khamliana who actually helped Lorrain and Savidge convert the Lushai sound into grapheme.	The letter was fictively addressed to Queen Victoria and the deference that was displayed was performative rather than just being literal	The white missionaries, colonial officials and the fellow chiefs and communities. Perhaps the novelty of the artefact was shared among all these people. It was a time when writing carried a magical property.
Kristian Tlangau Magazine Church	The first Lusei/Mizo Christian magazine produced which announces the emergence of print in the region. A hand press loaned by a white missionary doctor, Fraser was used for the purpose of producing this magazine. This happens to be the first printing press in the erstwhile Lushai Hills District otherwise printing was done in neighboring districts like Silchar, Guwahati, Calcutta including Chittagong which today forms part of Bangladesh.	The magazine was the first mass medium used largely for evangelical purposes but it was effectively deployed for both literising (standardizing the Lusei language) and literarising (promoting the language for literary and secular) purposes too.	The early converts and also to attract the potential converts among the natives. It included formalizing and institutionalising Church practices. In a related context, it was also informed by a desire to reform the pre-Christian beliefs and rituals.
Mizo Chanchin History book Liangkhaia	The first Mizo history written by a native pastor, Liangkhaia. He was among the	An attempt to produce factual narration of the	The early Mizo literates who were educated in mainland India came back with a longing for writing a

	<p>first few educated Mizos who felt the need for producing a culture of reading by producing literary artefacts of their own. The manuscript was completed in 1926 but printed and published in 1938.</p>	<p>Lusei past. The work may be seen largely as a reproduction of the colonial ethnographic writings and official reports. It valorises the colonial and the missionary (then) present and reinforces a savage past prior to the advent of the missionaries and the colonial rulers.</p>	<p>history of their past. It is to inspire that historic consciousness and to cater to that urge that Liangkhaia produces this narrative. So, this work was simultaneously aimed at creating a modern distinctive sense of the past and also to celebrate the newly acquired gift of Christianity and literacy among the Mizo public.</p>
<p>Hawilopari Novel Biakiana</p>	<p>The first novel written by a native writer, Biakiana was published in 1940. The name of the heroine in the novel metaphorically refers to celestial flower that greets the soul after one is dead. It is believed that the plucking of the flower takes away the urge to return to the mortal world. Perhaps, Christianity takes on the disguise of Hawilopar and the author suggests that the Luseis taken into the folds of Christianity need not ever look back on their pre-Christian past. In terms of the form, it appears that the author has effectively deployed the resources from</p>	<p>The novel is a love story between the main female character, 'Hawilopari' and Hminga, a young man from the same village of lesser fortunes. The novel is set in a pre-Christian era but gradually envelopes the advent of colonial rulers. It makes very clear use of the first important colonial military offensive against the Luseis. The event is</p>	<p>The newly educated Luseis in trying to imitate and contest the culture of mainland India came back with a desire to produce a literary culture, tastes, public sphere among the Mizos. In most parts of mainland linguistic regions, the novel appeared more than a hundred years prior to its origin in the erstwhile Lushai Hills District.</p>

	' <i>thawnthu</i> ' into operationalizing the modern form of novel. This act of writing a novel may be seen as an experiment and imitating of a modern dominant literary practice.	unambiguously read as necessary to discipline the unyielding and belligerent Luseis.	
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Thus, these two registers theoretically are conceived as carrying a volume of cultural transactions through issuing forth a classificatory scheme of ordering hierarchically cultural forms, performance of these forms and the conduct of practices relating to religion, agriculture, war, hunting, healing etc.

Problem Statement

This enquiry attempts to provide an account of media history of a federal unit, Mizoram, bordering international neighbors like Burma in the East and Bangladesh to the South. The strategically located federal unit has a short history of writing, literature, journalism and other technological media. The thesis conceptually has designated the category 'connected history' to carry the burden of narrating the linear as well as a spatial history of speech, script, print and other technological media. The category 'connected history', is plotted on to a horizontal relationship between speech, script and print and also a vertical relationship between these mediums, the latter vertical relationship suggesting a linear chronological narration with the former horizontal relationship suggesting a spatial connection between the

forms. The study seeks to invoke both these forms of narrating the media history of colonial Lushai Hills District and the present Mizoram.

Objectives and Methodology

1. Enumeration of critical events that appear to unfold the media history with sensitivity to the specificities of the spatial dimension as well.
2. Listing out sources that provide a lead to the critical events.
3. Interpreting the sources and the critical events from the perspective of the fragment rather than from the received vantage ground of Nation State, colonial or civilisational inheritance.

This intervention seeks to produce a historical account of media history over a period of more than hundred years for the borderland region, Mizoram. Since the print and manuscript originated simultaneously through colonial and missionary intervention, the term 'media history' denotes a connected history of speech, script, print and audio visual medium. It is assumed that there are no archival sources or historical documents prior to the coming of the British and the missionaries.

This thesis is informed by the fact that the Luseis deployed culturally acknowledged registers which allowed for classifying cultural forms of communication and expression including the performance and articulation through these forms. As the study is located within the broad discipline of Communication, it is less drawn towards an anthropological investigation of the performative practices of these cultural forms. The discipline of Communication provides theoretical

resources like William J. Carey's distinction between two broad approaches namely, the 'ritual view' and a 'transmission view' of Communication.²⁴

It is possible to extrapolate these models on to the cultural registers of '*thawnthu*' and '*chanchin*' respectively. It is necessary to point out that there is no empirical enquiry into the validity of the registers or the performance of these cultural forms. For the purpose of this enquiry, it is not the empirical validation of the registers that matters but the theoretical possibilities that the registers possess in terms of cultural transactions and mediations that signal the trajectory of media history in the region. In other words, the thesis attempts to provide a linear growth of media history along with the underlying negotiations that mark every critical event constituting the media history of the region.

Identifying Sources

Since the writing of media history is synonymously seen as unraveling the history of anti-colonial movement in mainland India, the sources are listed as belonging to political history. In the case of Mizoram, because of the absence of an elaborate colonial state structure and an organized anti-colonial articulation, the need for fabricating representative institutional mechanisms and structures did not arise. This situated history offered less scope for inventing the popular or the marginal. The absence of anti-colonial articulation and the lack of an elaborate colonial state structure have resulted in a minimal archival presence in the entire

²⁴ In his seminal essay 'Communication and Culture', James Carey proposes a model of Communication that is inspired by a mythic view of religion rather than a theo-centric view of religion with prayer standing for the ritual view of communication and sermon standing for the transmission view of communication. In other words, the ritual view of communication is anchored in a performative tradition rather than textual, exegetical tradition.

Northeast region including the erstwhile Lushai Hills District. While it is possible to read the emergence of religious public, the colonial rulers did not find it necessary to sow the seeds of representative institutions in most parts of Northeast. In fact, the Lushai Hills District was listed as an excluded territory under the colonial Assam Provincial State. The near absence of state institutions due to a policy of isolation practiced by the erstwhile colonial rulers resulted in the lack of desire and urge to participate in formal representative bodies. It may not be wrong to say that religion became the monolithic voice of a plural polyvocal Lusei society but there are sporadic instances expressing the need to democratically articulate the concerns of a sedentarizing society.²⁵

The practice of cultural history requires material or documentary sources. As mentioned previously, the thesis lays emphasis both on the documentary/material sources and the experiential reality that appears to have produced a socially reflexive semiotic process which is not directly encoded within the material artifact.

²⁵ In 1925, Telala Ralte and his friends were arrested by the Superintendent of Lushai Hills due to their political activities. They wanted representation of the Mizos in the administration. See Chawngsailova, *Ethnic National Movement in the role of the MNF*, Mizoram Publication Board, 2007. p.21

Table 3. Important Milestones of Media History

Sl.No	Critical Events/Historical Actors	Identification of Sources	Mode of Interpretation
1.	Pre-missionary ethnographic and philological work	<p>1. <i>Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lusei Dialect of the Dzo or Kuki Languages: With vocabularies and popular tales</i> by Thomas Herbert Lewin (1874)</p> <p>2. <i>A Grammar of the Lushai Language, to which are appended a few illustration of the Zuo of Lushai popular songs and translations from Aesop's Fables</i> written by Brojonath Saha (1884)</p> <p>3. <i>A Short List of Words of Hill Tippera Language, With Their English Equivalents- Also of Words of the Language Spoken by Lushais of the Sylhet Frontier</i> by J.D Anderson (1885)</p> <p>4. <i>A Short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes on the North-East Frontier with An Outline Grammar of the Rangkhoh-Lushai Language and Composition of Lushai with Other Dialects</i> by C.A Soppit (1893)</p>	For the first time, a anthropo-centric scientific, humanistic conception of the cultural practices of the Lushai Hills gets inscribed into the ethnographic and philological work of Lewin, Brojonath Saha, Anderson and Soppit.
2.	Philological work of Missionaries	<p>1. <i>A Grammar and Dictionary of the Lushai Language</i> produced by J.H Lorrain and F.W. Savidge (1898)</p> <p>2. <i>Mizo Zir Tir Bu</i> (A Lushai Primer) – Lorrain and Savidge (1895)</p>	The effort to reduce the Lusei dialect into grapheme is triggered by an evangelical zeal displayed through the foundational work of white missionaries like Lorrain, Savidge, D.E Jones and

			Edwin Rowlands. Among other things, in these series of efforts, the irreducible Lusei word 'thu' which also stands for song 'hla' is clinically dissected into the word and the song, giving precedence to the text and not to the performance.
3.	Colonial State's Journalistic Innovations	<p>1. <i>Mizo and Non-Mizo Tales</i>- J. Shakespear (1898)</p> <p>2. <i>Mizo Chanchin Laishuih</i>- The first handwritten Lushai Newspaper (1898)</p> <p>3. <i>Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu</i>- The first magazine produced by the colonial state (1902)</p>	In a limited area of mostly ethnographic works and scattered literary and journalistic offerings, some of the important colonial officials like Shakespear, Parry were inspired by both a pedagogic impulse and a desire to govern the natives through reconfiguring (at times reluctantly) their symbolic universe rather than the material reality.
4.	Linguistic, literary and journalistic contribution of the Church	<p>1. <i>Kristian Tlangau</i>- The first magazine produced by the Presbyterian Church (1911)</p> <p>2. <i>Kohhran Beng</i>- The magazine of Baptist Church, Lunglei (1946)</p>	In the first sixty years of colonial rule beginning from the second 'vailen' 1890, the most important historical actor to dramatically reorder the psychic, social and the cultural life of the hills people was undoubtedly the Protestant Church. In some ways, the making of the Protestant Church is the making of Mizo

			identity itself. Even the evolving assemblage of identities (political, gender, youth) is linked to the Mizo identities' continuing negotiations with the Church. The textual productions of these two Churches along with their strategies of controlling the reading habits over a century has given rise to what may be called as 'Christian form of literacy'.
5.	Native contributions to language, literary and journalistic field	<p>1. <i>Khamliana's Letter</i>- The first letter written by a Lusei (1897)</p> <p>2. <i>Mizo Chanchin</i>- The first history book written by a Lusei, Rev. Liangkhaia in 1926, published in 1938.</p> <p>3. <i>Hawilopari</i>- The first novel in Lusei language written by Biakliana in 1936 was published in 1983.</p> <p>4. Newspapers and periodicals like Mizo (1946), Zoram Thupuan (1947), Mizo Arsi (1948), Thlirvelna (1953), Zoram Hriattirna (1953), Mizo Naupang (1953), , Hun Thar (1954), Tunlai (1957), Sikul Thlirna (1957), Zirtirtu Thian (1959), Hruaitu (1961), Zalen (1962), Tunlai Chanchin (1962)</p>	<p>Until now, a positive assessment of the role of Lusei natives has not been undertaken. It is very likely figures like Khamliana, Suaka, Thangphunga and their successors like Liangkhaia and Biakliana have had an enormous influence in the shaping of linguistic, literary and cultural history of the region. Here is Suaka being recognised by the white missionaries, Lorrain and Savidge in a plaque which reads "<i>Presented to Suaka C. Vanchiao by F.W Savidge and J. Herbert Lorrain, in grateful remembrance of his untiring assistance in the Lushai language and</i></p>

			<i>translation work. 22nd November, 1897”</i>
7.	Mizo Academy of Letters	<i>Thu leh Hla</i> - The first and only literary journal of Mizoram (1965)	The emerging educated Mizos in the postcolonial Mizo Hills District of Assam felt the need to produce a literary public sphere.
8.	Products of postcolonial Nation State	1. <i>All India Radio</i> (1966) 2. <i>Doordarshan</i> (1972)	Mizo Hills District witnessed a period of turmoil during the mid 1960's which led to the establishment of AIR and Doordarshan in the District as a medium/channel to integrate the Mizos to the Indian Nation State.
9.	Periods of political turmoil	Tawrhbawm (1968) Mizo Aw (1972), Zoen (1972), Romei (1973), Leitlangpui (1973), Zomi (1973), Harhna (1975), Youth Herald (1975), Chhawrpial (1976), Zobawm (1977), Varparh (1978), Hunthar (1979), Thuthar (1979) Vanglaini (1978)	The period saw a regulation in any kind of media, literary and journalistic forms which gave rise to a revival of performative genre including folksongs or 'terror lore'. Except for <i>Tawrhbawm</i> (1968), most of the newspapers stopped publication until the Mizo Hills District became a Union Territory of India in 1972.
10.	The emergence of Mizo State	1. <i>Skylinks cable television</i> (1991) 2. <i>LPS Vision</i> (1994) 3. <i>First Mizo film- 'Ka thlang ber che'</i> (1984) 3. <i>First music video</i> (1985) 4.Some of the	A period of normalcy and peace prevailed with the granting of Statehood in Mizoram. There was an increase in the numbers of

		<p>newspapers/periodicals produced were: Zoram Chhantu (1986), Saiha Times (1986) Hnehtu (1988), Hringlang (1988), Pasaltha (1988), Zawlkhawpui (1988), Entlang (1989), Zorin (1989), Virthli (1989) Sports (1983), Rawlthar (1984), Sakeibaknei (1985), Senhri (1985), Aizawl Bazar (1988), Morning Post (1991), Mizo Express (1993), The Hero (1992), The Vox (1993), National Observer (1996), Zoram Hruaitu (1996) Lei Hringnun (1991), Zonda (1993), News Today (1995), Zozam (1995). <i>Note:</i> there are 91 newspapers, 14 periodicals and 15 cable television networks in Mizoram today.²⁶</p>	<p>newspapers, periodicals and electronic media in the State and the press becomes a mediating institution between the State and the people. Presently, there is a gradual commodification of the text and the image but not enough to support distinct domains of literature, journalism and performative arts.</p>
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Chapterization

In the next section, the thesis provides brief account of each one of the chapters relating to the growth of language, media and literature. This account identifies important sources and marks milestones in the development of cultural history of the region for a span of hundred years. The thesis emphasizes the textual sources and apart from enumerating these artifacts, the sources are read for their thematic content and philosophical orientation along with the technologies marshaled to produce, circulate and manufacture audiences.

²⁶ The latest unpublished report of Mizoram Journalist Association on the MJA Annual Day Celebration held in Aizawl in 2011.

In all, the dissertation contains six chapters with four main chapters along with an introduction and a concluding chapter. The chapters are divided in a linear chronological manner and each chapter covers a period of about twenty to thirty years. In the first sixty years of colonial rule (1890-1950), three important actors namely, the colonial bureaucracy, missionaries and the native chiefs play an important role in the cultural formation and contestation of the Lushai Hills District. This period may be termed as largely the making of the Christian religious identity. Colonial and missionary ethnographical writings including philological works, early attempts to produce literature in Lusei language along with intermittent journalistic initiatives form the subject of study for this dissertation during this period.

The last sixty years of postcolonial rule clearly witnessed two distinct political moments; a period of complete political turmoil and a period of peace. In the first thirty years of postcolonial rule, the most important actors were the radical political group, Mizo National Front, the Indian Nation State and a Mizo public that did not completely endorse the coercive ideologies of the MNF or the Indian Nation State. During this period, variety of cultural articulations in mediums like newspaper, radio and literature affirmed and contested the imagination of the Mizos as an autonomous political community. In the last thirty years, the political community as articulated by electoral politics has been more or less integrated into the national political community. The cultural productions in the form of newspapers, audio visual media and literary expressions have gone on to assimilate the region into a national community even as it appears to strive for a distinctive regional identity. Since the granting of statehood, representative institutions like the legislature,

media and civil society organizations including the Church are playing an important role in the articulation of the needs and aspirations of the contemporary Mizo society.

The introductory chapter maps the aims and objectives of the thesis. It also spells out the method and sources employed for carrying out the study. The thesis tries to provide a limited historical account of language, literature, technological media and performative arts. Theoretically, the study employs a framework that rejects a hierarchical relationship between speech, writing and print. It seeks to provide a connected history of language, literature and technological media.

The study uses both literary and social science methods to narrate an account of the history of culture in Mizoram. A close reading of colonial ethnographic texts including the folktales and writings of the missionaries, colonial officials and the native elites is undertaken for the purpose of dissecting and assembling the diverse strands of the formation of the Mizo culture and identity during the colonial period. Similarly, the study undertakes a textual analysis of postcolonial articulations as obtained in the literary and religious journals. Apart from the archival work, interviews were conducted with literary, media, political and cultural elites to elicit information and opinion regarding the development of language, literature and media in Mizoram. The study also includes the conduct of a survey to enumerate the print and the audio visual industry in 2007.

In the description of Mizo history of culture, the study identifies two important cultural registers namely, '*thawnthu*' and '*chanchin*', the former refers largely to a performative expressive form and the latter to a literal historical realist form. Over the last hundred years, the history of culture in Mizoram has been an elaboration of these two forms that supplement and complement each other in various cultural mediums like literature, journalism and performative, folkloric traditions. In this study, the texts are interpreted as a play between these two cultural registers namely, '*thawnthu*' and '*chanchin*'.

Like in many mainland Indian languages, the journalistic and the literary appear indistinguishable in the early phases of the standardization of the language. It is possible that there is lack of clear boundaries between the documentary and the literary, journalistic and the artistic. The lack of a specialized idiom for literary productions and absence of a canon along with canonical figures makes the history of the Mizo language and literature quite unprecedented. The received historical formulation of speech followed by writing and print later does not fit the present journey of the Mizo language. This is revealed in the examination of the early literary and journalistic compositions.

The Second chapter deals with the philological work in Lushai Hills District by studying an introduction to the craft of writing of the Lusei language. The Lusei language, also sometimes referred to as Duhlian language was preferred by the missionaries, J.H Lorrain and F.W Savidge for producing the script among the twelve

distinct dialects of the Lushai Hills. Prior to the arrival of the missionaries to the hills, several colonial officials like T.H Lewin, Brojonath Saha, C.A. Soppit and J.D Anderson had published their work on the Lushai grammar, compilation of vocabularies and dictionaries but were produced for the consumption of the colonial officials themselves. The colonial ethnographies also pointed out that the Lusei language was used for inter-lingual communication among the speakers of the other dialects. This chapter chronologically situates those formative texts which were important in producing a script for the Lusei language. These texts meticulously record linguistic behaviour, expressive folklores and other performative genres like folksongs and folk genealogies. Further, they imaginatively infer the principles that are needed for producing grammar and dictionary of the Lusei language. The compilation of words and their equivalence in various languages including English, Bengali, Tipperah (Tripura) go on to suggest that they have arrived at a theory of equivalence of words across languages and within the language. The reduction of sound to grapheme required the expertise to classify sounds and reproduce the sounds in the form of visual imagery. This study provides a preliminary analysis of these efforts towards the making of the script for the Lusei language.

The missionaries, Lorrain and Savidge produced a detailed work on grammar and dictionary meant for the natives as it was important for their proselytizing work. Providing literacy to the people was necessary to enable them to read the Bible and education was needed for preparing their minds and hearts to accept the new faith. The missionaries (Lorrain and Savidge) clearly admitted that the elevation of the Lusei language to script and writing would facilitate their evangelical concerns and

also help in providing secular education to the hills men and women. They prioritized their proselytizing desires along with their concern to provide secular and utilitarian education.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The thesis historically demarcates two distinct periods in the philological work conducted during the colonial period, one primarily associated with the colonial officials (T.H Lewin, Brojonath Saha, C.A Soppit and J.D. Anderson) and the other with the missionaries (J.H Lorrain, F.W Savidge, Edwin Rowlands, D.E Jones and others). The former period extends from 1870's to the early 1890's and the latter from 1894 to the 1930's. The first two sections of the chapter deals with these two distinct moments. It identifies, critically studies and contextualizes the important texts that were produced by the colonial officials and missionaries. The texts analysed in the first section were produced by the colonial officials. It includes *Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lusei Dialect of the Dzo or Kuki Languages: With vocabularies and popular tales* by T.H.Lewin, *A Grammar of the Lushai Language, to which are appended a few illustration of the Zuo of Lushai popular songs and translations from Aesop's Fables* written by Brojonath Saha, *A Short List of Words of Hill Tippera Language, With Their English Equivalentents- Also of Words of the Language Spoken by Lushais of the Sylhet Frontier* by J.D Anderson and *A Short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes on the North-East Frontier with An Outline Grammar of the Rangkhoh-Lushai Language and Composition of Lushai with Other Dialects* written by C.A Soppit. The second section analyses works of the missionaries used to proselytize and educate the heathen natives of the hills. The texts includes *A Grammar and Dictionary of the Lushai*

Language produced by J.H Lorrain and F.W. Savidge, *Mizo Zir Tir Bu* (A Lushai Primer), the first school text book prepared by the same missionaries and later revised and enlarged by the later missionaries like D.E Jones and Edwin Rowlands. The section also identifies other works like *Chhiarkawpna Bu* (Arithmetic) and *English First Reader* prepared by Rowlands and *Zir Tan Bu* prepared for the schools by D.E. Jones. The third section deals with the work of an important colonial official, J. Shakespear who wrote extensively on Lusei ethnography and philology. This last section critically engages with one of the folktales called 'Chhura' documented by Shakespear in his text on *Mizo and Non-Mizo Tales*.²⁷ Shakespear is seen as reproducing a mythical past of the Luseis which he seems to be considering as a shared medium of intelligibility. The act of committing folktales to writing by colonial officials including Shakespear speaks something of their intense familiarity of the Lusei world. However, they seem to underestimate the power of the medium of orality in constituting a distinct space of listening. Writing the folktale appears to erase the aura associated with listening. For the Luseis, the fantastic is an addition to the real.

The third chapter deals with the emergence of a religious identity which seems to have preceded the making of the secular, ethnic political identity. In the first decade of the last century, some of the native elites resisted the embrace of Christianity. The initial resistance from the traditional Lusei chiefs against the missionaries' works articulates through the enthusiastic organizing of traditional

²⁷ A slightly different version of 'Chhura' was reproduced by Laltluangliana Khiangte in *Mizo Songs and Folktales*.

festivals and dances to discourage the new religion. But within a short period of time, the entire population of the Lushai Hills District became Christians. This unprecedented history of conversion has its sources in the way the missionaries produced and regulated the Lusei textual and performative practices. The Church authorities forbade the newly converts to sing any kind of song unless it proclaimed their new faith, Christianity.

This chapter deals with a range of early literary and journalistic compositions like the first personal letter written by a Lusei chief Khamliana, three journalistic artifacts namely *Mizo Chanchin Laishuih*, *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* and *Krista/Kristian Tlangau*, two literary pieces namely the first Mizo history book *Mizo Chanchin* and the first novel *Hawilopari*. The choice of these texts is based on the originary moments of the Lusei language acquiring a textual form in diverse genres like personal letter, journalistic and literary genres including novel and historical writing.

The early literary and journalistic compositions may be considered as experiments in the nascent practice of writing itself and in creating the discursive domain of the literary and journalistic. These texts are examined for analyzing the twin process of both literisation (committing the dialect to writing) and literarisation (committing the language to literature) through a textual and a contextual analysis. The journalistic compositions were efforts at cultivating reading habits and also encouraging potential literates to write for the official magazine *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*. The magazine published by the Presbyterian Church, *Krista/Kristian Tlangau* was supposed to be read collectively within the Church and the domestic

premises. Reading involved both aural and the visual. Since very few people were literate and had purchasing power to buy magazines, reading must have primarily been a collective aural exercise. This allowed for a close scrutiny of what texts people consumed and the manner of their consumption. A close study of these texts suggests the formation of a religious identity and submission of the Luseis to the colonial rule.

This chapter closely studies the appearance of the '*chanchin*' realist narrative in the samples of the early literary and journalistic compositions mentioned above. The term '*chanchin*' is associated with both literature and journalism. Newspapers and magazines or periodicals are referred to as '*chanchinbu*'. History is also commonly referred to as '*chanchin*'. It is both a specialized term and a very general term. Reports of newspaper are akin to a '*chanchin*' narrative. In the description of the discipline called history, the term '*chanchin*' is used to invoke the document or record as source for narrating the event. The disciplinary domains of journalism, literature and history seem to offer scope for the deployment of the '*chanchin*' narrative. The early experiments in literary, journalistic and historical writings engage with the '*chanchin*' register and a close study of these writings and compositions realizes that the '*chanchin*' register negotiates with content other than realist narrative as well. The history of Mizo literature demonstrates that the evolving textual composition negotiates with the performance tradition, and that the history of the nascent Lusei literature cannot be reduced to the text. There is an improvisation of this performative inheritance so as to suit the evolving '*chanchin*'.

The fourth chapter deals with the media and literary institutions from the mid 1940's to 1980's. The period witnessed rapid changes in political, economic and cultural spheres. After India got its Independence from colonial rule, Lushai Hills District became a unit of the Assam State under the Indian Nation State and the name was changed to Mizo Hills District Council. The occurrence of the major *Mautam* famine in 1959 provided the emerging Mizo nationalists to articulate themselves as a distinct political entity. This was due to the perceived failure of the Indian State to rescue its people from their suffering. The Mizo nationalists initially formed a 'Mizo National Famine Front' and stepped out in voicing the demands and sufferings of the people to the Government of India. It soon transformed itself into a political party as 'Mizo National Front' demanding sovereignty from the Indian State. The MNF took to armed revolt in 1966 and a state of Emergency was declared in the Mizo Hills District. For a period of twenty years, beginning from mid 1940's to late 1960's, the Church and the Indian State were instrumental in facilitating and regulating the emergence of Mizo nationalist sentiments.

In this chapter, three different media and literary institutions are being analyzed namely *Kohhran Beng*, (an official organ of the Baptist Church of Mizoram, 1946-), *Thu leh Hla*, (a literary journal of Mizo Academy of Letters, 1965-) and a state owned media, *All India Radio* (1966-). Each of these institutions namely, All India Radio was assigned the task of producing national subject, *Kohhran Beng*, a spokesperson of the Baptist Church was given the responsibility of maintaining and expanding the constituency of the Church, *Thu leh Hla* published by the literary elite was keen to articulate a distinct literary and aesthetic domain for the Mizo language.

Thus, these organs embody three distinct forms of cultural production and consumption practices.

An overview of the *Kohhran Beng* newsletter along with a textual analysis of the first issue is undertaken for this study. One of the long lasting contributions of the Baptist Church of Mizoram was this newsletter which later on became a full-fledged religious and literary organ. The newsletter was started in the eve of India's Independence from the British rule and this tension was revealed in the first issue. As the colonial Government followed a policy of isolation, the integration of Mizoram into mainland India caused a great deal of concern for the missionaries as they felt that mainland India was Hindu centric and not Christian centric. Among other reasons, this newsletter appears to have been initiated as a response to India becoming independent and the inevitability of the exit of the missionaries. It appears that this newsletter embodies the '*chanchin*' register but realizes the importance of listening rather than reading in order to develop, maintain and nurture a newly formed Christian community. While the magazine uses the documentary form of narration, but there are frequent references to the need for reading aloud the content of the newsletter to the unlettered.

The chapter also examines the context for the emergence of the Mizo Academy of Letters along with the textual analysis of one of the issues of the literary organ, *Thu leh Hla*. With India gaining Independence in 1947, the winds of nationalist movement in mainland India seems to have influenced those Mizos who went out to

study in neighbouring cities like Guwahati, Calcutta and Shillong. The Mizo Academy of Letters came to initially express its allegiance to the Indian Nation State. In fact, the idea of an academy was suggested by the then Assam Education Minister, Devakant Barooah to the Mizo cultural elite. In the study, it is found that both literisation and literarisation were frequently recurring issues for the contributors of the magazine. The first issue of *Thu leh Hla* edited by J.F Laldailova and published in the monsoon of 1965 is taken up for the purpose of textual analysis. Since the study does not take up a longitudinal textual analysis of the magazine, limited generalisation pertaining to the political context is attempted. The study takes up few articles pertaining to use of Mizo language in formal educational system, the changing idioms including lack of appropriate usage of phrases and reflection on an intellectual engagement with the notion of culture. The study points out the emergence of a certain Mizo personality in the articulations of the various themes presented in the magazine. Along with the rise in political consciousness, the Mizos realize that they lack a secular culture to express their new political sentiments and identity. The Mizo Academy of Letters came into existence to promote literary work and to create a responsive literary public.

Similarly, the chapter seeks to reconstruct and interpret the dramatic circumstances in which a unit of All India Radio was established in Aizawl and Lunglei in 1966 when a state of emergency was imposed on the Mizo Hills. Apart from examining the volatile circumstances surrounding the installation of a unit of All India Radio in the Mizo Hills District, the chapter also deals with the programme content and the reception of these programmes during this period. All India Radio

was the first popular mass media to produce and disseminate Mizo culture, especially its oral forms on an unprecedented scale to its population. Since transport and literacy rates were not encouraging for the growth of the print culture, the radio became immediately accessible to large section of the Mizo population. The study also points to the strictures passed by the Mizo National Front against the Mizo public in listening to the popular Hindi film songs. This chapter accesses information on All India Radio by going through policy documents of All India Radio, propaganda materials of Mizo National Front, interviews of people associated with All India Radio, Mizo National Front and the cultural and literary elite. Further, it describes the restrictions imposed on the practice of the register of '*chanchin*' documentary form vis-à-vis the folk form including the emergence of folk songs marking the early phase of Mizo nationalism. Folk songs were deployed to express this newly emerging Mizo nationalism. These forms of cultural expression were not like the folk songs of the Lusei past nor were completely in tune with the Christian lyrical compositions. The emergency imposed in Mizoram seems to have occasioned the emergence of different kinds of lyrical compositions.

The fifth chapter lays out some of the material and cultural conditions of production and consumption of journalistic, audio visual and literary culture in Mizoram after mid 1980's. This period signifies the integration of Mizoram symbolically and materially into the Indian Nation State. The period sees an emergence of journalistic genre in the previously isolated, politically unstable region. The press assumes the role of a watchdog to the newly installed popular Government in Mizoram. Though it attempts to realize its role as the fourth estate,

the press is yet to become fully commercialized. Lack of commercialisation has resulted in lack of professionalism and journalists are not yet an important civil society actor in contemporary Mizoram. Journalism slowly grows in the region and the number of printing presses also increases. The newly formed districts of Mizoram State do not fail to voice their opinions and demands through newspapers and periodicals.

The chapter enumerates the newspapers and periodicals produced in the region in a chronological manner. Based on the enumeration, the chapter seeks to infer a minimal interpretative history of the journalistic culture in Mizoram. Along with the enumeration, this study also provides a short history of newspapers beginning from the mid 1950's in order to look at the pattern of newspaper consumption and production in postcolonial Mizoram. Along with the enumeration of the print industry, the chapter also provides a profile of the audio visual industry namely, the growth of cable television and the role of private production houses including Doordarshan. The study points out the popularity of western programmes on cable television including programmes aired from Korean channels. The lack of region specific programmes on Doordarshan has denied the channel a loyal audience.

Along with the enumeration of the print industry and the audio visual industry, the chapter also focuses on the continued presence of the literary public sphere through examining the magazines, *Kristian Tlangau*, and *Thu leh Hla*. The study takes up one issue of each of these three magazines dated April, 2010 for textual

analysis. Recently, *Kristian Tlangau* celebrated its centenary year and *Kohhran Beng* completed more than fifty years with *Thu leh Hla* to finish half a century of publication in a few years time. *Kristian Tlangau* reports events that are not necessarily confined to Mizoram, because the State produces a large number of pastors and evangelists for the rest of the country. A reading of these two magazines reveals that the production of literature is still largely patronised by the two big Churches of Mizoram namely, the Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church. Incidentally, the publication of *Thu leh Hla* by the Mizo Academy of Letters is patronised by the Government of Mizoram through the Ministry of Art and Culture. The study points out that literature is authorised and regulated either by the Church or by the State. These magazines are chosen for analysis as they shape and form the contemporary Mizo identity and the identity in turn shapes literary taste and aesthetics.

The concluding section summarizes the chapters and gives an account of the findings of the thesis. The study of language, literature and technological media from a critical anthropological perspective offers a horizontal mapping of the literal and the performative cultures in Mizoram. The study of media practices during colonial period reveals the prioritizing of religious identity over political identity. Similarly, the study of media and literary practices during the postcolonial period marks the arrival of territorial, linguistic and ethnic identity. The study identifies two cultural forms namely, '*thawnthu*' and '*chanchin*' that seems to get into the skin of literary, technological or performative media. The absence of a vibrant literary '*chanchin*' culture has been understood as resulting from a historical restraint imposed by the Church on the '*thawnthu*' performative tradition. The study suggests

that there needs to be a creative tension between these two registers rather than obstructing the traffic between the culture registers of '*thawnthu*' and the '*chanchin*'.

The chapter seeks to tie up the arguments of the thesis and spells out the interconnected history of the formation and change of the Mizo identity through the various discourses flagged off by the Mizo cultural history. Finally, this study points to a situation where speech, image and text are in the process of becoming commoditized in contemporary Mizoram.

CHAPTER II

Introducing the Craft of Writing: Philological Work in the Lushai Hills

This chapter traces the origins of mass media through the arrival of the technology of script and of print, in the erstwhile Lushai Hills District. From the late mid 19th Century onwards, the Lusei dialect had been committed to writing and became the medium of printed communication. This chapter unravels the story of how the Lusei speech acquired a graphic form. In the process of delineating chronologically the process involved in the making of the Lusei script, the chapter attempts to critically examine the process of the standardization of the Lusei language.

This chapter attempts to identify, document, comment and critically engage with some aspects of the major philological work conducted by missionaries and colonial officials in the Lushai Hills. This philological inquiry limits itself to the events associated with the process of standardization of the Lusei language and with the introduction of script in the language, during the colonial period (1870- 1947).²⁸

²⁸ The recording and documenting of the process relating to the emergence of script and print is made against the pre-existing socially reflexive cultural registers namely, 'thawnthu and 'chanchin'. These cultural registers provide a dynamic indigenous model of classifying cultural forms, their philosophical orientations and instantiate particular forms and conduct of relationships with regard to religion, economy, social and aesthetic domains.

This study pre-supposes that the standardization process involves the identification of Lusei dialect as a distinct phonological language among the other twelve existing dialects and a need for committing the dialect to writing and literature. The colonial officials felt that the Lusei dialect was more pervasively used than other dialects.²⁹ Hence, it was recommended by the missionaries and the colonial officials as the chosen dialect to acquire the power of literacy.³⁰

For academic purposes, it is possible to historically demarcate two distinct periods in the philological work conducted during the colonial period, one primarily associated with colonial officials (T.H Lewin, Brojonath Saha, C.A Soppit and J.D. Anderson) and the other with the missionaries (J.H Lorrain, F.W Savidge, Edwin Rowlands, D.E Jones and others). The former period extends from the 1870s to the early 1890s and the latter from 1894 to the 1930s. There is also a third connecting thread associated with the work of later colonial officials like J. Shakespear.

The period between 1870 and 1890 was a politically fluid period in terms of territoriality, ethnicity and linguistic identity. During the period (1870-1890), the Luseis were subjected to military expeditions and the need for ethnographic work

²⁹ Contemporary literary critics question the discrete nature of the different dialects. They believe that there are permeable boundaries between these dialects.

³⁰ T.H Lewin cited, "The dialect of the Lushai tribe is, however, common to, and understood by all, being the clan tongue of the great family from which all the chiefs are said to have sprung. The Lushai dialect is in fact the *lingua franca* of the country." (Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai dialect of the Dzo or Kuki Langauge.p.8) Also, in the work of a missionary, Donna Storm who mentions that most of the hills people of the region spoke Duhlian dialect. (Donna Storm *Wind Through the Bamboo*. Evangelical Literature Service, Madras. 1983 pp.42)

rose, in order to meet this challenge. The British were mainly reacting against sporadic insurgent attacks against the emerging economy of British tea planters in Assam. At this time, the colonial authorities were not particularly keen on permanently ruling the Hills tribes.

By the time the missionaries, Lorrain and Savidge produced the foundational work on the Lusei language in 1894, the territory had already been politically emasculated and the British declared that they were going to permanently rule the territory. The missionaries (Lorrain and Savidge) clearly admitted that this exercise would facilitate their evangelical concerns and also help provide secular education to the Hills men and women. They prioritized their proselytizing desires along with their concern to provide secular and utilitarian education.

In a way, the philological enterprise is informed by a pragmatic and proselytizing intent. The discourse that the Lusei is a primitive language and that it needs to be elevated to a written language is very obvious and clear. In the process of elevating the language, the colonial officials/missionaries believed that the lives of the speakers of the language would be uplifted. Though they refer to ‘reducing’ the Lusei dialect to print, their efforts seem to signify that they were indeed ‘raising’ the Lusei speech to script. It is largely in this scheme, that the philological work was conducted.³¹

³¹ On some rare occasions, the officials and the missionaries express doubt as to whether the dialect is as simple and complicated as it appears to be. Brojonath Saha, Lorrain and others have expressed such doubts.

Among other things, this chapter also looks at the mode of reading introduced by the missionaries. It appears that there is a restraint on the unbridled play of the faculties in the act of reading envisaged by the missionaries. Further, the committing of folktales to writing apparently erases a certain space of listening. It may be argued that there was a certain aura associated with the original forms of listening to folktales and mythical narrations.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first two sections are divided according to the two distinct historical moments delineated above. Each section will initially identify and later critically discuss important philological texts in a contextual manner. The third section deals with later colonial officials like Shakespear who wrote extensively on Lusei ethnography and philology. The chapter specifically deals with his book on Lusei Folktales.

Section-I

During the period (1870-1894), the erstwhile Lushai region saw four important colonial officials producing interesting philological work. They are T.H. Lewin, Brojonath Saha, J.D Anderson, and C.A Soppit. Lewin took on a Lusei name and has been immortalized in popular Mizo imagination as Thangliena. Brojonath Saha was a medical officer of Indian origin and both Anderson and Soppit were colonial officials.

While the missionary, Lorrain, is acknowledged as the founder of modern Lusei language in Mizo Christian historiography because of his contribution to the making of the first elaborate dictionary and grammar in the year 1894, the earlier philological work started by Lewin, Brojonath Saha, Anderson, Soppit and others preceding Lorrain has not received adequate attention. The latter stream of colonial officials produced similar work on grammar, compilation of vocabulary and dictionaries mainly for the use of the colonial official themselves, whereas, Lorrain produced the philological work mainly for proselytizing and for education of the Luseis.

It is likely that the philological tradition instituted by Lewin et al, identified the existence of twelve distinct dialects.³² These colonial officials made these phonological distinctions based on their ethnographic studies and they acknowledged that these dialects were discrete and separate from each other. They also pointed out that Lusei was used for inter-lingual communication among the speakers of the other dialects. Current Mizo intellectuals perceive that these dialects were less discrete and the boundaries between the dialects appear to have been porous.³³

³² Ibid.T.H. Lewin.p.8

³³Lalthangfala Sailo, Preface to *Mizo Robawm*, Serchhip District Academy of Letters. 2006. p. 2. Sailo argued that the contemporary Mizo language cannot be claimed by the Lusei people alone as it is a mixture of dialects of most of the clans in Mizoram.

Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lusei Dialect of the Dzo or Kuki Languages: With vocabularies and popular tales- T.H.Lewin

The title is instructive. Thomas Herbert Lewin is making a distinction between dialect and language. According to him, the people of the Hills (Dzo/Zo) possess a generic language that contains several dialects. The term 'colloquial' appears to connote a non-administrative, non-literary and a non-commercial language used solely for communication among the natives who lead simple lives. Lewin uses the term Dzo and Kuki interchangeably. In today's context, they denote two separate ethnicities and their relation with each other is highly contested.

The text is divided into two parts. The first part includes translations of Lusei usages/expressions into the English language including translation of three folktales as told to him by a fourteen year old slave boy.³⁴ The last section of the text has a lexicon with English synonyms for more than a thousand words.

Perhaps for the first time, the idea of Lusei prose and the script is experimented with, in this text.³⁵ Through this intellectual enterprise of Lewin, Hillsmen conversations are subjected to a logical, linear and sequential mode of a sentence. The move from verse to prose and orality to script is pregnant in this text.

³⁴ In the biography of Lewin written by John Whitehead, the boy happens to be the son of a Lusei Chief 'Rothangpuia'

³⁵ See B. Lalthangliana. *Mizo Literature*. MCL Publication, Aizawl, 1993. p.85

With this effort, the colloquial 'Lushai' transforms itself into an object of knowledge for Lewin. The three folk tales narrated in the text are -

1. The Consequences, 2. The story of Lalruanga and 3. The story of Kungawrhi.

There are two recognizable cultural registers corresponding to two distinct narrative forms in contemporary Mizo language.³⁶ '*Chanchin*' refers to a realist narrative and '*Thawnthu*' refers to a non-historicist narrative. Folktales belong to the latter variety. This folktale of '*Chemtatrawta*' (The Consequences) inserted in his book may be considered as a non-linear narrative and the causal logic of the plot runs in a circular fashion. The plot is not centered around a human predicament but around an ecological predicament of connectedness between humans, animals and plants. Here is the translated version of the folktale as written by Lewin:

A man was sharpening his dao (by the river side) and the father of (all) prawns bit him in the hand. The man became angry and (with one stroke of his dao) cut down a clump of big bamboos; a fruit fell from the bamboo and struck a bird on the nape of the neck; the bird (in his pain) scratched up an ant's nest with his feet; the ant (irritated) bit a wild boar in the eye, and the boar (rushing off with one toss of his head) bore down a plantain tree where a bat dwelt under a leaf; the bat (terrified) sought refuge in the ear of an elephant, and the elephant (driven out of his senses by the unwonted intrusion) kicked down the house of an old woman (who lived nearby), the old woman was so frightened that she rushed out and fell into the well.

³⁶ In the reading of some of the critical pieces that appeared in the journal *Thu leh Hla*, it seems likely that there are two dominant narrative forms and they may be treated as distinct and also as overlapping.

Why did this old woman thus fall into the well? “Because the elephant kicked down my house”, she said. Why did the elephant kick down the house of another person? “So indeed I did, but a bat entered into my ear and I knew not what I was doing” said the elephant. Why did the bat go into the ear of another? “The wild boar”, said the bat, “swept down my dwelling place”. “Why did the boar sweep down the dwelling place of another? “The ants bit me in the eye”, said the boar. Why did the ants bite the eye of another? “The bird scratched us up”, replied the ants. Why did it scratch up the ant’s nest? “A fruit fell on my neck”, retorted the bird. Why did the fruit fall on the neck of another? “The bamboos swept me down”, said the fruit. Why did the bamboos fall down? “The dao-sharpener cut us down”, they replied. Why did the dao-sharpener cut down the bamboos? “A prawn bit me in the hand”, he wailed. Why did the prawn bite another’s hand? “I did so, whether or no,” said the father of all prawns.³⁷

Since, there is an absence of epics, novels, and literary artifacts among the Luseis, Lewin has documented the folktales that inform the values of the natives. Unlike folktales in South India, where there is a long tradition of writing the folklore that eventually become a part of the literary culture, there seems to be no such

³⁷ T.H.Lewin, *Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai Dialect of the Dzo or Kuki Language: With Vocabularies and Popular Tales, Notated*. Calcutta Central Press Company, Calcutta. 1874. pp.71-72

lineage of folklore in this part of the world.³⁸ This confirmed one of Lewin's ideas that the Highlanders were culturally less differentiated than the mainland people.

Unlike the dictionary of Lorrain and Savidge, Lewin's dictionary had a limited role. It was basically a compilation of important words that may have helped potential officers to interact with the Luseis in a more formal context. Just a few years before the dictionary was published, the first major military expedition (1870) was conducted against the Luseis. The British administration was in a punitive mood and therefore the knowledge that was generated had that backdrop though Lewin himself entertained a romantic view of the Blue Mountains and its inhabitants.

Thomas Herbert Lewin's contribution is considered formidable not only because he wrote some of the memorable ethnographic and philological texts but lived among them and eventually lived with a Lusei woman named Dari. He was enthralled with the pristine simplicity of the hill folks whom he considered as not belonging to India. Lewin learnt to speak the language and made efforts to put the spoken dialect into written form. He was not merely interested in learning their tongue for the sake of ruling them but drove himself to actively participate in their life. His biographer remarks, "He was engaged in the tiresome work of preparing the vocabularies for his *Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai Dialect of the 'Dzo' or Kuki Language with Vocabularies and Popular Tales (notated)*, which was published in Calcutta in 1874. Though he acknowledged that it was imperfect and

³⁸ Stuart Blackburn's work on Tamil Folklore, *Print, Folklore and Nationalism in Colonial South India* is an exceptional making of the above point.

incomplete, he intended it as a manual for the use of government officers and to pave the way for education among the tribes. It consisted of ninety exercises and three stories- 'The Consequences', 'Story of Lal Ruanga' and 'The Story of Kungori'- having the Lusei text and an English translation side by side and accompanying notes. Though the work has now been largely superseded, it was a considerable achievement for an amateur untrained in linguistics and proved to be of great value to government officers and missionaries needing primer from which to learn the basics of the language. It still possesses a special usefulness in that it preserves evidence of idioms and usages that would otherwise have been forgotten. Although certain elements of the grammar of language eluded Lewin, he was truly a pioneer and provided the groundwork on which later scholars have built."³⁹

A Grammar of the Lushai Language- Brojonath Saha

Brojonath Saha, a Bengali medical doctor serving the colonial power in the Chittagong Hills, seems to have developed an interest in philological work among the Hills people. The author himself admits that the attempt to produce a grammar is in itself an irony of sorts because he was aware that the language had no script. Though Lewin was the first to start the enterprise of committing the 'Dzo' dialect to writing, it was Saha who ventured to write the first grammar of the Lusei language.

³⁹ John Whitehead, *Thangliena- A Life of T.H. Lewin*, Kiscadale Publication, Gartmore, Stirlingshire. 1992. pp.270-271

In a simple sense, grammar refers to the principles that organize the written language. It assumes that the written language is logically organized. The attempt of Brojonath Saha is to simultaneously produce a grammar and also commit the Lusei language to writing. He wrote-

“The Lushai language, especially with respect to its verbs, presents a strong contrast to the nation itself in its present barbarous condition; and whatever its origin, there can be no doubt that the people that originally constructed or used it must have reached a higher mental condition than the semi-savage tribe among whom it is now commonly spoken”.⁴⁰

There may be two reasons why Brojonath Saha is inviting attention to the prominence of verbs in the Lusei language. At one level, Brojnath Saha is suggesting that certain features of the Lusei dialect appear to be sophisticated and fail to correspond to their otherwise rudimentary culture. It is likely that in a non-sedentary culture practicing shifting agriculture and hunting, there may not have been emphasis on acquiring immovable property and therefore it may have placed less emphasis on nouns rather than verbs. In fact, scholars have reported the near absence of place names or village names.⁴¹ The names of Chiefs were normally the place names of villages. At another level, it's possible to delink the relationship between material culture and symbolic culture. The symbolic culture may reveal an

⁴⁰ Brojonath Saha, Preface to the book, *A Grammar of the Lushai Language, to which are appended a few illustration of the Zuo of Lushai popular songs and translations from Aesop's Fables*, Bengal Secretariat Press. 1884. p.iii.

⁴¹ The first handwritten newspaper of Lushai Hills 'Mizo Chanchin Laishuih' reported news and addressed them by the names of the chiefs rather than the names of their villages.

elaborate code that does not necessarily correspond to material culture. The recognition of asymmetry between symbolic and material culture has been acknowledged partially by many colonial officials including Lewin.

His book, *A Grammar of the Lushai Language, to which are appended a few illustration of the Zuo, of Lushai popular songs, and translations from Aesop's Fables* is divided into three parts such as Orthography, Etymology and Syntax. It also has Lusei popular songs, foreign fables and a conversation between two friends appended to it.

The first part of the book, Orthography consists of forty-nine Lusei sounds gathered from conversations of the people. Saha put these sounds into Roman letters with their corresponding Bengali and English sounds and divided them into eleven vowels and thirty-six consonants. This exercise clearly indicates that it is the earliest attempt at formulating the alphabet for the written Lusei language in Roman characters. The Luseis themselves did not dissect their language into vowels and consonants and the act of reducing an irreducible gestalt into discrete sounds and letters must have produced a level of discomfort for the early Lusei learners of the language.⁴²

⁴² This may be a reason why Lorrain found Khamliena to be a slow learner of the language.

The second part, Etymology has ten chapters containing detailed grammar lessons with specific examples for different parts of speech. The third part titled Syntax gives translation of phrases and sentences and also provides lessons on how to form sentences.

He listed out the different '*Zai*' or Lusei popular songs in the first appendix which includes songs that bear tribal names, names of individuals, names of objects, names of outlying countries, songs named after merry and festive occasions and songs named after the modulation of the voice. By listing out the various popular songs of the time, Saha had recorded the history of the people and their ways of life at that period of time. He gave examples of songs that bear the names of objects like '*Darthlalang Zai*' which means 'The Mirror Song' which suggests that mirrors were available and '*Lungpui Bil Zai*' meaning 'The Big Stone Song' which suggests that big stones have meaning and significance in their lives. One could also identify the festive occasions from the list of songs named after them which include songs like '*Buzai zai*' which means 'The Harvest Song', '*Salu lam zai*' which means a song sung at the celebration of the head of an animal hunted down by the hunters. Saha had translated it as 'The Feast Song' probably because the celebration is usually accompanied by feasts for the whole village. Both the lyrics of '*Zai phe*' or 'The Plain Song' and '*Hmar Zai*' or 'Song of the Hmar' were associated with drinking of beer. Saha believed that the Lusei music and songs were unique. He mentioned- "*The former (music) is often wild and plaintive, while in the latter, the modulations of the*

*voice are extremely varying, sometimes low and deep, and almost funereal, while at others rising to a lively pitch, but always musical”.*⁴³

The second appendix named ‘Vai Thanthu or Foreign Fables’ starts with a fable called *The Man and the God’s Idol*. The aspect of God or spirit seems to acquire importance among the Lusei and the aim of the story appears mainly to discourage idol worship. The other fables chosen by the author were *The Boy and the Thief*, *The Crow and the Pot*, *The Girl and the Tiger*, *The Old Man and his Disagreeing Children*, *The Man and his two Wives*, *The Monkey and its Young Ones* and *The Cow and The Goat*. The author mentioned that objects and ideas not familiar to the Luseis had been replaced by others with which they were familiar, in these fables.

The last appendix named *A Dialogue* cited a conversation between two friends where a man shares his story of misfortunes with his friend. He started with the news of his marriage, and then went on to how his properties were completely burnt down along with his wife when his house caught fire. The dialogue also suggests that *tanka* or money has been used at this period of time and that there was a practice of selling goods like animal skin to Bengalis.

⁴³ Brojonath Saha, op cit., p. iv

J.D. Anderson, a colonial official stationed at South Sylhet also wrote a book titled *A Short List of Words of Hill Tippera Language, With Their English Equivalents- Also of Words of the Language Spoken by Lushais of the Sylhet Frontier*⁴⁴ printed in 1885 by The Assam Secretariat Press, Shillong. This book has translations of a few English words into Tippera, Lushai and Bodo languages and has 13 pages.

J. D. Anderson (1885) worked on translating words from English to Tippera, Lushai and Bodo which were believed to be spoken by the tribes of these regions. He divided them into 14 areas like Natural Phenomena, The Human Body, Food and Clothes, Quadrupeds, Birds, Reptiles, Insects, Vegetable Products, Implements, Natural and Social Relations, Abstract Terms, Time, Adjectives and Numbers. Important areas like religion and agriculture are missing. It is interesting to note that Anderson's first word in his dictionary is also 'God'. He had translated 'God' as '*Rawvang*' (*Khuavang*) or '*Patien*' (*Pathian*) while Saha had used '*Khuavang*' for 'God'. The term '*Pathian*' refers to male figure of God whereas the term '*Khuavang*' refers to the female figure of God which was more in currency before Christianity.

The Lusei term for 'God' in Lewin's dictionary is '*Khuavang*' and for Anderson it is both '*Khuavang*' and '*Pathien*'. For Lewin, '*Khuavang*' stands for God and good spirit and '*Pathien*' stands for evil spirit.⁴⁵ Though Anderson claims in his preface that he borrowed the vocabulary from Lewin's text, he has used both the terms without

⁴⁴ The book is available at the University of California.

⁴⁵ T.H.Lewin, *Progressive Colloquial Exercises In the Lushai Dialect of the Dzo or Kuki Language: With Vocabularies and Popular Tales, Notated*. Calcutta Central Press Company, 1874. pp.ix & xii

making the distinction between the evil and the good spirit, of masculine and feminine figure of God. This mix of Lusei terms as equivalent to the English term 'God' is intriguing. '*Khuanu*' is used a poetic term for God in contemporary Mizo language where the term 'nu' stands for mother or feminine form. It may be derived from the term '*Khuavang*'.

A Short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes on the North-East Frontier with An Outline Grammar of the Rangkhoh-Lushai Language and Composition of Lushai with Other Dialects was written by C.A Soppit, the Assistant Commissioner of Burma published in 1893. It contains 88 pages and was divided into two sections. The first section dealt with history, anthropology and culture and is of 26 pages. The first section was written in 1887. The remaining 62 pages comprised the second section which consists of a Lusei-English dictionary containing 64 words, numbers and 14 Lusei sentences translated to English. The second section (1885) was written before the first section (1887).⁴⁶ It is very likely that the idea of history was firmly embedded in the positivistic tradition and the discursive of colonial anthropology was deeply grounded in the representation of the 'primitive'.

This section deals with four important philological texts largely written by colonial officials before the complete annexation of Luseis. In these texts there seems to be a theory of language emerging about the nature and culture of the Lusei society. For the officials, acquiring tribal language meant that they would be able to

⁴⁶ This information is accessed through the work of B. Lalthangliana's *Mizo Literature*. MCL Publication.

participate in a shared world view essential for governance and for producing scientific knowledge of the denizens of the Hills.

The equivalence that they were establishing between various languages needed them to prepare dictionary, grammar and texts on orthography. Brojonath Saha wrote the first grammar book on Lusei language with the intention of reducing the dialect to writing. Even as he wrote the grammar, he translated the sounds into letters. Though evolutionary logic requires that the alphabet precede the grammar, in this case, Saha was performing this operation in a simultaneous manner. Dictionary may be considered as a device to find equivalence between different words in the same language or between words from one language in relation to words from another language. In other words, the assumption is that there is a structure for all languages and that it consists of different elements and that these elements cohere in definite ways. Thus, Lewin formulates the structure of sentence in Lusei language as *"In construction it is generally the reverse of our English language, the objective case generally preceding the verb, while the word governed by what is with us a preposition precedes the preposition."*⁴⁷

Since these efforts are done in more or less solitary manner and the idea is not to use this knowledge to directly rule Luseis, there is no visible resistance to these knowledge making activities. But resistance to these activities appears soon

⁴⁷ T.H Lewin, *Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai Dialect of the Dzo or Kuki Language*. Calcutta Central Press Company Limited, Calcutta. 1874. p.5

after the writing of the canonical grammar text by the missionaries, Lorrain and Savidge.⁴⁸

Section -II

Arrival of Christianity and the Beginning of Reading Script/Scripture:

In the philological work, the missionaries had to simultaneously create both subjects of God and subjects of the colonial state. Unlike in some parts of mainland India, the colonial state had a meager presence in the Lushai Hills District.

It was to inscribe “God” in the lives of the Luseis that the earliest missionaries found it important to make the Bible available to its denizens. Writing was considered as a way to God because it allowed for reading the word of God. It may not be wrong to argue that the missionaries were more interested in facilitating the Luseis to read the Bible, rather than acquire the novel habit of writing. This act of reading preferred to nourish the soul instead of the human faculties. Hence, it is clear that the act of committing the Lusei language to writing may be perceived as an act of raising the Lusei dialect.

Contemporary historical accounts of colonialism emphasize the committing of Lusei dialect to writing. There is hardly any account of the dominant reading practice

⁴⁸ Vanchhunga, *Lusei leh a vela Hnam dangte*. Dept of Art and Culture, Mizoram. 1955 (Reprinted in 1994) p.280

that was inaugurated during this time. It is possible to surmise that the mode of reading introduced by the missionaries was less open and more didactic. To read in order to affirm the word of God may have provided certain possibilities in the emerging sedentary political economy of the hills. The most enduring contribution of the missionaries has not only been literising the Lusei language but instituting a certain responsibility towards the act of reading.

The missionaries foregrounded reading in their effort to literise the Lusei language. For now, the latter aspect will be elaborated. The act of literising the Lusei language required a series of prior activities. In fact, these series of activities were already undertaken by the colonial officials prior to the work of the missionaries.⁴⁹ It included compilation of vocabulary, identification of Lusei sounds, formulating the sentence structure, orthography and so on.

Even as the missionaries used and acknowledged the early work of the officials namely Lewin and Brojonath Saha, they were the first to devote complete attention to both translation and philological work involving the literisation of the language.

⁴⁹ T.H Lewin (1874), Brojonath Saha (1884), J.D Anderson (1885) and C.A.Soppit (1893) have been cited in the previous section.

The first missionary to visit the Lushai Hills was Rev. William Williams. He arrived at Fort Aizawl on 20th March, 1891 and stayed only for a few days in Mizoram. During his short stay, he offered to treat the Luseis to God's picture and not the word or the text. He observed:

I had collected Bible pictures to give to them and they seemed to like these greatly. They said they were going to take them home to give to their children...My watch attracted great attention and its tick tick, when they held it to their ears caused great amazement and satisfaction. One of them said, after looking at the works inside it, "what wisdom!"⁵⁰

The representation of God in the form of picture and later in the textual form of the Bible marks the arrival of a new time. The mediation of God through script required them to make a distinction between past, present and the future. It is as if Rev. Williams had set the clock for the Luseis forever.

It appears that the Luseis drew pictures and had acquired some notion of visual literacy. For instance, they drew pictures of animals that a dead person had supposedly killed, on the grave.⁵¹ The missionaries' resort to visual representation of the Bible in the form of pictures found immediate reception among the Luseis.⁵²

⁵⁰ J.Meirion Lloyd., *History of the Church in Mizoram (Harvest in the Hills)*. Synod Publication Board, Aizawl, 1991. p.21

⁵¹ J. Shakespeare, *The Lushei Kuki Clans*, Tribal Research Institute, Mizoram, 1998. p.85

⁵² Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram, 1898-99 cited that the Luseis enjoyed Biblical pictures and would come daily to look at them.

Even to this day, young children are initiated into Christianity through circulation of pictorial compositions of the Bible. In some sense, the history of popular education among the Luseis starts with the circulation of images rather than texts.

The most famous missionaries that ever set foot on the Lushai Hills happened to be J.H Lorrain and F.W Savidge. They are regarded as the founders of the Lusei script and the earliest initiators of the new religion of Christianity. Both the arrival of the script and the religion appears to have fundamentally changed the destiny of the Luseis. Contemporary Mizo society embodies the spirit of both these historic influences.

Lorrain and Savidge represented the Arthington Mission from Wales. Robert Arthington was a philanthropist who financially supported Baptist missionaries going to serve the 'heathens' in India. They separately reached Calcutta in the year 1891. They arrived at Sairang on 11th January, 1894, an hour's drive from the present town of Aizawl.⁵³ Initially, they were not granted permission to visit Lushai Hills, so they stayed at Silchar with a Welsh missionary, Laura Evans for a year and studied the Lusei language using Lewin's *Progressive Colloquial Exercise in Lushai Dialect of the 'Dzo' or Kuki Language* and Brojo Nath Saha's *A Grammar of the Lushai Language, to which are appended a few illustration of the Zuo of Lushai popular songs and translations from Aesop's Fables*.

⁵³ J.M Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram (Harvest in the Hills)*, Synod Publication Board, Aizawl. 1991. p.25

From the study of the philological texts produced by his predecessors, they became aware that the immediate need was to commit the language to writing. After they arrived in Aizawl, they took up this assignment in all earnestness. These two missionaries engaged two enterprising Luseis to simultaneously receive and disseminate learning. Thangphunga and Suaka became the first two pupils to learn to read and write. The alphabet produced by Lorrain and Savidge in 1894 seemed to have 24 letters such as⁵⁴:

â, a, b, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, \, u, v, z, ch

The main interest of the missionaries was to make the people literate. This was done to facilitate their ability to read the Bible. During their first year of stay they translated portions of the Bible. This was a precursor to their major work which was to follow soon. Lorrain, like Lewin, started translation of the Bible in the Lusei language even as he was trying to produce a grammar of the language.

In some sense, writing prose seems to precede the writing of the grammar. There may be two reasons for this situation. Firstly, it is likely that these missionaries were under either a self imposed urgency or they were told by their patrons to expedite their evangelical commitment. Secondly, the nature of the Lusei language was such that it didn't necessarily require the grammar text to precede the

⁵⁴ Recorded by Suaka and produced later in a leaflet form.

production of prose. Perhaps, both these reasons were important for this out of turn events. After all, for Lorrain and Savidge, the writing of grammar and dictionary was only a means to a providential end. However, it was found later that these translations proved difficult for the Luseis to read.⁵⁵

Perhaps, it is for this reason that Lorrain and Savidge followed the work of translation immediately with writing their important text *A Grammar and Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. In another context, the missionary D.E Jones observes, “The people say they are difficult to read- not because of any stiffness in the translation, but because it is all so different to their mode of thinking”.⁵⁶ In some ways, Jones is suggesting that there is a connection between reading and thinking, to read is to think in a particular way. On the contrary, in an autobiographical reflection of the Mizo pastor Vanchhunga, he usefully recalls that in the year 1898, some Lusei chiefs discouraged their subjects from learning through the mode of literacy, as it might take away their sense of intuitive judgment and in the process reduce them to becoming coolies rather than learned men.⁵⁷ The Lusei chiefs feared that they would fail to become subjects of their own thought and action. To establish a link between formal literacy being introduced by the missionaries and consequently becoming coolies is to apparently argue that their existing culture/thought patterns recognize the exploitative character of the form of labour known as coolie. It is possible for researchers in the future to explore the connections between formal literacy, Biblical

⁵⁵ Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram. p.6

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.6

⁵⁷ Vanchhunga, *Lusei leh a vela Hnam Dangte*. Dept of Art and Culture, Mizoram. 1955 (Reprinted in 1994) pp.280

education and the arrival of a profound surrender. The Lusei chiefs seem to see a grand design in formal education where the quality of being weak is being valorized over the quality of being strong. Or, it could be interpreted as the Lusei chiefs' plain reaction to their losing traditional power over their subjects.

The work of Lorrain and Savidge, *A Grammar and Dictionary of the Lushai Language* became one of the foundations of the Mizo language and education in Mizoram. Lorrain wrote in his diary on 1st September, 1894 that they came up with translations of 120 new words within a week. He also noted that there were single words for actions which can only be expressed in English by a sentence or by three or four words. For instance, the meaning of the word '*chhuah*' in Lorrain's dictionary reads-

"1. to go, to let escape, to allow to escape. (The action in any of the above may either be intentional or unintentional). 2. to put forth, to show, to show forth, to display, to exhibit, to set forth, to expose, to expose to view, to produce, to disclose, to publish (in print, etc)."⁵⁸

The action term '*chhuah*' refers to several literal and complex modes of action. In its non-literal sense, it appears to be used for signifying an action rather than the action per se. For instance, the word '*chhuah*' stands for both 'to expose' and 'to expose to view'. The other synonym for the word is 'to disclose'.

⁵⁸ J.H.Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. The Asiatic Society, Calcutta. 1997 (Reprint). p.81

Historically, the word '*chham chhuak*' stood for 'to chant' and its equivalent '*sawi chhuak*' stands for 'to speak out'. The latter may also be used for signifying the act of sermon. The word '*chham chhuak*' was performed by the traditional priest known as the '*puithiam*'. The chanting was done along with animal sacrifices to appease the spirits and in the process disclose the world. The contemporary priest performs the sermon in order to deliver God's words to its followers. This has a more literal meaning of transforming its followers than the traditional priest who chanted in order to put forth (animal sacrifice), to set forth (chant) and finally to disclose a Gnostic world. '*Chham chhuak*' inhabits an enchanted world and '*sawi chhuak*' speaks to a revealed world. This may be the reason why many philologists including Brojonath Saha and Lorrain have pointed out the prominence of verbs in the Lusei language.

The entries listed in the first edition of Lorrain and Savidge's dictionary are supposed to have contained around 5000 odd words.⁵⁹ Earlier, Lewin's dictionary did not exceed 1000 odd words. In less than twenty years, from 1874 to 1894, the philological works seem to gather momentum in terms of both quality and quantity. Though there are continuities between the tradition led by Lewin and the tradition inaugurated by the missionaries particularly Lorrain and Savidge, there are some discontinuities too. As pointed out earlier, the latter tradition made it very obvious that they were guided by pedagogical and evangelical intent.

⁵⁹ B. Lalthangliana. *Mizo Literature*. p.120

In the preface to the text, Lorrain categorically states, *"thanks to a sympathetic and wise government and the God-blessed labours of many missionaries both Welsh and English-has gradually through the years transformed this once wholly illiterate and semi-savage tribe into one of the most loyal, literate and progressive communities in the Assam province."*⁶⁰ Among reasons specified by Lorrain such as the intervention of the colonial government in banning headhunting, establishment of law and order, the missionaries' evangelical work, it is not clear on how a book on grammar and dictionary would also engineer an otherwise recalcitrant population into a loyal, literate and progressive community. Perhaps, Lorrain had an insight that the idea of grammar is related to the establishment of order that is overly connected to the modern state. Language is a subject of the state as much as it is the subject of the speakers belonging to the state. The production of the community requires or presupposes the arrival of a state. Grammar identifies the community as subjects of the state.

The production of community for missionaries like Lorrain posed a problem because they indulged in animistic beliefs and practices. It is likely that the production of community occurs at three levels. To elevate the savage to a state of humanity is the first level of production of community, to bestow language and literacy is to transform this community further, to propose language in order to access God is the third level of the production of community. It is in these three senses that Lorrain uses the expression, "loyal, literate and progressive." The expression 'loyal' refers to accepting the authority of colonial rule, being literate

⁶⁰ This preface appears in the 1940 edition of Lorrain's Dictionary. p. v

refers to being able to read the Bible, and progressive is an attribute of civilization that the Lusei may inherit due to acquiring of literacy and submission to the kingdom of God.

A Grammar and Dictionary of the Lushai Language is divided into four parts. The first chapter occupying 35 pages consists of grammar of the Lusei language, sounds and pronunciations of words and alphabets. The second chapter runs through pages 36 to 53 and is comprised of useful sentences with their meaning in English. The third chapter, "Lushai-English Dictionary" occupies 54-232 pages and the fourth part, "English-Lushai Dictionary" runs through 233 to 246 pages. In the Lushai-English dictionary, Lorrain and Savidge did not include words starting with the letters *g, j, n* and *ng*.

This text is recognized by scholars and historians. Lorrain produced an elaborate dictionary in the year 1940. This text was published by The Asiatic Society, Calcutta. This has more than 20,000 entries and Lorrain remarks in the preface of this book that he lost several entries because of the menace of rats and other vagaries of nature. The earlier dictionary comprised a section on grammar. By this time, it seems like there was a need to look at these two kinds of work as very specialized and hence the publication of dictionary per se. The distinction between syntax and semantics had been institutionalized.

Missionaries' role in Formal Education and the Textualization of the Mizo Language

The establishment of the Lushai Hills District in 1898 converged with the emergence of formal education and the arrival of the missionaries. The three entities appeared during the last decade of the 19th century. It is accepted that the colonial state did not take active part in providing formal education and the responsibility of formal education was claimed by the Church authorities.

Like in other parts of colonial India, missionaries played an important part in the production of materials for formal education in colonial Mizoram. The production of materials indicates the level of standardization of Indian languages. Standardization refers to a manuscript language becoming a print language. In the peculiar case of the scriptless Lusei language, both script and print appear simultaneously.⁶¹ In the case of the Lushai Hills District, a number of missionaries played an important role in developing content for school teaching.

Mizo Zir Tir Bu (A Lushai Primer), the first school text book was believed to be produced on 22nd October 1895 printed at Shillong and the second edition of the text book was believed to be produced in 1901.⁶² Edwin Rowlands prepared *Chhiarkawpna Bu-II* (Arithmetic) in 1903 and *Chhiarkawpna Bu-III* in 1906 for the

⁶¹ Refer to *On the discursive and material context of the first handwritten Lushai newspaper 'Mizo Chanchin Laishuih'*, 1898 by P. Thirumal and C. Lalrozami on **The Indian Economic and Social History Review**. July-September 2010. Vol.XLVII No.3.p.381

⁶² *Mizo Zir Tir Bu*, Assam Secretariat Printing Department, Shillong, 1901 (2nd Edition)

school. These two books were compiled into one in 1925. He also prepared *English First Reader* in 1907 printed at SPCK Press, Vepery, Madras. *Zir Tan Bu* was also prepared for the schools by D.E. Jones in 1915. The first song/hymn book *Kristian Hlabu* was produced in 1899 with 18 songs, printed at Calcutta Press and 500 copies were printed.⁶³ Along with providing secular education, training in music also became part of the formal schooling system.⁶⁴ Colonial officials and missionaries realized that music was an essential way of life for the Luseis. They emphasized music both in terms of encouraging and discouraging certain forms of music.⁶⁵ The most popular form of music in contemporary Mizoram is the Church music.

Invention of New Words and Vocabularies

The missionaries had to provide a temporal arrangement in order to organize the life of the Luseis around the institution of the Church preeminently and to some extent the colonial state. The colonial officials and missionaries found to their surprise that they had no names for listing the days of the week. D.E Jones in his autobiography mentioned that he worked with Edwin Rowlands in coining names for various days of the week and months of the year. He wrote:

“They had no word for Sunday or for any day of the week. They had names for thirteen months, but now they had adopted English names for

⁶³ Z.T Sangkhuma. *Missionary-te Hnuhma.*, MCL Publication. 1995. p. 154

⁶⁴ See Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram 1894-1957, Synod Literature and Publication Board, 1997. p. 11

⁶⁵ The missionaries banned singing of love songs among the early Christians. See R.L Thanmawia, *Mizo Poetry*, Din Din Heaven, Aizawl. 1998. p.101

the months. These are the names that two of us (DEJ and ER) gave to the weekdays: starting naturally from Sunday- (Pathinni) which was God's day of the Day of Rest (the day used to be known as the day for giving soldiers their ration), the day for starting work- (Thawhtan), the second day of work (Thawhlejni), the middle day (Nilaini), the fifth day (Ningani), the day for finishing school (Zirtawpni) and the day for preparation (Inrinni). The names sound better in Mizo than in another language.”⁶⁶

It is possible that the Luseis organize their temporality around seasons that inform non-sedentary agricultural practices. Their jhum work and hunting never ended on a particular day of the week, but had to end since the arrival of Christianity and the invention of weekdays associated with it. *Inrinni* (Saturday) means ‘to prepare or get ready’, which suggests the preparation and cleaning up to worship God the next day. The tribal worldview which was dominated by their rituals and festivals, agricultural practices, custom etc was suddenly transformed into a new understanding of time. The names given to the days of the week by Jones and Rowlands are still in use today.

The scheme of organizing the days of the week around the institution of the Church rather than the institution of factory or industry provided a non-secular sense of temporality. Rhetorically speaking, each day was qualitatively different from the

⁶⁶ D.E Jones, *A Missionary's Autobiography*. Translated from Welsh by J.M Lloyd, Lengchhawn Press, 1998. p.19

other. On a Sunday, in contemporary Mizoram, one finds streets completely empty and the meaning of the translation appears pregnant in their present way of life.

Anderson (1885), in his *A Short List of Words of Hill Tippera Language, With Their English Equivalents- Also of Words of the Language Spoken by Lushais of the Sylhet Frontier*, had not translated the names of the week while he included names for day, night, month, year, today, tomorrow and yesterday, therefore Jones' claim seems to be true. Naming of the days in this manner brought the people into a new worldview. The Luseis who spent each day more or less the same way began to have *Pathianni* (Sunday) and they were not supposed to do any kind of work. Christians traveling to other villages on Sundays were suspended from the Church. It was meant for worshipping God as the name suggests, '*Pathian*' meaning *God* and '*Ni*' meaning *Day*. *Zirtawpni* (Friday) suggests that learning or studies had begun in their lives as '*Zir*' means 'to study' and '*tawp*' means 'the end'.

J.M Lloyd (1991) also wrote that new words had to be found to express the new ideas and concepts that Christianity had brought and words like church, chapel, week, days of the week were freshly coined. Words like Christmas, Cross, Pharisee were borrowed from English and a few other words from Bengali and Khasi.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ J.M Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram*, Synod Publication Board, 1991. p.80

Forms of Address

Before the advent of Christianity in Lushai Hills, the people never gathered together to listen to one person directly addressing them. It was only in the 'Zawlbuk', the young boys' dormitory that the 'Val Upa', the leader among them announced their hunting or war plans and other important information. The listening culture existing in the Lushai hills was mainly of folktales from parents or grand parents to their children. When Christianity arrived, one of their first tasks was to gather the people on Sundays and deliver sermons. Similarly, in a classroom, students were supposed to listen to the teachers. The idea of assembling in order to listen appears to have been a novel experience. This new system took some time to evolve and the missionaries complained that the Luseis often smoked their pipes, conversed with others even as the speaker addressed the audience.⁶⁸ The idea of speaker and audience existing in a didactic relationship initially did not take off among the Luseis. To invest in the authority of a speaker appear as a rather uninteresting proposition and the early missionaries were also made fun of by the Luseis for their deep conviction in the book, the Bible. The production of an assembly or a congregation through spatial and corporeal practices, was part of the process of both Christian and secular education. Somewhere, the origins of philological practices lay in constituting the pedestal and the congregation or the ability to mark a distinction between speaker and audience. In the pre-Christian Lusei scenario, it is easy to surmise that there was less of a clearly marked distinction between speaker and audience.

⁶⁸ See Dorothy Glover, *Set on a Hill- The Record of Fifty Years in the Lushai Country* compiled by Baptist Church of Mizoram, 1993. p.15

Lorrain wrote in his dairy on 16th October, 1895 that they made three rules for the people to be followed in the Church; the people were not allowed to smoke pipes during the service; women were not allowed to talk while singing the hymns; and every church member should bathe at least once a month and if not, he or she would not be allowed to attend the service.⁶⁹ The reading of these three orders portrayed the scenario of the Church during this period of time. It was clear that they were never gathered at a place to hear a sermon or a speech. Information and orders were always passed on through the village crier or '*Tlangau*'. They did not seem to realize the sacredness of the new religion and certainly not the necessity of bathing.

Role of the Church

Philological innovations depend on availability of media technologies. Though books on the Lushai Hills have been written by colonial officials, missionaries and native elites from 1870's onwards, the first printing press arrived in the Lushai Hills at Aizawl only in 1911. Generally, these books were printed either at Calcutta or at Sylhet.

It is important to note that the standardization of the Lusei language through a variety of philological works was produced by two important institutions namely the Synod Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church. The Synod Presbyterian Church established in 1897 with its headquarter at Aizawl played and continues to play a crucial role in the constituting of a print culture in Mizoram. The first experiment in

⁶⁹ Unpublished dairy of J.H.Lorrain called Pu Buanga Log Book, Baptist Archive, Lunglei.

the installation of a hand press was carried out by Dr. Fraser, a missionary from the Synod Church. This printing press was brought by Dr Fraser to avoid the problem of getting it printed from outside the Lushai Hills District.

Though Lorrain records the services of several Lusei natives in the production of his various philological works, there is no meticulous documentation of the role of the native elites in the making of the written Lusei language. Further, there is hardly any contestation or debate about the way the written language became a print language. When there was a controversy over the term to be used to address God, it appears Khamliana who partially guided Lorrain in the writing of the dictionary actually suggested '*Pathian*' to '*Khuavang*'.⁷⁰ Earlier, colonial officials like Lewin had categorically remarked that Pathian stood for evil and Khuavang for the good spirit. Similar sentiment regarding the expression was also echoed in the personal writing of William Williams who was the first missionary to visit the Lushai Hills in 1890.⁷¹

In some sense, the earliest converts to Christianity were the first literates. They were the ones who were eager to spread the word of God through variety of means including printing and publishing. For instance, '*Krista Tlangau*' was published by a pious convert, R.Dala and his friends in 1911. To this day, this Christian newsletter appears periodically. Initially, it was printed at the hand press owned by Dr. P. Fraser and the printing press was known as 'The Lushai Christian Press.' A few years later, its name was changed to '*Kristian Tlangau*'. Perhaps, there

⁷⁰ This is claimed by the descendants of Khamliana and the information is accessed through personal communication with Linga, the grandson of Khamliana in 2009.

⁷¹ Unpublished diary of William Williams cited by J.M. Lloyd in *History of the Church in Mizoram*, p.21

is a story of the types that were used in the printing press which is not available.⁷² Since the Roman characters were used, it is likely that there was no demand for script reforms like it happened in several other Indian languages.

The second important press that arrived on the Lushai soil was a treadle operated machine gifted by G.H. Loch, a British official to the Presbyterian Church in 1914.⁷³ The name of the press was changed to 'Loch Printing Press' to recognize the benevolence of that colonial official who gifted not only the printing press but was also responsible for introducing new agricultural practices. Since then, they started publishing other biblical texts, songbooks and school textbooks, apart from the newsletter. It was again changed to 'Synod Press' in 1973.⁷⁴ The Synod Press still has the largest printing facility in the contemporary federal state of Mizoram. Presently, it is known as The Synod Literature and Publication Board.

A few years after the Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod was established, the Baptist Church of Mizoram came into existence when the two pioneer missionaries Lorrain and Savidge came to back to Mizoram as missionaries of Baptist Missionary Society in 1903 and settled at Serkawn, Lunglei. The establishment of the Baptist Mission Printing Press in the south took place when Mr.

⁷² Even today, there is anxiety among the printers and scholars about the ability of the Roman letters to represent Lusei sounds.

⁷³ Lloyd, op.cit., p.138

⁷⁴ In his work, Lalhrualtuanga Ralte mentioned the colonial official, Col. Loch's philanthropic and social contributions. Loch donated money for building schools and missionary residences, constructed roads and a reservoir along with the treadle press which is showcased in a glass container at the present Synod establishment. pp.317-336

Sandler, a friend of Rev. F.J Rapper donated a treadle machine to the mission in 1938. A hand press was also donated to the mission a few years later. The mission started producing Christian literature with these two machines.

The Mizoram Presbyterian Synod and Baptist Church of Mizoram played a crucial role in constituting a linguistic identity and formation in the region. They continue to play a key role in the growth of Mizo language and literature in Mizoram. Therefore, the dominance of Christian literature is visible in the region. It may not be wrong to say that the history of the Lusei script and print is predominantly the history of the Church.

The missionaries guided the Lusei speech to script and print. It is not clear what has been gained or lost in the moment of the speech transforming itself into script and print. May be committing the Lusei language to script is not merely leading to the process of mummification of the language. Language for the Luseis seems to convey more than an instrument for control of their external and internal environment. The philological exercise seems to make language as an object of knowledge rather than as a medium of existence. The relation between words and songs has never been clear in the Lushai imagination and to make the distinction between them is to fracture this imagination.

Section III

Specificity of the Colonial State and the need for Ethnography

The most important colonial official involved in the making of the Lushai Hills District is Major J. Shakespear. He participated in the second and most definitive military expedition against the Luseis. For many years, Shakespear was the uncontested colonial official of the newly amalgamated Lushai Hills District. The Luseis addressed him as '*Tarmita*', the man who wore spectacles. They also called him 'Borsap' the White Prince of the Hills. He had developed an intense familiarity with the hills people and their practices. Shakespear wrote several ethnographic tracks on various Hills tribes including the Luseis.

Colonel Shakespear published *Mizo and Non-Mizo Tales* (1898) in Mizo language and included six Mizo folktales like *Thangpasaisira leh Nuhlupi*, *Tlumtea te unau thu*, *Sichangneii thu*, *Chhura thu I & II*, *Liandova te unau thu* and *Pafa hruiabo thu* and three non-Mizo tales like *Zaia Khualzin thu*, *Zaia mihring sa ei khuaa a zin thu* and *Khena leh Rama thu*. It is interesting to note that the title of the book reads Mizo folktales and not Lushai folktales. Being an administrator of the Lushai Hills District, Shakespear is acutely aware of the differences of the various clans residing in the hills with Luseis being one of the dominant clans. Perhaps, it is for this reason that he uses Mizo as an overarching term that subsumes several other clans including the Lusei.

Shakespear is actually reproducing the mythical past of the Luseis which he seems to be considering as a shared medium of intelligibility. Folktales like *Chhura* are stories that revolve around an endearing character who constantly refuses to suspend his worldly judgment for the sake of transforming the situation into an incredible event. Easy interpretation of the world is denied and a more risky understanding is undertaken. For *Chhura*, the world is not merely given and one cannot rest with the world as it is received. So, *Chhura* undertakes the task of beating the world into desirable shapes with his mallet.⁷⁵

Perhaps, Shakespear realizes folktales form an unconscious script for the denizen of the hills. Their sense of pride, hurt, history and desire are woven into the medium of folktales. In the Chinese language, of which Lusei is a derivative meanings are arrived at through an expression of their tones. It is in the telling and not so much in the writing that folktales receive their signification. The act of committing folktales to writing by colonial officials including Shakespear speaks something of their intense familiarity with the Lusei world. However, they seem to underestimate the power of the medium of orality in constituting a distinct space of

⁷⁵ “Chhura is represented as a man of immense strength and stature, of an easy going disposition, but not much blessed with brains. Thus one story tells of how, being on a visit, he was regaled with a crab stew, which he had not tasted before, and liked greatly. He inquired of what animal it was made. On his way home he forgot the name and commenced searching. Someone seeing him looking about asked what he had lost. “Stupid”, replied Chhura; “if I knew, would I be looking?” The passer-by remarked that he smell strongly of crab. “That’s it! That’s what I was searching for,” cried Chhura much pleased, and went on his way. Hi mallet head, a roughly dressed cylinder of stone, about 30 inches long and 18 inches in diameter, is pointed out to the curious, lying beside the path between Leng and Lingvum, where it is said to have fallen when it flew off the handle while Chhura was flattening the earth in Vanlaiphai valley some five miles away. A large spherical stone in the same neighborhood is pointed out as one of the pellets shot from his pellet bow when he was at Thenzawl, many miles distant”.

This excerpt is taken from J. Shakespear’s *The Lushei-Kuki Clan*. Tribal Research Institute, Mizoram. 1998.p.98

listening. Writing the folktale appears to erase the aura associated with listening. For the Luseis, the fantastic is an addition to the real.

Apart from being an administrator, Shakespear was a keen student of Lusei culture and society. Shakespear had to conceive of a form of governance that was not based on representative colonial institutions. In fact, the Lushai Hills District took the shape of a semi-police state. The colonial rulers believed that installing expensive administrative apparatus on the hills was not necessary. Their belief was based on the fact that the hills economy was only a subsistence economy and it did not provide any surplus for the purposes of extraction and taxation. Hence, it did not inherit the paraphernalia of the colonial government in Presidencies like Bengal, Bombay and Madras. Shakespear had to resort to deploying traditional authorities shorn of their powers to symbolically rule the Lushai Hills District. It is preeminently for this reason that he and many others from the last decade of the 19th century had to concentrate on producing philological and ethnographic accounts of the hills people.

The Government officials published their works in book form for the purposes of governance. E. B. Elly, an Assistant Quarter Master General had written *Military Report on the Chin-Lushai Country* published in the early annexation period in 1893. O. A. Chambers, Captain of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment wrote *Handbook of the Lushai Country* printed by the Superintendent of Government, Kolkatta in 1899. T.H Lewin's *A Fly on the Wheel or How I Helped to Govern India* was published in

1912. N.E Parry also wrote *Handbook on Lushai Customs* published by Assam Secretariat in 1928.

Conclusion

This chapter announces the fixing of Lusei sounds to written characters, which in turn, inaugurated a new discursive domain along with a corresponding corporeal regime. The latter was flagged off by the white missionaries, for whom, ‘to write’ signified the right to read ‘the word’. The process of converting the sound to grapheme signalled performing the acts of reading and listening too. This chapter demonstrates how this process of what can be called as ‘Christian literacy’ took shape through a number of activities associated with the ethnographic and philological work conducted by colonial officials and white missionaries with the support of the natives. Also, the chapter deals with the activities that were performed against the existing less-differentiated pre-colonial forms of discursive and sensory regimes. Finally, the chapter suggests that the onset of ‘Christian literacy’ energized the cultural register of ‘*chanchin*’ and circumscribed the role of ‘*thawnthu*’.

Chapter-III

Emergence of Literary and Journalistic Productions in Colonial Lushai Hills

Unlike most other borderland regions in colonial India, the religious identity precedes the making of the secular, ethnic and political identity in the Lushai Hills District and the religious identity emerged and got consolidated during the first four decades of the 20th century. This chapter engages with the textual and the performative practices relating to the making and reinforcement of the religious identity.

The two important Churches namely, the Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church acquired a certain institutional character that affected the everyday life of the Luseis. Both these institutions actively initiated several networks to support the spread of education, health and religious practices across the length and breadth of the Lushai Hills District.

It may be a useful hypothesis to suggest that these two Churches produced the symbolic and the moral universe for regulating the conduct of the Luseis for the first four decades of the 20th century. In the first decade of the last century, the native elites resisted the embrace of Christianity. Within a short period of time, a large population of the Lushai Hills District became Christians.⁷⁶ This unprecedented

⁷⁶ The Christian population rose from 2,461 out of 91,204 populations in 1911 to 98,108 out of 152,786 population in 1941. Refer Liangkhaia, *Mizo Chanchin*.p.162-180

history of conversion has its sources in the way they produced and regulated the Lusei textual and performative practices.

Very specifically, this chapter deals with a range of early literary and journalistic compositions like the first personal letter written by a Lusei chief Khamliana, three journalistic artifacts namely, *Mizo Chanchin Laishuih*, *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* and *Krista/Kristian Tlangau*, two literary pieces namely, the first Mizo history book, *Mizo Chanchin* and the first novel, *Hawilopari*. These texts are presented along with a textual and a contextual analysis.

The early literary and journalistic compositions may be considered as experiments in the nascent practice of writing itself and in creating the discursive domain of the literary and journalistic. Though Lorrain along with Lewin and Brojonath Saha had produced the formal grammar and dictionary of the Lusei language, it is only with the practice of composition of diverse texts that these rules regarding grammar and dictionary were realized. Hence, it is only in the composition of a range of texts that problems relating to standardization of the Lusei language would have emerged. Similarly, creation of the literary domain required the deployment of genres like letters, newspapers, magazines, novels, history books, folktales and songs. It is for this reason that these texts are examined for analyzing the twin processes of both literisation and literarisation through a textual and a contextual analysis of the sample of the above mentioned literary and journalistic compositions.

Like in many mainland Indian languages, the journalistic and the literary languages appear indistinguishable in the early phases of the standardization of the language. It is possible that there still exist no clear boundaries between the documentary and the literary, the journalistic and the artistic. The lack of a specialized idiom for literary productions and absence of a canon along with canonical figures makes the history of the Mizo language and literature quite unprecedented. The received historical formulation of speech followed by writing and print later, does not fit the historical journey of the Mizo language. This is revealed in the examination of the early literary and journalistic compositions.

The term '*chanchin*' is associated with both literature and journalism. Newspapers and magazines are referred to as '*chanchinbu*'. History is also commonly referred to as '*chanchin*'. It is both a specialized term and a very general term. Reports of newspaper are akin to a '*chanchin*' narrative. In the description of the discipline called history, the term '*chanchin*' is used to invoke the document or record as a source for narrating the event. Not infrequently, the term '*chanchin*' is also used interchangeably for literature. At some level, '*chanchin*' refers to a realist narrative and disciplinary domains of journalism, literature and history seem to offer scope for the deployment of the register of '*chanchin*'. The early experiments in literary, journalistic and historical writings engage with the register of '*chanchin*' and it negotiates with content other than realist narrative as well. For instance, the analysis of some of the compositions does indicate the ability of '*chanchin*' to represent non-realist narratives.

The history of Mizo literature demonstrates that the evolving textual composition negotiates with the performance tradition, and that the history of the nascent Lusei literature cannot be reduced to the text. It is true that Protestantism does regulate the entry of the Lusei performative tradition.⁷⁷ There is an improvisation of this performative inheritance so as to suit the evolving '*chanchin*'.

First Letter

The first letter written in Lushai by the native Chief Khamliana (1897) to the Queen of England Majesty is considered as an important literary artifact. Interestingly, this letter is fictively addressed to the Queen of England. Actually, the letter was sent to his tutor 'Lorrain' who had taught him to write and read just a week before he wrote this letter.

Contextual analysis:

In 1897, the North and the South Lushai Hills District were coming close to becoming amalgamated into a single Lushai Hills District and the region was being mapped for extracting resources to run the local administration. Native chiefs who were close to the colonial bureaucracy were haggling for extending their physical boundaries. In an earlier context, the more the number of households in a chiefs' territory, the more respect and power would accrue to him but both the households and the territory would lack complete fixity. In this new cartographic and bureaucratic imagination, there was hardly any scope for changes once they were drawn. This

⁷⁷ R. L Thanmawia, *Mizo Poetry*. Din Din Heaven, Aizawl, 1998. p.116

was not only because the new technologies allowed for precise measurement and enumeration, but the chiefs were banned from waging war against each other.

Writing and the evolving cartographic imagination of the region provided fixity to the otherwise fluid idea of space that was associated with Jhum and Hunting culture of the Luseis. The native chiefs had to contend with this new form of representation of the Lushai Hills District. It appears that Khamleina was experimenting with his new found skills of writing and reading and putting it to very personal use. In some sense, he had access to this bureaucratic imagination through his association with colonial officials, missionaries and his ability to read and write.

Khamliana had provided strategic information to the military officials to wage the second Vailen against the Lushais' chiefs. Khamliana did not inherit any traditional property from his father because he was born of a concubine and also due to the internecine quarrels of the various clans. One colonial official, McCabe writes:

"I secured the services of Khamliana Raja, who had been driven away from his village by the Howlongs, and had taken refuge with his brother-in-law, Sailenpui. Tired of his dependent position, he wished to start a new village of his own near Aijal, but most of his family and dependents were in Lalburas hands, and without my assistance, he could not obtain their release. I agreed to help him if he accompanied me throughout the promenade, and acted as my messenger to the different Lushai Eastern Chiefs. Strict faith was kept on both sides: he served me admirably, and I

obtained the release of his relatives, who to the number of 40 houses are now settled near Thanruma".⁷⁸

This remark was made in 1890 when the war was still on. From then on, Khamliana grew from strength to strength. Khamliana's letter speaks of his ability to talk to the colonial rulers in their own language. This language which Khamliana had acquired has encoded nature as decipherable and amenable to possession and extraction. Khamliana realized that writing allowed for a certain control over one's destiny and through his writing, he was seeking to control other's destiny as well.

Khamliana's ability to write is at once an acknowledgement of the new form of representation and an opportunity to participate in this form of representation. To enter into the white man's world of representation means that it is informed by a distinction between the word and the object that it represents. In other words, there is a correspondence theory at work which is exemplified in the making of the dictionary that was to follow soon. In fact, he was the first person to recognize that power can be acquired through participation in the production and consumption of knowledge rather than through coercive means. Khamliana's uncanny insight into colonial modernity led him to willfully play subordination in order to access power. This letter displayed below registers his subjugated self as a play of mockery:⁷⁹

⁷⁸ R.B Mc Cabe's tour dairy (Political officer, North Lushai Hills), 1890, Mizoram State Archive, Aizawl, Mizoram.

⁷⁹ This document is in the possession of the heirs of Khamliana.

16 June 1897

Fort Aijal

North Lushai Hills

Your Majesty the Empress,

Madam even from the times of our grandmothers and grandfathers we have called you Kumpinu, we often hear your name. Now we know that you have sat on the throne for 60 years, when the anniversary arrives I will light a bonfire in my village/when the time actually arrives, we will light a bonfire in all the villages, we are very much delighted. In the olden times we were silly and because of our ignorance(due to our silliness and ignorance) we used to raid upon your villages, now that your messengers told us something about you and that you dislike the slaughter of other people, henceforth we will give up our quarrel. Now that the British "sap" came to us and prepare the Bible for us and graciously taught us to write in our own (mother) tongue, by now we can write in our own language, we are very much grateful. You who from endless ages past had reigned paramount we the Lusei who are not really worth reckoning but because of your generosity are given the opportunity to say a few words through a letter we are grateful for that (opportunity). So thus, we have become your subjects now and in this distant land live by your rice and salt, we heartily welcome everything. We the Lusei are not really qualified to be called humans, but now you and your missionaries had kindly taught us the meaning of being humans we will even get to know your better kind self

which was hitherto unknown to us, at this stage I am at lost even on how to courteously communicate with others (fellow human beings), kindly pardon my shortcoming. And in the future we will live on your kindness and take heed of your orders, as for us we are less insignificant and smaller than even the ants to you. As for our relationship, according to your orders, your officers will not have to fear for their lives. We are grateful for your compassion; nevertheless we Lusei are so ignorant that we will be even more pleased if you will look after our tidings with kindness. As for us, for such eminence you are, we are not worthy of even this opportunity of writing to you kindly receive our letter with favour. We send you our greetings. We are very pleased with you. May you live in good health.

-Khamliena Sailo, Lusei Chief⁸⁰

Textual Analysis-

This is the first ever written artifact in the Lusei language by a native Lusei. For many Luseis at that time, this artifact may have appeared as a magical creation. It is possible that he received help from some colonial official to draft this letter, but that does not reduce the importance of the letter. Khamliana seemed to be in a hurry to express submission to colonial rule on behalf of all the Luseis. In fact, some of the Lusei chiefs were still asserting their traditional rights over the subjects and resisting the British suzerainty. Khamliana knew that the resistance may not hold forth in the long run and he wanted to share power rather than resist the colonial power.

⁸⁰ The letter was written in Lusei dialect and the translation is done by K. Malsawmdawngliana.

Khamliana assumed that the Luseis lack indigenous resources to become fuller human beings. According to him, literacy, military, knowledge and Christianity form the civilisational core of British rule. As the Luseis lack these cultural and material resources, they have not realized their fuller self. Khamliana suggested that Luseis have the possibilities of experiencing different subjectivities; they had the potential to become subjects of the Church and subjects of the empire. To become subjects of the church is to disown their former identity that was associated with a primitive self. To become subjects of the empire would mean that their allegiance will be confined to a rational technical bureaucratic order rather than to kinship-related personal authority of traditional chiefs. It is not clear whether Khamliana was aware of the trade-off for becoming human beings and what was it that the Luseis have to sacrifice for becoming humans and responsible colonial subjects.

Apart from profusely thanking the empire for providing such basic amenities like rice and salt to allowing Luseis to participate in the elevated act of writing to anticipate participation in the Christian ecumenical community, Khamliana suggested that the colonial rule offers the basis for a material and a moral order. But he quickly followed it by requesting the queen to look after the tidings of the Luseis with kindness. This may be read as an appeal for adequate compensation in return for being loyal subjects. As we know from colonial ethnographic accounts, this was a period of drawing detailed maps of different territories belonging to various Lusei chiefs and Khamliana seemed to be suggesting that colonial bureaucracy should take kindly to his claims for extending his chiefdom. This is interesting because while he admitted that the missionaries and the colonial bureaucracy offer a superior civilisational culture, he was sure that there were spaces for contaminating this moral

ethical world. This moral ethical world for Khamliana had continuously been negotiable.

In the early Greek tradition, when letter writing was initially founded, it was used to validate one's own conscience but in this case, Khamliana has deftly allowed the empire to respond to their own conscience. He managed to do this because he submitted along with his people not as equal subjects but as barely noticeable subjects. This cloak of strategically becoming less conscious subjects has to journey forth to fully reveal itself and until such time, the colonial state has to nurture this precarious self and subject. To compare oneself to ants is to indulge in a theatre that absolves bigness with compassion. In some sense, the first letter ever written by a Lusei chief is playful and deceitful. So, letter writing is not an examination of one's conscience because the self is on its way and yet to be crystallized and Khamliana found no need to reflect on any moral inadequacy because he possessed only a marginal self.

The First Newspaper-Mizo Chanchin Laishuih (1898)

Newspaper is an artifact and a commodity in most contemporary national societies. It traces its origins in modern western historical experience of capitalism and the rise of nation states. In the colonial Indian context, the newspaper arrived as an artifact rather than as a commodity. In borderland regions like the erstwhile Lushai Hills District, which were not part of mainland India, newspaper became an emblem of the Lusei language acquiring literacy and journalism was perceived as a support for a famished bureaucratic apparatus. Writing, journalism and bureaucracy

were employed as institutional forms to regulate and reproduce a non-sedentary, pre-industrial and a largely oral society.

The title of the newspaper, '*Mizo Chanchin Laishuih*' appears instructive. It is very likely that the term 'Mizo' is used to mean people from the uplands or hills. Contemporary use and experience of the term is not the same as it is found in the title. Currently the term 'Mizo' and 'Mizoram' refers to an administrative category and it is a product of its negotiation with the postcolonial Indian state. Perhaps, the term '*chanchin*' appeared as a title of a text for the first time. As mentioned, '*chanchin*' refers to a linear documentary realist narrative. Since the Lusei language had acquired a script just a couple of years before the writing of the newspaper, this enterprise may be regarded as an experiment in both the literisation process and the subjecting of the Lusei language to the journalistic form. The term '*laishuih*' refers to 'paper' and the preferred word for 'paper' in the contemporary Mizo language is '*lehkha*'. Another unusual etymology of the word '*laishuih*' is traced to the word '*silai*' which literally means 'gun.' It is possible that the newspaper is also read as the official organ of the superintendent of police, Shakespear who supposedly authorized the production of the newspaper. In this manner, there is an imprint of power and authority in the title of the newspaper.

Four issues of this newspaper appeared over two years from 1898 to 1899. The newspapers were handwritten and it was multiplied through carbon copies. The 2nd paper was issued on August 24th, 1898 and 4th issue was dated 16th January,

1899. These artifacts are available in the Mizoram State Archive and the Synod Archive. The purpose of producing and circulating these artifacts was not to enlighten the masses. It is possible that these newspapers were consumed by the local bureaucracy and the native elites. In the absence of a colonial bureaucratic apparatus, the newspapers complemented governance that was carried out through conflating kinship-based chieftains with nomination of non-hereditary chiefs to rule the subjects on behalf of the empire. Journalism was improvised to provide governance to the un-entitled, illiterate subjects who immediately were ruled by traditional chiefs and in a circuitous manner were subjects of empire too.

The newspaper mentioned the names of three important people namely Shakespear, Khamliana and Suaka. By the time the newspaper was published in 1898, Shakespear already had an intimate and varied experience of the region. This colonial official participated in the second decisive war known as the second *Vailen* against the Luseis. The war resulted in the complete subjugation of the Luseis and Shakespear was asked to administer these new subjects of the empire. Territorially, the North Lushai Hills District and the South Lushai Hills District were amalgamated in the same year as the publication of the newspaper and Shakespear was made the Superintendent of the amalgamated Lushai Hills District.

It is very likely that the newspapers were written by the native elites, Khamliana and Suaka under the supervision of Shakespear. Khamliana was a Lusei chief who had less inheritance but managed to secure for himself property through

his ability to liaison with the colonial machinery. Khamliana seemingly profited by providing information to the colonial officials in their military expedition against the Luseis. Similarly, Suaka was a commoner who worked in the British administration as an unskilled employee but gradually rose to acquire prominence within the British bureaucracy.⁸¹ Both of them conspired with the British in their military expedition against the Luseis. Lorrain learnt the language from these men and eventually taught them the skill of writing the Lusei language. They may be considered the earliest Luseis literates from their community. In the newly transformed post-Second Vailen situation, they played important role in representing and shaping the future Lushai Hills District.

Circulation of the Paper

Since the newspaper was not for popular consumption, it was circulated within a network of bureaucracy created for the purpose of governing through a mix of indigenous institutions and formal bureaucratic structures. Lushai Hills District was divided into several administrative divisions and Circle Interpreters were appointed to inform the government the news and information from their respective villages which fall under their supervision. They were also expected to inform the villagers regarding the government orders. There were 13 such officers in Aizawl and 7 in Lunglei. They reported to the Lushai Clerk at Aijal. With this in mind, it can be assumed that not more than 20 copies of the newspaper were produced and distributed.

⁸¹ Lalhrualtuanga Ralte : *Zoram Vartian*. Synod Press, Aizawl, 2008. p.265

Mizo Chanchin Laishuih as Handwritten

In the year of the publication of the newspaper, there was hardly any printing press in and around the region. The closest printing press was located in Sylhet and many publications of the missionaries were printed either at Sylhet or in Calcutta. Missionaries published their works from Madras and the colonial officials published their texts from Calcutta. It is likely that the printing of these documents was a cumbersome process and took a long time. Perhaps, it is for this reason that Shakespear did not find it necessary to print *Mizo Chanchin Laishuih*.

With regard to culture of reading, it may be noted that the first Lusei primer appeared in 1895 and the first formal school was established in the same year. Just a year before the primer appeared, Lorrain and Savidge committed the Lusei dialect to writing. In 1898, there were few people who were familiar with reading and writing skills. It is true that the first material produced for public consumption in the Lusei language was the Bible. Other materials in the Lusei language were not necessarily produced for public consumption. Even those Luseis who received rudimentary education found it difficult to read the gospel. Some missionaries attribute this difficulty to a lack of a reading habit or 'mode of thinking.'⁸² But this newspaper was read with relish by Lorrain and there seems to be no clue as to how the native elites received the text at that point in time.

⁸² Thanzauva.K : Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram 1894-1957, Synod Publication Board, Aizawl, 1997. p.6

Textual Analysis of the Newspaper⁸³

This section deals with the second issue of *Mizo Chanchin Laishuih*. There are six diverse pieces of news, moral anecdotes and human interest stories. Four of the items appear as news. They relate to agriculture, health practices, rituals and so on.

*An Account of Shooting “Sa Hrang” Animals*⁸⁴

*Whosoever kills a tiger or a bear, and displays the head to the Bor Sap (superintendent) will receive a cash reward. If the hunted tiger is a full-grown one, he will be rewarded Rs. Twenty and a hundred anna, and if the hunted tiger is a cub, he will receive Rs. Twelve and eight annas (i.e., 50p). And if a person shoots a full-grown bear, he will receive Rs. Ten, and then if the prey is a bear -cub he will receive Rs. Five. Then, if he shoots any other wild-animal, no money will be given/money will not be given to him.*⁸⁵

It was a time when the colonial government was seeking to enhance tributes from the chiefs through the clearing of forests and bringing these lands under

⁸³ Refer Appendix –I for a photocopy of the MCL

⁸⁴ Here, the author uses the terms “Sa hrang kap thu”. The term “Sahrang” is used only in the context of the larger and more dangerous wild animals, especially to those which are hunted, like the bear, elephant, tigers, wild gayal, wild boar and rhinoceros. Hence the difficulty in having an appropriate translation of the title as is used by the author.

⁸⁵ The newspaper was produced in Lusei dialect and the translation of this issue is done by K. Malsawmdawngliana.

cultivation. The colonial official, Shakespear was providing incentives for the Luseis to hunt animals. Perhaps hunting of tigers and bears was fashionable throughout the colonies and the officials used the trophies to be sent home.

It was the custom of the Lushais to move from one place to another every five to seven years, and it was difficult for the colonial officials to keep track of the movements.⁸⁶ They wanted the people to settle so that they would be able to build hospitals, Government offices, schools etc. Apart from this, another reason for promising the awards could be that wild animals like tigers and lions often enter their villages to eat the domestic animals. While Shakespear commanded the hunters to kill the tiger, he seemed to be aware that tiger is not merely a big cat for the Luseis.⁸⁷

People of Thongliana's village shot a bear. Tlangbula's village also shot two. And even the people of Rokungi's village likewise killed two. Then Thanruma shoots a bear and performed the 'ai' ceremony over it with a mithun ("shial")⁸⁸. And the people of Khawvelthanga's village kill two bears. And a person from Lalchunga's village, which is near Lunglei, also

⁸⁶ Thanzauva.K : Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram 1894-1957, Synod Publication Board, Aizawl, 1997. p.35.

⁸⁷ See *On the Discursive and Material Context of the first Handwritten Lushai Newspaper Mizo Chanchin Laishuih*, 1898. P. Thirumal and C. Lalrozami on *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*. July-September 2010. Vol.XLVII No.3.p.385

⁸⁸ The "ai" ceremony involves sacrificing of a domestic animal for a wild creature killed in hunting or over a foe killed in fighting. This is done with a view of getting the spirit of the slain into the power of the slayer after death, and also to protect him from evil consequences during this life. Here, the hunter-slayer uses the Mithun as the sacrificial item.

killed one. And then a subject of Lianawna, who was on the trail of a bear, was attacked by the beast and was severely gnawed on the throat, head, on the shoulder, back and on both the arms. He was gnawed on twenty and five (25) spots. On the day of the incident, “Doktor Sap” stayed over night at Lianona’s village, he washed the wounds, made three stitches, applied medicine all over the wounds, and on the next day he was carried on a palanquin to Aizawl where he is convalescing and is almost completely healed now.

And, one of Chhuahkhama’s villagers is attacked by a bear. “Doktor Sap” went to enquire about the situation and said to them, ‘Carry him to Aizawl on a litter’. They refused to carry him. Later “Doktor Sap” went again to enquire about him: ‘If you do not bring him (to Aizawl); certainly, he will die’, he said. They then carried him to Aizawl. He is very sick. It is still uncertain whether he will survive or die.

The main reason for including this news item is to make the natives understand the importance of the doctor in treating illness and disease. They wanted the people to know about medications which were unknown to them at this point of time. They had the habit of calling the specialist, ‘Bawlpu’⁸⁹ for their healing. Though modern medicine claimed a space of superiority, both forms of practices existed side

⁸⁹ Every village had their own priest or Bawlpu who undertake the rituals and sacrifice animals when a person is sick. They believed that sickness is caused by an evil spirit, who has to be pleased by sacrificing their domestic animals.

by side seeking attention from the patients and their relatives. The news item does give more legitimacy for modern medicine and the professional doctor associated with administering the medicine, there was an acceptance that the traditional healer still occupied an important position as a specialist in dealing with health issues.⁹⁰

This year at Champhai the Vai⁹¹ sow rice. Bullocks from the plains were used to plough the field. This year large track of land is not being ploughed. If the rice is successful they will plough larger tracts from next year.

During this period, in 1898, the military official G.H Loch introduced a new form of agricultural practice using bullocks on the uncultivated plains east of Aizawl. Shakespear was keen to introduce technology of the Assam plains to increase the yield of agriculture. It is possible that he thought that the Luseis were less enterprising and did not pay attention to increasing their material well being. He urged natives like Sanga, Butpawla and others to practice agriculture with bullocks on the plains which later took on the name of Champhai.⁹² A new agricultural practice, a new village and a new culture was thus gradually formed.

⁹⁰ See *On the Discursive and Material Context of the first Handwritten Lushai Newspaper Mizo Chanchin Laishuih*, 1898. P. Thirumal and C. Lalrozami on *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*. July-September 2010. Vol.XLVII No.3 pp.388-389

⁹¹ 'Vai' is the term used by the Mizos to refer to the foreigners i.e., the non-Mizos.

⁹² Rev. Liangkhaia : *Mizo Chanchin*. Mizoram Publication Board. 1938. p.153

And come next month the entire Borsap family will visit the plains. They will be staying in the plains for a month. Khamliena and Suoka will accompany them. When they get back home they will write about whatever remarkable sight they saw.

This news item provides the itinerary of the chief official of the Lushai Hills District. Interestingly, his entourage included the Lusei chief, Khamliana and the official Suaka. This news item mentions that the two Lusei elites have been delegated the task of reporting their stay on the plains. It may be inferred from this that the authors of this issue of the newspaper were Khamliana and Suaka. From this news item, one gets to understand that the plains provide 'remarkable sight' and those sights have to be replicated on the hills. In other words, the hills have to be fabricated in the image of the plains.⁹³

In olden days, when the mother of an infant dies in child-birth, even the child certainly dies. But, nowadays they can be made to survive. If the mother of an infant that cannot as yet take (one's) food dies and if the child is brought to Aizawl the Bor Sap will take it to his care. Without need for the mother's breast milk, with a bottle he would feed them cow milk comfortably. Last year near Aizawl at Thakthing village Darnenga's wife died in childbirth. The child is taken care of by the Bor Sap's wife and now the child is living with the father. Even now, there are two Mizo children

⁹³ P.Thirumal and C. Lalrozami, op.cit., pp.393-395

with the Bor Sap's wife. When they can take food on their own, they will live with their fathers again.

In this anecdote, there is a story of a popular practice of a live infant being buried with the dead mother who dies at child birth. This practice is perceived as inhuman. In the recent past, some infants have been fed with milk and saved by the Borsap's wife. This practice was related to a traditional belief that when a mother dies, there will be nobody to feed the infant with breast milk.⁹⁴ They expected the soul of the mother to accompany the baby's soul on the way to paradise⁹⁵. They also had the habit of placing an axe beside the baby's body for it to use on the way to 'Pialral'⁹⁶ or 'Paradise' in case it encounters a problem. Major Shakespeare used the newspaper to inform the people that a new born infant could live on cow's milk. This factual piece of information was intended to alter their cosmic understanding of life, death and after life.

The earth in which we live is a circle like an orange. On account of its large size it appears flat. A steamship can go round the earth. Our earth is entirely like the moon. It does not rest upon any object. The ocean is much larger than the earth. The water of the ocean is salty. It is not

⁹⁴ B.Lalthangliana : *Mizo Literature*. MCL Publication, Aizawl, 1993.p.125

⁹⁵ Chalhiana : *Pipu Nun*. The Trio Book House, Aizawl, Mizoram, 1976. p.35

⁹⁶ The Lushais believed that there is a paradise or pialral beyond the 'rihdil' river which is on the border of Burma.

suitable for drinking. But in spite of that the Sap/Europeans do not manufacture salt out of it.

This is an instructive and educative piece of knowledge. Since the Luseis regarded the earth to be flat and that it rested on a turtle, the authors of the newspaper found it necessary to use the genre of newspaper to educate the masses. The sharing of knowledge is also seeking legitimacy for the act of deciphering and redrawing the boundaries of the Lushai Hills District on the basis of cartographic and geographically based information.

First Mizo History Book

In the cantonment of Aizawl town, where most of the educated Lusei elites lived, there was a public announcement requesting the newly educated young people to compete for writing the history of their community. Rev. Liangkhaia who competed in the contest won the prize for writing the best history of the Luseis in 1926. This text was not published until 1938. It is interesting to know that the newly educated Lusei elites were realizing the need to produce formal disciplinary history of their community. What inspired these elites to demand a historical enquiry about their own past is an important question that contemporary scholars have rarely attempted to answer. It is possible that these elites were sensitive to the rapid transformation that was happening in material and symbolic life of the Luseis. They were keen to reflect on the changes that they were experiencing during those

preceding decades. Perhaps, this was the reason for announcing the contest for writing the history of their community.

They had recently become baptized into Protestantism. The colonial state did not provide adequate channels for educational, professional or social mobility but they did not interfere with the incentives that the church offered to these new elites. It was only after 1944 that the first high school was established in the Aijal town of the Lushai Hills District. The first four decades of the 20th century may be viewed as a period that situated the otherwise mobile community as a sedentary community. It was this experiment that produced the need for spatio-temporal understanding of themselves as subjects of history. Even though located in a stable spatio-temporal context, the Luseis' urge to reflect on a past that lacked a similar context resulted in writing of a history that emerges out of this paradoxical understanding of themselves. Their memory was still fresh with the fluid spatial, political, linguistic, territorial identities that they and their ancestors had experienced.

Liangkhaia was supposedly the first ordained pastor among the Mizos. Liangkhaia was born in 1884 and he passed his school exams with distinction twenty years later. He went to study theology at a Bible College located in Cherra, Assam. Liangkhaia began to practice preaching from 1916 and he was ordained as a pastor in 1921.⁹⁷ He composed about 20 hymns and also translated several songs from English. Liangkhaia seems to have a flair for literary activities. Liangkhaia's years of

⁹⁷ Laltluangliana Khiangte, *Thuhlaril-Literary Trends and Mizo Literature*, College Text Book (Mizo) Editorial Board, Aizawl. 1997. pp 120-121

association with the church must have transformed his personality. His eagerness to compete in the contest for writing history of the Luseis may have been an attempt to understand and evaluate the person he had become. In fact, the memory of his adult years may be considered as a period that was crucial for the formation of the Mizo collective identity. It was his keenness to participate in the shaping of this radically new identity that made him a contestant for competing in the competition for writing history of the community.

Liangkhaia like other educated Luseis had to marshal resources for the production of the Lusei self and the community. Even as the Mizo identity was being inaugurated in the early decades of the 20th century, Liangkhaia was working towards producing a past for this quickly enveloping identity. Since, identities without past cannot be logically accepted, he reasoned that he would conceive of an antiquated origin for this very modern experience of being a Mizo. Hence, he traces the antiquity of the radically modern Mizos to 6th century AD. However, he refuses to grant a positive lineage to this antiquity but he does grant a positive evaluation of the Lusei history from the colonial period onwards.

Textual Analysis of the Book

The first edition of '*Mizo Chanchin*' was published in 1938 and was edited and republished in 1945. The preface for the book was written by Col. J Shakespear on 26th September, 1938 from Chelsea, London. In the preface, Shakespear remarked that he would not believe if someone told him 50 years earlier that he will be alive to

see the first book written by a Mizo. Liangkhaia published Part II of the book in 1947. The two books were compiled into one and published in 1976. The latest edition of the book was published in 2002.

The book is divided into eleven chapters and consists of 222 pages. Each one of the eleven chapters provides a sketchy description of the different periods which is organized in a linear fashion. The first chapter is titled '*Chhuidawn thu*' which means 'Contemplation' or 'Probable stories'. The chapter talks about the origin of the Mizos acquired from oral sources. It examines the resemblances of Mizos with the neighboring tribes. The second chapter '*Mizo Hnam Hrangte*' talks about the different classification of clans and sub-tribes of the Mizo tribe and the language and dialects used by them. The third chapter, '*Run leh Tiau Kara Awm Lai*' gives details on the practices, religion, dress, weapons and wars waged among the clans and villages during 1000-1500 AD while the Mizos supposedly settled in Run and Tiau situated in Burma. The fourth chapter '*Lal Thlah Thu*' depicts the origin and ancestry of chiefs of different clans. '*Thlang Tlak Thu*', the fifth chapter deals with how the tribes migrated down south to the present region for fear of the '*Pawi*' enemies from Tiau (Burma) and how they raided each other for better land. It tells the story of how the Sailo clans became powerful and dominates most of the clans of the region. They migrated to different places and even came down to '*Zampui Tlang*' which is at present situated in Tripura territory.

The sixth chapter, '*Chhak Nawr leh Thu*' narrates the story of how a chief named Lallula and his village raided and captured villages up north, towards Burma. This chapter also mentions '*Vailian Thu*' (where 'vai' stands for outsider, stranger or enemy) referring to the British expeditions against the Luseis in retaliation to the raids undertaken by the Luseis. It gives an account of the raids made by the Lushais on the British territories and the British retaliations against the Luseis from 1854 to 1871. Vailen-I is a recognizable event for most contemporary school students in Mizoram. It was fought for punishing the Luseis who had slaughtered a few white men and kidnapped the daughter of a plantation owner by the name Mr. Winchester. The daughter's name was Mary Winchester, and she was kidnapped on January 23rd, 1871 from Alexandrapur in Assam. The seventh chapter '*Thlang Tlak Hnihna*' describes how for the second time the Lushais, moved down south for fear of aggression from the Sukte of Tiau area, Burma. Since the Luseis were not able to move up north because of the fear of the Sukte, the Luseis were forced to travel down again to the emerging British plantations located in Assam. This constant encroachment from the Luseis led the British to wage the second Lushai expedition or '*Vailian Vawi Hnihna*'. The next chapter talks about the second British expedition and the resistances against the British army made by several Lusei and non-Lusei chiefs. This expedition led the British to take the decision to annex the region and rule the territory indirectly through the chiefs. The region was administratively divided into the Northern Lushai Hills and the Southern Lushai Hills. The Northern Lushai Hills came under the administrative control of the Chief Commissioner of Assam and the Southern Lushai Hills under the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. The Superintendent of the North Lushai Hills, McCabe (1890-91) visited most of the villages and convinced each of the chiefs to give land tax every year and also to

provide 'kuli' laborers to work for the British officials. His political report shows that there were 25 villages in the North Lushai Hills with 8,318 houses and 41,590 populations.⁹⁸

Chapter nine, '*Sawrkarin Awm an Ngheh Thu*' informs readers regarding the rules and regulations laid down by the British government on the people. Every household were imposed Re.1/- as land tax and 10 seers of rice every year and all the adult male members of a village should provide labour six times a year to the government. They were also banned to raid other villages, violation of which would lead to the killing of the chief. The chief of each village would work as a collector of tax for the government. The author mentions that several unwanted practices were abolished due to the colonial rule. He lists out the names and works of the political officers and administrators of the British government who worked in the region. He also notes that all the villages mourned the death of Queen Victoria on 22nd January, 1901 and erected memorial stones in their respective villages.⁹⁹ This chapter also gives details about the first Census of Lushai Hills in 1901. There were very few literates in the region at this period of time and the author was one of them. These few people who barely knew how to read and write were engaged in the work of the census. The author gives a detailed report of the census in this chapter. He also mentions about the arrival of Dr. Fraser in 1909 who was against the 'bawi' or slavery system. The then superintendent, Major Cole was of the opinion that the 'bawi' system in the Lushai hills was not to be equated with slavery in other parts of

⁹⁸ Liangkhaia, *Mizo Chanchin*, LTL Publications, Aizawl. 2002. p.148

⁹⁹ Ibid. Liangkhaia. p.154

the world.¹⁰⁰ Both the missionary and the colonial official approached the Assam Governor for a solution. Both were deported from the region by the end of 1911.

Chapter ten, '*Mautam leh a Hnu Lam Thu*' talks about what happened during and after the Mautam famine which occurred in the Lushai Hills in 1911. The then superintendent, W.M Kennedy had to borrow a loan of Rs.8, 00,000 from the government which was to be repaid within ten years. The author was of the opinion that the colonial rule was a blessing in that time of destitution and suffering. The chapter also talks about the censuses of 1911, 1921, 1931 and 1941 and gives reports of each census. It also mentions the names of the superintendents of the Lushai Hills and some of their works and also remarkable events that happened during their terms. It talks about the First World War and how it influenced the people. 2000 young Lushai males were sent to France as armies for the British in 1917 and returned the next year in 1918.¹⁰¹ Another noteworthy event that happened was the spread of a disease called Influenza in 1918 which killed many people in the region. 380 people died from *Hriangtuiek* village alone. The next year 1919 seemed to be a year of remarkable events for the people as a revival occurred and many people converted to Christianity, and their mourning due to the disease was taken off by this revival. They started singing and dancing in the churches and other places using the drum which was banned in the Church until that period of time. The author also mentions the first ever written book on the customs and ceremonies for the

¹⁰⁰ See Zatluanga, *Mizo Chanchin*, Directorate of Art and Culture, Mizoram. 1996. p.203

¹⁰¹ The Mizos participation in the World Wars is also documented by Col. V. Lunghnema in *Mizo Chronicles*. pp.140-144

Luseis written by N.E Parry, '*Mizo Dan Bu*' or 'The Lushai Customs and Ceremonies'. He agrees that the book was produced after thorough study and consultations with all the chiefs from both the North and the South Lushai Hills. He also talks about the division of the region into circles for better administration and the appointment of some chiefs as circle interpreters. In this chapter, he also mentions the formation of Mizo Union, the first Mizo political party and the people involved in the politics of Mizo Hills. He also notes that the first high school was established in 1944 with the help of the superintendent A. Macdonald against the wishes of many other government officials and missionaries and even the native leaders and elders.

The last chapter titled '*Kohhran Chanchin*' narrates the arrival of Christianity and the growth of the churches of different denominations in Mizoram. It talks about the Arthington and Welsh missions who sent their missionaries to the region, the revivals that occurred which resulted in mass conversion among the people and how the early Christians were tortured in Khandaih village by the chief Vanphunga in 1906.¹⁰² The year 1944 was celebrated as '*Chanchin Tha Jubili*' which marked 50 years of Christianity in the region. In 1944, there were 80,584 Mizo Christians in the northern Mizoram.

First Mizo Novel

The pursuit of modernity takes different forms in different historical contexts. In some cultures, art or literature may inaugurate history and in some cultures,

¹⁰² Ibid. Liangkhaia. p.195

history may inaugurate art. The advent of the literary domain in 20th century Lusei society was a moment of recognizing the historical domain as well. It is as if that they knew of each other's existence. The first Mizo novel *Hawilopari* is an inauguration of both art and history, and literature and modernity.

'*Hawilopar*' refers to the mythical flower that only the soul of the being is allowed to experience after its physical death. The act of plucking of the flower by the soul is a moment when the soul completely becomes detached from its earthly longings.¹⁰³ The non-occurrence of this event will result in the soul being perpetually restless. '*Hawi*' refers to an undesirable urge of the soul to constantly return to earthly affections. This novel in an insidious manner relates *Hawilopari* to the new faith, a responsibility of art to translate tradition and bestow both spirituality and humanity on the Luseis. In fact, it is a splendid re-working of an indigenous myth using the modern genre of novel.

Outline of the Story

The novel '*Hawilopari*' begins with a dialogue between two young men in a village situated east of Aizawl. These men were keenly discussing their marital prospects. Soon, they get married and raise a family. One of them had two sons, Hminga and Liana and the other had a daughter, Hawilopari. The names of these two friends were not mentioned throughout the novel, they were mostly referred to as Hawilopari's father and Hminga's father. Referring to men and women with their eldest son's or daughter's name was a common practice in a Mizo society.

¹⁰³ J.M.Lloyd, , *History of the Church in Mizoram*, Synod Publication Board, Aizawl, Mizoram.1991.p.14

Unfortunately, Hminga's mother died when Hminga reached the age of 'Ramtang rual'.¹⁰⁴ They had a stepmother who hated them and constantly punished them for no fault of theirs. They finally could not bear her and planned to flee home and the village. During this time, Hminga and Hawilopari were secretly in love and without even telling each other they both knew each other's feelings.¹⁰⁵ Hminga assured Hawilopari that he will return to the village in order to claim her. A benevolent character, Zema appears in the story to help the boys flee the village. Apart from Zema and the two boys, Chhana, the son of the village chief also joins them in fleeing the village. They killed a bear one night while they were in the jungle. They headed towards Hringchar (Silchar) which was a British army post in the state of Assam. The British army official known as the 'Big Sap,' took kindly to these boys and provided them job in the military station. While Zema was given the job of a cook, the other three boys became soldiers in the British army. Meanwhile, in the village a search was on for the missing boys and only Hawilopari and her friends, Ngaihi and Mawii were aware of their escape. The three girls kept their promise by not telling others in the village even when they were questioned and secretly waited for their friends to return. After working in the army post for ten years, a good opportunity arrived for the boys to go back to the Lushai hills. They were told that a military expedition was being planned to retaliate against the Luseis offensive against the tea garden. In the offensive, the Luseis killed several people including a white man. What enraged the British most was the Luseis audacity to kidnap the

¹⁰⁴ Ram tang rual is used for referring to adolescent boys who are considered old enough to work in the fields and guard the rice fields at night.

¹⁰⁵ It was a common practice in a Mizo village that the girls were not supposed to show or make it obvious that they like a boy. It was a custom that any boy could visit the house of a girl and she was expected to treat them equally whether she likes him or not.

daughter of the murdered white man. So, the military expedition was organized to punish the Luseis for this unprovoked violence including the ghastly act of kidnapping the daughter of the murdered British man. Hminga and his friends were eager to join expedition as it was an opportunity for them to visit their families under the protection of the British. Eventually, they joined the expedition.

Meanwhile, Hawilopari went through a difficult time in the village. She was asked as a bride for Khualluta, a son of one of the ministers of the village chief. Khualluta was deeply offended when Hawilopari rejected his offer to marry him. Being a son of an influential person in the village and rejected by a person from an inferior rank, he was doubly hurt. His anger was further fueled by Hminga's step mother advice to openly lie to the villagers about his physical relationship with Hawilopari. Hawilopari and her family were forced to leave the village under this humiliating circumstance. Her father sought help from relatives residing in another village and left their village secretly in the night. Not long after they lived in the relative's village, they were raided by the Pawihs, a clan who do not use Lusei or Duhlian dialect. Hawilopari and several others were taken as captives. Hminga and his friends finally got back to their village. Hminga set out to find his beloved and seek the help of Zema to retrieve her from the Pawihs. In their encounter with the Pawihs, Zema died but Hminga managed to retrieve Hawilopari from their clutches and returns to the village. The story ended with a song in Hawilopari's mind which pronounced that just as the beautiful Sun rising after a long darkness, happiness appeared in her heart.

Analysis

Though the novel on the face of it is based on a realist philosophy, the ability of the author to rework the popular oral myth of *Hawilopar* needs to be acknowledged. It looks like the ‘*chanchin*’ register of modernist narrative has incorporated elements from the performative ‘*thawnthu*’ narrative. In some ways, a pre-Christian myth based on animistic beliefs is reworked into the Christian pantheon. It may be argued that only those pre-Christian myths that were amenable to a Christian interpretation were incorporated.

This first Mizo novel titled ‘*Hawilopari*’ written by L. Biakliana was published in 1940. The novel was set against the backdrop of the first military expedition against the Luseis, popularly known as ‘*Vailen*’. Historically, this was the first war in which the Luseis were decisively defeated. Though this war was fought in order to punish the Luseis for raiding the tea plantations and murdering few white officials and planters, the Luseis also experienced deep humiliation and hurt.¹⁰⁶ This novel appears to be a re-orchestration of this memory.

The term ‘*vai*’ associated with ‘*vailen*’ positively referred to the British as an outsider and an intruder. The radical change from ‘*vai*’ to ‘*sap*’ in less than two decades (1870-1890), from an outsider to a benevolent ruler, has not formed the subject of discussion in the colonial or the post-colonial context. This novel written in the late 1930’s delinks the humiliation from the violent event by focusing on a

¹⁰⁶ The Luseis were not able to digest the large scale violence inflicted by the British on their territories. They named the river through which the British army marched to the Lushai Hills as the river of excrement or ‘*Ek-lui*’ expressing their disgust. The expedition seems to have produced deep hostility against the British. The Vai’s victory during the first *vailen* was symbolically encoded in these scatological terms but in the writing of the official history of Mizoram, there is hardly any mention of these strands of resentment. See unpublished tour diary of R.H. Sneyd- Hutchinson (Superintendent, South Lushai Hills) on 18th January, 1897. State Archive, Aizawl, Mizoram.

romance between two young Lusei lovers. The hero displayed no moral compunctions in working for the *Sap* who was waging a war against fellow Luseis. Perhaps, this may not have been the manner in which the narrative of the *vailen* would have circulated in the decades after the battle. In fact, the sap actually was addressed as '*vai*'.

This novel may be treated as an experimental novel. In other parts of mainland India, literary canons were being established in modern regional languages around this time. This was facilitated because of the British patronage, colonial educational system and a pre-colonial literary heritage. In the Lushai Hills District, there was no obvious patronage or extended formal education provided by the colonial state. Also, the Lusei language lacked a pre-colonial literary heritage.

It is not surprising that Biakliana used the genre of novel instead of a historical narrative. Biakliana experimented with different literary forms, from poetry to novel, short story to composing hymns which are sung even today in the Church. He was educated in the neighbouring towns of Silchar, Shillong and Guwahati. Biakliana showed familiarity with English literary texts like Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. This desire to experiment with different literary genres in his own language conveys a longing for aesthetic innovation and practice. Biakliana was acutely aware that the Lusei language had only recently acquired a script and he was inaugurating a process of turning the language from a functional documentary form to an artistic literary form.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ See Laltluangliana Khiangte's, *Biakliana Robawm*, LTL Publications, Aizawl, 2007.

This experimental novel *Hawilopari* is less of a product of an already established or aspiring middle class. The missionaries started few schools but they were more interested in creating a community of believers rather than producing educated middle class babus to run the official missionary. It was only in 1940's that the first high school was established in Lushai Hills District. From 1910 to 1940, the protestant Church produced a professional class of pastors. Biakliana studied theology at a seminary and he was the son of the first ordained pastor from the Lushai Hills District. It is possible that the rigors of practicing an austere form of Christianity forced some of these pastors to contribute to literary activity. Paradoxically, the minimalist form of life became an artistic craving among the Church elites and also their aspiration for imagining a collective Mizo identity. Though *Hawilopari* is supposedly a love story between two young Luseis, the characters refused to demonstrate any physical craving for each other. Carnality was an integral part of the traditional pre-Christian Lusei oral performative practices. The novel establishes a restrained relationship between love and desire, God and human beings and among human beings themselves.

Biakliana realistically portrays the subjugated role of women in the making of a Lusei household. The death of Hminga's mother led to the collapse of the household because they missed the presence of a woman to fetch water, cook, collect woods, pound rice and many other crucial activities needed for the conduct of the household on an everyday basis. Initially, after the death of Hminga's mother, neighbours and friends supported the family in running the household, but slowly Hminga's father realized that he cannot receive the support forever. So, Hminga's father decided to get another wife for running the household chores. Biakliana's

lament about the stepmother as a powerful woman and her husband as a weakling reinforces the patriarchal nature of the Lusei society. This lament of Biakliana needs to be located within the Christian conception of an ideal family where only the father is treated as the institutional head of the family.

In the previous section, there is an analysis of the suggestive references to Christianity. The novel also makes explicit reference to the Bible. At some point in the novel, the author takes stock of the journey of the brothers from a state of well being that accrues to them through their employment in the British army to a state of restlessness after serving in the army for some years. Biakliana invokes the figure of Eve and the idea of sin to contextualize the happiness followed by restlessness in the life journey of the brothers. The author is proposing the regulation of desire in the conduct of one's life in order to practice good life.

In the novel, Hawilopari prayed and addressed God as *Pathian*. The practice of prayer in a pre-Christian setting appears anachronistic. Of course, there were forms of worship which did not resemble the Christian idea of sermon or prayer. *Khuavang* and *Pathian* were common names of God used in pre-colonial context and *Pathian* was frequently cited as a negative god. It is interesting that Biakliana prefers to invoke the idea of prayer and *Pathian* in a pre-Christian/pre-colonial context. Since it is not a historical narrative based on factual sources, it allows the author to fictionalize the situation and provide it with heavy Christian analogies.

The First Magazine Produced by the Government- Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu

Unlike in mainland India, where the first newspaper was started by a disgruntled employee of the East India Company, the *Mizo Chanchin Laishuih* was initiated by the most powerful colonial official, Shakespear, in the Lushai Hills District. Though this experiment did not last long, Shakespear institutionalized the use of journalism in the launching of the monthly magazine *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*. The magazine had a wonderful career spanning almost four decades with reasonable regularity. The title of the magazine includes the term 'Vai' meaning anybody other than the natives. *Vai* had been used in a friendly manner and it is likely that the *Vais* were expected to contribute to the well being of the hills people. Along with the Luseis, the white colonial officials and missionaries including the mainland Indians also wrote for the magazine. The magazine mainly discussed issues concerning the people of Lushai Hills District.

The people of the Lushai Hills District were addressed as 'Mizo' in both *MCL* and *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*. It is not clear whether the people belonging to various clans and ruled under various hereditary and non-hereditary chiefs actually recognized themselves as Mizos at this point in time. It is not surprising that the colonial state required an umbrella term to address the people of the newly constituted administrative territory of Lushai Hills District because there was neither linguistic nor territorial or a recognizable singular ethnicity existing prior to fixing of this label, 'Mizo.' It was an administrative strategy of the colonial state to produce static identities on rather politically fluid subjects of the Lushai Hills District.

In the history of the Lushai Hills District, this magazine happens to be the first journalistic product that was printed. Though there were no printing presses in the Lushai Hills at this juncture, this periodical was printed at Sylhet, currently located in Bangladesh. It was sold for 1 anna. In other words, this is the first journalistic commodity that appears in this part of the world. Hence, this magazine is both an artifact and a commodity.

It is not clear whether the pieces which the men and women wrote for the magazine were scrutinized and edited by a board of editors for accuracy, use of language, ideological moorings and so on. In the four decades of its existence, Shakespear and Giles provided leadership for the first decade (1902-1911), Makthanga had the longest career as the editor of the magazine (1911-1936) and Lalkailuaia and Sainghinga acted as editors for the rest of the life of the magazine.¹⁰⁸

Shakespear's actions were informed by an awareness of the need for the Lusei language to experiment with different genres in order to become a standardized language as well as a literary language. The production of *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* may be seen as an effort in this direction. One of the earliest literary journalistic institutions to employ 'chanchin' and to elaborate this particular narrative form may be unambiguously traced to *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*. In the columns of this magazine, 'chanchin' appears as both documentary and literary prose. The

¹⁰⁸ Lalthangliana B., *Mizo Literature*. MCL Publication, Aizawl, 1993.p.151

magazine provides a platform for the twin processes of literisation and literarisation to occur simultaneously.

If the launching of the magazine announces the birth of journalism, then its form is subjected to the twin processes mentioned above. History of journalism of contemporary Mizoram begins with elaboration of the '*chanchin*' as both a documentary and a literary form.

To write a history of print media is to invoke important variables like content, audience, technology, commercialization, aesthetics and state regulation. According to the 1901 census, there were 761 literates among the natives, out which 736 were men and 25 were women. Since the periodical was sold at a price of 1 anna, it is not clear how many educated men and women exercised the choice to purchase the magazine.

Like in many other places in mainland India, here too, reading was rarely private. The magazine was generally read aloud to people who were interested in knowing the important events, people, policies and programmes of the colonial government and so on of the Lushai Hills District. Since the magazine was almost fully owned by the colonial state, the editors would have exercised restraint in selecting scribes, stories and the form of the periodical.

An examination of the content and form of *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* over the four decades may reveal the discursive constitution and affirmation of a political community known as 'Mizo'. Shakespear and A.R Giles were the two important persons associated with the publication of the magazine in the early years of its existence. They took care to persuade different sections of the literate community in the town of *Aijal* to participate in the act of writing, buying and reading the magazine.

The first issue of *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* ran through 14 pages in 1902 but by January 1904, the magazine increased the number of pages to 20. The first issue was priced at 1 anna and in 1904, the price remained the same even as the number of pages increased. It is likely that the contributors did not receive money for writing in the magazine throughout its existence till 1941.

This section deals with a particular issue of *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* which appeared in the month of January, 1904. It gives a brief account of the different kinds of stories and issues that the magazine provided to its readers along with the names of the scribes who contributed to *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*. The stories were partly recounted from government reports and documents, some were first hand reports, there were also folktales, instructions regarding public hygiene, persuading young people to join for learning skills like carpentry and so on. In all these stories, the *Vais* appeared as educated, cultured and worthy of emulation.

The issue contained nine stories. Three of these narratives were written by Edwin Rowlands, a Presbyterian missionary residing in Aijal. One of these stories related to the comparison of frequency of infant deaths in two villages namely, Mau-Buang and Mual-lung-thu. Citing from some government reports, Rowlands was trying to educate the Mizos about the high incidence of infant mortality. He provided reasons for the young mothers not being able to protect their infants immediately after child birth. Rowlands clearly stated that pregnant women were forced to work in bad conditions. They were not allowed to rest before or after the pregnancy. In some sense, Rowlands was persuading men to change their minds with regard to treatment of women especially when they were pregnant. It seems that instead of providing better conditions for young mothers, the Mizo men were offering sacrifices at the death or illness of the infants. Rowlands was arguing against such irrational practices and he was advocating the use of modern medicines in place of the prevailing shamanistic practices.

Chawnga, a school teacher of Biate village contributed two story items – *Khaw Chan Thu* which means ‘An Event in a Village’ and *Tunlai Dan lo Awm* meaning ‘The New Laws’. In *Khaw Chan Thu*, he narrated two incidents where his village Biate experienced unfamiliar events. The first one was a massive light enclosing the village from the sky on 22nd October (written as Awktobar), 1903. He described it as a torch which could light the whole village and about two miles of the jungle area. He mentioned that it happened after dinner, it was probably 6.00 to 7.00 in the evening, but people still refer to time by what they do. Another incident was that some object with the size of a thigh – (*Malpui tia*) flew over the village and when

it disappeared, there was a sound which resembled that of a firing of a cannon. He again described the time as *Feh reh lai* which means it was a time people left the village for their cultivation work after their morning meals. It is also evident that people have known cannons or *Laipui*. The British military expedition to the Lushai hills must have used them. This incident happened on 11 November, 1903. He explained these incidents as an atmospheric pressure and was not *ramhuai* or evil spirits that caused them. It can be seen from the magazine that the natives themselves have started writing against their own belief systems. The influence of the missionaries and the British rule is evident from the writings. It may be argued that this magazine was used to criticize traditional practices and beliefs like faith in spirits and ghosts. The register of '*chanchin*' was employed to represent the world in a scientific and objective manner. In other words, the journalistic representation of a supposedly supra-sensible event was reduced to a causative inference within a referential world.

Chawnga, being a school teacher recognized the importance of the formal institution of learning called the school. It is possible that Chawnga may have been one of the earliest professional teachers from the Lushai Hills District. In this opinion piece, *Tunlai Dan lo Awm*, the author forcefully argued for the support that the formal institution of school requires if it is to continue on a long term basis. Chawnga persuaded fellow Mizos to show solidarity in approving the formal educational system by participating in the building of homes for the teachers and also to look after the physical needs of the teachers like food. This effort to persuade the Mizos to support the formal school system is in line with the story of the colonial state not

supporting adequately the establishment of formal schools in the erstwhile Lushai Hills District. It is also a fact that many chiefs did not like the young people to spend time in the formal schools and they disapproved the introduction of the modern educational system.

Similarly, in the next story, *Thingtlanga ZoSap Skul te* which means *the Zosap Schools in Villages* written by Edwin Rowlands, there is an appeal to the Lusei public to come forward to support the maintenance and continuance of those schools which have been established by the missionaries in various part of the Lushai Hills District. Rowlands provided a profile of the nine schools located in villages like *Khawrihnim, Phulpui, Khandaih, Mai-te, Zuk bual, Lung-tan, Biate, Khawreng* and *Ngo-pa*. For servicing these nine schools, the missionaries employed 11 teachers for these schools, of which three were female teachers. Some of the schools were solely meant for the girl students and female teachers were looking after those schools. There were five schools in and around Aizawl like *Thakthing, Hriangmual, Rasi-veng, Mirawng veng* and *Maubawk* with one teacher at each school. There were 14 schools in the Lushai Hills in 1904 according to his report. This magazine was not used merely for providing information but also for seeking cooperation in the missionaries' effort to educate and to become believers. Secular education was a means to attract their potential converts from this part of the colonial world and *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* became a vehicle for such a cause.

The next item was *Mitiri Thu* again written by Edwin Rowlands (Zosapthara). This news story informed readers that five native boys had enrolled to study carpentry works and that they will be paid stipend during their three years of training. He mentioned that the training was as good as going to school. He suddenly changed the story after this and wrote that people should not hate the *Vai* residing in the region. He explained how the government wanted people to learn trades like blacksmithy, carpentry, tailoring and writing which the Mizos have never learnt. It seems that the people were not willing to learn at this period of time because he mentioned that people from the plains came to work and earn since the Mizos did not learn how to do these kinds of jobs. He advised the people to learn the trades and compete with the Plains people instead of serving them and that they can still become rulers of their own land if they work hard and let their children study. He explained that the *Zosap* (White missionaries) were not government workers but were working for the betterment of the people, and that the government also wanted to help the people.

The next item seems to be a folk story and was contributed by a female writer, Rothluaii from Palian Lailak village. She narrated a story of a man named *Hualtungamtawna* who married a weretiger¹⁰⁹ wife. His parents realized that she was a weretiger and made their son drunk of rice beer so that he would kill his wife. *Hualtungamtawna* tried to shoot his wife but missed it because he was too drunk. The wife's parents were furious at this act, so they planned to kill him. They sent

¹⁰⁹ Weretigers were known as *Keimi* (*Kei* comes from the word *Sakei* which means Tiger and *mi* from *mihring* meaning human being). Mizos have a number of folktales on the *Keimi*.

another daughter in marriage to him. After the marriage, they visited Hualtungamtawna and stayed for the night. He realized that they were weretiger family and killed them except his wife. Knowing that his wife would try to take revenge, he instructed his dogs (who were foxes) to kill his wife if his wife killed him. His wife succeeded in killing Hualtungamtawna and when the funeral was over, his dogs bit the wife and killed her. This kind of story seems to have been popular among the Mizos during this time.

This story requires some description of the form. Unlike other stories which were based on a '*chanchin*' register, this story is based on the register of '*thawnthu*' and the incorporation of folktale into a journalistic genre is interesting and intriguing. The journalistic genres are normally based on realistic narratives and this tale seems to present a non-realist narrative. The tension between the '*chanchin*' and '*thawnthu*' is seen emerging in the earliest journalistic enterprise and it is likely that this tension continues to this day in shaping both the literary and the journalistic domains.

The seventh item written by Thanga of Rasi was titled *Mizo Vai laka an Fimkhurna tur* which means *Certain things on which Mizos should be careful against the Vai*. He listed out certain practices that Mizos should remember when they go to houses of the Vais. Thanga advised his people not to touch water at the *vais* houses, not to pass urine and stools close to their houses, not to enter their kitchen and not to walk above them while they were sleeping. He explained that their ways of lives were different, so when the *vais* did not want to eat with them, it was not because

they think the Mizos were filthy but because of their traditions. They could no longer eat with their mothers and fathers once they ate with people outside their own. Thanga also asked people not to dirty the 'Government roads' even when they sleep on the roads at nights.

The eighth item written by J.N Sarma was titled *Hmantlak titi (Mizo zawng zawng en bik tur)* or *Useful conversations (For all the Mizos)*. Sarma seems to be a *Vai* (Assamese or Bengali) working in the Lushai Hills. His opening line urged the readers not to be angry because of what he was going to write, and also not to laugh at it. He wrote that the Mizo people were poor because of their laziness, they were happy if they wore the *Vai's* clothes and shoes. Sarma lamented that the Mizos have less aspirations and do not seek to rise in position by doing hard work. The Mizos failed to recognize that they did not hold important positions and they were happy to do menial jobs like washing dishes for the British army. He proceeded to give them practical advice on how they could make more money through engaging in certain economic activities like selling seeds of a fruit called *Saithei* to the plains. He stated that Mizos were satisfied if they could write their names, but being able to write names was not enough to work and earn. He complained that Mizo children working for the armies bragged of wearing the *Vai's* pants and shoes but did not like to study and that their future was only to beg.

The last story titled *Zaia Khualzin Thu* is a fictive account of a person who traveled twice by sea and due to shipwreck, found himself in islands among

unimaginable men and women. The first account resembles 'Gulliver's travels' where he met pygmies and also a giant cyclop. In the second account, Zaia was thrown into an island where very dark people resided. They tried to kill him by making him eat some herbs but he managed to escape from their clutches. After this adventure, he fled from that place to a village where ordinary people reside. Zaia was offered the hand of the chief's daughter and he married her. One day, to his surprise he found that a resident was upset because he had to die along with his dead wife. It was a custom in this village that if the wife of a husband died, then the husband too had to be buried along with the wife. Zaia became upset when he heard about this practice. He began to think that he may soon have to be buried if his wife died. Within a short period, his wife actually died. So, efforts were afoot to bury Zaia. As in his previous adventures, Zaia escaped from this dangerous situation. He finally returned to his village along with a lot of jewels stolen from the graves of the village where he was buried. Finally, he became rich and led a happy life in his village.

The story was written by a person with initials S.Ch.V, likely to be Suaka Chawngthu Vanchiau, who worked as an important colonial official in the Lushai Hills District. The seven-pages-long story talked about how Zaia could not be happy settling at one village and thus traveled to many places even to distant lands and islands of the *Vais* and how he encountered many difficulties and almost died in his dangerous encounters with *vais*. At the end, Zaia came back to his hometown and narrated his story to the villagers.

This unusually long feature story based on fiction rather than on real events demonstrate the need for imagining geographic spaces that an average Lusei may have found difficult to imagine. Since the Lushai Hills District was a landlocked space, the need to empathize with the world of *vais* and also the dangers associated with travelling outside the Lushai Hills District is portrayed in the story. In this story, the hero managed a lot of hurdles and finally returned to the hills as a wealthy man. This story is important in two senses: firstly, the attraction to travel to the *vai* country and the dangers associated with the adventure. Secondly, the story deals with the possibilities of the Mizo becoming rich in the *vai* country. The author of the story, Suaka had travelled to the plains and actually realized the possibility of becoming rich. This fictive story seems ideologically loaded and in a subtle manner seeks to persuade the typical Lusei to become enterprising and rich. In other words, it seems to disprove the lack of enterprise of an average Mizo to achieve material well-being in this world. Perhaps, this is the first story written by a native elite where material well-being is offered as a positive value for the people of the hills. In other words, this value which is central to the *vais'* worldview is recognized as important for the development of the Mizos. The magazine cleverly becomes a medium for promoting individualistic values among the Mizos who experience life as members belonging to a clan rather than as individuals.

The First Magazine Produced by the Church- Krista Tlangau/ Kristian Tlangau

The missionaries used different forms of print artifacts for spreading Christianity in the Lushai Hills District. Rev. William Williams, the first ever missionary to reach the hills circulated biblical pictures to the inhabitants of the

hills.¹¹⁰ Lorrain and Savidge committed the Lusei dialect to writing and authored the Lushai Bible. Soon after, they produced hymn books for popular consumption. Since the Luseis were yet to inhabit the monetized economy, this hymn book was exchanged for a couple of eggs during the last decade of the 19th century.¹¹¹ The launching of *Krista/Kristian Tlangau* is the next important event in the trajectory of events that went on to produce the literary and cultural history of Mizoram.

It is important to recognize that the career of the magazine coincides with the career of the Mizo identity itself. It is possible that a religious identity precedes political-ethnic identity for the Mizo community. In the making of the religious identity, the two important institutions namely the Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church played a very important role. In the first two decades of 20th century, there was an effort to institutionalize the Church practices among its new believers and also the need to constantly affirm this religious community through textual practices in the Lushai Hills District. The publishing of *Kristian Tlangau* aimed at fulfilling both these objectives.

Kristian Tlangau magazine facilitated the growth of the Lushai language. As suggested earlier, the missionaries did not merely translate the Bible but actually produced the Lushai language. Even to this day, the magazine carries the burden of spreading God's word and also bears the responsibility of promoting the Lushai

¹¹⁰ J.M. Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram*, Synod Publication Board, Aizawl, Mizoram.1991.p.21

¹¹¹ Ibid. p.48

language as a secular and a literary language. Since Protestantism is the main form of religion that comes to Lushai Hills, a certain bureaucratic form of scriptural engagement and interpretation becomes available in the columns of the magazine. It is in this sense that the magazine evolved its template to disseminate God's word in the people's tongue. When one examines the presentation of content, it is noticeable that there is a seamless flow between the sacred and the mundane, religious and the official, literal and the artistic.

The magazine clearly announced itself as following a documentary and journalistic style (*Kristian chanchin* or Christian reporting) with emphasis on reporting domestic and international Christian events, opinion pieces on policies regarding the Church and its followers, interpreting Biblical texts for popular consumption of its readers. The flattening of scriptural content with the register of '*chanchin*' allowed for a wide readership including developing a taste for reading per se. In 1919, about a thousand copies of *Kristian Tlangau* was printed and distributed in the Lushai Hills District for a Lusei literate population of over 4000.¹¹² It is a formidable feat to achieve in a non-monetised, largely jhum-based economy with hardly any political or economic integration with mainland regions.

The phrase *Kristian chanchin* mentioned in the preface of the first issue of *Krista Tlangau* needs clarification. As mentioned previously, the term '*chanchin*' refers to a realist mode of representation and journalistic writing is the most

¹¹² *Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram 1894-1957* compiled by K. Thanzauva. The Synod Literature and Publication Board, Aizawl, 1997. p 63

important example of such a narrative form. It is through these publications like *Kristian Tlangau* and *Mizo leh Vai chanchinbu* that the 'chanchin' register gets elaborated during the early part of the 20th century in the Lushai Hills. But the difference between the two important magazines is that the former dealt with religion and the latter with the 'ordinary everyday'. Though the cultural register of 'chanchin' is available for representing the manifest world, it is also employed to depict religion in a historical personalistic sense rather than a mystical experiential sense. In fact, the magazine gently disapproved the experience of revivalism among the believers who went through a mystical and a hallucinatory experience. In some sense, the 'chanchin' register refuses to incorporate non-realist experiences like mysticism and collective hallucination. In other words, the 'chanchin' does not innovate artistic features in order to express diverse religious and spiritual experience rather it tends to regulate the non-historical and the orgiastic communal.

Krista/Kristian Tlangau was the first Christian monthly newsletter produced in Lushai Hills. It was first published by R. Dala and his friends in October, 1911. It was printed at the hand press donated by Dr. Fraser, a missionary doctor deeply controversial but extremely sympathetic to the cause of Lusei education and well-being. The printing press was named 'The Lushai Christian Press'. It is the longest surviving magazine in modern Lusei history.¹¹³ It contained 16 pages and was sold for 1 anna and presently, it contains 32 pages and the subscription fee for a year is 50 rupees.

¹¹³ Ibid. Lalthangliana, p.153

The first issue published in October, 1911 had twelve items. The front page contained a preface from the editor, R. Dala, (a Lusei pastor) regarding the magazine, its price and how and why it was produced. The editorial stated that it was produced only for dissemination of the Christian teachings, to explain Biblical passages and to collect and publish the news of missionary work in different places. Since communication was difficult on the hills and the believers and potential believers were scattered, the editor felt Krista Tlangau can provide a platform to communicate among various people involved in God's work in the Lushai Hills. The cost of the magazine was 1 anna (Hna khat) or four paisa, and 75 paisa for a year's subscription which could be paid in money or an equivalent quantity of rice worth the specified sum of money. Dala expressed gratitude for the machine because such a facility was not available prior to Dr. Fraser's introduction of the hand press on the hills. Like the craft of writing which was introduced to produce the Bible, the printing press is seen as a technology that would enable the spread of God's word in a more efficient manner. In other words, the Lusei language seems to be further enabled to serve the needs of the Church rather than the needs of the empire which was visibly absent on the Lushai Hills.

There is hardly any disconnection between the need of the Church and the empire and this allowed for the regulation of artistic and performative forms such as dance and love songs that expresses eroticism and sensuality and facilitated production of a certain form of creativity centered around the principle of restraint rather than desire. For instance, there has been a tradition of composing hymns beginning from Lorrain's composition (1898) to a contemporary Mizo, Ramdinthara's hymn compositions. These compositions were basically written and performed along

with music. These devotional pieces represented the sinners' austere relationship with God. The magazine was basically an extension of the hymn books but it largely used the '*chanchin*' register.

The second item introduced the office bearers of the magazine namely, the editor, R. Dala, the Secretary- Zakunga and the Treasurer – Kawlkhuma. It also invited contributors to write for the magazine. The magazine informed the readers of how to subscribe. Interestingly, its potential subscribers were asked to send in their names along with the names of the chiefs. The lack of a singular address for the subscriber was not felt as an aberration. In other words, address as entitlement was yet to take roots in the Lusei society.

The third item titled 'Korea' talked about how Korean Government resisted Christianity and even gave orders to kill Christians and whoever read the Bible and how a war between China and Japan in 1894 made Korea suffer. Christian missionaries entered at this point of time and helped the people in many ways. A revival happened in 1907 which converted many Koreans to Christianity. They also narrated stories of Korean Christians who were willing to give up everything to preach the gospel to others. This story should be seen in the background of the initial resistance articulated by the Lusei chiefs against the missionaries' work on the hills. Around the same time, in Lushai and neighboring hills, Christian congregation experienced collective trance. In this state of trance, they saw visions. This form of shamanistic experiences was accompanied by praying, singing and dancing.

Actually, on the Lushai Hills, a similar phenomenon associated with the traditional god, *Puma Zai* is received enthusiastically by many people. There is an effort to read the *Puma Zai* experience of collective orgiastic performance as secular and not spiritual.¹¹⁴ The participants continuously weep, laugh, dance wildly, drink and see visions for several days at a stretch.¹¹⁵ Hence, this item is very pregnant with context and meaning. The magazine was trying to provide a sanitized narrative of the spree of events and is silent about the *Puma Zai*.

The magazine narrated three different verses from St. Matthew's gospel. Two of the verses have explicitly stated moral instructions for the reader. One of them pertained to exposing false vanity and religiosity. The English translation of the verse reads:

For God said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God". Then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ R.L Thanmawia, *Mizo Poetry*. Din Din Heaven, Aizawl, Mizoram, 1998.p.99

¹¹⁵ Lalsawma, *Revivals-The Mizo Way*. 1994. pp.45-47

¹¹⁶ Matthew 15:4-6 from the Bible. New International Version.

In this cryptic verse, Jesus professed the necessity to respect family members like parents in a manner that corresponded to obeying God himself. If not, it may become a violation of the commandment of God. It is not clear why this verse was chosen and commented upon in the magazine. May be, the idea of a family was a bit fluid during the early colonial period. Most young men grew up and socialized in the youth dormitory known as '*Zawlbuk*'. Very clear ideas of a nuclear family may not have existed and parents' role in shaping children morally and intellectually is being suggested in this verse, so that children develop respect for the parents and in the process internalize reverence for the Almighty. After all, the basis of Christian piety is grounded in the institution of family. Children are socialized in the larger community and less in individual families. In fact, the idea of the modern individual self and personhood seems to evolve around the new Christian practices initiated by the Church.

The magazine inserted another verse from Matthews 5:22 which states:

“But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.”¹¹⁷

The magazine gave only the reference of the verse and the reader was supposed to read the Bible in order to get a full text of the verse. This seems to be

¹¹⁷ Taken from New International Version.

an interesting format that the magazine developed for the reader and the believers. It means that the reader has to be motivated in order to read the Bible simultaneously with the magazine. Interestingly, there was a commentary on the verse. It illustrated the verse by using an analogy: 'Can you remove the liver and heart of a mithun (animal) without killing it?' This idiomatic usage supposedly refers to the need to completely renounce oneself of flesh and blood so that he or she becomes available in an uncontaminated form to embrace God. Punishment for sin is inevitable and penitence paves the way to attain nearness to God.

The magazine appears to have inserted this verse because there was a clear hostility from the non-converted Luseis against those who were converted. Similarly, the missionaries did not approve the activities of the traditional elites who were opposing missionary activities on the hills. In fact, some of the traditional elites started a countercultural movement by introducing a number of festivals like *Mim Kut*, *Chapchar Kut* and *Pawl Kut* and popular rituals involving traditional dances like the *Puma Zai/Tlanglam Zai*.¹¹⁸

The seventh item was written by Zakunga, an office bearer of *Kristian Tlangau*. The office bearers of the magazine did not receive regular salary and they basically volunteered to work for the magazine. This story appears in the form of a moral anecdote. It is titled *Kan tih aiin min rul tam* which means that what we do to others come back to us. Here, Zakunga narrated a story from the French

¹¹⁸ Ibid. R.L. Thanmawia. pp.99-100

Government where the Governor ordered the ministers to think of a new way to punish the convicted. One of the ministers volunteered to build a jail big enough to fit in a person, but not high enough for him to stand nor wide enough for him to sleep. The first person to be jailed was the minister. He had to suffer for fourteen years in the jail that he had himself built. The moral of the story stated that wrong deeds would lead to a long period of suffering and that Jesus will judge the deeds at the end and everyone will get what they deserve.

In another story titled *Tirh-ko Chambarlena*, the author Zakunga narrated a true incident which happened in the Princely State of Hyderabad. There was a king in Hyderabad and his kingdom was surrounded by a stone fort. Chamberlena was a white missionary who was trying to persuade people to change faith. The king asked the missionary to leave the place since he was preaching a different religion. But Chamberlena refused to leave until he finished what he had to preach. People gathered to kill him. He prayed to God for their anger to subside. He requested the people to listen to him and told them that they could kill him after his speech. He told them about Jesus Christ and how he died on the cross for them. After the speech, he told the people that they could kill him. But the people cried and bought the Bible so that they could read on their own. This preacher did not pray for his life, he prayed that he would be able to preach. This was the story written by Zakunga and he ended it with a verse from a song which talks about how God blessed people with what they needed. The verse also seems to convey that the Almighty answered prayers of the believers. The purpose of publishing this news story in the magazine was likely to encourage the Mizos to have the courage to preach the gospel to

others. This was a time when Christianity was resisted by many people, especially the chiefs. Christians were driven out of their villages. Vanchhunga, an evangelist, who later became a pastor, cited a story of their preaching in a village¹¹⁹. The name of the chief was Darmaka. When they started reading the Bible (they had only the gospel of Luke translated and printed at this time), Darmaka rose and told them that he will cut the Bible into pieces. So, Vanchhunga and his friend ran with the Bible. Darmaka chased them for about half an hour but could not catch them. He mentioned how he prayed that night to God to protect the book.

The next item *A Shilling hnunung ber chu* (The last shilling) is published without the name of the writer. This entry started with an explanation of what *shilling* is which says *A shilling is the Sap's tangka (coin), it costs 75 paisa*. This is a story of how God spoke to a young man who told him to give his shilling to a lady he was about to meet the next day on his way to his work. Not knowing who the lady was, he ventured out and gave it to a lady he first met. She told him how she had spent her last shilling in buying gospels and distributing them to people and that she prayed to God for a shilling. The story is likely to have been written by a missionary, or was told to a native by one of them. This may be seen as an advertisement for purchasing the Bible. The message was addressed to the new believers and to the potential believers. Since the missionaries were not from a wealthy Church, they found it difficult to distribute it free of cost.

¹¹⁹ Vanchhunga, *Lusei leh a vela Hnam Dangte*. Department of Art and Culture, Mizoram. 1994. pp.287-288

The magazine, *Kristian Tlangau* is the voice of the Presbyterian Church. In this story, the author with initials R.D., is seeking to promulgate procedures for routinizing the varied practices of the Church. Since the Church was in its infancy and its believers were modestly growing in numbers, the Church authorities found it necessary to institutionalize its practices regarding who has the authority to suspend members of the Church and arrange for their re-entry, laws on marriage, election of Church leaders- elders and persons who has the authority to perform baptism and serve sacrament to the congregation. Actually, the Church appears to enter into diverse spheres of the Lusei life like marriage, religion, family and so on. This magazine became the anchor for both informing and gaining consensus for the entry of the Church into the deeper recesses of the Lusei life-world.

The next entry is a letter addressed to R. Dala, the editor of the magazine, dated 5th September, 1911 from Thankunga, a native preacher of Lunglei. It was a query regarding the procedures to be followed by the Church of Lunglei. It appears that there were two sets of Church practices associated with the two Churches located at Aijal and Lunglei. Thankunga wanted clarification regarding the procedures and he sought Dala's intervention in the matter. He expressed his concern over different laws practiced in the Church of Lunglei and Aijal (Aizawl). At this time, some important Church functionaries like Thankunga felt the need to establish uniform rules and procedures regarding Church practices across the various Churches in the hills. In this context, Thankunga requested Dala to persuade the authorities at the Aijal Church to propose similar rules for institutionalizing the Church in different parts of the hills. It is also possible to interpret this request from

Thankunga as a recognition that the Presbyterian and the Baptist Church have been working closely with each other in the immediate past.

The letter was dated 5th September, 1911 and personally addressed to Dala and not to the magazine. The letter was reproduced in the magazine almost a month later. It is not clear as to why Dala thought it necessary to insert this letter in the magazine. Perhaps, there were several reasons for reproducing this letter. One singular reason may be that there is a genuine concern regarding the lack of established Church rules and procedures. Second, the Presbyterian Church was seen as a friendly but a larger institution than the Baptist Church. The hierarchy becomes noticeable in the way the pastor of the Baptist Church is seeking advice from his big neighbor. Thirdly, the letter suggests that Dala was an influential person even before he became the editor of the magazine.

Further, the letter suggests that through acquiring the skills of writing and formal education, the Church created new elites in the region in less than twenty years of their existence in the Lushai Hills. It is likely that the ordinary people of the traditional Lusei society took to Christianity and formal education than the traditionally influential elite of the Lusei society. Dala, the editor of the magazine was also from an obscure background. The Church, through the magazine, was affirming this emergent section of population who were enthusiastic in taking up Christianity as their faith. One of the reasons for the deprived sections belonging to the traditional order to take to Christianity may be that the ritual and sacrificial offerings favoured

the elite rather than the common people. Dala's enthusiasm for favoring the new religion may be due to this insight that Christianity allows for accessing God without those expensive rituals and sacrificial practices. Unlike the traditional practice of communicating with the spirits through the *puithiam*, the common man referred to as '*hnamchawm*' may have found it easier to access the Christian God directly.

The last item is a sermon written by Thanga, a native writer. The sermon is based on a Biblical passage which says:

"All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flower of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever".¹²⁰

The author divided the sermon into three points, the first one talked about the resemblances of human beings and grass, plants or flowers. The second point talked about how the glories and the wealth of men do not last long. The last point stressed on the immortality of God's Word and that whoever believes in God may live forever. Thanga urged the readers not to worry too much on the material things but focus on eternal life. He ended the writing with a poem which says that life in this world is a temporary life but the permanent life of followers of Jesus is in heaven.

¹²⁰ The passage was in Lushai dialect. The sentence formation and words used at this time have been revised and changed. The Holy Bible have not yet been fully translated and printed at this point of time. The passage cited here in English is taken from New International Version, International Bible Society, 2006.

Conclusion

This chapter deals with the early literary and journalistic compositions which may be considered as experiments in the newly acquired practice of writing. In dealing with the early experiments in literary, journalistic and historical writings, the chapter suggests that the journey of the Mizo language and literature does not display a clear-cut transition from literisation to literarisation, including autonomy of literary style from journalistic or historical writing.

Chapter IV

Textual Productions and Local History of Nation-State Media

(1950's – 1980's)

From the mid 1940's to 1980's, the Autonomous Mizo Hills District has been part of the federal state of Assam with minimum representation in the Legislative Assembly of the state Government. These immediate decades after Independence witnessed rapid changes in political, economic and cultural spheres of the region. It also saw the emergence of the Mizo nationalist sentiments facilitated by the Church and the Indian State. In this chapter, an attempt is made to examine the conditions of production of culture and cultural products, and its circulation and consumption from the mid 1940s to the 1980s in order to identify the process involved in the making of the Mizo identity. For this purpose, three different media and literary institutions which embody three distinct forms of cultural production and consumption practices are analyzed and forwarded in the chapter.

Firstly, *Kohhran Beng*, an official magazine of the Baptist Church of Mizoram, (1946-) is taken up for analysis. This magazine which had been a sort of literary and cultural institution for the majority of masses for the last seventy years emerged as a result of the Church's attempt to re-define its role in the context of the integration of the Mizo Hills with the Indian Nation State. This attempt to re-define itself and its relation to the State can be noticed in the early issues of the magazine and therefore

an overview of this magazine along with a textual analysis of the first issue is undertaken here.

Secondly, an interpretative enquiry into the origins of the Mizo Academy of Letters along with the textual analysis of one of the issues of its official literary journal, *Thu leh Hla* is taken up. The 'Mizo Academy of Letters,' a semi-independent body initiated by the Mizo literary elites to promote Mizo language and literature in 1965 was in fact a result of the growth of Mizo nationalist sentiments along with the ambivalent impulses to integrate with the Nation State (gave rise to a literary and cultural institution known as the 'Mizo Academy of Letters,' a semi-independent body initiated by the Mizo literary elites to promote Mizo language and literature in 1965. Its official literary journal, *Thu leh Hla*, was established in 1965 and it continues to exist till date.

Thirdly, the study seeks to draw attention to the peculiar manner in which a state owned media, All India Radio, was established in 1966. This part attempts to reconstruct and interpret the dramatic circumstances in which two units of All India Radio were established in Aizawl and Lunglei in 1966 just when a state of emergency was declared on the Autonomous Mizo Hills District. In writing the circumstances surrounding the establishment of two units of All India Radio in Aizawl and Lunglei, the study seeks to emphasize the need for articulating a local history of the state owned media. Generally, the history of All India Radio and Doordarshan

are written from the perspective of the postcolonial Nation State highlighting the progress and march of the largest democracy in the world.

Magazine of the Baptist Church of Mizoram- Kohhran Beng: A

Contextual Analysis

The contribution of the Baptist Church towards production of Mizo culture in the form of the first hymn book, the Bible, grammar and dictionary is formidable. The Mizo society has deeply internalized these theological and philological works. As mentioned previously, the two personalities, Lorrain and Savidge fondly known as Pu Buanga and Sap Upa belonged to the Baptist Church and they were instrumental in producing these foundational texts.¹²¹ The Baptist Church set up a number of educational, medical and religious institutions. Like the Presbyterian Church, they had few printing presses and they published several books regularly. The material and the cultural history of media have largely been shaped by the Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church in the Lushai Hills District. Of course, the colonial state and the emerging educated elite mediated this cultural history of Mizoram located within the Indian Nation State through redefining the contemporary along with their indigenous past.

One of the long lasting contributions of the Baptist Church has been the newsletter which later on became a full-fledged religious and literary organ, '*Kohhran*

¹²¹ See *BCM Compendium*. The Baptist Church of Mizoram, Lunglei, Mizoram, 2003. p.10

Beng. '*Kohhran*' refers to 'Church' and '*Beng*' refers to 'Ear.' It was started in 1946 and the title was suggested by the first Lusei editor, Rev. Challiana Murray. Among other reasons, this magazine appears to have been initiated as a response to India becoming independent and the inevitability of the exit of the missionaries.

In this section, the context for the production of the magazine is discussed along with textual analysis of the first issue. *Kohhran Beng* is a product of several decades of missionary work performed by the Baptist Church. It is inaugurated at a very strategic moment in the history of the region and the nation. Since the missionaries and the colonial state followed a policy of isolation, the Mizo Hills region was not ideologically or economically connected to mainland nationalism or the political economy of British India Province. *Kohhran Beng* realizes at this moment that this policy of isolation may give way to a policy of integration and the first issue (1946) announces the anxiety associated with shifting from one political and cultural policy framework to another interdependent policy framework.

It appears that this newsletter embodies the '*chanchin*' register but realizes the importance of listening rather than reading in order to develop, maintain and nurture a newly formed Christian community. While the magazine uses the documentary form of narration, there are frequent references to the need for reading aloud the content of the newsletter to the unlettered. Reading aloud may not necessarily be aimed at reading for the illiterate but actually its objective may be to share communally the contents of the newsletter. The distribution of limited

copies like one copy to every Church allowed resulted in limited circulation. Reading the copy in the Church may have solved the problem of scarce distribution. It may also be that there was a need for providing surveillance to the act of reading. Even today, it is a practice that what is read in the Church will once again be discussed in the home of one of the Church members. In some sense, not only in the public space of the Church that reading gets regulated but it continues in the home space as well. This form of reading does not allow individual creativity to enter into the act of reading. It may not be wrong to say that singing and reading that the Church introduced were practices of a similar kind.

Kohhran Beng seeks to build upon already established modes of reading and listening. '*Chanchin*' is a register that seems to cultivate the ear as much as the eye. In the early years of its existence, *Kohhran Beng* intended to cultivate the ear but the contemporary style and content of the magazine suggest that it has set in a mode of reading which is private and not so public. The documentary narrative appears in the form of reportage of events not only from Mizoram but it seems to report events from other parts of the country like Orissa, Sikkim, Tripura, Manipur and so on. This is facilitated by the fact that Mizoram sends one of the largest contingents of protestant missionaries to the rest of the country and abroad.

It appears that the journalistic language as deployed by the Church has grown not in terms of a commercial press and growth in readership but the Church has been the only notable institution to use the '*chanchin*' effectively through its

organs like the '*Kohhran Beng*' and the '*Kristian Tlangau*'. The '*chanchin*' engages not only with issues relating to Mizoram but also issues pertaining to other regions in the country. The ability of the Mizo language to access the context and content of disparate situations seems to provide an opportunity to energize the forms within the '*chanchin*' register. This register was used only to address issues relating to the Mizo Hills earlier and now relating to Mizoram. It is this changed context which has made the magazine multiply in content, pages, and readership and participate in advanced technologies. Issues relating to political, economic and cultural policies appeared in the magazine. The first issue of *Kohhran Beng* consisted of only two pages and it was written by two people with issues relating to the local Churches and the need to responsibly relate to the Bible. It only addressed the Mizo people though there were references to their neighbour namely the Chakmas and the Brus. Today, the magazine is 34 pages long and is available both as published material and as online resource.

Textual Analysis

The first issue of the magazine is appended to this text¹²²:

Let Jesus Reign throughout Zo Ram (Zo Land)

CHHIM BIAL KOHHRAN BENG

October, 1946

Brothers and Sisters,

¹²² The text is in Mizo language and the translations of the issue are mine.

The general masses are not aware of the rules and the work of the Church. Most people do not know how many Church workers are employed and where they are posted. There are people who do not even know their own pastors. The Church also collects offerings but we most often do not know how much has been collected and the purpose for which they are used. Therefore, from this period, we will attempt to disseminate such information through this newsletter and it will be issued monthly, or if not possible, once in two months. This newsletter will act as an ear for the congregation to be familiar with the Church matters. Having this in mind, we decided that the title of the newsletter should be '*Kohhran Beng*,' to inform everyone and serve our needs to hear the Church news and other important matters.

This newsletter is meant for the congregation as the name suggests and the leaders should share the information given out through this newsletter, they should not stingily grasp it to themselves. Every Church should read it out to its congregations at least once and then pass on the paper to individuals to enable them to read it themselves or in groups. Several villages pine, "We are not visited by others, we are a deaf village." Therefore, make sure that you get this *Kohhran Beng* in your village. –
Challiana

This passage broadly outlines the purpose of producing the newsletter. It appears that the Church has grown without a corresponding rise in its administrative and organisational structure. There has been a lack of communication between the Church authorities and the believers especially in those places far from Aijal and Lunglei. Since the kingdom of God is mediated through the Baptist Church, there is a need for caution as to how matters relating to material reality of running the Church ought to be conducted. The resources for conducting the activities of the Church including the salary of the pastors, evangelists, teachers of the mission schools and other Church workers were raised from the believers and there was a need to share that information about mobilization and allocation of the resource. Perhaps, there was some apprehension about the clarity regarding these issues both among the Church authorities and the believers.

Kohhran Beng is to sensitize both the Church leaders and the followers about the need to inculcate ethical practices in the conduct of one's life and the life of the Church. This newsletter seeks to sensitize the inner ear of the connections between this worldly life and the life of God. If this newsletter had generously been shared among people who are not literate by those who have the ability to read, then, it would have catered to the urge to experience this sort of listening. The lack of sharing information relating to the Church has been negatively described as, 'we are a deaf village' and cause for dampening the enthusiasm for ethical listening among believers. The newsletter seeks to provide moral attunement for the ears of the Church, to listen is to listen in a moral and ethical sense.

The author of this piece, Challiana who introduces the newsletter and the objectives of the newsletter to the potential reader, wrote a definitive text on Mizo history and culture in 1944 but it was posthumously published in 1969. Until recently, this was used as a text book for schools and colleges.

In the text that is cited below, the Church proposes to institute an official known as the 'Church Secretary' for conducting the affairs of the Churches in villages that are far from the headquarter of the Baptist Church located in Serkawn. This may be read as an effort to decentralize the functioning of the Church.

The Church Secretary- Who is the Church Secretary? Do we know what his main role is? Each village has their own queries regarding matters of their Church, so most people send their questions to the Serkawn Church. The Presbytery has recently appointed Pastor Sawiluaia to answer these queries. If necessary, the Church Secretary would act as an interlocutor between the Serkawn and other congregations residing in the plains. He will also be the leader of the Sunday School and will reside at Serkawn. No particular village will not be under his pastorship but will often visit the villages when necessary.

This piece of Church announcement about the appointment of the Church Secretary whose duties have been clearly identified relates to defining the organizational structure and authority of the Baptist church. The Church secretary is

supposed to monitor the activities of churches outside Serkawn. Interestingly, the announcement states that he will be a liaisoning official between the hills and the plains. The mention of plains does not specify whether it is the Assam plains or the Bengal plains. Perhaps, the realization that they cannot segregate the hills from the plains because of the impending independence of India even in Church matters makes them define the role of the Church secretary in that fashion. Besides, the Church authorities wish to leave a structure that would endure even after they depart and this anxiety too informs this announcement and appointment of the Church secretary.

The item cited below talks about the need for evangelizing the neighboring Tuikuk (Bru) and Takam (Chakma) people. The early converts felt it was their duty to proselytize the non-Christians.

Have we turned our back against the Tuikuk and Takam people? No, not at all. Our evangelist, Kawha died last year and his friend, Siama had been transferred to another place, but the Church had sent two evangelists, Khuma from Sirte village and Sanga from Laisawral to them. Furthermore, we have employed Kama and Taikhara to work as teachers. Therefore, we should contribute more money towards the Tuikuk and Takam people. It is such a wonderful thing that a few Churches have been established among them.

This news item proposes to give importance for missionary activities among the Chakma (Takam) and the Bru (Tuikuk). The Chakmas were traditionally Buddhists and were advanced in terms of possessing a script in pre-colonial India.¹²³ But their conditions during the colonial period deteriorated. The Bru were known as Riangs in Tripura and Tuikuk in Mizoram. The Brus practiced animism and did not lead a sedentary life. Both the Chakmas and the Brus were not converted till the 1940's by the missionaries. By this time, the Mizos were fully converted and they produced a large number of evangelists and these professionals wanted to dedicate their lives to work among the lesser brethren like the Brus and the Chakmas. This news item displays such a Mizo sentiment. Historically, a large number of Brus and Chakmas were converted only after India became independent. To this day, Mizoram sends one of the largest contingents of professional missionaries to the rest of the country.

The next item appears to highlight the importance of the Bible to become a practicing Christian. It encourages people to engage themselves in observing the Bible Day by dedicating a particular day for praying and studying the Bible.

The Bible Day- All the Churches should observe a Bible day every year and dedicate the whole day to study the Bible. The congregation must engage themselves in praying and studying portions of the Bible more profoundly. The offering collected on that day would be dedicated for the

¹²³ See Jyotirmoi Chakma's article *Origin and Evolution of Chakma Language and Script* in *Kriti Rakshana* Vol 5, Nos-5-6, April-July, 2010.p.5

people who are engaged in the work of producing the Bible. Last year, it was observed on the first Sunday of December, it would be good to observe it on the same day this year too.

This seemingly simple suggestion to dedicate a single day in a year to the study of the Bible is an acknowledgement of the power that this monolithic text has acquired in less than 40 years in the life of an ordinary Mizo. There is a popular reception to this invitation by the missionaries to join the Church. The missionaries were effective in establishing a discourse where the Bible was construed as the new ground on which the edifice of the Mizo society ought to be built. This discourse warranted the labour of reducing the Lusei dialect to writing and a hoary tradition of translation of the Bible which has gone on for several years even after the Independence of India.¹²⁴ This news item seeks to raise the readers' conscience towards raising resources for fuller translation of the Bible in Lusei language and for newer translations in neighbouring dialects.

The term 'praying' and 'studying' are prescriptive. It is prescriptive in the sense that there is an attempt to evolve practices that produce an experience of a deeper sense of their community. The Mizos' earlier form of worship did not involve a clear cut demarcation between the spiritual and the mundane. Christianity ushers in a new form of worship and a new sense of community. The news item's call to dedicate a day for praying is also an effort to invoke and

¹²⁴ Zairema, *Kan Bible Hi*, Zairema, 2003. p.165. Zairema records that the first Lusei/Mizo Bible in a complete form was produced in 1959 and was titled 'Lushai Bible'.

affirm this new sense of moral ethical community. There is some familiarity with the act of praying and the former pre-Christian forms of worship but the term 'studying' may not have any sort of equivalence in the Mizo traditional culture. For a very long time, the Mizos have been migrant community. Over a period of more than a thousand years, the Luseis have been constantly moving from a distant part of South Asia (China) to the Indian sub-continent. In the process, they seem to have produced a culture where there is less of a need to practice ascetic or transcendental forms of meditation. The term 'study' refers to 'meditation' and it is possible to say that this form of disembodied intellectual engagement is yet to take deep roots in the practicing of religion in the Mizo Hills.

The item in the following section persuades the congregation to donate money for the commemoration of Lorrain who was fondly referred to as 'Pu Buanga'. It is to institutionalize the memory of the white missionary whose name has been associated with all the gifts (like writing, literacy and Christianity) that the present Mizos feel proud of.

It has been decided that offerings would be collected for the commemoration of Pu Buanga. But we have not received any amount yet from the churches, so we do not know how we are going to commemorate him. We will decide it in accordance with the people's effort to contribute the money.

Pu Buanga or Lorrain was the most loved missionary for the Mizos in the past and even today. Along with Savidge, he devoted most of his life in making the Lusei language serve God and people alike. He is known for creating the most important literary and biblical text in the Lusei language like the translation of the Bible, producing the hymn book, grammar and dictionary and several other texts. Most importantly, he made the Lusei dialect available for the purpose of writing. Though the purpose of writing was mainly to produce the Bible in the local tongue, the use of writing cannot be reduced to religion alone. Today, the language is used to produce knowledge in a variety of domains like humanities, social sciences, physical sciences and performative arts. In some sense, while religious identity has been achieved through these formative textual and material practices, the Mizo identity is an ever expanding entity and Pu Buanga's name will be associated with modern Mizo history and culture for a very long time to come. It is precisely these thoughts that the newsletter seems to be implicitly suggesting to the reader through this column. So, there is a lament because they have not been able to mobilize resources to commemorate Pu Buanga.

The last item of the issue was written by a white missionary, Rapper who was known to the Mizos as '*Zomawia Pa*' or the father of Zomawia. It is a reflective piece on the impending transfer of power from the British to the Indians and its concomitant consequences for the Mizo elite and society.

It has been three months after I returned from Sap ram. I see lots of changes in Mizoram after I left in 1942. There are transformations in many ways, even your mindset has changed a lot. Unlike earlier times when you lived an ignorant life, you are not satisfied with what you are anymore. The young girls and boys who have pursued their studies outside Mizoram have seen the lifestyles of others. You have gained wisdom in many ways, and in some ways could not be contented with yourselves now. You have desires to live the lives of the plains. This is not surprising and it is inevitable. It is impossible to be completely cut off from the plains.

It is delightful that the time you mingle with other people coincides with the period when the Church is already deeply rooted in the region. The girls and boys are also now cultured/ educated enough to mix with outsiders. We are very proud of you all.

Since change is inevitable, always remember that you are Christians. You have the ability to transform the whole nation of India.

These days, you know that there are many rumors against the mission. You should know the main aims and objectives of our mission. It is to disseminate the good news (Christianity) among the non-believers and to provide knowledge and increase the faith of the Christians.

It is not our aim to govern others but we are to serve them. In order to serve others, we should be skilled in medicine/ health care, education, publishing and printing of books.

The people of this region have worked extremely hard for fifty years and are now fit to be declared as educated people. There are more than 9,000 full members of the Church, 99 schools and 3,800 students at present. You have pastors, teachers, doctors and caretakers. We are always willing to help the Mizos in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ whenever necessary.

It is good to know that the Church members are now able to support their own pastors. At this time, church members are generous in terms of contributing money and are now self-sufficient. Even so, we can still assist you in many ways like running schools, publishing books, translation of the Bible and we are eager to render our help. – Zomawia pa (Father of Zomawia).

This is written in the context of the changes that the missionary perceives as result of slow and gradual exposure of the Mizos to the life on the plains. Earlier on, both the colonial state and the missionaries clearly demarcated the boundaries

between the hills and the plains. They produced a discourse that the moral economy of the hills had to be protected from the political economy of the plains. They addressed the political economy of the plains as 'desire' and they actively discouraged any attraction for cultivating this desire. Zomawia pa (Rev. J.F. Raper), the white missionary who is the author of this reflective piece very judiciously describes the inevitability of the moral economy of the hills to hold on against the political economy of the plains. The norms of the hills will not be sufficient to regulate the life of the mizos who are now becoming part of the representatives and market institutions of the plains.

There was rapid monetization and commoditization of different facets of the Mizo life world immediately after Independence but this trend seems to have set in even during the time of producing this newsletter. The integration of the hills with the plains creates anxiety for the missionaries. Over four decades, they produced and regulated the cultural and material life on the hills with the help of an emergent elite and the colonial state. Actually, there were tensions between the colonial state and the missionaries regarding the moral economy of the hills.

One of the missionaries, Peter Fraser had raised a controversy about the traditional slavery system practiced among the Mizos. The colonial state defended the practice of paying ransom for the release of slaves from the chiefs. Lorrain in his dictionary revised in 1940 retained the meaning for the term 'bawi' as 'slave.' In other words, while there was approval for most aspects of moral economy of the

traditional Lusei system, there were instances where the Church pointed out injustice prevailing within the traditional order using the Bible as a source for determining the appropriateness of norms. This instance was pointed out in order to suggest that both the colonial state and the missionaries were able to regulate the cultural and material life of the Luseis but they have come to a point in history where somebody like Raper has started realizing that they will not be in a position to provide this normative support in the future. All the same, Raper suggests that there are areas like “running schools, publishing books, translation of the Bible” where the missionaries could still lend support. The author compliments the Luseis for taking to Christianity and modern education pretty quickly. At the same time, he seems to suggest that a substantive form of Christian reasoning and thought has not been fully internalized. This has been the distinction that Chaliana also draws between praying and studying. A certain form of disembodied spiritual engagement seems absent from the tradition of Christianity that is inherited among the Mizos.¹²⁵

The title *Kohhran Beng* needs further analysis especially the term ‘*beng*’ or ears. ‘*Kohhran Beng*’ literally refers to ‘Church ears’ or ‘ears of the congregation.’ Metaphorically, it signifies developing a disciplined ear or subjecting oneself to an ethics of listening. In the traditional Lusei society, singing formed the pre-eminent form of listening. Singing was usually accompanied by dancing and drinking.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ In his report, Raper states, “The growth of the Christians themselves in maturity of thought and expression has not kept pace with its increase in numbers” in *The Annual Report of BMS on Mizoram 1901-1938*, Mizoram Gospel Centenary Committee, Baptist Church of Mizoram, Serkawn.1993. p.352

¹²⁶ Savidge, in his report in 1904 wrote, “...the Lushai boys and girls do not sing in their natural state...They seemed astonished that anyone could sing without drinking” in *The Annual Report of BMS on Mizoram 1901-1938*. pp.11-12

Through collective singing, dancing and rice beer drinking, the community was enacted and affirmed. The distinction between the corporeal and the spiritual seemed less clear. Singing was an embodied form of collective performance and it required a certain altered state of being derived through intoxication to experience a deeper sense of the community which included animate, inanimate, celestial and demonic entities.

Both the Baptist Church and the Presbyterian Church understood that music was very important in the lives of the Mizos and they deployed music for proselytizing and educational purposes. Unlike other parts of colonial India where music was not a part of early schooling system, the missionaries introduced musical education through the solfa system for the children in the Lushai Hills.¹²⁷ The solfa system involves learning music through sighting or reading which was different from earlier forms of learning and performing. This codification of singing through notations was a new way of relating to music.

It is not clear how this way of relating to music energized or inhibited the earlier form of singing which was based on listening and a trial and error form of learning. In terms of content, the love songs which were sensuous and the war songs which displayed unbridled valor were banned by the white missionaries. Singing which generated eroticism and aggression was regulated and later

¹²⁷ *Report of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram, 1894-1957* compiled by K. Thanzauva. The Synod Literature and Publication Board, 1997.p.11

completely banned.¹²⁸ The tutoring of the ears has been more or less received in the manner that the Church expected. Perhaps, the title, '*Kohhran Beng*' is an acknowledgement of the success of producing a receptive ear for God's work in the land of the Mizos.

With the coming of the Church, the ear seems to be released from the site of the body and placed at an affective distance from the corporeal self. This re-designation of the ears in relation to a new moral universe appears to set in a novel practice of singing and the experience of the aural. In other words, the Church re-inscribes the Mizo body and the ears are particularly subjected to regulation and discipline. The title 'Church ears' for the magazine is aimed to signify the new form of listening and aurality that seems to be still evolving.

Mizo Academy of Letters (MLA)

The Context for Its Emergence

From the 1940's, the winds of nationalist movement in mainland India seems to have influenced those Mizos who went out to study in neighboring cities like Guwahati, Calcutta and Shillong. The educated elites started the political party known as Mizo Union in 1946 and prior to that they periodically complained that they did not have representative institutions in the Mizo Hills to air their public grievances. Due to the colonial policy of isolation, the Mizo Hills were declared as an excluded

¹²⁸ See R.L Thanmawia *Mizo Poetry*. Din Din Heaven, 1998.p.101. He cited, "The authoritarian leaders of the Church people to sing any kind of song unless it proclaimed the Christian faith".

area and issues relating to the Mizo Hills were not discussed in the Assam Provincial Legislature. There were times when the native elites demanded participation in the Assam Provincial Legislature the colonial officials along with the chiefs rejected their demands.¹²⁹ With India gaining Independence in 1947, this demand became vocal among the native literati. Along with this rise in political consciousness, they realized that they lacked a secular culture to express their new political sentiments and identity. In fact, the civic organization known as Young Lushai Association formally conducted a patriotic song writing competition in the town of Aizawl.¹³⁰ The literati recognized that the only form of literary and performative expressions available to them as Mizos happened to be primarily religious cultural expressions of a protestant kind. In 1952, the literary figure Rokunga, a patriotic song composer remarked,

“The Christian youths had no songs to sing other than the religious hymns. Those of the classical poems have been discarded after the conversion into Christianity. To sing the love songs and Kaihleik Zai were still prohibited by the Church.”¹³¹

Rokunga was suggesting that the emerging political identity required negotiation between the traditional Lusei identity and the Christian religious identity. The Mizo language had to take up this challenge of providing secular literary and

¹²⁹ Chawngsailova, *Ethnic National Movement in the role of the MNF*. p.21

¹³⁰ The competition was announced in the column *YLA Thubelh* in *Kristian Tlangau*, January, 1947. Vol.XXXVI, No. 418. p.17

¹³¹ R.L. Thanmawia, *Mizo Poetry*. Din Din Heaven, Aizawl. 1998. p.116

artistic forms for articulating this modern identity which had no discernable past or history. There was a strand of performative tradition which emerged in the late 1930's and this related to music performed at the Serkawn area in Lunglei popularly known as the Serkawn Concert. The annual Serkawn Concert (Lunglei) organized by the Serkawn Middle English School since 1932 was responsible for the emergence of a novel literary and musical tradition with less emphasis on religion. Students entertained the audience by reciting new poems emphasizing the pristine landscape of the Mizo Hills and invoking pride and love for their homeland and their ancestors. Apart from poetry, on similar themes, dramas were enacted, and both traditional and western music were performed. C.Z Zawna recalled that the main aim of organizing the Concert after 1936 was to popularize secularism in poetry.¹³² From the 1940's, the enveloping political consciousness among the native elite amplified the need for new literary and cultural production that needed to compete with similar expressions that were found in other regions of mainland India particularly Assam, Bengal, Manipur, Tripura and so on. It is likely that these regional nationalisms were also being translated into literary and cultural productions with Bengal taking the lead for almost a century before other regional nationalisms.

From the 1950's to the mid 1960's, there was a certain ambivalence regarding the political and cultural integration of Mizo Hills into the Indian Nation State. The ambivalence concerned the paradoxical situation where the seduction of the fragment becoming part of a representative democracy along with an anxiety that the fragment may be subsumed politically and culturally within the new gestalt

¹³² Ibid. R.L Thanmawia. pp.109-110

masquerading as Nation State. In 1959, when the major famine swept the Mizo Hills District, this paradoxical situation was partly resolved. The Mizo elite realized that they were not able to generate enough sympathy from the national elite in Delhi and adequate help to cope with the famine was not forthcoming. A simmering discontent found expression in the change of title and its functions, the civic body, Mizo National Famine Front came into existence to help combat the famine but later changed to a radical political organ Mizo National Front demanding sovereignty from the Indian Nation State. The MAL came to initially express its allegiance to the Indian Nation State. In fact, the idea of an academy was suggested by the Assam Education Minister to the Mizo community. The 1950's and the 1960's were a period of expanding linguistic and regional nationalisms across the country, some of which were divisive but many were an expression of their allegiance to a national territory and a national community. It was in this context that Devakant Baruah suggested the establishment of MAL in order to facilitate the flowering of regional literatures and culture in the image of the Nation State. So far, we have delineated a history of secular literature and art expressing Mizo nationalism from the late 1930's. This took a definitive turn after India gained Independence but gathered momentum with the occurrence of the famine leading to the establishment of Mizo National Front. The Mizo Academy of Letters may inherit a lineage of this spread of events.

The MAL established by a group of literary and political activists around the time of the conflict in 1964 had to suspend its most important literary organ '*Thu leh Hla*' for almost ten years from 1966 to 1974.¹³³ The Academy came into existence to

¹³³ B.Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature*. MCL Publication, Aizawl, 2004. p.489

promote literary work and to create a responsive literary public. Among the founder members, there were people who already had established themselves by writing important texts and there were people who were not just interested in promoting literary activity but sought social relevance for artistic creativity.¹³⁴

For the purpose of the study, this section will conduct a preliminary textual and contextual analysis of the first issue of '*Thu leh Hla*'. In his editorial of the first issue of *Thu leh Hla*, Laldailova seems to argue for a standardized language tradition and cultivating a literary culture among the Mizos but lamented that the idea of starting the MAL had come from a non-Mizo. The editorial opined that the office bearers of MAL were only acting as patrons for instituting this potential language-literary cultural tradition and that they were not literary figures or experts in Mizo language themselves. The editor offered invitation to the people of the region to participate in producing the proposed linguistic-literary cultural tradition. The editorial suggested that there is a hope of setting right a linguistic-literary deficit if people come forward enthusiastically to create and consume the proposed literary tradition. In other words, the editorial appeared to provide a platform for standardization of Mizo language through a critique of contemporary literary and performative Mizo language used in everyday Mizo life in the region.

¹³⁴ Among them, H.K Bawichhuaka was a socialist and he was keenly interested in transforming the highly stratified and tradition bound Mizo community into a socialist society. J.Malsawma compiled Mizo songs *Mizo Hla Hlui leh Thar* for college text book for B.A. while J.F Laldailova was the first Mizo to compile a Mizo-English dictionary in 1969 and Selet Thanga produced a book *Pi Pu Lenlai* (1984).

The first issue of '*Thu leh Hla*' was 32 pages long, with contributions from 13 native Mizos and on a variety of themes ranging from language, literature, history and culture. There were 15 articles including the editorial. Situated in postcolonial Indian Nation State, the elites who wrote for the magazine were keen on maintaining differences from mainland India and also the homogenizing West, but they were acutely aware that they were part of the supposedly horizontal community called the India Nation. The preliminary textual and contextual analysis of *Thu leh Hla* will concentrate only on five articles out of the 15 including the editorial.

The following item is titled '*Hmasawwna*' meaning 'Progress.' In this article, Selet Thanga, a Mizo writer critically examines the issue of institutionalizing the Mizo language in the formal educational system.

Hmasawwna – Selet Thanga¹³⁵

Even if it is just to reveal my lack of knowledge on expressing one's own thinking, let it be so.

Looking at the present situation, it is fortunate that our language (Lushai) has been included as one of the subjects at the college level. This could be attributed to the achievement of one of the main objectives of the Lushai Student Association which was formed in 1935 and I expect the M.Z.P. (Mizo Student Association) to jump for joy by lifting their feet right

¹³⁵ Lalthatluanga translated this article and it is dated June, 2011

up to their ears. But, progress and success achieved, which appeared to be sufficient in the past are always necessary to be reconsidered and modified. But who will take such responsibility.

In the Middle School they study prose and poetries which could be regarded as outstanding literary works. But, especially speaking about verses and poetries, considering the students, their subjects are too difficult and they could not derive their beauty and sweetness. However, we cannot ignore the fact that due to good teachers and good teachings they are able to succeed in their examination. In this respect I believe we can say that even the idioms and words used by our forebears might be too old.

While studies (of the Mizo subject) are comprehensive at the Middle School stage, it does not mean that it is no longer required at the higher level as observed in the High School Leaving Certificate Examination, poetries are completely omitted in the syllabus. While studying and learning of some poetry is a must in the English subject it is peculiar that on studying one's own language it has been left out altogether. I believe it is not only peculiar but beyond this it would be regretted.

If the High School Leaving Certificate Examination is to be continued, the syllabus should be prepared, starting from the Middle School in a progressive manner. For instance- some subject like *Esopa Thawnthu* (Easop's Fables) and *Kristian Vanram Kawng Zawh* (The Pilgrim's

Progress) which were studied at the lower grade are included at the High School level which made the students lose interest. No progress worth mentioning is made in this regard.

We also need to find ways and means of correcting some words, the usage of which are taken for granted as having the same meaning, such as “lo” and “rawn,” (Ex:- For “come here” there are some who use to say “rawn kal rawh”, while others use to say “Lo kal rawh”) pawl(regrettable) and pawimawh (important) etc etc.

I believe now is the time for those who know the way to start constructing footholds. Or is there something which I failed to understand?

The author begins by congratulating the Lushai Students Association for lobbying with the Government to introduce Mizo language as an optional course at the college level. Even as he compliments the student body, he carefully analyses the history of introducing the Mizo language at different levels of school education. Selet Thanga seems to approve the Mizo language curriculum at the Middle School level because the content is inclusive of both prose and poetry. The author disapproves the Mizo language curriculum at the High School as the content excludes poetry which he thinks is so central to Mizo literary and cultural heritage. Though he accepts that Mizo poetry is rather difficult for students to learn, he is startled by the fact that the same students are allowed to engage with poetry in the English language. The author thinks that this omission is not merely startling but

uses the word 'pawi' to mean that it may become 'regrettable' to exclude Mizo poetry. Further, he believes that the prose curriculum inclusive of texts like Aesop's Fables and Pilgrim's Progress removes the attraction of the students towards engaging with the Mizo language in an animated fashion.

The article cited below reads '*Thangthar Tawng*' which means 'Language of the new generation' and it is a profound note on the history and contemporary significance of language in Mizo life.

Thangthar Tawng - J.F Laldailova¹³⁶

I believe there are many among us who could not differentiate between the idioms and phrase of our forefathers and their manner of speaking in expressing their views. The present Mizo language has already been fabricated during the time our ancestors lived in the forest moving from place to place in search of fertile land. The present generation does not make much contribution in giving names especially for trees, grass and animals besides which were already given by our ancestors.

Names given by our predecessors for some objects are beautiful, such as 'vawngthla' for a certain kind of 'thlanvawng' tree and 'mukfang' for a

¹³⁶ Translation work done by Lalthatluanga in June, 2011.

certain kind of 'muk' tree. Names given to other trees such as 'Chawnpui' (A flowering tree), 'rihnim' (A fruit-bearing tree), 'mualhawih' (tree with beautiful flower), 'chhawkhlei' (rhodendron), 'ainawn' (flowering tree) are all beautiful names. If we attempt to know all the names given to various objects, much time and efforts will have to be given.

Most of our present dialects are derived from 'Duhlian' language (sub-tribe of the Mizos) and some are adopted from other sub-tribes such as Hmar, Ralte, Pawih etc. names of various objects have also been appropriated from the English and Hindi as well. Till date, we do not have other convenient substitute for words like 'rawng' (colour), 'baltin' (bucket) and 'mil' (agreed) taken from the Hindi language.

There were some words and jargons fabricated by the new generations which though fairly popular for sometimes, if they lack beauty or usefulness could not last long. Among these the word 'Phian' (the equivalent in English is 'quite') has lasted for sometimes now. The reason might be it is quite convenient for expressions and it seems it is going to be domesticated permanently in our language. Some words and phrases which came into being but that would not last are 'Aw an tia' (Instead of the correct usage-'Aw an ti' which means 'They said yes'), 'Engmah a nia' (Instead of the correct words 'Engmah a ni lo' which means 'It is nothing'), 'chheu' (word to describe a particular action), 'nai' (weakling). Some other

words like-‘ rap’, ‘ras’ (slang words used instead of ‘lutuk’ which means ‘very’) ‘gosling’ and ‘tawrh’ (kind of hairstyles) though I believe could not be regarded as thrash, there will come a time when they are felt irksome.

Some expression like “A anin a ang lo,” (Not likely, the correct expression should be just “A ang lo”) ‘Ka tum aiin” (Beyond my intend) instead of ‘Ka rin aiin” (Beyond my expectation) which are commonly used now-a-days are not commendable. “A tiha tih ngeih lo”, (Not worthy to take action upon, instead of “Tih ngeih loh”) is also an expression which came into existence since a few years back. As far as my knowledge is concerned, phrase such as “Hlek nei” (A negative expression of somebody’s character) was never used during 1930–1940. ‘Bialnu’ (girlfriend), “bialpa’ (boyfriend) are also words coined by the present generations. Another word ‘kher’ (very) was not frequently used in the past. Instead of saying “A tha kher mai” (very good) they would say “A tha hle” or “A tha ngei mai”. I am still reluctant to use the word ‘fe’ (very) for something solemn. (‘tam fe’ for plentiful, ‘tha fe’ for very good etc.)

According to the situation and time, there are some words and expressions which have been constructed or adopted from other language, such as, ‘insiam’ (sterilized), ‘tiket kat’ (booked a ticket), ‘hupthuk khel’ (hupthuk is a kind of gambling and ‘khel’ means play, derived from Hindi word.), tawka (Heart in playing cards), ak (spade in

playing cards), 'tial' (club in playing cards), 'zum' (diamond in playing cards), 'I mal ka kat' (I am cutting your Ace (in a card game)), "phit sarih kan tling ta' (We have gained seven points), "Bazarah ka inpho" (I am selling my wares at the market place, 'bazar' is derived from Hindi word for bazaar), "Cinema tiket i kat tawh em?" (Have you booked a ticket for the movie?), "Kani (A kind of drug) ngai tluk zetin ka chak" (I desire it as much as an addict desires kani), "A fim chi nge i duh a nu?" (What do you prefer, crystal clear or murky? For description of the colour of liquor), "Tel pava khat ka lei" (I bought ¼ litre of cooking oil. Tel (oil) and pava (1/4 litre) are derived from the Hindi words), "Tala mil chabi ka nei lo" (I don't have the key that fits the lock). Tala (lock) and chabi (key) are adopted from the Hindi words.

But there are words which are not worthy to be used even as a jest, because the younger generations might think they are appropriate. Such words are – 'tatu' (instead of neitu - owner), 'intineitu' (instead of neitu - claiming ownership), 'sumdawngtu' (instead of sumdawng-merchant), 'kal tu' (instead of ' kal' which when use as a verb means to go but as an adjective it means 'goer' - the one who went, messenger etc.) These words are found in a dictionary published by one of the distinguished publishing houses, 'chengtu' (instead of cheng - dweller) which I found in one local newspaper.

There are also some people who are almost 70 years of age who could not be regarded as new generations but wrongly use phrases and words. When their intention is to say 'hloh' (loss) they say 'hlauh' (fearful), "Enge i zuar?" instead of "Enge i zawrh?" (What are you selling?), 'puanchhia' instead of 'pawnychhia' (rag), 'thuamhnaw' in place of 'thawmhnaw' (dress), 'puanthuah' instead of 'pawnthuah' (bedroll), 'khuai zu' in place of 'khawi zu' (honey), 'ransa' (domestic animal) when they mean 'ramsa' (wild animal). Appropriate usage and meaning of words are not to be mixed up. There are times to use words like 'puanchhia' (bad cloth) and 'pawnychhia' (rag), 'pawndum' (name of one of the handloom clothes), 'puandum' (black cloth) and the words 'sial ki' (bison horns) and 'se ki' (bison horns beaten together in folk dance). The word 'rura' (acute, excessive or extreme) was generally used to denote negative conditions like chaos, panic or trouble. However, it is exactly my aim to use the word (rura) as used by the present generation.

J.F Laldailova, the editor of the journal and the author of this piece, thoughtfully reflects on the genesis of the Lushai language by observing that it was a product of a nomadic past where the Lushais constantly moved from one territory to another in search of greener pastures. However, that nomadic past did not take away the significance of attributing beauty to the act of naming things and objects but the contemporary Mizos have not invested time in naming objects and events that surround their present life. Instead, they seem to carelessly indulge in the act of naming without due regard to beauty and functionality or they seem to depend

heavily on borrowed idioms and phrases from Hindi and English. The author appreciates his forefathers' efforts in naming trees, animals and plants. In fact, he thinks that the names given to trees like '*Thlanvawng*' and '*Mukfang*' is informed by an aesthetic criterion rather than a functional or a scientific criterion. The name given to the tree, '*Mukfang*' is actually a description of the tree, '*muk*' refers to that particular tree and '*fang*' connotes 'proportion' or 'measure' and strangely, it also means 'purposelessness'. In other words, naming is not based on some typical property of the object or the perceptual quality of the object, but it is a complex description of both property and the perceptual quality. In the dictionary, Lorrain describes the tree in this manner, "the name of a tree with large roundish leaves and small round fruit. The timber, especially the heart, is durable and is used for posts. The young leaves and shoots are cooked as a vegetable-especially with rat's flesh. The bark is used appropriately in exorcising *zuhri*. The juice of the fruit is used as an adhesive." As mentioned in the dictionary, the tree appears to be used for both instrumental and ritual purposes and the sharp distinction between mundane and the sacred may not have existed in pre-colonial Lushai Hills. In some sense, the '*mukfang*' tree may not have been classified clearly into what is taxonomically called as *flora per se*.

The author examines the eclectic composition of the Duhlian dialect with vocabularies and idioms concomitantly used in other hill dialects like Hmar, Ralte and Pawih including usages borrowed from sedentary cultures of mainland India and foreign languages like English. The author seems to point out that native speakers of

the Mizo language are not investing in their language and it has led to uncritical borrowings from mainland Indian and international languages.

Further, Laldailova gives several examples of language idioms and usages that have been produced not so long ago. He cautions that these innovations may lack durability and gives reasons as to why they may wither away. For instance, he observes *“Some words and phrases which came into being but that would not last are ‘Aw an tia’ (Instead of the correct usage-‘Aw an ti’ which means ‘They said yes’), ‘Engmah a nia’ (Instead of the correct words ‘Engmah a ni lo’ which means ‘It is nothing’), ‘chheu’ (word to describe a particular action), ‘nai’ (weakling).”*¹³⁷

From the time that this article was written, the Mizo world had gone through rapid change in material transformation of their society. Common place objects, situations and transaction obtained in mainland India found its way into the Mizo society and alongside, the names of these objects and situations were also smuggled into the Mizo vocabulary. For example,

According to the situation and time, there are some words and expressions which have been constructed or adopted from other language, such as, ‘insiam’ (sterilized), ‘tiket kat’ (booked a ticket), ‘hupthuk khel’(hupthuk is a kind of gambling and ‘khel’ means play,

¹³⁷ *Hmasawwna* (Selet Thanga) and *Thangthar Tawng* (J.F Laldailova) are translated by Lalthatluanga for this study.

derived from Hindi word). “Bazarah ka inpho”(I am selling my wares at the market place, ‘bazar’ is derived from Hindi word for bazaar(market)), “Cinema tiket i kat tawh em?” (Have you booked a ticket for the movie?), “Kani (A kind of drug) ngai tluk zetin ka chak” (I desire it as much as an addict desires kani), “A fim chi nge i duh a nu?” (What do you prefer, crystal clear or murky? For description of the colour of liquor), “Tel pava khat ka lei” (I bought ¼ liter of cooking oil. Tel (oil) and pava (1/4 litre) are derived from the Hindi words), ‘Tala mil chabi ka nei lo” (I don’t have the key that fits the lock. Tala (lock) and chabi (key) are adopted from the Hindi words.¹³⁸

In the above passage, the author provides an enumeration of the vocabulary borrowed from the Hindi language in an objective fashion. Laldailova takes on the colonial philological description to task by emphasizing the inappropriateness of use of adjective instead of verb- ‘kaltu’ (instead of’ kal’ which when use as a verb means to go but as an adjective it means ‘goer’ which literally translates as- the one who went).

The author belongs to a generation which is reflecting on the Lushai language as a scribal language and not merely as speech dialect. This reflection was not possible for the missionaries like Lorrain who compiled the first dictionary and the native Luseis like Khamliana and Suaka who assisted Lorrain in compiling the

¹³⁸ Translated by Mr. Lalthatluanga

dictionary and the grammar. Laldailova appears to simultaneously grasp the pre-reflective nature of the speech dialect used by the semi-nomadic Luseis as well as the logical proclivity of the scribal language used by the modern Mizos living in the fixed territory of Indian Nation State.

In this exciting piece, Poonte provides a slice of book history of Mizoram. It emphasizes the non-religious publications and it gives brief description of author, theme of the book and its price, place and person from where it can be purchased.

Mizo Books- B. Poonte¹³⁹

The author enumerates twenty two books published in the early 1960's and advocates the purchase of the books through this piece. In the preface, the author points out the lack of book publishing in the region and reasons that printing is a capital intensive trade and therefore it is difficult to publish books in Mizo Hills District. Most of the themes of the books concentrate on secular topics like history, language, literature, customary laws, poetry, folk tales and so on. Books on poetry far outnumber publications in other areas. The prices range from maximum of Rs.6 to a minimum of 25 paise. The prominent places of selling the books include Synod Bookroom, Bara Bazar and Kulikawn, all located in Aijal (Aizawl). It also included Lungleh (Lunglei). Some of the books were not sold in shops but were available with individuals who were responsible for promoting the sale of books and also were literary figures themselves. It is interesting to note that the books advertised through

¹³⁹ Refer to Appendix-II for the translation of the item.

this article though described as secular were also written by many pastors. In some sense, the integration of the Mizo Hills with mainland India seems to have made a peculiar demand for the production of secular and patriotic culture from the Mizos. The enumeration of these 22 books goes to prove that the Mizos had accepted their challenge and were responding in this manner.

Culture- H. Thang Khuma¹⁴⁰

In this piece, Thang Khuma attempts to provide a self description of Mizo culture at one level and culture as a universal phenomenon at another level. Even as he argues that culture is local and specific, he seems to confirm that there are positive and negative attributes across different cultures. By citing Hitler's conception and practice of culture, the author says that these supposedly negative attributes may be disabling and undemocratic in spirit.

In the next paragraph, Thang Khuma deconstructs the hegemonic manner of the hierarchical classification of cultures. He argues that the Mizo culture is neither inferior to mainland Indian civilisational culture nor the imperial British culture. Further, he sees a parallel in the Mizo practice of virtues in the form of 'tlawmngaihna' with the civilisational cultures like the Jews, Hindus, Buddhist, Greeks and the Romans. Thang Khuma finds the source for practice of virtue in Mizo orature like folksongs and folktales. Likewise, the scriptures of the Jews, Hindus and the Buddhists provided a source for moral and spiritual virtues.

¹⁴⁰ Refer Appendix-III for the translation of the item.

According to Thang Khuma, culture is both immanent and transformatory. A responsible attitude towards cultural transformation is needed when colonization has become a historical reality and the Nation State as a monolithic entity as a product of that historical reality. Both external colonization and internal colonization have debilitated the inner strength of weak and marginalized communities within Nation States. This situation has provided an occasion for weaker nations to express their unity. It appears that Thang Khuma is indirectly referring to the internecine quarrels among the Mizos themselves and the process of the making of the 'we'¹⁴¹.

In the final analysis, Thang Khuma maintains that culture does not correspond merely to modern science and knowledge. In some sense, he seems to suggest that material civilization of the West alone is not enough to emulate. For him, along with the seduction of modern life, there should be prominence given to cultivating ways of traditional communities that are rooted in non-material values. In this article, the author seems skeptical of the Mizo society acquiring an acquisitive culture and he suggests that contemporary reality should be tempered with ancient Mizo virtues.

All India Radio (AIR)

This part seeks to highlight the dramatic circumstances in which AIR and Doordarshan were established in Mizoram between 1960's and 1980's. Apart from examining the volatile circumstances surrounding the installation of a unit of All India

¹⁴¹ In such troubles, they create a new 'we' identity and fight, shedding their blood to protect the 'we' that is newly born.

Radio in the Mizo Hills District, the chapter also deals with the programme content and the reception of these programmes during this period. Further, it analyses the restrictions imposed on the practice of the register of '*chanchin*' documentary form vis-à-vis the folk form including the emergence of folk songs marking the early phase of Mizo nationalism.

Since there is a contestation of the claim over the territory and its population by the insurgent group and the Nation State, it is not easy to narrate the official history of All India Radio alone. The term 'local' is used in a somewhat loose fashion. It connotes a non-state perspective to understand the state owned media and refers to a situation where the people are yet to be constituted as citizen subjects. In fact, AIR was established at a time when the Nation State had suspended the fundamental rights of its subjects in this part of the region. So, the perception of the state owned media by those people whose rights have been withdrawn provide a different view of media reception and history. The study seeks to frame this view of media and history as local history of All India Radio.

The first four decades of the 20th century saw the growth of textual compositions and the spread of the forms relating to the '*chanchin*' register which essentially connotes a realist narrative form. This realist narrative form received a set back during the twenty years of insurgency (1960's-1980's). Mizoram seemed to witness a regulation in the production of any important fiction, non-fiction, history,

journalistic or literary work during this time.¹⁴² This period may be regarded metaphorically as a boycott of the forms of the '*chanchin*' register by the Mizo literary elite and the public. There is a lack of reflexivity associated with the '*chanchin*' register and it may not be inappropriate to say that the forms associated with the '*chanchin*' register is realized only in periods of normalcy and order. In other words, '*chanchin*' is a register that encompasses forms which has deep connections with the modern State. It is not surprising that only the Indian State and the MNF produced documentary literature accusing each other and the Mizo public did not contribute to the production of artistic or literary work.

Though the Mizo National Front is arguably the most important institution in postcolonial Mizoram to imagine and affirm the Mizos as a political community, there is a pre-history to the making of Mizo nationalism. There are some critical events that occurred during colonial rule which may be seen as a precursor to the emerging political consciousness.¹⁴³ When India attained Independence in 1947, the Mizo Union as the first political party encouraged people to participate in imagining a greater Mizoram consisting of overlapping boundaries with Manipur, Tripura, Burma and Bangladesh.¹⁴⁴ Folk songs were deployed to express this newly emerging Mizo nationalism. These forms of cultural expression were not like the folk songs of the

¹⁴² *Kristian Tlangau*, the journal of Presbyterian Church was among the few exceptions. It continues to be published during the insurgency period.

¹⁴³ Several incidents relating to infringement of rights of the Mizo subjects either by the Mizo chiefs or colonial officials were reported to higher authorities seeking their intervention.

¹⁴⁴ See Chaltuahkhuma's *Political History of Mizoram*. pp 80-81

Lusei past nor were completely in tune with the Christian lyrical compositions.¹⁴⁵ Strangely, the emergency imposed in Mizoram seems to have occasioned the emergence of different kinds of lyrical compositions. These compositions were not necessarily against the Indian State nor did they approve the Mizo National Front.¹⁴⁶

The story of the territorial, linguistic entity known as Mizoram has its origin in the postcolonial Indian State. It was known as the Lushai Hills District during the colonial period. The affirmation of the Indian State began with partition of India from Pakistan. Although this is a story that is commonly shared, there have been varieties of interminable conflicts with the fragments.¹⁴⁷ The making of a national territorial community resulted in reassembling fragments in a mechanical, legalistic manner. On several occasions, physical coercion was deployed to make the fragments cohere with the whole especially for those regions which shared international boundaries with other Nation States. Mizoram is a case in point.

The territorial and ideological subsumption of the fragments into the national body is still a process that continues after six decades of the nation coming into existence. Even today, this is very evident in several parts of northeast India. In Mizoram, the first three decades after independence witnessed an armed

¹⁴⁵ Soon after India's Independence, a number of lyrical compositions like *Politic Hla* (relating to politics), *Ramthar Hla* (songs lamenting for a new land) and *Hnam Hla* (patriotic songs) emerged. See B.Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature*.pp.370-382.

¹⁴⁶ See Cherrie L. Chhange's *Loneliness in the Midst of Curfews- The Mizo Insurgency Movement and Terror Lore* in *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India*. pp.239-244.

¹⁴⁷ Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and its fragments*. Princeton University Press, 1993.

confrontation with an important radical political group claiming to represent the Mizos as an independent political and territorial community. This political group called themselves Mizo National Front (MNF). They professed Christianity as their faith and resisted territorial and cultural claim of the Indian State over Mizoram.¹⁴⁸ Ironically, this Christian identity was already in place and what they crafted was an ethnic political identity with territorial markers. The making of the ethnic political identity vis-à-vis the Indian State was a play that allowed for a contest of the Hindu cultural inheritance of mainland India and the staging of a religious (Christian) and ethnic (Mongoloid) differences with the rest of the nation.

Apart from physical coercion, the State established its ideological apparatus in the form of educational institutions and effectively installed and ran state owned broadcast mediums like AIR initially and Doordarshan later. At the height of these confrontations, the Government produced and disseminated newspapers, fixed chains of loudspeakers in various parts of Aijal town to broadcast official announcements, continuously airdropped newsletters and bulletins across the Mizo Hills District in support of their action against the supposedly lawless insurgents.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ C. Nunthara, *Mizoram: Society and Polity*. p.197

¹⁴⁹ Unpublished documents relating to MNF and Government of India sourced at Aizawl Theological College archive.

State of Exception as context for installation of All India Radio station in Mizo Hills District

The state owned media AIR and Doordarshan emerged as cultural institutions affirming the State and the national community on an everyday basis in this region. These institutions were established at a time when there was military offensive against the important insurgent group Mizo National Front who claimed to represent territorial and political autonomy for the Mizos. The affirmation of the national community is carried out in the name of economic progress and the broadcasting institutions were supposed to provide cultural and ideological resources for pursuing the national agenda of growth and prosperity. All India Radio and Doordarshan became instruments of the State which produces consensus from the fragments for their participation in the imagined economy.

On the one hand, the establishing of the state owned broadcasting institutions in non-mainland India during a period of conflict between forces supposedly representing the fragments and the coercive apparatus of the State clearly indicates that it is supposed to perform a legitimizing role for protecting the juridical power of the Nation State. On the other hand, the ideology of subsuming the fragment into the whole on behalf of progress and development inflicts violence of another sort. It is this twin context that surrounds the deployment of All India Radio and Doordarshan in Mizoram. One kind of violence refers to a context where there is a state of exception¹⁵⁰ and the other when there is supposedly a state of normalcy.

¹⁵⁰ See Paul A. Passavant's article on *The Contradictory State of Giorgio Agamben* in *Political Theory*, Vol 35, No.2, April 2007 (147-174) and Ellen Bellina and Paola Bonifazio's book on *State of Exception: Cultural Responses to the Rhetoric of Fear*. Cambridge Scholar Press, 2006.

It appears that the Indian State has left a scar in the biography of the postcolonial Mizo community. For Mizos who are now aged 60 years and above, the early decades after independence especially the 1960's and 1970's are even now relived as a traumatic event. A state of exception prevailed for almost two decades due to the armed confrontation of the Indian State and the MNF. The state of exception refers to suspension of law and fundamental rights of people in order to protect the Nation State which claims to be in danger. The suspension of law allowed the Indian State to bomb its own territory in the name of defending the integrity and territory of the Nation.¹⁵¹ Lives of the people were less important than maintaining and exercising the juridical power of the Nation State. Ironically, the announcement of the state of exception (1966) coincides with the launching of All India Radio station in Aizawl (1966). In other words, a public broadcasting system was established in order to reinforce the suspension of law and fundamental rights of citizens in this region. Though the emergency is lifted off and on, a psyche of fear persists during those decades and it is possible that the state owned media contributed to legitimizing this anomic moment. One of the contemporary writers tragically recalls the prevalence of a culture of silence when any form of expression was forbidden:

“When the Movement was at its peak, i.e. in the 60s and early 70s, the act of writing itself posed innumerable risks, and was reason enough to be

¹⁵¹ See Cherrie L. Chhangte's *Loneliness in the Midst of Curfews- The Mizo Insurgency Movement and Terror Lore* in *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India*. Edited by Tilottoma Misra. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2011. Cherrie cited, “With Jet fighters dropping bombs over Aizawl, Mizoram again became the only instance of India bombing its own territory.” p.239

considered a suspect in the eyes of the Army, whose soldiers were often illiterate themselves. Even if they were literate, they did not understand the Mizo language, and therefore, could not differentiate between potentially harmful documents and harmless creative outpourings. Thus, rather than go through the hassle of being accused as rebels and insurgents, people avoided writing as much as possible. Much of whatever little was available by way of written records of this period, such as diaries, journals, and creative writing were burnt either by the Army, or by the authors themselves, for fear of punishment. Also, there was a lot of censorship in the media, notably the All India Radio, which was the most popular media and easily available to the masses”.¹⁵²

This unfolding of the Orwellian stage whether to write and to think becomes an act of heresy is also the occasion for imagining a collective self bereft of cultural form or expression. It is interesting to note that the most important form of media that was circulated and consumed was the folk song. It is believed that there were innumerable compositions of folk songs which expressed the collective anguish and extraordinary sorrow of the Mizos.¹⁵³ Even as traces of this cultural creativity are difficult to locate, the curatorial practices of the State allowed for a sort of surveillance where any potentially subversive material was quickly found and

¹⁵² Ibid. Cherrie, p.239

¹⁵³ “Songs, thus, played an important part in reflecting the state of mind of the people, notably the psychological and emotional impact of terror upon them. In the event, many of the folk songs that emerged at this time became transmitters of collectively shared feelings and sentiments; with the singers themselves taking on the role of “vectors””. Ibid. Cherrie, p.239

immediately destroyed. For these many reasons, the twenty years of armed confrontation between the Indian State and the MNF has not produced an archive to resurrect the event except for the living memory of people who inhabited those times.¹⁵⁴

Trauma of engaging with the realist ‘chanchin’ narrative

It is clear from several accounts that the state of exception which prevailed in Mizoram failed to produce realist narratives during and even after that period. This may be due to the extraordinary loss of individual and community self suffered during the state of exception. The psychic infringement did not allow for an objective reading of the rupture and the ‘*chanchin*’ narrative failed to carry the weight of this loss which was beyond the literal and the documentary. Among other reasons, the ‘*chanchin*’ as a narrative form follows and depicts the objective world. Such a form of representation cannot engage with a battered, severely compromised moral self whose source is beyond the literal imagination and representation. ‘*Chanchin*’ cannot access the source nor represent the loss of the self. When a state of exception is imposed, reality is transfigured and the objective world cannot be taken for granted including one’s own life and body. The absence of ‘*chanchin*’ is a reflection of loss of control not only over representation and textuality but it connotes a lack of control over one’s involuntary corporeal world. The disappearance of representation and textuality during this period may be true only for the ‘*chanchin*’ register. The Government of India may possess an archive relating to the insurgency and the MNF

¹⁵⁴ Personal communication with Vanneihluanga (June, 2008) and Lalkhawliana (June, 2008).

may possess documents relating to their war against the Indian State, but the Mizo creativity did not produce literary expressive forms about their collective anguish and suffering. This cultural hurt and injury is yet to find expression in any realist narrative form.

The mid 1960's and 1970's must have received a setback for the growth of the '*chanchin*' narrative. The declaration of the armed struggle between the Indian State and the MNF had made the production, circulation, distribution and consumption of any written material in the form of document a suspect in the eyes of both the Indian State and MNF. As the '*chanchin*' register is available for scrutiny or validation because of its transparent and manifest content, writers practicing realist narrative forms did not feel that they can produce content out of this form. Hence, scribes and journalists, literary and cultural commentators, academics and creative individuals found it difficult to practice and produce literary and cultural artifacts during this period.¹⁵⁵

It is precisely during these post-Independent years that many linguistic regions produced commendable literary artifacts in mainland India. These literary productions reinforce the linguistic regions that the Nation State draws in the mid 50's. It does not merely reinforce the administrative region as cultural region, but the literary and cultural productions also reaffirm the national community in the process.

¹⁵⁵ Personal communication with Laltluangliana Khiangte who informs the scholar that the Mizo Academy of Letters, the elite body for promoting literary productions and for shaping literary practices had to close its establishment from 1966 to 1970 because of the armed conflict.

For regions in the northeast including Mizoram, conditions for literary and cultural production are not available for affirming either the region or the nation. Both the Nation and the region are contested and obviously, there is a dearth of commendable literary or media productions during this mid 60's and 70's in Mizoram.

The local history of All India Radio has to be written against this moment where any creative thought fails to find expression in writing or performative arts. It is this culture of silence that is performed by the Indian State through the cultural institutions like All India Radio initially and Doordarshan later. For MNF, there is a need to penetrate this culture of silence through the armed resistance and also a counter propaganda against the Indian State. In a dramatic encounter with the Indian State, MNF literally captured the All India Station at Lunglei. The insurgency started airing programmes for almost two weeks in 1966.¹⁵⁶ This history of staging a coup and hijacking a state owned radio station has never been part of the official history of the state owned media.

The decades between 1950's and 1980's are crucial to the making of modern Mizo identity and Mizo culture. These decades announced the entry of the Indian nation state into the lives and cultural processes of the people of the Mizo Hills. An active resistance against the incorporation of the Mizo Hills into the Indian state is founded in the mid 1960's but its roots may be traced back to the colonial period. Apart from the military offenses against the radical insurgent groups, the State also

¹⁵⁶ Personal communication with R. Zamawia, a former Mizo National Front leader, in 2010.

deployed cultural institutions like All India Radio and set afloat certain cultural processes through the opening up of several educational institutions offering higher education that was not available prior to 1950, introduction of Hindi as an official language in schools and colleges and regular broadcast of news in the official State language leading to an imagination and reproduction of India on an everyday basis. This affirmation of the nation was closely contested from the 1960's onward to the early 1980's.

In the writing of the official history of All India Radio and Doordarshan, these local histories are erased. In fact, the Deputy Commissioner of Mizo Hills District flagged off the launching of All India Radio with these remarks:

"The All India Radio station Aijal that goes on air from today marks the opening of a new chapter in the economic and cultural history of this beautiful corner of India- the Mizo District. It fulfills a long cherished desire and a keenly felt need of the people of this district...A beginning has been made today to bring to the Mizo people a powerful medium for creative expression of their widely acknowledged cultural talents and native genius. The reputed music and melodies of Mizo District will be further enriched by knowledge of other music of India and will radiate from the transmitter at Aijal to take cheer and joy to the rest of India; and the programmes of other areas will bring us nearer and closer to the cultural activities in the rest of India. Apart from music, both Indian and western, of

which we will certainly have a rich and heavy dose, the programmes will bring us closer to the thoughts, genius and ideals of the leaders of our great nation; and the words of wisdom and advise of elders and leaders of Mizo District will reach a large audience who are not otherwise reached. News broadcast would be clearer and apart from news from Delhi and Gauhati we will hear news of events in the Mizo District almost as and when they happen. Knowledge and experience will spread about our developmental programmes and progress. Truly, the AIR Station, Aijal breathes in a new atmosphere in Mizo District- a healthy atmosphere, for promotion of culture, education, knowledge and economic progress.”¹⁵⁷

This is an excerpt from a lengthy speech delivered by the most important dignitary of the Indian state. It is interesting to note that this event is supposed to trigger off a cultural and economic history of the region. The Indian Nation State’s claim over its fragments has been in the name of providing progress and development. The mention of flagging off a cultural history is rather intriguing. This speaks of a civilisational project of the new nation state wherein it assumes that there is a lack of a substantive culture even while conceding that the Mizos have a great talent for singing and performative arts. At some point in his address, the Deputy Commissioner states that All India Radio may provide an opportunity to produce programmes that “...*will bring us closer to the thoughts, genius and ideals of the leaders of our great nation.*” This preamble affixed to

¹⁵⁷ Accessed from Mizoram State Archive.

the launching of All India Radio jars with the letter written by the Mizo National Front to the Prime Minister in the same year:

“The political immaturity and ignorance which lead the Mizo people to the misguided choice of integration with India was a direct result of the banning by the British Government of any kind of political organization till April 1946 within Mizoland which was declared ‘a political area.’ During the fifteen years of close contact and association with India, the Mizo people had not been able to feel at home with Indians or in India nor have they been able to feel that their joys and sorrows have really ever been shared by India. They do not, therefore, feel Indian. Being created a separate nation, they cannot go against the nature to cross the barriers of nationality. They refused to occupy a place within India as they consider it to be unworthy of their national dignity and harmful to the interest of their prosperity. Nationalism and patriotism inspired by the political consciousness has now reached its maturity and the cry for political self-determination is the only wish and inspiration of the people, ne plus ultra, the only final and perfect embodiment of social living for them. The only aspiration and political cry, is the creation of MIZORAM, a free and sovereign state to govern herself, to work out her own destiny and to formulate her own foreign policy.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Lalrawnliana, *Zoramín Zalenna a Sual*, Vol-1, R.M.Press Khatla.1995. p.96

This important document very clearly states that the Mizos do not want to be subjected to the Indian Nation States' cultural or economic imperative. They argue such a subdominant position would only bring national indignity to the Mizo people. The refusal to yield to cultural or economic imperative of the Indian Nation State forms the basis for imagining the Mizo identity and culture at that juncture. In those turbulent years, All India Radio appears to have reported the volatile conflict between the MNF and the Indian State in a biased manner. Regularly, they carried news regarding the MNF casualties and rarely the casualties suffered by the Indian army.¹⁵⁹ The Mizo public particularly from the educated classes found it difficult to openly sympathize with MNF but they were in broad sympathy with the MNF cause. This attitude towards the insurgent movement is reflected in their hostility towards people working in institutions like All India Radio and those teachers who worked in a number of schools in the district. It appears that the Mizo employees of All India Radio in the early years of its inception were perceived as traitors.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, school teachers were regularly chastised by the MNF cadres to boycott their work.

All the same, All India Radio emerged as a popular medium among the Mizo public due to its transmission of Mizo songs and its supply of daily news. '*Chanchinthar*' was the name used for both radio news bulletins and news from newspapers. Never before was a technology employed to broadcast the Mizo oral performances in such a manner. The novelty of the medium must have contributed to its popularity. The Mizos close familiarity with oral forms must have enhanced the

¹⁵⁹ Personal communication with Vanneihluanga in June, 2008.

¹⁶⁰ Informed through personal communication with Lalhmerliani in June, 2008.

reception of radio among the people of the hills. Besides, the absence of the tradition of producing and consuming daily newspapers in a popular manner allowed for not so literate people to participate in the act of listening to their familiar songs and lyrics.

Daily newspapers emerged during the Second World War.¹⁶¹ There was a felt need for news because many Mizos were recruited for serving in the British army and the relatives of those soldiers were keen to keep track of their lives through the reading of newspapers. But only the literates had access to these newspapers. Things changed with the arrival of radio news. Listening to news became a popular practice. It may not be wrong to say that radio was the first technological medium which introduced a popular culture of consuming news and music. Radio news during the early years of All India Radio was consumed to have knowledge of the movements of both MNF and the Indian State. It also provided recreation in the form of the Mizo songs that were broadcast during those early years. Meanwhile the MNF banned listening to the Hindi songs on the radio and prohibited wearing Indian dresses as they felt that the 'vai' culture had crept in too far among the Mizos. People who wanted to listen to Hindi films songs were scared and would listen to it with a very low volume.¹⁶² This initiative of MNF to pass strictures against the people who tend to take on Indian practices has to be seen within the Christian ideology that

¹⁶¹ The superintendent of Lushai Hills, A.G. Mc Call started a daily newspaper called *Ni tin Chanchin* which means 'daily news'. The newspaper featured only war news. It was printed at Thankunga Press in Aijal. Another weekly newspaper titled *Tun Hapta Kar Chanchin* was published by a Lusei named Liankhuma. Perhaps, he was the first Lusei to ever publish a newspaper. See Vanlallawma's *An Interpretative History of Mizo Journalism in Hringlang Tlang*. MCL Publication, Aizawl.1998.pp.20-21

¹⁶² Personal interview with Lalkhawliana, a former insurgent. He is also the owner of an English daily newspaper of Mizoram, *Highlander* in June, 2008.

MNF professed. So, the act of listening to Hindi songs and wearing Indian dresses is perceived by MNF as participating in Hindu practices and is representative of the Indian State which is construed as Hindu State. It may be therefore inferred that the programmes aired by All India Radio were interpreted by MNF as representative of the Hindu culture and therefore suspect. This public broadcasting system in the eyes of MNF was not regarded as a secular institution but a communal institution. The MNF at times argued that the Indian State consisted of non-believers and the struggle against them aimed at establishing a Christian State.

The people of the Mizo Hills District were subjected to two forms of cultural regulation. The Indian State prohibited any cultural expression that asserted the territorial and political sovereignty of Mizo nationalism. MNF restrained articulation of any critique against itself and did not allow for autonomous expression that was neither supportive of the Indian State or MNF itself.

In fact, MNF's relationship with the Church went through a difficult phase. The Church denounced the violence committed by MNF and also criticized the MNF for arguing that violence was essential for establishing a Christian State. It is also true that the Church did not approve of the violence committed by the Indian State. Often, the Mizo Church leaders acted as interlocutors between MNF and the government of India.

MNF enjoyed relationships with China, Burma and Bangladesh. After Bangladesh became independent in 1972, they found it difficult to seek shelter in the neighboring country because the Indian Government was friendly with the new national Bangladesh Government. MNF sought monetary and military assistance from China and the Chinese Government reciprocated positively on certain occasions by complying with their request. In a certain manner, the confrontation between MNF and Government of India also had international ramifications. It is for these reasons that when the Aizawl Doordarshan station was inaugurated in 1982, the Department observed:

Doordarshan was not known to the people of the State. The people in this landlocked State were however fortunate in a way to have access to Bangladesh programmes in the west and programmes of Myanmar in the east. In those days, the former President of Bangladesh and the top brass of Military regimes in Myanmar were better known to the people than our National Leaders. This unhealthy trend was soon reversed when the VLTP started relaying National programmes originated from Delhi, though its coverage was very limited.¹⁶³

Since Mizoram is a landlocked region, both All India Radio and Doordarshan were seen as important tools of communication connecting the region with other mainland regions of India. To what extent did All India Radio and Doordarshan

¹⁶³ Profile of Doordarshan Kendra, Aizawl, Mizoram prepared by DD Aizawl station. p. 2.

realize its capacity to produce a national culture in Mizoram seems a difficult question to answer. Of course, it is true that when the newly inaugurated radio station at Aizawl started beaming Hindi film songs, there was a popular reception from the Mizos immediately. As previously mentioned, this enthusiasm for Hindi film songs quickly came under the scrutiny of MNF who acted as gatekeepers of culture. MNF actively discouraged the consumption of popular Indian culture purveyed through All India Radio and Doordarshan.

Conclusion

This chapter deals with the cultural institutions, processes and products that were manifest during this state of political turmoil that the region experienced between 1950s and 1980s. In the process of dealing with two sets of disparate institutions like '*Kohhran Beng*' and '*Thu leh Hla*' on one side and the units of AIR on the other side, the chapter clearly suggests that historical and realist narrative forms including journalistic genre did not proliferate. Since the forms relating to the '*chanchin*' register were proscribed by the state and the insurgent group too giving rise to expressive tradition of singing and reciting associated with the register of '*thawnthu*'. In other words, the theoretical proposal put forward by the chapter is an acknowledgment of the fact that the register of '*chanchin*' requires state support and patronage without which it may not prosper. Apart from theorizing the productive tensions between '*chanchin*' and '*thawnthu*', the chapter also documents the dramatic seizure of All India Radio station for a number of days in 1966 by the insurgent group, MNF.

Chapter V

Contemporary Media Scenario of Mizoram

The main aim of this chapter is to map the print, literary and audio visual performative culture in contemporary Mizoram. More specifically, it deals with the study of three inter-related areas, namely the quality and quantity of the commercial press, the tardy growth of the cable television industry, and the continued presence of the literary and religious public sphere through the magazines, *Kristian Tlangau* and *Thu leh Hla*.

This period (1990s onwards till date) signifies the integration of Mizoram symbolically and materially into the Indian Nation State. With Mizoram becoming a federal unit, the cultural and economic policy of the region has to cohabit the macro policy of the Nation located within an amorphous global order. This negotiation between mainland India and the borderland Mizoram is further reconfigured by the advent of satellite television through transnational channels. Though the newspaper industry is yet to become resilient, there have been experiments in the local production and circulation of sound and images on cable television along with a concern for energizing the Mizo language and literary practices through the Church and civic bodies such as the Mizo Academy of Letters. This chapter will lay out the material and cultural conditions of production and consumption of both popular and literary culture.

The press, the cable television industry and the literary magazines are enumerated in the context of Mizoram becoming part of the Nation State. From the 1990's onwards, due to the liberalization policy followed by the federal Government, literary and media institutions are not only part of the national culture but participate in a global environment. In fact, the locally produced programmes for the cable television industry do not imitate the mainland popular culture—predominantly the Bollywood industry, but they seem to closely follow both Western and South Asian television industry especially Korean television channels.

As mentioned previously, Mizoram becomes a federal unit from 1986. This integration of Mizoram with the Nation State provides a new context for literary, artistic and media production and consumption. The Mizo language is yet to be commercialized and it goes hand in hand with the fact that the region has not yet developed capital based agricultural, industrial or service oriented economic sectors.¹⁶⁴ The lack of commercialization of the Mizo language is reflected in the absence of a vibrant, capitalist newspaper industry. Except for one Mizo language newspaper which claims to have a circulation of more than 30 thousand for a population of about 11 lakhs, none of the other newspapers possess a circulation of more than 10 thousand.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ It is true that even in mainland linguistic regions, the official language is yet to become commercialized. Jeffrey points out the absence of commercialization of the Kannada language in Karnataka although its industrial urban indicators are better than other linguistic regions where language has been more or less commercialized.

¹⁶⁵ Two newspapers namely The Aizawl Post and Zozam Times claim that they sell close to 10 thousand copies.

As stated in the previous chapter, the political atmosphere which prevailed in the state in the immediate decade after Independence failed to give rise to a public sphere including the growth of a newspaper culture. Perhaps, if Mizoram had not witnessed a period of turbulence for the first thirty years after Independence, the State's patronage for the economy and culture, especially the Mizo language, would have allowed for more rapid growth of a capitalist press and wider diffusion and print consumption of Mizo language.

With the new 'Look East' policy, it is likely that the entire northeast region including Mizoram would witness an opening up of international borders with Myanmar, Thailand, China and the entire Southeast Asian region.¹⁶⁶ This may provide an occasion for the growth of economy and media in the northeast region, including Mizoram.¹⁶⁷

From the early 1990's, the landlocked region of Mizoram like other mainland regions in India began accessing global satellite television. The reception of both western television programmes along with South Korean television programmes

¹⁶⁶ Thongkhohal Haokip, *India's Look East Policy: Prospects and Challenges for Northeast India*. The Paper was presented at the North East India Council of Social Science Research's national seminar on India's Look East Policy and North East India: Achievements and Constraints, Shillong, 26-27th March 2010. http://www.freewebs.com/roberthaokip/articles/Indias_Look_East_policy_Northeast.pdf accessed on 20th October, 2011.

¹⁶⁷ Some of the northeast radical groups are resisting this opening up of the international boundaries. Comments given by Mohn Kikon, the discussant at *Trapping and Un-trapping the Bordered: issues and challenges of people in cross-border situation* session of 2nd International Conference of the Asian Research Borderlands Network-Asian Borderlands: Enclosure, Interaction and Transformation. 5-7 November 2010, Chiangmai, Thailand.

became very popular in many regions of the northeast including Mizoram. The Mizo appetite for watching soap operas from the Korean channels like *Arirang* rose phenomenally. A visible youth culture developed around these transnational channels which aired a variety of programmes including football.¹⁶⁸

As mentioned previously, the literary public sphere and the religious sphere have always been intertwined. The three important institutions that mediate literary culture in contemporary Mizoram are the Mizo Academy of Letters, the Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church with their renowned publications, namely, *Thu leh Hla* and *Kristian Tlangau*. Out of these three literary organs, *Kristian Tlangau* is the oldest, having a publishing history of more than a century. *Thu leh Hla* has a history of almost 50 years. Among other influences, these two journals appear to play an important role in the career of the Mizo language and they seem to shape its linguistic and literary trajectories.

The ‘*chanchin*’ and the ‘*thawnthu*’ are continuously debated in these journals. Though the ‘*chanchin*’ is the preferred form of narrative for these journals, the boundaries get constantly redefined in the literary criticism as practiced in the discussions engendered in the journals. This chapter will contextualize the importance of these journals for the growth of contemporary Mizo language and literature.

¹⁶⁸ See Daisy Hasan’s article on ‘*Out of the Box*’- *Television Representations of North-East India* in *Sarai Reader: Crisis/Media*, 2004, pp.126-129

In the previous chapters, there has been an adequate narrative description regarding the connected history of literature, print and performative traditions. This history of speech, text and print seem to present itself as independent of each other but a close enquiry may reveal a seamless flow between acoustic, visual, kinesthetic and the tactile media forms. The making of the field of the contemporary Mizo sensorium is a complex process which this chapter in a limited manner will attempt to describe and analyze.¹⁶⁹

Print Media

Since the colonial government evolved a policy of isolation of the Lushai Hills District from mainland India, there is a notable absence of representative institutions including the lack of a newspaper culture. The colonial government and the missionaries patronized education only at the school level. In other parts of the country, the demand for school text books, literary publications and newspapers grew simultaneously along with emergence of nationalism. The colonial government was forced to at least rhetorically engage with representative institutional demands by constituting local civic bodies, regional legislative bodies and imperial judicial and legislative bodies. The connection between growth of regional languages, literary cultures and journalistic traditions occur in response to the changes instituted by the colonial rule. In the absence of representative aspirations, the Lusei language in its formative years served mostly to engage with religious needs rather than political or

¹⁶⁹ Cantwell deploys the term 'ethnoneotic plenum' to describe the collective structures of the community that unconsciously informs the making of literary, artistic and religious practices. Cited in Betsy Taylor's *Public Folklore, Nation Building and Regional Others: Comparing Appalachian USA and Northeast India* in Indian Folklore Research Journal, Vol 1, No. 2, 2002: 1-27

community needs. The lack of a newspaper culture is also reflective of the representative aspirations of the Lusei people during colonial period.

During the first three decades after Independence, the volatile situation of the Mizo Hills inhibited the emergence of a public sphere to represent a conversational space between the State and the Mizo society. For almost two decades (1960's to 1980's) in the Mizo Hills District, the armed conflict between the radical Mizo National Front and the Government of India led to the imposing of Emergency and suspension of fundamental rights of the Mizo people. Since the fundamental right to freedom of speech was suspended along with the right to assemble, produce and distribute information regarding governance, the major casualty was the absence of a demand for a public sphere including the inauguration of a newspaper culture.

In other words, for almost 70 years of colonial and postcolonial rule, Mizoram did not experience representative forms of institution nor actively produce a counter public sphere. Since the rule of law was suspended, the need for information regarding governance was not available and the Government broadcast channels like All India Radio and Doordarshan purveyed censored news. When the Emergency was lifted and Mizoram was declared a Federal State in the mid 1980's, there was a gradual demand for a newspaper industry. The changed political context did not give rise to a vibrant newspaper industry because the economy of Mizoram does not possess an adequate agricultural and industrial base. Also, the size of the population is not numerically large for expansion of readers or viewers.

From the mid 1980's, newspapers and periodicals rose in terms of numbers but not in terms of circulation.¹⁷⁰ This may be attributed to stable political rule and the uninterrupted working of electoral politics. Ever since the State formation, the Mizo National Front contested elections as a recognized political party and ruled Mizoram several times. The Congress party is the other important National political party that has contested elections in Mizoram. The newspapers have generally reported and commented on the policies of the ruling parties, opinions of the Church regarding these policies and implementation of these policies. Adequate space is also provided for writing about the cultural elite, notably the musical bands, and few newspapers carry advertisements. In other words, electoral politics has made it possible to produce and consume newspapers only from the last decade of the last millennium. Today, news is consumed as both information and commodity.

The term '*chanchinbu*' is used interchangeably for newspapers or periodicals. This has acquired a new currency in the changed political context. In other words, press as the fourth estate becomes possible when people's fundamental right to freedom of speech and life is guaranteed by the State. The colonial rulers governed the hills by invoking the traditional authority of the chiefs even as they dramatically reconfigured the pre-existing fragile structures of authority and power. Along with the apparent authority of the traditional chiefs, the Church provided another principle for organizing the Lusei society. Together, between the Church and the colonial state,

¹⁷⁰ Newspaper like Zoram Chhantu (1986), Saiha Times (1986) Hnehtu (1988), Hringlang (1988), Pasaltha (1988), Zawlkhawpui (1988), Entlang (1989), Zorin (1989), Virthli (1989), Morning Post (1991), Mizo Express (1993), The Hero (1992), The Vox (1993), National Observer (1996), Zoram Hruaitu (1996) and periodicals like Sports (1983), Rawnthar (1984), Sakeibaknei (1985), Senhri (1985), Aizawl Bazar (1988), Lei Hringnun (1991), Zonda (1993), News Today (1995), Zozam (1995) were produced.

they blurred the difference between traditional and modern authority, Lusei state and society.

The term '*chanchin*' as applied to journalism may imply objective news or reporting. In colonial Lushai Hills District, the distinction between state and society became blurred due to the apparent power delegated to the Lushai chiefs leading to the absence of a space for critiquing the state or to plant the seed for the profession of journalism. A critique of established authority came only with India gaining Independence but that critique took the form of an armed conflict. So, the seeds of a realist representation of authority and power in the form of journalistic discourse are a little more than two decades old. In other words, '*chanchin*' as a realist journalistic narrative is possible only when the rule of law prevails.

This is not to say that there were no experiments in producing journalistic writings during the colonial period. In fact, the first newspaper, *Mizo Chanchin Laishuih* dates back to 1898 and was a handwritten newspaper, circulated among the colonial native officials in the Lushai Hills District. This was followed by an important periodical, *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* (1902), which lasted for almost four decades. The Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church have made two solid contributions to the Mizo journalistic tradition by producing two important periodicals namely, *Kristian Tlangau* (1911) and *Kohhran Beng* (1946). These Church periodicals are still being produced. However, all the three above mentioned

periodicals did not provide a critique of the colonial state, traditional power or Church authority. In fact, they were deployed to internalize the authority of these institutions.

Apart from these recognized periodicals, the Lushai Hills District saw the appearance of the first proclaimed daily newspaper *Ni tin Chanchin* which means 'daily news' started by a colonial official, A.G. McCall, in order to mobilize sympathy for the Second World War and also to provide news regarding the conscripted Mizos in the British Army.¹⁷¹ Among other reasons, as the borders between India and Burma became an active zone of conflict with the Japanese advancing through the Burmese territory. The news was mainly delivered in the English language but it was translated into Lusei by some natives.¹⁷² It seems that the Luseis had developed an appetite for news of this kind and the newspaper was very popular.

Around the same time, there was an effort from the newly educated class to produce literary and cultural articulations that instilled pride about their land and their people. The secular poetry associated with the Serkawn Concert in the late 1930's is a reflection of an emerging nationalist disposition among the Mizos. The newly emerging educated class who were trying to imagine a horizontal community (community based on non-ascriptive status derived initially through a protestant ethic) came from non-traditional elite. In fact, the bulk of the supporters for the Mizo National Front belonged to this aspiring educated class. Since religious identity

¹⁷¹ C. Vanlallawma, *Hringlang Tlang*. p.20

¹⁷² The war news that Mc Call received was translated into Lushai dialect by Lalmawia and was printed at Thankunga Press. See C. Vanlallawma *Hringlang Tlang* p.21

preceded the political identity and the articulation of political identity coincided with an armed conflict, this educated class did not use the journalistic discourse to express solidarity immediately after Independence. Of course, the imposition of Emergency gave rise to the use of folksongs and other traditional performative genres.¹⁷³ This cultural improvisation was made to substitute for the absence of the 'chanchin' or the 'chanchinbu'.

Brief Enumeration of Mizo Language Newspapers in Postcolonial Mizoram

On the eve of India's Independence in 1947, the Lushai Hills District theoretically came under the Parliamentary system of democracy. The first political party, 'Mizo Common People's Union' was inaugurated in 1946 and the same year saw the appearance of their political organ, 'Mizo,' a periodical. It was soon followed by a weekly magazine 'Zoram Thupuan' in 1947 started by another political party, United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO) which professed secession from India and merger with the then State of Burma. In 1948, the Mizo Common People's Union became 'Mizo Union' and the new outfit published a weekly periodical 'Mizo Arsi.'

Apart from these overtly political publications, the Presbyterian Church also published periodicals like 'Harhna Hruaina' (1949) and 'Upa Lengkhawm' (1949) along with the Baptist Church's 'Kohhran Beng'. It is likely that the Church was getting anxious about the pronounced articulation of the Mizo community as

¹⁷³ See Cherrie L. Chhange's 'Loneliness in the midst of curfew: The Mizo Insurgency Movement and Terror Lore' in The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India. Edited by Tilotoma Misra. p.239-240

linguistic, territorial and ethnic community in addition to being a Christian religious community.¹⁷⁴ In other words, the religious identity precedes the political identity and often feed into each other although occasionally they do not seem to complement each other. For instance, the important literary and cultural organ '*Kristian Tlangau*' did not stop publishing when emergency was imposed in the mid 1960's. The only occasion when the '*Kristian Tlangau*' stopped publication was during the Second World War as they could not procure newsprint and other materials needed for publishing the magazine.¹⁷⁵

The Mizo Hills District Council of Assam in 1950's experienced a new atmosphere among the freshly educated elites of Aizawl. There seemed to be a thirst for reading content which was neither overtly political nor religious. Apart from the regular Church based magazines and political organs, the decade saw an increase in non-Church and non-political publications which has not emerged in the region before. This may be characterized as efforts mainly coming from individuals who were interested in developing new literary and cultural taste against the background of developmental and cultural agenda of the Indian Nation State. Publications included themes from literature, education, children's literature and also Government policies and programmes. Examples include publications like *Thlirvelna* (1953), a literary bi-monthly magazine from Lunglei, *Zoram Hriattirna* (1953), the District Council newspaper mainly announcing the Government's information, *Mizo Naupang* (1953), a children's magazine, *Hun Thar* (1954), a weekly paper on wars, and *Tunlai*

¹⁷⁴ The first issue of 'Kohhran Beng' explicitly mentions this kind of anxiety of the missionaries.

¹⁷⁵ Personal communication with Rev. Zosangliana Colney in November, 2011.

(1957), *Sikul Thlirna* (1957) and *Zirtirtu Thian* (1959), which were educational magazines. Nevertheless, it appears that there is an absence of journalistic writing based on objective facts among the publications, such as hard news and reporting.

Due to the Mautam famine in 1959 and the emergence of insurgency through the political organization, the Mizo National Front in the District, there was unusual decline in any form of literary or journalistic production.¹⁷⁶ *Hruaitu* (1961), *Zalen* (1962), *Tunlai Chanchin* (1962-Govt. newspaper) and *Thu leh Hla* (1965) were the few papers that appeared during the period. These newspapers and periodicals could not continue their publications during the peak year of the armed conflict in 1966-1967. *Tawrhbawm* (1968) appeared at Aizawl only towards the end of the decade.

The armed conflict continued for more than two decades and there was a general repression of people's voices including journalists. On several occasions, writers and journalists were physically assaulted and sometimes imprisoned by the Indian State.¹⁷⁷ Also, when the MNF found that the newspapers did not adequately reflect the insurgent's point of view, the journalists were subjected to similar forms of repression.¹⁷⁸ Perhaps, for the first time, some idea of the public sphere emerged at this moment and the interests of the Mizo public outside the security concerns of the

¹⁷⁶ An exception to this general rule, 'Kristian Tlangau,' the organ of the Presbyterian Church continued its publications during the insurgency period.

¹⁷⁷ Such incidents have been cited in MJA's Souvenir, Mizoram Journalists Association, 1996.p.11

¹⁷⁸ Personal communication with Robert Lalchhuana, owner of 'Romei' newspaper in 2005.

Nation State and the political concerns of the Mizo National Front, were articulated. The publication of the literary organ, *Thu Leh Hla* of the Mizo Academy of Letters during this troubled period may be an indication of the presence of a public expression that cannot be explained as reinforcing the ideology of the Nation State or the agenda of the insurgent group, Mizo National Front. In the writing of the postcolonial history of Mizoram, this democratic voice seems to have become invisible. This period offers a glimpse of a transition from peculiar traditional authority inflected by the colonial rule through a policy of isolation to a democratic representative form of governance in postcolonial India.

A number of newspapers came into existence between 1970's and 1980's. They were *Mizo Aw* (1972), *Zoen* (1972), *Romei* (1973), *Leitlangpui* (1973), *Zomi* (1973), *Harhna* (1975), *Youth Herald* (1975), *Chhawrpial* (1976), *Zobawm* (1977), *Varparh* (1978), *Hunthar* (1979), *Thuthar* (1979) and *Vanglaini* (1978). Of the Mizo language newspapers, only *Mizo Aw*, *Zoen*, *Harhna*, *Romei*, *Chhawrpial* and *Vanglaini* have survived. At this time, a majority of the Mizo language newspapers followed a tabloid format and they were mostly printed in Aizawl or Lunglei. While *Highlander* (1972) was the only English daily newspaper of that period which supported the militant political party, MNF, the newspaper *Mizo Aw* reflected the views of the Mizo Congress Party which identified itself with the Indian Nation State. Both these newspapers continue to be published till date. In all, 14 newspapers and periodicals were started in the Union Territory of Mizoram between 1970 and 1980.

As mentioned previously, the period of armed conflict comes to an end in 1985 by granting Mizoram statehood and absorbing the secessionist political outfits into representative Parliamentary political parties. The establishment of the legislature for the State of Mizoram inaugurated the period of normalcy and peace that has not been witnessed among its neighbours like Nagaland, Manipur and Assam. Political stability gave way to other developmental concerns like education, planning and economy, human resource and employment.

A number of newspapers appeared between 1980 to 1990, prominent among them were the daily newspapers like *Zoram Chhantu* (1986), *Saiha Times* (1986) *Hnehtu* (1988), *Hringlang* (1988), *Pasaltha* (1988), *Zawlkhawpui* (1988), *Entlang* (1989), *Zorin* (1989), *Virthli* (1989) and periodicals like *Sports* (1983), *Rawlthar* (1984), *Sakeibaknei* (1985), *Senhri* (1985), *Aizawl Bazar* (1988) were published. Of these daily newspapers and periodicals, *Saiha Times* (1986) *Hnehtu* (1988), *Pasaltha* (1988), *Entlang* (1989), *Virthli* (1989) and *Sakeibaknei* (1985) are still published.

From the 1980's the category of daily newspapers distinctly emerged. This may be due to the legitimacy of producing and consuming news. Prior to the 1980's, both production and consumption of news were denied legal sanction. With the grant of Statehood and the arrival of representative form of governance, the press becomes a mediating institution between the State and the people. Though there is a lack of other linkages like technology, transport, advertising revenues, adequate

disposable income of readers and demographic profile of the consumers for the growth of the newspaper industry, Mizoram for the first time experienced the need for information as news and commodity. In other words, there are partial conditions that facilitate the emergence of newspapers in Mizoram and the sudden spurt of newspapers may be attributed to this facilitating condition.

Since the 1990's there was an increase in the number of newspapers and periodicals produced in the region. *Morning Post* (1991), *Mizo Express* (1993), *The Hero* (1992), *The Vox* (1993), *National Observer* (1996), *Zoram Hruaitu* (1996) and periodicals like *Lei Hringnun* (1991), *Zonda* (1993), *News Today* (1995), *Zozam* (1995) were produced. The new millennium brought publications in the form of daily newspapers from Aizawl like *Newslink* (English), *Khawpui Aw*, *Zoram Tlangau*, *Lenlaini*, *Dingdi*, *Zoram Thlirtu*, *Aizawl Thupuan*, *Zualko*, *Hruaitu Arsi*, *Zoram Voice*, *Aizawl Post*, *Zoram Times* and *Speed*. Lunglei District also produced a number of dailies like *Chhinlung*, *Hnamdamna*, *Lunglei Times*, *Vulmawi*, *Zochhiar*, *Ralvengtu* and *Lunglei Tribune*. Champhai District has publications like *Lenrual*, *Chhawkhle*, *Dumde* and *Rihlipui*. *Pasaltha* newspaper from the late 1980's continues to be published at Champhai District. Saiha District produces newspapers like *Maraland*, *Chhim Aw*, *Saikhawpui*, *Saiha Post*, *Buannel*, *Moonlight* and *Kawleng*. Serchhip has newspapers like *Laisuih*, *Lenkawl*, *Ramlai Arsi*, *Serkhawpui*, *Serchhip Times*, *Lamkal*, *Thenzawl Today* and *Zawlbuk Aw*. In Kolasib District, there are newspapers like *Tuilut*, *Turnipui*, *Hringlang*, *Ramnuam* and *Kolasib Times*. *Hnahthial Today*, *Calathea* and *Hnahthial Times* are the newspapers produced from Hnahthial District. Mamit District also has a newspaper called *Mamit Times*.

Literary Public Sphere

This section will continue to textually and contextually engage with the two important literary organs that shaped the career of Mizo literature namely, *Kristian Tlangau* and *Thu leh Hla*. In the previous chapters, some issues of the three journals were textually and contextually analyzed. To be precise, the first issue of *Kristian Tlangau* (1911) and the maiden issue of *Thu leh Hla* (1965) were textually examined along with the circumstances surrounding the production of these magazines. In this section, a similar exercise is being undertaken to study one issue of *Thu leh Hla* and *Kristian Tlangau* journals published in April, 2010. This exercise will enable one to make some limited observations regarding the trends in literary culture or tradition.

Thu Leh Hla

In 1965, the Mizo Academy of Letters declared in their inaugural editorial of *Thu leh Hla*, that the Mizo language requires to be standardized and made comparable to other modern Indian regional languages along with an effort to cultivate a literary culture among the Mizos. After more than 45 years, it appears that these twin purposes namely, ‘pedagogic’ and ‘aesthetic’ still permeate the functioning of the literary organ, *Thu leh Hla*.

Textual Analysis of Thu leh Hla, April, 2010

As this dissertation seeks to map the events that constitute the growth of literary and media history in the former Lushai Hills District and the postcolonial

Mizoram, the study identifies the sources that provide an account of the events. Indeed, the connection between the events and the sources that bring to light these occasions unfold the literary and media history of the region. The inauguration of *Thu leh Hla* as a literary journal marks a major event in the literary and linguistic history of postcolonial Mizoram. It simultaneously becomes a source for providing an account of the literary history of the region. In this section, the issue of *Thu leh Hla*, 2010 is used more as a source for tracing the journey of Mizo literature in general and *Thu leh Hla* in particular from its inaugural issue.¹⁷⁹

Sikulpui (The Great/Mighty School) - C. Chhuanvawra

In this touching story, the author emotionally appeals to the reader to revisit the sacred precincts of the two most famous educational institutions. *Sikulsen* and *Sikulpui* of colonial Lushai Hills District which were foundational to contemporary Mizo society and culture. It is written in the context of these two schools being overrun by the increasing and indiscriminate urbanization of Aizawl city. The author traces the history of the passions that went into the making of the school and the intellectual energy that these ancestral educational institutions disseminated from the students who later on went on to become teachers, pastors, bureaucrats, army officials and important opinion leaders of the region. According to the author, *Sikulsen* was started in 1898 by the venerable missionary, D.E Jones who was

¹⁷⁹ Since this dissertation seeks only to provide milestones in the literary and media history of Mizoram, no exhaustive analysis over a large time period of 50 years is undertaken. The analysis of the two issues, the inaugural issue and the 2010 issue is undertaken mainly to see if there are any broad changes in the trajectories of the themes, formats, content, circulation and consumption in a rather sketchy manner. Only three important items out of more than a dozen items are taken up for a literary and descriptive analysis.

fondly addressed as Zosaphluia by the hills people. D.E. Jones was deeply involved in the evangelical mission and his contribution to education was in the form of producing materials in the English language for school curriculum, developing the Mizo language through compilation of the earliest hymn book, and also establishing the mother institution, *Sikulsen*.

The author recalls the efforts of D.E Jones with a lot of affection and gratitude. In 1906, the next major institution, *Sikulpui*, was granted permission to launch a Middle English school besides *Sikulsen*. Till 1909, this important institution was housed in a hut and only in 1914 did the Government provide an unusually formidable structure lavishing more money than was invested on the Deputy Commissioner's building. It came to be recognized as one of the most appealing structures in the whole of Lushai Hills District. The author invokes this glorious past and contrasts it with the ignoble intentions of the present bureaucratic dispensation. This unsympathetic attitude of the Mizo public at large is insensitive to the historical and cultural roots of the contemporary times.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ **Sikulpui- C. Chhuanvawra** (Translations are mine)

The first formal institution for education in Mizoram was established on 15th February 1898, which fell on the 28th birthday of the white missionary, Zosaphluia (D.E Jones). The school was built between Synod Press and Bookroom, which at present is the Executive Secretary's bungalow. The school was run on these premises until 1905. A new building was constructed and occupied from 1906 where the Boys Primary School is presently functioning and it's called Silkulsen. Zosaphthara (Edwin Rowlands) resided in the school. No modification has taken place till this day except to cover a small renovation of the floor.

In 1906, the Borsap (Superintendent of Lushai Hills District) granted permission for establishing a Middle School. Sikulsen introduced an English Section from 1907 and this went on for two years.

The Middle School was a continuation of the Primary School which was an all Boys School. Therefore, the name 'Boys Middle English School' was given. Since the expansion of education in colonial Lushai Hills District was primarily a missionary enterprise, many of the students of this school who became teachers went on to teach at primary schools in rural areas of Mizoram. Being the only

middle school in Mizoram as well as the most prestigious one, it earned the name SIKULPUI. The nearby junction was named 'Sikulpuikawn,' and is still known by the name today.

In July 1907, Zosapthara (D.E Jones) talked about the school in Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu magazine as:

About the school: Middle English

Middle English section started from June in Sikulpui, Aizawl. Saitawni, Ngaithangvunga, Khianga, Saptea, Kawlkhuma, Lianhmingthanga were present. Middle English was to be taught over two years. Students successfully completing the course from Middle English were expected to be able to teach English in any of the schools in Lushai Hills District. The course structure followed: four years Lower Primary, two years Upper Primary and 2 years Middle English.

Zosapthara(Edwin Rowlands)

In 1909, near Sikulsen, a hut was erected where classes were conducted until a formal structure got erected. In 1914, the Government constructed the Sikulpui building. It's a wonder why the government spent such a large amount of money constructing the building! The District Commissioner bungalow which is now occupied by the Governor costs Rs.6, 000/- to construct while it is said that the Sikulpui building cost Rs.15,000/-. For years, people said, "It is the best and most beautiful school in Assam."

They took a lot of care while constructing the building. The foundation was dug up to chest level and broad flat stones were placed at the bottom and stones were placed on top of each other all the way up to the skirting of the wall. The area of the floor space was 3656 sq ft. which was arranged into 1 ft. by 2 ft. sq. moulded stones were placed in order. The four stair cases were constructed with 1 ft. by 2 inch and 6 inch thick solid stone. At the bottom of the stair case three stones measuring 3 ft long were placed on top of another three stones measuring 4 ft. long. A 6 ft. in length stone was placed right at the top. This was how all four stair cases were constructed.

As Zosapthara mentioned in Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu, the structure of education was 4+2+2. Middle School was till class VIII. This structure was followed for twenty years until 1930 when Assam Government tried to get a more unified structure within its region. At this point, the Middle School was up to class VI till 1981. By 1982, it was up to class VII.

In 1904, Chief Commissioner of Assam, Sir Bonfyld Fuller visited Mizoram and saw the good work carried out by the missionaries. He was so pleased with the work that he handed over all the schools under the missionaries control on the 1st April 1904. As it was established by the missionaries, it was under their control until Indian Republic on the 1st September 1952 when it was taken over by the government and became a government school.

Even after it was taken over by the government, it still remained a boys only school until 1957 after which it became a co-ed school and girls were allowed to be admitted.

In Sikulpui, as well as Zosapthara, there were many other prominent teachers: Chawngsiamia, Hrawva, Rostosingh, Vankhama and Mena worked as teachers and headmasters. The first 28 pastors from Rev. Chhuahkhama to Rev. C. Pazawna were from this school. The one who started Salvation Army in Mizoram, Brig. Kawlkhuma, Brig. Sapliana and Brig. Ngurliana Sailo and father Alexis Sanglura were also alumni of the school. The school also produced 30 famous politicians, 8 Indian Civil Servicemen and 11 army, navy and air force officers as well as doctors and engineers. All the former students from this school held high regard for the school which in turn increased the reputation of the school.

The main reason why Sikulpui is valued is because other schools were produced from it, it is the ancestral school. It was the only Middle School in Mizoram for seven years. Even after Serkawn Middle School was established in 1914, they were the only two schools which produced teachers for other Primary Schools of the region. Before 1945, under the Post-war Re-construction Scheme, 8 Middle Schools were added to the already existing schools. Prior to this, Sikulsen and Sikulpui were the only

Tracing the genealogy of modern education in the colonial Lushai Hills District and postcolonial Mizoram, the author remarks, “Sikulpui hlutna ber chu Zoram Sikul dangte thlahtu, a bul ber a nihna, a upatna hi a ni.” In English, it may be translated as, “The main reason why Sikulpui is valued is because other schools were produced from it, and it is the ancestral school.” The author laments that it was able to protect the structure only with the intervention of INTACH.

Milu leh Mizote (Headhunting and Mizos) - Sangzuala¹⁸¹

schools in North and South Mizoram. Sikulpui is a precursor to all the educational institutions of the major Schools, Colleges and the present Mizoram University.

The Aizawl College, SSA and DEO Office over shadow Sikulpui. If INTACH had not stepped forward to preserve the premises, it would have totally vanished. It is necessary for the Mizos to take good care of the old man SIKULSEN who is 112 years old and our mother SIKULPUI who is 103 years old.

¹⁸¹ **Milu leh Mizote (Headhunting and Mizos)- Sangzuala** (Translations are mine)

Just by reading the title of the article, one may not feel the need to talk about the topic. But it becomes problematic when the non-Mizos call us ‘headhunters.’ This item is an opening of the topic for further discussion and clarification.

In Mizo language, the term ‘Lu’ has many uses for different purposes. ‘luman’ (compensation for the death of anyone), ‘lukhawng’ (the name of a kind of tax, duty, or bonus paid to certain near relatives of a person after his death or to have reward, recompense, blessing, advantages, etc, attached to it; to be a source of profit, gain, or advantage; to be profitable or advantageous)¹⁸¹ ‘lunghahna’ or ‘lu lumna’ (a place one can call a home – where he can rest his head), we also say ‘a lu nungin’ (counting every one young and old, everyone. (*Lit.* every living head.)¹⁸¹ Most people value our ancestor’s place or land - ‘lu lumna.’ In wars and battles, Mizos take not only the head of their enemies, but also of their friends who died in the fight when they are not able to take home the body. The family members of their dead friends receive the head to organise a funeral. Therefore, ‘lu’ (head) plays a very important role in the life of the Mizos. But ‘Milu’ refers to the head of the enemies and this is what is needed for us to discuss.

We fought wars and raided our enemies, and took heads of the enemies that we killed. But can we be labeled as ‘a tribe/clan of Head hunters’ needs discussion. The white men ‘Sap’ referred to us as ‘head hunters’ in many of their writings, without any hesitations, our native writers also began to call ourselves ‘head hunters.’ We cannot deny the fact that our ancestors had the habit/tradition of taking heads of the enemies, but we should rethink whether we, as a ‘Mizo’ can be called ‘headhunters’ and that are we supposed to be proud of this label, needs further interpretation. For instance, in 1857, many armies of the

The writer of this piece seems to make a distinction between an ethical interpretation and an ethnographic interpretation of history. The author emphatically denounces the description of Mizos as 'head hunters' in the dominant historical accounts. He argues for a more positive description of the ethnographic detail provided in colonial narratives

This is an interesting piece because it seeks to challenge the dominant colonial/ Christian historiography that suggests the absence of rational human ordering of the Mizo world prior to the arrival of colonial and missionary rule. Sangzuala appears to eke out a rational ground for this supposedly bizarre practice. In his rendering of the practice, heads of both enemies and friends were collected from the battle ground and brought home, one to celebrate victory and the other to perform funerary rites. Further, he notes that these wars were fought for settling disputes regarding land. Thus, like other mainland kingdoms, resource mobilization

East India Company rebelled against the British and this was referred to as 'Sepoy Mutiny' by the white men. But as time goes by, Indian historians began to refer to it as the 'First War of Independence.' This is known as 'new interpretation.' Even though the event or occurrence could not be changed or modified, there can be ways of interpretation and meaning.

One may argue that we, the Mizos did take heads as it was an honourable deed to come back with heads of the men that we killed in the battle, so we were addressed as head hunters. I cannot say that this argument is totally wrong. That is why it requires discussion.

On the other hand, there are a group of Mizo people who do not agree with the terminology of 'head hunters.' We took heads and fought wars against our enemies, but the reason for fighting the war was not 'heads' but for land or due to dispute between two chiefs. The 'head' was only a trophy for the young men who came back victorious to show their bravery. This is also an argument with a good standing. In America, the Red Indians peel the skin of the heads of their enemies they killed. The white men called them 'Scalp Hunters,' but they certainly do not call themselves one. Therefore, it is not always appropriate to agree with what other people label us with. This is another argument.

This topic does need to be discussed and given a rethought. People who say that we are not head hunters as taking head was not the main reason for wars.

was the ground on which disputes arose and conflicts emerged resulting in wars. So, according to the author, there is nothing primeval about the historic practice. In effect, this story argues for positively describing the Mizos and their past prior to the arrival of colonialism and Christianity.

Aizawl Khua leh Veng Hrang Hming (History of Place Names within Aizawl) – Dr. Lalsawmliana Sailo¹⁸²

¹⁸² **Aizawl Khua leh Veng Hrang Hming** (Translation to English is done by the scholar)

1. Zotlang- Aizawl

Let me start off by saying that Aizawl city is built by the British officials. They came from Silchar to rule over our chiefs in 1890. They settled at Aizawl and established **Aizawl Kulh ‘Fort.’** This is how Aizawl city came into being.

In 1990, Mizoram Gorkhali’s celebrated their 100 years of stay in Mizoram. They formed a Committee which collected names of Gorkhali people who lived in Mizoram. According to the findings of this Committee, the Gorkhalis who served in the 1st Bn. Assam Rifles were given the privilege to get a ‘temporary settlement’ permit with a number of ‘Terms and Conditions’ on the recommendation of the AR Commandant to the Gorkhali soldiers with good ACR. They found out the names of two such Gorkhalis who were given the permit to settle in Mizoram, one of them resided in Dintar, Kelpu Veng in 1892 and another in Zotlang, 2 miles from Aizawl above Sairang road. The name of this person staying in Zotlang was Subedar Sherman and the name of the place was known as Shermantilla. They were under Nikhama, chief of Luangmual village and they had to pay double the tax the Mizos were paying.

This village was shifted under Vaivakawn Village Council election in 1954. By 1966, there were 3 Mizo houses and 33 Gorkhali houses in this village. In 1981, Mizo men changed the name to ‘Zotlang.’ In 1984, they became a separate Village Council and took on the name Zotlang instead of Vaitlang.

2. Laiputlang :

A man named Lalkeseia who resides in Chawnpui informed me in our conversation regarding the origin of the name of ‘Laiputlang.’ It may be useful to know the correct information among many others. Pu Saia said, “My great grandfather Lalvunga was a ‘pasaltha’ or brave hunter. In 1870, Lalvunga, son of Lalluta set up a village near Hlimen and people fought for land during this period. The chief announced that whoever possesses a gun will be given the first privilege to choose a plot of land for cultivation.” Fortunately my grandfather was the first person to get a gun in the village. He named his son ‘Laiputhanga’ (Laipui means a gun). He selected the area which is now near Aizawl- Chaltlang-Ramhlun and the hill top was named ‘Laipuipa lo tlang’ (Laipuipa=Laipui’s father, Lo= land for cultivation and Tlang= hill) and is now known as ‘Laiputlang.’

3. Tuikual Veng:

By 1950 India became an independent country. There was a Mizo District Council at Aizawl. Land permit has to be acquired from the District Council from this time onwards. Many people were given

This particular story may be conceived as a reflection of an emerging appetite for a particular kind of Mizo historical geography. In earlier times, both history and geography were more fluid categories and these have become more rigid with the sedentarization of the Mizo society over the last hundred years. Though the author provides a very objective engagement with archival and ethnographic sources to plot the historical geography of Aizawl, this pre-occupation with time (history) and space (geography) is conducted within the empty homogenous time of the Nation State.

Even as these place names go through changes over a period of hundred years, the ebb and tide of Mizo nationalism contesting the Nation State's claim over this territory and the people seem to play a role in the rearranging of boundaries and place names. It is in this context that the locality named, '*Shermantilla*' in honor of Sherman, a Gorkha soldier serving in the colonial army was changed to '*Vaitlang*' (hills of the mainland Indians) during the height of the insurgent movement and it was finally renamed as '*Zotlang*' (hills of the Mizos) in 1981. The author gives an enumeration of the number of Gorkha houses (33) in contrast to the Mizo residents (3) in the locality during 1966. Paradoxically, the aspiration for an authentic ethnicity coincides with the Mizo achieving statehood within the identity of the Indian Nation

land at Sairang Road. People started settling in the area by 1952-1954. They had a Village Council in 1954. Men of the village gathered at Thanghleia's house to select a name for the village. Among them, Zahnuna and Thanghleia are still alive today. They decided on 'Tuikual Veng' for the name of the area. It became one of the biggest 'veng' or locality of Aizawl and now has been divided into two different areas, Tuikual North and Tuikual South.

During 1940's when we were in high school, there were names of localities which do not exist anymore. People who have such information should write more about these in this Thu leh Hla magazine.

State. With the arrival of the statehood, there seems to be an increasing number of alternate histories of the region. In this story, the Gorkhas celebrate their hundred years of residence in Mizoram recalling their legendary ancestors like Sherman in whose behalf the place was named '*Shermantilla*' later changed to '*Vaitlang*' and currently assuming the name of '*Zotlang*'.

The Gorkhas had originally come to the Lushai Hills as soldiers of the British army and the British possibly would not have annexed the Lushai territory without the help of these hills people originally from Nepal. This complex connection between the British, the Gorkhas and the Luseis who do not actually belong to mainland India but appear to produce Indianness through the process of becoming part of colonial and post-colonial history, is indirectly woven in this simple tale of historical geography of Aizawl. From *Shermantilla* to *Vaitlang* to *Zotlang*, the Mizos have become less of a hills people and the urge to map the seduction of sedentarization allows the author to narrate the history of place names located in Aizawl.

It is equally true that the lure of the hills into an un-commoditized time and the irreducibility of the hills into just physical geography without a mythical investment also becomes part of the need to reconfigure literary and performative culture.¹⁸³ The journal '*Thu leh Hla*' occupies a space that accommodates and plays out these seemingly conflicting ideological positions. Perhaps, these positions ought to be

¹⁸³ For instance, in an article which appeared in *Thu leh Hla* (2007) titled 'Mizo Literature Hrilhfiah Dan hi' seeks to reinstate the performative and expressive traditions associated with 'thawnthu' which prefigures the formal literary culture associated with colonial and post-colonial literary traditions. Refer Appendix-IV for the translation of the article.

arranged on a continuum rather than as two exclusive and separate ideological moorings.

Some Comparison between the Inaugural Issue of *Thu leh Hla* (1965) and another issue of *Thu leh Hla*, 2010

Format:

The first issue of *Thu leh Hla* runs through 32 pages while the April, 2010 issue has 40 pages. The cover page of the former carries the name of the magazine, the volume number and year and the name of the editor. The latter has the name of the magazine and 'A monthly Literary Journal of Mizo Academy of Letters' below it, it also carries the month, year and volume number. It carries the emblem of Mizo Academy of Letters and a short quotation which says 'A word can be a song, and a song can also be a word.' It has the name of the editor on the bottom of the page. The inside pages of the first issue runs in two columns while the pages of the 2010 issue runs in one column. The quality of the paper seems to have improved in the latter issue. *Thu leh Hla* was initially a quarterly magazine and later on became a monthly journal.

Circulation:

The circulation of the April, 2010 issue is 1500 while 500 copies of the first issue were printed in 1965. The price of the magazine increased from Re.1 in 1965 to Rs.10 in 2010.

Content:

The 1965 issue carries 15 items including the editorial with 14 different contributors. The contributors include two pastors and a female writer who contributed a piece on Mizo women and their talents in weaving. The 2010 issue has 10 items including the editorial with 8 contributors. The contributors include two persons with doctorate degrees. A female writer, Buangi Sailo contributed a poem in this issue. (Buangi Sailo was awarded Padma Shree in 2011 in 'Literature and Education'. She is a famous Mizo poet).

The first issue does not include any poetry but has items related to '*thawnthu*' and an indigenous, local understanding of stars and the '*thawnthu*' stories associated with them.¹⁸⁴ The connection between astronomy and astrology appears blurred in the description of the stars. The issue of 2010 has two poems but does not have any article on '*thawnthu*'. In other words, there is an elaboration of '*chanchin*' which lays emphasis on documentary, historical and realist narratives.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Liangkhaia, the author of the story on stars identifies 28 stars and it is titled as 'Mizo Arsi Hriat Dan' (The Mizo Way of Understanding Stars). Among other things, the author narrates the origin of two stars, *Hrangchhuana* and *Chawngmawii*. In the popular conception of Mizos, these stars were once lovers on earth and when their love failed to fructify, they were turned into stars. Chawngmawii, the female counterpart belonged to a village that was hostile to where her lover, Hrangchhuana hailed from. Once when Hrangchhuana was secretly visiting his beloved, the chief and his men caught him and killed him along with his lover. Actually, these stars have been named because they tend to be seen together (almost making love) for some part of the year and very distant from each other for some part of the year. See Liangkhaia, *Mizote Arsi Hriat Dan* in *Thu leh Hla*, 1965. p.12-16

¹⁸⁵ See articles on 'A short history of naming localities in Aizawl city,' 'History of the Sikulpui school,' and 'Headhunting and Mizos.' All these interesting historical narratives are written in an objective linear historical mode. There seems to be a reluctance to engage with an auratic or enchanted past.

The first issue has items which talks about the need for standardization of Mizo language. These writings reveal that Mizo language was in the process of standardization and there are debates on the usage of the words, meanings, formation of sentences and phrases. The issue of 2010 carries a lesson on the grammar of Mizo language produced by the Mizoram Board of School Education Language Board which is approved by the Mizo Academy of Letters. Both the issues give attention to issues relating to standardization of language, in the inaugural issue, the discussion was fore grounded by a literary and public personality, J.F Laldailova, whereas in the latter issue, the discussion was highlighted by a formal body like the Mizoram Board of School Education Language Board in consultation with the Mizo Academy of Letters. There seems to be formalizing of institutional mechanisms to engage with the question of standardization of Mizo language.¹⁸⁶

Editorial composition:

It appears that there is no dramatic alteration in the way the editorials have been written in the past in comparison to the present. Both the editorials are more or less of the same length and talk about the functioning of the Mizo Academy of Letters. While the inaugural issue introduces the Mizo Academy of Letters and its aims and objectives, the issue of 2010 talks about the activities to be conducted on its Annual Day celebrations.

¹⁸⁶ In the item on 'Paragraph Chungchang,' there is advice to the readers on the construction of a grammatically proper paragraph. There is a mention about the appropriate usage of Cases (small case and big case). It appears that there is a series on grammar and this item is a part of the continuing series.

Kristian Tlangau

It may not be completely off the mark to observe that the two famous Church institutions of Mizoram, namely the Presbyterian and the Baptist Church, have gradually abdicated the role of shaping Mizo literary and aesthetic tastes. The colonial white missionaries had taken on the extra burden of instituting Mizo as a modern language with script and print. Today, this burden of cultivating a literary culture has been parceled out to the Nation State via the Mizo Academy of Letters, the Language Board and other bureaucratic bodies. In effect, the two literary organs namely, '*Kristian Tlangau*' and '*Kohhran Beng*' have been deployed to intensify their evangelical effort and this fits well with the fact that Mizoram along with other Northeast states produced the largest number of missionaries in the country.¹⁸⁷

Textual Analysis of Kristian Tlangau, April, 2010

In this specific issue that is being examined, a select number of items based on translation are taken up for analysis. Along with analyzing the content, the context of the stories is also examined wherever it is necessary. Apart from analyzing this specific issue of *Kristian Tlangau*, a limited comparison between the form and content of the inaugural issue with the issue of 2010 is undertaken for this section of the chapter.

¹⁸⁷ This statement needs to be researched. Here, it is formulated as only a hypothesis based on a cursory reading of a selected number of issues.

This issue carries an editorial, collection of news from the various activities of the Synod Presbyterian Church and also announces an essay writing competition in anticipation of the centenary celebration of the *Kristian Tlangau* to be held in 2011. The title of the article decided for the competition read, 'The star of the Mizos-Kristian Tlangau'. There is also a section on questions asked by the readers for which the editor gave answers regarding clarification of Bible translations, rationalization and routinization of Church practices and revisiting the naming of days carried out by the white missionaries during the colonial period. The issue carries two sermons written by two different persons, a pastor and a Church elder (*Upa*).¹⁸⁸ Apart from the above mentioned items, there are two articles, both written by Church Upas, C. Lalbiaktluanga and Lalzuia Colney. The last item is an obituary of the Synod Church leaders who passed away. This issue carries accounts of six such deaths of the Church ministers.

Editorial

In anticipation of the forthcoming Good Friday, the journal provides a fabled account of Jesus' enormous sacrifice resulting in the iconic crucifixation. Apart from reiterating the mythical account, the editorial urges its readers to enact their moral worth through kindness towards the less fortunate ones that would befit the

¹⁸⁸ The term 'Upa' has had a career of its own in the last hundred years or more. The literal meaning of the term 'Upa' refers to an old or elderly person. Traditionally, it is believed the chiefs appointed Upas (not necessarily based on their age) to act as ministers for running the administration of their kingdoms. With colonialism, the institution of Upas declined as the administration was carried out under the guidance of the British administrators but the white missionaries reinvented the Upas and their role in a more restricted manner. Though there is association in Mizoram primarily for the Upas (based on their age), it is only in the Church, the Upas (not necessarily based on their age) play a specific role in conducting the activities of the Church along with the pastor and the respective congregation. If one were to visit houses in today's Mizoram, you are likely to find names prefixed with the term Upa and this is used only by the Church Upas.

occasion. Such act of kindness enables one to experience love towards God and towards others. Being Christians allows for spreading this message of love and experiencing the joy of sharing.

The editorial in the course of inviting the reader to share the mythical tale and the need to perform such exemplary acts appears to gently persuade the Mizo public to participate in the evangelical activity of the Church by voluntarily becoming evangelists. In some sense, the editorial like other items in the issue emphasizes the virtue of becoming evangelists and changing the world for the better.

Interactive Article based on Readers' Questions and Kristian Tlangau's Response

One of the items based on questions that were received from the readers about issues relating to the Church is answered in a question-answer mode. The format seems to be intriguing for a journal published by the Church. It is likely that the format has been borrowed from the television medium. However, in this interactive format, only the name of the reader is appended to the text and the name of the person answering the question is not mentioned. It appears that the reader has to presume that the question has been answered by the editorial board.

1. Clarification regarding Biblical Exegesis

In the very first question raised by a reader named Lalmuana, the question of the authenticity to be accorded to sacral languages namely, Hebrew and Greek, is

indirectly posed. A certain anecdote in the Old Testament regarding the event relating to God's reprimand against the people of Nineveh for not obeying his commands is taken up for clarification. The Hebrew version of the Bible records that the people of Nineveh would be destroyed in less than 40 days for their heresy and the Greek version of the Bible mentions that the people of Nineveh will be destroyed in 3 days. The *Kristian Tlangau's* response is interesting. Instead of saying directly that both are correct, the magazine observes that the Mizo translation is a derivative of the Hebrew Bible and it is necessary to accord more legitimacy to this scriptural text rather than the Greek version of the scripture. It is not surprising that such a judgment is made regarding these texts because the Mizo language itself acquires both humanity and sacredness due to its ability to become a script and at some level to produce scripture as well. The association of the nascent Mizo language with the ancient sacral language of Hebrew appears to be an interesting staging of conversation across civilisational planes.¹⁸⁹

2. On Regulating Local Church Practices

The next question that is posed by a reader named Lalhriatkima refers to the practice of the congregation members bringing flowers to ceremonially mourn the

¹⁸⁹ **From Lalmuana, West Phaileng** (Translation work is done by the scholar)

Q. Our Sunday School text book published this year says that instead of "Ninevi would be diminished/destroyed in 40 days," it is more likely that it should be "3 days." Which one is the correct one? Do you have Septuagint to read?

Ans: The Old Testament is written in Hebrew. Mizo Bible has been mostly translated from Hebrew language and from a Revised Version. The book of Jona from the Old Testament is also translated from Hebrew and therefore we should use what our Bible says. Greek Bible Septuagint (LXX) is with us and as the author of the Sunday School text book says, it is written "3 days."

dead on the occasion of their anniversaries inside their Church. The journal judiciously observes that it is a delicate issue and it has to be resolved by the respective congregations and the Church functionaries. However, it points out that it should preempt any display of wealth because it may not be in good taste to have people who are less well off finding it difficult to perform similarly.¹⁹⁰

3. On Exegetical and Linguistic Transformations relating to different Mizo language translations of the Bible

In this question and answer discussion, one of the readers queries the two different translations belonging to two different periods on two different planes, one at the level of interpretation and other at the level of semantic transformation of the word 'inpawl'.¹⁹¹ The reader has referred to the passage from Luke 5:36 which reads

¹⁹⁰ **From Lalhriatkima, Speaker, Prayer Team, Electric Veng**

Q. Many of the Church members have a practise of bringing flowers to decorate the Church to commemorate their dead relatives. Is this an acceptable practice for the congregation and for a believer?

Ans: We only came to know about the practice from your question, it is a very sensitive one and should be given a serious thought. The respective Church Committee should sit and decide on the matter. The practice is that at the end of the year, on 31st December, the Church commemorates the death of its members. The Synod does not encourage its members to spending too much money on the death anniversaries of their relatives, providing feasts for the communities, it has even given out regulations for such activities. There might be members whose income does not permit them to bring flowers to the Church; also, it might be a pain to some members to bring it, so it appears

¹⁹¹ **Upa R.Sangchhunga, Bilkhawthlir**

Q. The new translation of the verse from Luke 5:36 – *He told them this parable: “No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old* is totally different from the old translation, please tell me the reason for the completely different translation.

Ans: I don't know which old translation you are referring to, but I guess you are talking about the most popular translation. Let's see the difference in the translation. **Old Translation:** Tuman puan thar pawt thlain puan hluin an bel ngai lo (No one tears a piece out of a new garment and patches it up with an old

in the English language as *He told them this parable: “No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old.”*¹⁹² In this passage, Jesus urges his followers that the virtues of old practices like fasting need not necessarily be useful to redeem the spiritually fragile people. The meaning of fasting may not be accessible to all followers who lack a deeper communion. Fasting is only a means for a deeper communion and it is not an end in itself.

In a changing socio-economic context, it is possible that the comparisons between the old and the new may be a comparison between those who became Christians in the early years of colonial rule and led a pious life, to the present Christians who seemed to be more close to leading a life of the world rather than waiting for an after world. It is also possible to restrict the context metaphorically to the contemporary and analogically connect the comfortable relation between the Church and the powerful people in Mizoram. In the last hundred years of Christianity in Mizoram, the socio-economic context did not sufficiently change in the first half of the 20th century. During the next 20 years after Independence, Mizoram experienced political turbulence. All the same, there has been considerable change in the

one) **New Translation:** Tuman puan thar pawt thlain a hluih an bel ngai lo (No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch the old one). **Old:** Bel ang sela (If they patch it) **New:** Bel tehreng pawh ni se (Even if they patch it) **Old:** A thar chu a titet ang a (They will have torn the new garment) **New:** A thar chu an tithler chhe mai mai a (They will have only torn the new garment) **Old:** A thar them leh a hlui chu a **inpawl** bawk hek lo vang (and the patch from the new will not match the old) **New:** A thar them lahin a hlui chu a **rem** bawk hek lo vang (and the patch from the new will not match the old) I do not see much difference in the translation, and the meaning definitely is not changed. Please check and study the verse once more.

¹⁹² Quoted from New International Version of the Bible.

economic, political and cultural realms in the last thirty years or so. Across political and economic contexts, the Church has had an eminent role to play in shaping the personality of the region. This query about the translation may be about its holding of power and authority across diverse political situations.

In the earlier translation, the term, '*inpawl*' was specifically used to connote 'to match', although the term was used to also mean 'to converse,' 'to communicate,' and 'sexual intercourse.' It appears that the term which had varied usages and also seems to have had no taboo relating to the sexual act too, has presently acquired only the last connotation and along with it there has been a taboo attached to this natural act. In other words, when the Mizos were a speech community, the term was used variedly according to different situations and even when it was used to refer to the sexual act per se, there was no taboo attached to the signified and the signifier. Thus, it is possible to interpret that the Mizo language has switched codes from its being primarily a pre-Christian speech community to its becoming a dominant Christian literate community.¹⁹³

4. On Coining Names for Different Days of the Week

This query from the reader concerns the need to formalize the names for different days of the week which were suggested by colonial missionaries.¹⁹⁴ The

¹⁹³ There is a need to seek more evidence for the formation of what can be called as Christian literacy. The evolution of the Mizo language has the possibility of switching codes from its history of being a speech community to its becoming a literate community and the career of the word '*inpawl*' thus explained.

¹⁹⁴ **Q.** The naming of days across the week- 1st Day= Pathianni (God's day), 2nd Day= Thawhtan (1st day /beginning of work), 3rd Day= Thawhleleh (next day of work), 4th day= Nilaini (middle day of the week), 6th Day=Zirtawpni (last day of study), 7th day= Inrinni (Preparation day) 5th day=Ningani (5th day) This fifth day does not have a name like the rest of the days. Imagine it as a human being, how ashamed it

Christian calendar had been deeply internalized but there still remained the lack of linguistic grace that is accorded to already ordained names of the days. In Mizo, the name for 'Thursday' reads '*Ningani*' meaning 'the fifth day' and the reader laments the pure functional nature that is associated with the name. The reader proposes '*Nilaihawhtan*' as a better name which he claims was actually in use prior to 1940. The journal's advice to the reader was to initiate an academic seminar on the matter and await the results of the seminar. It remarked that it was difficult for the body to make a distinction between those two terms '*Ningani*' and '*Nilaihawhtan*' and vouch for the latter.

The Sacral River Ganges Re-imagined as the Blood of Christ.

In a different article with a dramatic title, 'Kraws Thisen leh Ganges Lui' (The Blood of Jesus Christ and the Ganges River) that draws on an epic Hindu imagery of the River Ganges.¹⁹⁵ This story gives an account of the Hindu mythology associated

would have been! Even if they could not come up with a name for the day, wouldn't it be better to use called '*Nilaihawhtan*' like it was called before 1940? Even though it might be time consuming, I don't think it would be much of a problem. Wouldn't it bring progress to our literature?

Ans: Thursday in the English language is named as Nilaihawhtan, Nilini or Ningani. Our ancestors used Nilaini (Wednesday) as a holiday, and start working again on Thursday, the 4th day of the week. Ningani and Nilaihawhtan are both used by people. It is difficult to suggest which one is better for the name. It would be sensible to decide by organising a Literature Seminar and after a serious discussion, we would feel at ease to use whichever the experts decide for the name.

(Translations are mine)

¹⁹⁵ **The Blood of the Cross and the Ganges River- Upa Lalzuia Colney, Kanan** (Translations are mine)

I had the opportunity to visit Varanasi (Benaras), one of the most famous cities of UP on 21-26 Nov, 2009 with our Synod Mission Board Speaker, Evangelist Lalramzauva Ralte and his team of 53

with the religious practice conducted on the sacred river bank. The narrative which clearly represents the Hindu view point of seeking salvation through this ritual (of taking bath, drinking water from the Ganges river at least once in a lifetime and

people. I would like to share one of the things that I witnessed during this trip. It is about the people cleansing their sins in Ganges river, not knowing the blood of Jesus Christ.

First of all, let me tell you the history of this place hoping it would describe my point clearer. Varanasi was known as Benaras during colonial period and some people still call it by the old name. It is one of the oldest cities in the world and is one of the seven holy places for the Hindus. Varanasi has other important religious places too. The first Buddhist sermon was given in Varanasi and the Buddhists had built a temple there called Sarnath Temple. People say that the name Varanasi was given to the place because Varuna River from the north and Asi River from the south meets here. From its old name - Benaras, Bana means 'to make' and 'Ras' means river. The holy river of the Hindus – the Ganges flows through this land. The Hindus regard the Ganges as a river that can cleanse their sin and give them salvation. They believe that Ganges River was created by their goddess Kasi.

The river is famous not only among the Hindus but attracts people from all over the world like US. They collect the river water of Ganges and want to make sure they drink it before they die as they believe that it would save their soul and would purify them.

Hindus cremate dead bodies by the Ganges and I could count 17 in my short visit. When I enquired, people told me that about 200-300 bodies are cremated every day. Hindu religion is a very old religion and this fire lit for cremation on the river bank has not been put out for more than 5000 years. Sick people are brought by the river and await their death hoping the river would save their soul.

While we were on a visit, we saw people staging songs and dances on a platform that is built on the bank of the river. A thought that came to my mind was that these millions of people have not heard of the blood of Jesus Christ and our Kristian Thalai Pawl- (Youth wing of the Church) should come and perform songs and dances preaching the Gospel. Varanasi has a very small Christian population and therefore Christianity is not regarded a nuisance yet, we can still preach the Gospel freely. There is a small Para-Church and the Varanasi Mission Charitable Trust is taking the lead in the mission of preaching.

Our Synod had also taken steps in affiliating the Para-Church of Varanasi. Till now, there are 560 people who got baptized and the population slowly increases. There are 3,147,927 people in Varanasi according to 2001 Census and would have increased a lot by now. Among these people, there are only 560 Christian, they are far too less! Who will take the responsibility? The people are not aware that the blood of Jesus was shed for them in the cross of Calvary, and they believe the Ganges River can save them!

These 3 crores people do not know that the blood of Jesus is Salvation, they need someone to tell them. Many people go to the river hoping to their souls to be saved. The water that they regard to be holy is the most contaminated water filled with ashes of dead bodies. I really wish that all these people know that the blood of Jesus on the Cross can save them.

Jesus is calling them and wants to save them. Who will deliver this message to the people? Hundreds of people are dying not knowing this!

performing crematory rites on the banks of the sacred river) proceeds to convert the logic by suggesting that those millions of people who practice this ritual may be encouraged to believe that the Ganges River is after all the blood of Christ in itself. In other words, the author of the story fantasizes that these Hindus may be persuaded to think that salvation may be attained through the blood of Christ instead of drinking the contaminated water of the River Ganges.

This article supposedly seeks to attract the attention of evangelicals from Mizoram to take up the task of spreading the word among the ritual ridden Hindus. This Hindu religious site appears to provide an easy platform to set up missionary activities. The author imagines converting a captive audience of several millions flocking to this place every year.

Some Comparison between the Inaugural Issue of *Kristian Tlangau* (1911) and another issue of *Kristian Tlangau*, 2010

Format:

The inaugural issue of *Kristian Tlangau* (1911) runs through 16 pages while the issue of 2010 has 34 pages. The former does not have a cover page but carries the name of the journal and a Bible verse from the book of 1Timothy 2:7 which says, "And I have been chosen as a preacher." It also has the volume number, month and year of publication and the price of the magazine. The cover page of the latter issue carries the name of the magazine, month and year, emblem of *Kristian Tlangau* and

mentions that the magazine was started in 1911. It also has the title of two stories from the issue and their page numbers.

Circulation:

The inaugural issue does not carry the number of copies produced but the issue of 2010 has a circulation of 27,500 copies. In 1919, about a thousand copies of *Kristian Tlangau* was printed and distributed in the Lushai Hills District for a Lusei literate population of over 4000.¹⁹⁶ The price of the inaugural issue was 1 anna (4 paisa) and could be paid in money or an equivalent quantity of rice worth the specified sum of money. The latter issue is priced at Rs. 50 for a year's subscription.

Content:

The first issue published in October, 1911, had twelve items. The front page contains a preface or editorial from the editor, R. Dala, (a Lusei pastor) regarding the magazine, explaining how and why it was produced. Apart from this editorial page, it carries an announcement which informs reader of how to subscribe to the magazine, its price and the mode of payment. It carries five articles, four exegetical pieces of four different Bible verses and a letter from a native pastor of Lunglei (South Lushai Hills).

¹⁹⁶ Presbyterian report..p 63

The contents include an editorial, collection of news from the various activities of the Synod Presbyterian Church. The news includes a visit by the John Amalraj, the Executive Director of Interserve India regarding their mission work in India, Light Educational Ministry (LEM) phonic training given to children, the Synod Executive meeting reports, Sunday Scholl text book, news of Synod leaders travelling to different places within and outside the country, activities of Synod Mission Board and Church Missionary Society, news of the Synod Revival Speakers Meet, the announcement of the newly elected Kristian Thalai Pawl (youth group), reports of the Women's wing meeting, report of a Literature Seminar held in March, 2010 and so on. The issue also announced an article writing competition in celebration of the *Kristian Tlangau* centenary for the coming year. The title of the article decided for the competition was 'The star of the Mizos- Kristian Tlangau'.

There is also a section of answers to the questions from the congregation in various parts of Presbyterian Churches in Mizoram. These questions express their doubts regarding biblical verses, practices of the Church, naming of the days of the week, translations of the Bible, and so on.

The issue carries two sermons written by two different persons, a pastor and an elder or minister (Upa) in the Church. The first sermon pertains to forgiveness of Jesus and forgiveness of fellow humans. The other sermon talks about the death and rise of Jesus.

There are two articles both written by Church ministers (upa). Upa C. Lalbiaktluanga from Hmunthar writes a travelogue concerning his visit to Israel, the Holy land of the Christians. The other contributor, Upa Lalzuia Colney writes about the irony of people bathing in the Ganges River to wash away their sins not knowing that Jesus shed his blood on the cross for them.

The last item is an obituary of the Church leaders from various parts of Mizoram. This issue carries six such accounts of deaths of the Church ministers.

Change in Editorial Body:

The frequency of the publication of magazine has remained unchanged, it was a monthly magazine then and it continues to be a monthly magazine now. The inaugural issue mentions three formal members associated with the publication holding the positions of Editor, Secretary and Treasurer respectively. In the more recent issue (April, 2010), the journal mentions the name of the Editor and of the three Joint Editors including Business Manager. It is likely that the journal has become more corporatized and its operations are clearly monetized and professionally managed. Earlier on, it was published from a small hand press loaned by Dr. Fraser, a venerable missionary doctor who fought against the colonial administration for the continuation of slavery in Mizoram. Today, the Presbyterian Church has multiplied its publications, runs a large printing press and a number of distribution outlets where their publications are displayed.

The inaugural editorial stated that it was produced only for dissemination of the Christian teachings, to explain Biblical passages and to collect and publish the news of missionary work in different places. Since communication was difficult on the hills and the believers and potential believers were scattered, the editor felt *Krista Tlangau* can provide a platform to communicate among various people involved in God's work in the Lushai Hills.

The editorial of the issue of April, 2010 talks about the love of Jesus and encouraged the readers to offer their hearts in return. Since the issue of this month falls before Good Friday, it appears that this theme was selected for the editorial piece.

Local Cable Networks

Initially, the local cable networks distributed domestic and transnational channels to viewers in Aizawl and few districts (like Lunglei, Champhai and Kolasib) within Mizoram. Gradually, they started producing news bulletins and music videos in Mizo language. Perhaps, this was the first time that local entrepreneurs and creative artists commercially produced audio-visual programmes. It included experiments in producing other audio-visual genres like short films and soap operas.¹⁹⁷

From a small number of cable networks which catered largely to the urban population in Aizawl, the cable networks have grown from three in 2005 to fifteen in

¹⁹⁷ This study is based on a small survey conducted in 2005 and 2007. It is likely that some of these statistics presented do not indicate the present situation.

2010.¹⁹⁸ Till date, the genres of news and music videos have remained the most popular forms of audio-visual production and consumption.

In the early stages of satellite television, mainland television programmes like Chitrahaar around 1987, soap operas like Kasauti Zindagi Kay in 2006 were popular. It is true that most mainland Indian/Hindi programmes were found to be less culturally meaningful for the audience in Northeast in general and Mizoram in particular. For similar reasons, the federally funded Doordarshan channel was/still watched mainly for news programmes and rarely for entertainment.¹⁹⁹

Even as the early initiative of commercial cable TV production concentrated on limited genres like news and music videos, currently, the genres have grown and there are a number of talk show programmes, singing competitions, talent shows and a variety of other interactive programmes as in the mainland Indian television industry. Recently, the important *LPS Vision* cable network started boxing competitions on a regular basis, attracting advertising revenue from the retail industry in Mizoram. In some sense, the cable industry is slowly entering a commercial phase.

Here is a brief survey of the cable industry in Mizoram conducted in 2005 and 2007: The first local channel of the region *Skylinks* was established on a Teacher's

¹⁹⁸ Report of Mizo Journalists Association on its Annual Day, 2011.

¹⁹⁹ Daisy Hasan, 'Out of the Box' *Television Representations of North-East India* in Sarai Reader 2004: Crisis/Media. pp. 126-129

Day on 5th September, 1991.²⁰⁰ There were three competing cable TV networks in Mizoram- *Skylinks*, *LPS Vision* and *Zonet* until *Skylinks* was taken over by *LPS Vision* in 2009. Other smaller operators like *JB cable Networks*, *LDF Cable* and *Eldo Zenith Links* operate at Lunglei. These local cable networks are mostly located in urban areas are concentrated mainly in Aizawl and Lunglei. According to the latest Mizoram Journalist Association Report, 2011, there are 15 cable television networks in the whole of Mizoram.

LPS Vision and *Zonet* broadcast 24 hours music demand channels that are telephone based. *Skylinks* was the first cable network to introduce Mizo soap opera which was titled '*Ngaihzual Nang Nen*' started in August, 2005. The serial was shown twice a week for 20 minutes. Hindi soap operas were very popular among the Mizos from 2005 to 2007. *LPS Vision* and *Zonet* has dubbed *Kasauti Zindagi Kay* in Mizo language and relayed the Mizo version.

Zonet provided local news everyday at 5:30 PM, local, national and international news every evening at 7:00 PM which is relayed again the same night at 10 and the next morning. *LPS Vision* has local, national and international news at 7:00 PM everyday also relayed again at 10:00 PM. It also provides local news every morning called '*Chibai Mizoram*' at 6.30.

²⁰⁰ Mr. Antony Chhuanvawra, proprietor of *Skylinks* says, "We began on a Teachers' Day because we thought a TV channel is like a teacher benevolently providing information to the public." (Personal interview with Antony in 2005)

The frequency of most of the local cable networks is about three hours of Mizo programme on news, entertainment and advertisements in the evening, relaying of English movies during the rest of the day, 24 hours music channels (religious music and secular music channels). The sources of information are mainly local reporters, press releases, NGOs and other satellite channels. There are no local news agencies in the State.

Music Videos and Films

The first Mizo music video album released in December 1985 was produced by Joseph Zokunga. It was a collection of music videos of famous singers of the time including C. Luri, RTC Lalduhawmi, C. Lalrinmawia, Helen Zaithankungi Sailo, C. Vansanga, Lalneihthangi, H. Laldanglovi, Zirsangzela Hnamte and the Joseph Band.²⁰¹

Music videos have become popular among the Mizos in and outside Mizoram after the starting of the three local channels. There were more than 800 music videos made during 2005. In 2005, there were more than 40 recording studios in Mizoram and a number of Video editing studios.

The first film in Mizoram, 'Ka Thlang ber che' was made by Lalsawmliana, owner of *LPS vision* in 1984. The film is a love story that revolves around a Christian family. There are 18 characters and the duration of the film is 1 hour 20 minutes. The

²⁰¹ See Mizo Aw (A daily newspaper of Aizawl), 17 December, 1985.

film was shot in a Video Home System (VHS) format and was distributed in the same format. The film was viewed in groups in community halls and houses through a VCR as there are no cinema theatres and cable television during this period. There are about 50 video films made in the year 2005.²⁰²

Mizoram does not have a film industry as such. Even though a good number of films are made, they are mostly short films-not more than 1 and a half to 2 hours. There is an emergence of the music video industry recently in Mizoram. The music video genres have an upper hand over films and therefore rule the entire entertainment industry.

Conclusion

This chapter deals with the contemporary media in Mizoram. The study documents the growth of press, electronic, literary and religious media as it has been in existence from 1990s onwards. The chapter pays attention to the altered political context of the region, which in effect forms the analytical part of this intervention. In short, documentation of critical media events along with an analysis of the political context formed the crux of this chapter.

²⁰² Personal Communication with Lalsawmliana (owner of LPS Vision), in 2006.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

This thesis is a narrative of the cultural history of a society which has recently acquired a script. For the purpose of this enquiry, media history is interchangeably used as cultural history of colonial Lushai Hills District and contemporary Mizoram. The study has designated the term, 'media history' as a connected history of speech, script, print and other technological media.

The study follows two distinct approaches, one approach is led by a linear, evolutionary, anthropological framework and the other is informed by a non-evolutionary, critical anthropological framework. Through this framework, the study charts out a linear chronological media history and through the critical anthropological theoretical framework informed by historically obtained facts, the study charts out a spatial history in conjunction with the official linear history. Interestingly, the linear chronological media history proposes a discontinuity with the pre-colonial oral history of the region whereas the spatial history, informed by the cultural registers of the region, offers a radical continuity to script and recognize the technology of script and print as another form of literacy informed by a prior existence of a distinct form of literacy associated with orality. In some sense, this intervention attends to the discontinuities and continuities which form part of the media history over the last hundred years. Thus, the study combines both a temporal and a spatial account of the connected history of speech, script and print of the Colonial Lushai Hills and the contemporary Mizoram State.

Existing historical accounts of the cultural history of Northeast region including Mizoram do not privilege the pre-colonial, pre-Christian cultural inheritance. In the official and Christian historiography of the region, there is less scope for recognizing the culturally acknowledged registers which the community deploys for understanding and experiencing historical and contemporary reality. One of the important proposals of this dissertation is the recognition of the community's implicit understanding or its intuitive knowledge of its cultural forms and practices. In the process of archival work, ethnographic engagement and reading reflexive Mizo literary and non-literary texts, the study has identified two important cultural registers discussed in the introductory chapter and other chapters of the thesis. As mentioned in those chapters, this implicit cultural understanding occurs through the deployment of indigenous registers known as '*thawnthu*' and '*chanchin*' which facilitate recognition of cultural forms, their distinct worldviews and the performances of the forms resulting in the production of cultural differences.

Historically, the two registers appear to encode the manifold unity of the pre-colonial Lushai world and they continue to perform that task in the contemporary world as well. In that, these two registers act as super register for reflexively recognizing distinctions between various forms and practices relating to linguistic, literary and technological media. The study while emphasizing the pre-colonial and pre-Christian inheritance of these two registers, invests a material and a discursive legacy to its continuing role in shaping modern forms of production, circulation and consumption of media and literary culture in colonial Lushai Hills and the contemporary Mizoram. The mediation of modern media and literary forms through these registers provides a dialogic space for a creative tension between a linear

account and a spatial account of the connected history of speech, script and print. During the last hundred years, there is a waxing and waning of this dialogic space.

On a broader plane, the study theoretically argues that there is no radical discontinuity between the literal and the performative, the '*chanchin*' and the '*thawnthu*'. Instances of both affirming and rejecting the research proposition are found in this work with the history weighing more in favor of discontinuity rather than continuity. For instance, the White missionaries during the early colonial period categorized the pre-Christian expressive forms and practices associated with '*thawnthu*' as diabolical; and surprisingly, during the first few decades after Independence, there was a lull in the production, circulation and consumption of the '*chanchin*' form giving rise to subversive performative genres like musical and lyrical compositions. In other words, the White missionaries promoted '*chanchin*' and exaggerated the difference between the two registers whereas the Indian State by default gave rise to '*thawnthu*'. The first instance affirms the discontinuity between the registers of '*chanchin*' and '*thawnthu*' and the second affirms the continuity. The thesis suggests that the Christian religious identity has been primarily shaped through the register of '*chanchin*' whereas the political identity seems to invoke the register of '*thawnthu*' for mobilizing the psychic and cultural resources. In some sense, the religious identity has roots in the newly acquired textual mode of being and the secular political identity seems to draw its sustenance from a pre-religious form of semiosis located in the register of '*thawnthu*'. The study proposes that the media history of the region may be read as the waxing and waning of the two registers across the modern forms and genres of literary and technological media over the last hundred years.

Milestones Identified

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the earliest recognizable milestone relates to the ethnographic description of the politically fluid Lushai Hills inhabited by various tribal clans including the dominant Luseis. Since this period pertains to the non-existence of the Lushai Hills as an administrative unit, the motive for the philological work of Lewin, Brojonath Saha, Anderson and Soppit does not neatly fit into the logic of control and governance. It is for this reason that they have less inhibition towards recognizing and documenting innumerable expressive cultural forms and practices. Though the foundational work of writing the dictionary and grammar is undertaken by the White Protestant missionaries a little later, there is a clear indication that they make an unconscious distinction between the cultural registers of *'thawnthu'* and *'chanchin'*. This effecting of discrimination between *'chanchin'* and *'thawnthu'*, posited as 'positive' and 'negative' respectively gives rise to what may be termed herein as 'Christian literacy'. This study offers insights into the tension that is set against the earlier form of literacy informed by a complementary role of the two cultural registers whereas the onset of Christian literacy reconfigures the complementary relationship between the two registers as oppositional and antagonistic.

The thesis identifies important milestones and critical events in the literary media history of Mizoram. The production of script by the missionaries was preceded by the ethnographic and philological works of the colonial officials which include *Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lusei Dialect of the Dzo or Kuki Languages: With vocabularies and popular tales* (1874) by Thomas Herbert Lewin, *A Grammar of*

the Lushai Language, to which are appended a few illustration of the Zuo of Lushai popular songs and translations from Aesop's Fables (1884) written by Brojonath Saha, *A Short List of Words of Hill Tippera Language, With Their English Equivalents- Also of Words of the Language Spoken by Lushais of the Sylhet Frontier* (1885) by J.D Anderson and *A Short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes on the North-East Frontier with An Outline Grammar of the Rangkhoh-Lushai Language and Composition of Lushai with Other Dialects* (1893) written by C.A Soppit.

The ethnographic and philological works of these colonial officials were the initial work on the dissection of the cultural practices of the Lushai Hills inscribing their practices in a linguistic, anthropological, scientific and humanistic conception. These texts are selected for the study because they situate and formulate the basis for the development of the Lusei dialect which is crucial for the literary and media growth in the region. The colonial writings were the formative texts important in producing a script for the Lusei language.

The production of the Lusei script and the reducing of the dialect into a written form is the most important milestone in the literary media history of the State of Mizoram. A set of works of the philological work of the white missionaries include *A Grammar and Dictionary of the Lushai Language* produced by J.H Lorrain and F.W. Savidge, *Mizo Zir Tir Bu* (A Lushai Primer), the first school text book prepared by the same missionaries and later revised and enlarged by the later missionaries like D.E Jones and Edwin Rowlands, *Chhiarkawpna Bu* (Arithmetic) and *English First Reader*

prepared by Rowlands and *Zir Tan Bu* prepared for the schools by D.E. Jones. The missionaries, Lorrain and Savidge also pointed out that the Lusei language was used for inter-lingual communication among the speakers of the other dialects of the region.

In their venture to reduce the Lusei dialect to writing, the missionaries prioritized their proselytising aspirations more than their concern to provide secular and modern educational system in the region. Providing literacy seems to be their main goal to enable the Luseis to read the Bible. The study suggests that the philological work of the missionaries is a significant marker that makes a distinction of the cultural registers of '*thawnthu*' and '*chanchin*'. It appears that Christian literacy regulates the prevalence of '*thawnthu*' in the philological and literary productions of the missionaries.

Another important milestone located by the thesis is the journalistic innovation of the Colonial State. The sources identified include J. Shakespear's text on *Mizo and Non-Mizo Tales*, the first handwritten newspaper of Lushai Hills, *Mizo Chanchin Laishuih* (1898), the first magazine produced by the colonial state, *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* (1902).

While critically engaging with these texts, the study finds out that most of the ethnographic and journalistic productions of the Colonial State were motivated by

both a pedagogic impulse as well as a desire to govern the Luseis. The symbolic Lusei universe was reconfigured into a material reality through these texts.

The linguistic, literary and journalistic contribution of the two Protestant Churches namely, the Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church were fundamental in this thesis. The first magazine produced by the Presbyterian Church, *Kristian Tlangau* (1911) and the official organ of the Baptist Church, *Kohhran Beng* (1946) were the major literary and journalistic publications. Apart from these, the two Churches produce a number of newsletters and periodicals for different sections of the people like women, children and youth. However, the dissertation engages with the two major magazines *Kristian Tlangau* and *Kohhran Beng* as these were the official organs of both the Churches.

The philological work inaugurated by Lorrain and Savidge which gave rise to the twin process of literisation (committing the dialect to writing) and literarisation (committing the language to literature) was taken over by the two important foundational institutions, the Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church. The conversion of sound to grapheme required the disciplining of the sensorium in the form of assembling of bodies horizontally leading to the emergence of a distinct fellow feeling, listening and directing the eyes to the person occupying the pulpit and recognizing the power and moral authority of the text through the person offering the sermon. Literisation and literarisation appears to unfold the elaboration of the word in its graphic form. This enquiry suggests that the text becomes a new ground for ordering and experiencing the world presumably different from the authority obtained

through the performance of rituals and beliefs centered around benign and evil spirits that supposedly govern their material, symbolic and spiritual world. Unlike the other Northeast communities, the rapid spread of Christianity among the Luseis may be due to a certain monolithic construction of religious identity based on the text or on the cultural register of '*chanchin*' rather than pluralizing the religious sphere through a more receptive engagement with the pre-existing Christian beliefs and rituals located within the register of '*thawnthu*'. This enquiry analyses the textual production of these two Churches from the perspective of the construction of singular, monolithic religious identity refusing to draw resources from earlier forms of literacy and performative practices.

Another important milestone in the media history of the region is the native contribution in the language, literary and journalistic field. The first letter appears to be written by a Lusei chief Khamliana in 1897, only three years after the Lusei script was produced. The first Mizo history book *Mizo Chanchin* (1938) was written by Liangkhaia, the first ordained pastor among the Luseis and the first novel *Hawilopari* was written by his son, Biakliana in 1926.

It is noteworthy that except for Khamliana, the traditional elite did not receive education in the initial years. In fact, most of them were against education and Christianity. The traditional commoners were among the earliest literates and rose to become the new elite only a few decades later. The early Christians who went on to become pastors and evangelists formed a new set of emerging elite and were influential in shaping the linguistic, literary and cultural history of the region. The study saw an attempt to bring continuity of '*chanchin*' to '*thawnthu*' through these

nascent practice of writings by the natives but it is also evident that the writings are largely governed by Christian ideology which somewhat rejects and regulates the beliefs that the register of *'thawnthu'* possesses.

The post colonial Mizo Hills District saw the emergence of *Mizo Academy of Letters*, a literary organ formed by a group of early educated Mizos of the region like J.F. Laldailova, J.Malsawma, C. Lalrema, H.K Bawihchhuaka and others. They produced a journal, *Thu leh Hla* since 1965 and it is still the only literary journal in the State of Mizoram. The emerging educated Mizos felt the need for producing a literary public sphere among the Mizos. They seem to be burdened with the urge to revive the Mizo traditions and beliefs through literature. This seems to be one of the few instances where the cultural register of *'thawnthu'* is invoked voluntarily in order to reclaim cultural resources of the past.²⁰³ This study has provided textual analysis of the journal *Thu leh Hla* to demonstrate the need for revitalizing literature through the invocation of diverse resources including those embedded in the pre-Christian past.

The establishment of *All India Radio* and *Doordarshan* in the Mizo Hills District by the postcolonial Nation State of India is yet another significant milestone. With India gaining its Independence, the Mizo Hills became a district of the Assam State. During this period, the Mizo Hills District witnessed rapid changes in political, economic and cultural spheres. As mentioned in the previous chapters, the region was haunted by a severe political turmoil and armed revolt against the Indian Nation

²⁰³ See items of the first issue of the journal *Thu leh Hla*. J.F. Laldailova laments on the beauty of the naming of trees, flowers and objects by the ancestors.

State. This resulted in the establishment of the State owned media in the region as a tool to integrate the revolting Mizos to the larger Nation State of India.

During the insurgent years, the Mizo Hills District experienced a regulation of literary and journalistic forms. The people could not produce any kind of writing for fear of punishment from the soldiers of the Indian army. This regulation of the 'chanchin' register in the region gave rise to a practice of performative tradition in the form of folksongs. In other words, the culture register of 'thawnthu' is haltingly revived by default during this period of turmoil when writing is regulated. In this study, a local history of All India Radio is narrated along with the regulation of listening practices by the radical political groups and the proscription of 'chanchin' leading to the revival of folksongs which has come to be interpreted as 'terror lore' by present cultural commentators of Mizoram.²⁰⁴

A critical event that appeared after twenty years of insurgency was the formation of the federal State of Mizoram under the Indian Nation State in 1986. The emergence of local cable televisions like *Skylinks* (1991), *LPS vision* (1994) and the production of music videos, films and a number of newspapers and periodicals occurred. In contemporary Mizoram, there are 91 newspapers, 14 periodicals and 15 cable television networks apart from the State owned media like All India Radio,

²⁰⁴ See Cherrie L. Chhangte, 'Loneliness in the midst of curfew: The Mizo Insurgency Movement and Terror Lore' in *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India*. Edited by Tilottoma Misra. p.239-240

Doordarshan, Press Information Bureau and others.²⁰⁵ The period of normalcy and peace in the State of Mizoram led to this increase in the production of literary, journalistic and audio visual forms. The press begins to take its responsibility of mediating between State and the people. The commodification of the text and the image appears to gradually take roots with both '*chanchin*' and '*thawnthu*' being recognized as partners rather than as antagonistic players in the journey of the future media history of Mizoram. The future of Christian literacy lies in its ability to pluralize the religious identity or reconfigure the commodification of the Mizo language market within the space of the Nation State.

In sum, the thesis offers theoretical insights and historical instances to demonstrate how the Mizo identity has journeyed forth from a fluid spatial geography to a convergence of a linguistic, religious, territorial geography. In other words, the making of media history of the colonial Lushai Hills District and the present state of Mizoram, a federal unit within the Indian Nation State, contributed in many ways to the conflation of territory, religion and language. Some of the insights require more ethnographic, archival and historical research for better illumination and theoretical clarity.

²⁰⁵ Latest report of Mizo Journalist Association (2011)

Mizo Chanchin Laishuih, 1898

Lai shui h 2. Aizawl 24 August. 1898

Centenary. 100 lives
Synod office
Mizoram. Aizawl
Aizawl.

Tham Thum Khuate savom lian kap
Tin Thangbata khavet pa nichan kap
tin Rokunzi Khuate pawh pakh an
kap. Tin Thannuma savom a kap
shial in a ai. Tin Khua vel thanza
Khuate pakh an kap. Tin Lung-
lei khunga Lalchunga Khuate pakhat
a kap. Tin Lianona Khuate pakhat
chue savom hnu a yui lai in savom
chuan a shek a, a broka, a lu chhepa
a hnuia, a kokia a hnunga, a ban
ve ve a kut ve ve a ke ve ve a shek
chiana. Hmun thom khich lek hmun
nga a a shek a. A shek ni chue doktor
Wafu Lianona khua a riak a, a hmuam
hma a sil fai a hmun thum a a
thui a dam doi a knoi veka, a taka
chuan aizawl a an zawng a lana
a dam dawn ta.

Tin Chhuak khina khuate kaphat saon

APPENDIX-II

Mizo Lekhabute²⁰⁶

(MIZO BOOKS)

There are few books available in the Zo language. Most of the books that are published are religious in nature. I am enumerating those published books which are not religious and I encourage individuals and associations to purchase these publications. Writing and publishing a book involves huge expenses and it is not an easy task.

1. **Mizo leh a vela hnam dangte Chanchin** or An account of Mizos and their neighbours: The author of this book is Rev Vanchhunga, Mizo pastor and it is priced Rs 3.00. You can purchase from A. Thanglura, Member of Parliament and Vanbuka. The language used by the author is rich and powerful. Any person who has read this book feels that he or she was having a dialogue with the author meaning that the book was not didactic in nature.
2. **Mizo History**: The book was written by V L. Siama and it is used a text book for middle school. It is priced at Rs.1.62. You can purchase the book from Lalrinliana who stays in Barabazar in Aijal. Since the book is prepared for school kids the book is eminently lucid and readable. This is the fourth edition.
3. **Mizo Pi Pu Leh An Thlahte Chanchin**: K. Zola was the author of this book. This title literally refers to Mizo Gandfather, Grandmother and their Ancestors and metaphorically refers to Our Ancestors. You may purchase the book

²⁰⁶ Translation of this piece is done by me and Dr. P. Thirumal.

from the author and his address is Mission Veng, Aijal . This is the latest book on Mizo History and it is published in the year 1964. The author is a good narrator and has the mind of the detective in historically investigating the Mizo past. It is lucid and very readable. He included old Mizo songs as probable sources for writing history. Besides, the book provides an legendary account of valorous men in Mizo history.

4. **Mizo Hla Bu:** This book on Mizo songs was compiled by Liankhuma and it priced at Rs 1. You may purchase the book from Ngurkhuma who resides at Kulikawn, Aijal. It contains 510 non-religious songs of the Lenglawng variety which is close to patriotic or secular songs. The other type of songs belong to the variety 'love songs' known as Lengzem.
5. **Hmasang Mizo Awm Dan:** The title of the book literally means 'The Way of Life of the Ancient Mizos' and the author of the book was Rev. Challiana, a pastor from the Synod Church. Intriguingly the book has been prescribed for both middle school and the Pre University Syllabus. It is priced at 62 Naya Paisa. You may purchase the book from Synod Book room. This book is very informative and the author uses language in an elegant manner.
6. **Awithangpa Hla:** This book is a compilation of the traditional songs composed by the classical poet Awithangpa who lived between 1887 -1965. It is compiled by L.R.Sailo and is priced at Rs 1. You may purchase the book from Lalsenga who is located at Government High School, Aijal.
7. **Sangi Inleng:** The title of the book means 'Suitors of Sangi' where 'Sangi' is a name of a lady. This is a fictional story, which is written as a drama/play form

by Lalthangfala, B.A. and is priced at Re.1. You may purchase it from Sailothanga at Bara Bazar, Aijal.

8. **Mizo Dan Bu:** The title of the book reads 'Book on Mizo Customary Law'. It was published by the District Council, Government of Assam and it is priced at Rs 1. You may purchase this book at the Council House, Aijal. The book is based on the ethnographic work of the colonial official N.E.Perry who wrote on the Mizo culture and society. The book gives an idea of the changes that have occurred in Mizo customary law over the several decades. The book is not voluminous but is extremely useful and insightful.
9. **Mizo Titi:** The title of the book literally refers to 'Mizo Conversation' but metaphorically it may simply mean 'Mizo Discourse' or 'Discourse of Mizo Public'. It is characterized as a book on Mizo History and it prescribed for primary schools in the region. It is priced at 80 paisa and it is available with Lalrinliana who resides in Barabazar, Aijal.
10. **Mizo Tawng Ziak Dan:** Roughly translated the title may read as 'the proper way of writing Mizo language' or how to improve writing skills. The book is a product of the North and South literature committee and the committee seems to be interested in standardizing of the written Mizo language. Vankhuma is the author the book and the it is priced at 25 paisa. You may purchase the book from the author himself.
11. **Zo nun:** The translated title would read 'The Life of a Mizo'. It is anthology of writings from different contributors on the everyday life of the Mizos. This edited work was authored by J.Malsawma and is priced at Rs 3. This book is

prescribed for B.A. Degree curriculum and it is available for purchase at the Ziki press, Kulikawn, Aijal.

12. **Mizo Hla Hlui leh Thar:** The title reads 'Old and New Mizo songs. This book has been compiled by J.Malsawma and it has been prescribed as a textbook for B.A Degree. It is priced at Rs 2.25 and it may be purchased at Lalrinliana, Barbazar. The old songs reveals the genius of our ancestors and the new generation are also very creative with their compositions.
13. **Hla Thu Hrilhfhahna:** The title translates into 'Poetical dictionary'. This work was written by Thankunga and it is priced at Rs 1. The book may be purchased at R. Buchhawna, Aijal. The author describes the meaning of difficult poetic Lushai expressions.
14. **Mizo Hla Khawnkhawm:** The title reads 'Selected Mizo Poems' and it was written by Lalmama. The book has been prescribed for middle school and it is priced at 62 paisa. The book may be purchased from Lalrinliana, Barabazar, Aijal.
15. **Nun Dan:** The title reads 'Way of Life' and it written by H.K.Bawichhuaka. The book was written by the author while in prison. It is priced at Rs 1. It is available at Synod Book room.
16. **Bengvarna bu:** The title reads 'Book on General Knowledge' and it priced at Rs 2.50. It was written by R. Thanhkira and it is available from the author.
17. **Abraham Lincoln:** This book was written by Thanhkira and it is priced at Rs 1.25. You may purchase the book from the author himself.

18. **Mizo Thawnthu:** The title is translated as 'Mizo Folk Tales'. It is compiled by P.S.Dahrawka and it is priced at 6.25. It is available at Sasem Stall, Aijal. It contains interesting Folk Tales and it was published in 1964.
19. **'Chawngpui, a ti vawl vawl thin':** This a love story in the form of novel written by Vanlalropuia. It is set in a pre-colonial context and copies of the book are exhausted and are not available for sale at the moment.
20. **Saikuti Chanchin:** This is a biography of the Lushai poet 'Saikuti' written by Selthuama and published by Lalrema, a civil service officer. The book has just come out of press and it is yet to be priced. It may not cost more than Rs 3. It will be available for sale at Lunglei by J.Buana.
21. **Zoram Thlirna:** The title reads 'A view of Zoram'. It is prepared by B.Poonte and it is available freely and it was published at the end of 1964. It contains fifteen photographs.
22. **Pi Pu Ziarang:** It may be roughly translated as 'The Characteristics of Our Ancestors' and it was written by Kiautuma. It provides an account of the Pawi and the Lakher.

APPENDIX-III

Culture²⁰⁷

By H. Thang Khuma

What is this thing that we call 'culture'? Do Mizos have one? What is Cultural Society, Cultural Club? Culture is a word which is very difficult to define, yet very important. The definition of culture may differ in different nations and countries and the people who are defining it. It may also differ in different periods in time. The culture that is employed by certain people may be totally different from the culture of another group of people. For instance- the culture that Hitler employed during the Second World War was based on the domination of the high class individuals. Under Hitler's culture (the Germans call it 'Kultur'), people have no freedom or rights, the minorities are fully suppressed by the upper class.

Culture is not exactly similar with Civilization. Civilization is more of an outward lifestyle of the people, their manners and customs, while culture is a deeper character, it is the seed of the civilization. Lifestyles, manners and customs may change with time but culture does not often change. Therefore, there are things which do not change with time in cultures whether it is Mizo culture or Indian culture. However, they may take in/ add cultures which are borrowed from other nations. Language is one of the foundations of culture. Mizo culture, like the Japan or England culture, has its own life/soul which it should protect no matter what problems/hardships it may undergo. When a nation is being governed/ colonized by another nation, it does not mean that the colonized people have lost their culture, nor

²⁰⁷ Translation work is done by me.

it means that their culture is inferior. Rome in its greatest was not inferior to the Greek culture. Japan culture is not lower than the culture of the USA. Likewise, Indian culture is not superior to the Mizo culture, Mizo culture is also not inferior to the British culture.

Cultures may be shown in material productions, their proverbs, writings, folktales and songs. While the culture of the Jews is clearly revealed in the Old Testament, the Hindu culture is written in their old book, Manu Smriti. Mizo culture is revealed in the old song compositions and folktales. According to Mizo culture, human life is short and is not as precious as the afterlife, they expect a better life in a different world, pialral or paradise. They would find peace and freedom in the new world. They never want to be suppressed by others/outsideers. They never choose to be well fed as a slave but would sacrifice their life for freedom. In Mizo culture, a person wants the good of their friends/fellow Mizos than his own, but would compete with others in bravery and 'tlawmngaihna'. A short definition of Mizo culture would be 'tlawmngaihna' but is not enough for all the aspects of the culture. It appears that the beauty of Mizo culture has now been diluted with education and mixing/coalescing with other people. So, even though culture does not completely change, the appearance may change with such factors. (Culture is not static, it is dynamic).

Hindu culture does not regard life to be long and luxurious; Bhagwat Gita teaches that people should be hard working without expecting rewards. Buddhist culture speaks of freedom of thoughts. These cultures undergo changes with time.

Greek culture gives importance to mind and blood in terms of sacrifice to gods and goddesses. Their sword fights of the brave warriors, their idea of democracy,

their thirst for knowledge and wisdom, handmade artifacts and writings reveal that they have a rich and great culture. They see beauty in everything.

A famous poet, Keats seems to be thinking very high of the Greek culture when he says-

*“What leaf fring’d legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities, or mortals or of both,
In Temple or the dates of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maiden loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?”*

From the study of Greek culture, we find that Plato and Aristotle teachings have even influenced the world culture.

Culture should not refuse to develop and change for the better with time. If it does not follow the changes in the world, culture may be hampered. It should borrow and take in the good things from other cultures to grow. Culture is inner aspect and should enter our thoughts. It rejects all the unwanted aspects of the inner and outer lifestyle of the people and takes in only the ‘good.’ Here, the measurement of ‘good’ is what the whole nation regards as good. (Culture is an all round perfection- Arnold). Governments of the West often do business with other foreign countries, and are eager to govern others. Meanwhile, people of the East want to protect their region and exclude themselves from foreign interference. This is something that is noteworthy. When a certain nation subjugates, suppresses and governs a weaker section of the people or other weaker nations, it creates a new unity among the people of the weaker section or nation. The love between couples

grows more and more with the problems they face rather than with a dull ordinary life. More often, small and weaker nations do not feel the need to be united until their peace is hampered by stronger nations. In such troubles, they create a new 'we' identity and fight shedding their blood to protect that 'we' that is newly born.

In some sense, culture is somewhat enlightenment. Mathew Arnold states that, "A man of culture should aim at perfection." Does this mean that a cultured person should be from a city, well educated, and filled with wisdom? This is not enough. Culture includes all these and more. When our definition of culture includes only the above mentioned factors, a group of 'cultured men' are created and they do not in any way develop the culture. Culture touches upon every aspect of the human life, as a person cannot live on his own. Therefore, culture has many fragments. Each of these fragments is joined together at the centre. It includes the beauty of their artifacts, religious life, community life, politics and science. It would not be surprising if you question whether science is a culture. American culture depends largely on science, so we cannot omit science from culture. Who can say that this scientific based American culture may not change the face of the cultures of the East as well?

I have written a long article. It is difficult to write on culture in few words. The lifestyles, manners and customs can alter our culture, so the Mizos should be very careful in dealing with other cultures. We should take only the good ones and reject the bad ones. The goodness in our culture should be protected with our lives. It seems this is the main reason why Mizo Cultural club is established.

APPENDIX- IV

How Literature is Defined ²⁰⁸

Zoremthanga, Hlimen

This piece of essay is a bunch of rambling thoughts that have lately occupied my mind. I cannot foresee how this piece will have any effect or impact in the minds of others, but nevertheless, I will scribble out my thoughts and see where it goes.

To begin with, have we ever questioned whether the English word '*Literature*' and the Mizo language equivalent '*Thu leh Hla*' or '*Thuhlaril*' bears the same depth and scope? Could it be that the British, being the developers of our Mizo script or that we regard highly of them that we often use English terms even where we have our own Mizo equivalent of it. The term '*Literature*' itself is used more often than the Mizo equivalent of '*Thu leh Hla*' or '*Thuhlaril*' and in the process, almost exterminating the Mizo terms. Especially among today's Mizo generation, the use of English became some sort of a fashion and a trend. The labels of our garments and dwellings have also been replaced with English terms instead of the Mizo; for example, *Room* instead of *Pindan*, *Pen* instead of *Kawlawm*, *Paper* instead of *Lehkha phék* and the already mentioned *Literature* instead of *Thu leh Hla* or *Thuhlaril*. So, it could be seen that these substitutions of the Mizo language with the English is considered today as a way or kind of modernization. Many examples could be listed out but one thing that is clear even from here is that these ongoing trends are seriously affecting the preservation and quality of the existing Mizo literature and posed as a hindrance for the development of it.

²⁰⁸ This article appeared in *Thu leh Hla*, September, 2007 and is translated by Benjamin Lalfakzuala.

Now let us discuss the topic. Firstly, let us try to trace the meaning and origin of the English word *Literature*. Thulairilbu (by CTBEB pub-MZU) had stated that the word *Literature* came from the Latin word '*Litera*' which means *Letter* in English. Letter in this context simply meant the English alphabets A, B, C etc. It could also mean a set of words written and posting it for a distant receiver which we identified it as *mail*. From here, we can see that the word *Literate* of the English word came from the Latin word *Literatus* (plural- *Literati*). The word *Literate* thus comes to mean a person who is able to read and write a script. From here, we explore further and discuss the ideal or correct way of reading and writing these scripts. So, our main topic of discussion, the word *Literature*, borrowed from the Latin word *Litteratura*, came to be in existence and came to be defined as the art of writing a script. In a nutshell, it is the study of reading and writing a script in its real intention.

Let us explore further how the English word had defined the word Literature. The Oxford English dictionary defined it as '*writing with a sense of style and purpose*.' Chambers English Dictionary defined it as the '*artistic know-how to reading and writing*'. Writer R.J. Rees had opined, '*Literature is the expression in words of some thought or feeling or idea about life and the world*'. Another writer William J. Long had also opined, '*Literature is the expression of life in words of truth and beauty, it is the written record of man's spirit, of his thoughts, emotions, aspirations; it is the history, and the only history, of the human soul*'. Whatever the definitions may be, it could be asserted that: songs, poems, or a combination of both, deep, meaningful and beautiful and having the power to reach the deepest and remotest corners of our human thoughts are some of the qualities of Literature.

Even the Mizo writers have more or less defined Literature along the same vein as those stated earlier. Now let us trace the meaning and origin of the Mizo word *Thu leh Hla*. *Thu* may be broadly defined as '*a verbal speech which had been formed in the mind*'. *Hla* could mean a '*meaningful set of words constructed in a particular way and having a particular tune to it*'. Therefore, if we put '*Thu*' and '*Hla*' together, it means '*either Thu or Hla or a combination of both, written or spoken out in a meaningful and particular way*'. Lately, there is the invention of a new term called '*Thuhlaril*' which was aimed to define '*Thu leh Hla*'. The words '*Thu*' and '*Hla*' came to be joined together and a new word '*Ril*' was added as it was thought to augment the meaning of Literature, giving it more beauty and depth. The new word '*Ril*' here, would mean, deep and serious. So '*Thuhlaril*' would mean either '*Thu*' or '*Hla*' having insightful or profound importance or implication.

At this point, it would be safe to assume that the basic meaning of Literature is comprehensible. Now let us try to understand the differences between the English *Literature* and the Mizo *Thuhlaril*.

As we have mentioned earlier, one may understand the scope and range of *Literature* from the definitions that we have already provided. From the previous examples, it could be seen that almost all the examples included the word 'written'. So, if this is the case, then it could be asserted that written record is an important element of Literature. If we go back to the examples, we could find out that the intention of the Latin and English origins of the word Literature also pertains to 'writing out' something or the other. Again, as stated before, the Latin had used '*Litter*' to describe the action of writing a script, which in turn was adopted by the English as '*Letter*'. And from here, we have also discussed that '*Litteratura*' was

again adopted by the English as *Literature*. So we could understand that, besides all the beauty and elegance in its art, writing is an important element. Therefore, whenever Literature is defined, the boundary is always set to 'writing out the script' or 'written record'.

Even among many of the Mizo writers, the boundary has always been intrinsically set to written record. But then, if we trace the origin of the Mizo *Thuhlaril*, we find out that the boundary is not always limited to written record. The reason for this is that, if we look at the individual words put together in *Thulairil*, it is clear that there is no demand for '*writing*' as is the case for Literature. So in the Mizo *Thulairil*, there is no law which demanded it in written form. In a way, in *Thulairil*, one could broadly set the boundary to 'passing the literature by means of oral speech'. *Zikpuui Pa*, a writer had opined that, '*Literature may manifest itself through oral speech and sentences, but the most important is of the human dream and suffering*'. Along the same vein, we could therefore state that even before the existence of the written script, literature had passionately expressed the issues of the times so much so that it has the power to change the thought and imagination of the listener. If this is the case then, could this be called a good literature? Besides this, what one should take into account is that, whenever a literature of one language is translated into another, the translated literature often lost the original intent or often strayed away from the original trajectory. What we can realize from this is that, just as there are different people using different languages and scripts, the literature too, be it oral or written has always been subject to differ one way or the other.

The idea of situating literature to the oral or written has been rhetorical and is often debated. However, it seemed that putting it in written form is favoured by the

majority. If we contemplate it purely and objectively, putting it in written form has more of the advantage. The reason for this is that, one of the qualities of literature, as we have mentioned earlier is permanence. So, as long as there is written form, the literature will be preserved and will stand the test of time. In addition, it will also be convenient for further research and proofing. Oral form on the other hand would be difficult in passing the original literature from one to another as memory will play a crucial role in retaining the quality and original intent of the literature. Therefore, it seemed better to set the boundary of literature to written form.

However, for the Mizos, it is not always easy to set the boundary line to written forms. Only one Century had passed since the Mizos have Romanized scripts (A, Aw, B, Ch...). Therefore, with such a young script, the Mizos have not much produced good and quality literature worth mentioning. The Greeks, the French, the English, the Romans etc who have spearhead civilization have had scripts which date back as far. So the writers of their time have already immortalized their work through written scripts. All this time, it seemed the Mizos have been too occupied with primitivity that they have not developed their own form of script. While other races and civilizations have followed the path of development and modernization, the Mizos were still busy celebrating their festivals and engaging in inter-tribal skirmishes. Even in the 19th Century, it is as late as 1894 that the Mizos came to have a Romanized script, that too, developed by the Christian missionaries. Taking all these into consideration, it could be seen that it is difficult for the Mizos to set the boundary in literature only to written forms.

The Mizos, even to this day have not produced a literature which would be regarded for its elegance and beauty which would be able to convey its perfect state

of being, its true worth or purpose. Even some of the sought after or highly regarded literatures were all before the acquisition of the Mizo script and was passed down through generations by means of oral tradition which had a high probability of exaggerations and inaccuracies. Some of the Mizo literature regarded as the gems of Mizo literature:- *Hlado*, *Bawhhla*, *Chaihla*, *Mizo Thufingte*, *Mizo Thawnthu* and others were all imported now from oral tradition to written form. These olden Mizo literatures still remain the epitome of Mizo literature even by today's standard and continued to be the main charm which enriched today's Mizo literature. One important thing worth remembering is that, the olden Mizo songs, especially those which were sung out spontaneously were often very deep and insightful, for example, *Tlar hnih zai*, *Tlar thum zai*, *Salulam zai*, *Bawh hla* etc. Even the Mizo folklores and legends were quite authentic which often had strong values, ideas and purpose.

It is because of this that it is difficult for the Mizos to set the boundary of defining literature to strictly written form. So does this mean that the definition of the Mizo *Thulairil* be left to each person's convenience and perception? Probably not! From the perspective of how we define literature, it is apparent that there is the rejection of almost all the olden Mizo gems by virtue of it being oral tradition. Therefore, if we broaden our point of view, we might just find out the ideal definition to situate *Thulairil* which would be in sync with our existing circumstances. At the same time, one cannot help but approve that written form is the most pure and reliable. Whatever the case may be, the existing situation calls for fresh perspective which may produce favourable results. In conclusion, one could assert that the olden

Mizo gems that we have mentioned may not have qualified for being *Literature*, but by all means, they absolutely qualify for being *Thulairil*.

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