Chapter - VI

ECO-DOMESTIC LIFE

Most of their material needs came from their Jhuns and from the forest.
CHAPTER- VI

ECO-DOMESTIC LIFE

To enhance our knowledge on the cultural history of the Vaipheis, we shall now closely observe the different aspects of their economic and domestic life in its traditional form, its norms and impact on individual's social activity and relationship thereof.

The generous gifts of nature from its bounty have played the dominant role in shaping and fostering the economic and domestic life of the people. Physical environments formed the basis of all economic and domestic activities. Chapman Clark has rightly stated that the people were dependant on the forest, and on their own efforts, for all the necessities of life. They were entirely self-sufficient, growing all they ate and also the cotton which was spun for clothing and bedding. All the materials needed for building their houses—wood, thatch, cane and bamboo—came from the forest.

Now let us analyse the eco-professional aspects of the people we concerned.
Main Occupation:

Like other tribals of the hilly regions, the Vaiphei tribes were all agriculturists in the olden days. It is believed that they have been practicing the worst form of Jhume cultivation (shifting Cultivation) known as 'ThingTang Lou' or 'Pam-Lou' etc. since they left Kale-Kabaw Valley for the steepy and infertile ridges of the Chin Hills (Myanmar).

It is both drastic and destructive in the sense that every 'Pam-Lou' or 'MaZap' requires periodical change of the site after few years of cultivation which necessitated the Village Chief and his ministers to hold 'Pam-Lou-Lei' (as already seen in the previous chapter-V), to find a new site suitable for cultivation. Secondly, another defect of such agricultural system is the absolute dependence on the monsoon rainfall. Sometimes, heavy rainfalls had damaged the standing crops, and in other years it's conspicuous by its absence or ill distribution causes drought. When such unwelcomed years arrived, the old wrinkled toilers began to weep like young infants, because they have no subsidiary occupation or industries to earn bread for their families.

It is the duty of every young man to help his parents in their field. Much preparatory work has to be done before seeds are sown. Tall trees are cut down and thorny bushes and shrubs are slashed and heaped up in one corner of the fields. Such heaped shrubs and bushes is called 'Chap'. This chap is allowed to dry in the summer sun. During such interval of waiting for the drying up of the chap, the villagers busied themselves in a simple merry-making known as 'CHAP PHOU ZU' occasionally.

Traditionally, these bushes and shrubs are burnt by the month of March. As a result, following the burnt down of trees and undergrowth, each head from each
household would perform a ritual called ‘DAIPHU’. The person who performs this ritual would fix small sticks made out of bamboo around a tree trunk on the ground and then smeared the bamboo-sticks with the blood of hen or cock he offered. Such ritual is performed for the fertility of the soil and, it is performed only in the fields.

After the ritual ‘Dai-Phu’ had been performed, the people begun digging the ground of the fields. Before the advent of the 17th century, horns or wooden spikes were the only means of digging up the earth. Such digging equipment was known as ‘Tu-Thaw’ or ‘Tu-Dal’. But now with the advancement of civilization, hoe became the main tool for digging up the earth.

The father, mother, son, if grown up a couple of little children, if any, in other words, virtually the whole family would have to work on the fields for days. To get work done quickly, Lawm, namely, Lawm-Lian, Lawm-Thak, Lawm-Neu (already mentioned in chapter V) work in turn on the field of one of them at a time. This practice is prevalent even today. Likewise all the members of the various unit of Lawm under the leadership of their chief known as ‘Lawm-Kungpu’ (male leader) and ‘Lawm-Kungpi’ (female leader), would work on a particular field. After the work is over they would move on to another and so on till all the fields are made ready for sowing.

As their Pam-Lau were at a considerable distances from the village, they built a hut known as LOU-BUK or ‘TIIAM’ in their respective PAM-LOUS, and stayed there caring and guarding their precious crops from wild monkeys, birds, and other pests. Only the male adults of the family stayed in rotation ways until they transported the crops in their granaries.
Generally, the \textit{PAM-LOU (Jhums)} are weeded twice or thrice before harvest. When the time for harvesting arrived—which is between October and November—most of the family members would stay in the \textit{Lou-Buk} or \textit{Thaam}, and would work together reaping and collecting the golden crops. During such period, the \textit{Lawm-Kungpus} and \textit{Lawm-Kungpis} would play advantageous role again by helping the villager who lagged behind others in reaping and transporting the crops to granaries.

The rice is cut very high as the straw has no value. It is threshed on a piece of ground specially levelled near the Jhume house (\textit{Lou-Buk}). Threshing is done in two or three ways. The ears are thrown on to the threshing floor and trodden out by persons dancing on them or are beaten with sticks till the grains have all fallen out. Both these methods are rather wasteful, and a better one is to construct a platform about 7 to 8 feet from the ground on which a circular bamboo bin is fixed, into which the ears of rice are thrown and a young man with girl as a companion dance merrily among them, singing all the while, the split end of the bamboos of which the platform is made keeping up a cheerful clatter. The grain is quickly separated from the ear and falls in a golden cone on to the threshing floor.\footnote{4}

The fallen corn on to the threshing floor are then accumulated in the shape of a pyramid, and the height of it was measured by a gun or a well-marked bamboo pole. A good harvest is generally between two to three fathoms, and are celebrated in the village with pomp and grandeur. Such celebration is named as \textit{‘BU-AIH’}, and the song which used to be sung is called \textit{‘LAMPAK-LA’}. The dance which used to be performed is also called \textit{LAMPAK-LAM’}. The \textit{‘Bu-Aih’} is celebrated along with a banquet by butchering a swine or a bison. All the villagers young or old participated in this grandiose feast. It is one of the most happiest moment for the whole community of the village.
Sometime this Bu-Aih celebration lasted for about two or three days depending upon the benevolence and the wealth of the person who hosted it.

Major crops: Either in North-Eastern India or in the Chin Hills and Kabaw-Valley of Myanmar, the Vaiphei people generally grew varieties of corns, vegetables and fruits, namely. Rice (Bu), Maize (Kawl-Bu), Pop-corn (Kanpuak), Gourd (Uum), Yam (Baal), Potato (Aalu), Sweet Potato (Kawltha), Pumpkin (Mai), Sesame (Sii), Ginger (Thing), Banana (Naga), Guava (Kawl-Thei), Pineapple (Leng-Thei), Onion (Loulu-L-San), Cucumber (Chang-Mai), Sugar-cane (Kel-Zu), Brinjal (Manta), Chilli (Maicha), Pomegranate (Kawlbu-Thei), Orange (Sekthum), Papaya (Thing-Chang-Mai), Mustard (Ankam), Jackfruit (LaamKhuang), Tobacco (Dum), Cotton (Pat), etc.

Agricultural tools: The agricultural implements used in cultivation are Dao (Chem) which is of two types, v.i.z. - "Chempawng" which is triangular blade about three inches wide at the end and half an inch wide at the handle, and the other 'ChemKon' its size is similar to Chempawng but its end is slightly curved. These daos are generally used for clearing bushes and shrubs in the fields.

The second important agricultural tool is the axe or heicha, which is mainly used for cutting down trees, and the third is the Hoe (Tuthaw or Tudal) which is also of two types: the bigger hoe-(Tudal) is meant for ploughing the fields and the smaller (Tuthaw) for digging holes to sow the seeds or the nursery-plants. The forth is, the Kawite (or sickle) a curved blade like a hook with a handle used in cutting the crops.

In contrast to the people residing in the steepy hills, buffalo (Lawi) and Oxen (Bowng-Chal) are employed for ploughing the fields in the low-lands of Manipur (India) and Kabaw-Valleys of Myanmar.
Like other hilly tribals, hunting is considered as one of the most alluring vocational occupations of the Vaiphei tribes, especially in the olden days.

As the people are living in the deep woods, infested with varieties of wild animals provided an immense scope for hunting adventure and earning livelihood as well. In spite of being a risky and hazardous occupation where sometime the hunter became the hunted and vis-à-vis. The people regarded hunting as the most interesting sport and, the greatest expedition next to war until the dawn of the middle of the 20th century.

As a rule Vaipheis hunted in large numbers or in group ways, though there were also some other individual hunters who took it as their sole occupation and became sharp-hunter and expert in jungle lore. In collective or group hunting, all the interested male members went out from the village and encamped somewhere in the deep woods with provisions to last them for weeks. Here, the younger ones who had joined the hunting party prepared their meals while the rest went out for hunting.

Killing of animals such as rhinos, elephants, tiger, lion, bear and wild boar are considered to be of high value which deserves the performances of solemn ceremony called 'SA-ALIH'. When such valued animals are killed, the villagers would welcome the hunting party with songs called 'ZAANGCHA-LA' and 'SALU-LA' with a dance called 'SALU-LAM' at the entrance of the village. On the other hand, the hunting party would freed many rounds of their fire-arms and their high volume 'HAN-LA' and 'SALU-LA' would echoes and rock the hills around their village.

In general, the killed animals are brought in the camp; the abdominal organs are cooked, and the rest divided among themselves while the hunter preserved the skull of the killed animal for himself. The flesh are then roasted in the fire dry, and stored in their respective bamboo-baskets (Paal-Bawm) until they are full.
ThikNang or SuangChep-Meithal (A gun with single load or shot at a time), Thal (Arrow), ChemKon (Curved Dao), and Cheicha (Spear), are the main weapons used for hunting. And, Gophel (Bamboo-catapult) and different types of Chang or Thang (Traps) are used for hunting or catching birds, and animals such as rabbits, monkeys, deers, porcupines, squirrels, etc.

The Vaipheis have different types of ‘Tricks and Treats’ to entrap even gigantic beasts such as tiger, elephant &c. without the use of the aforesaid tools and weapons.

In Vaiphei dialect the sport of hunting is called ‘GAM-LENG’ or ‘SA-BENG’.

**FISHING**: Another vocational occupation of the Vaiphei people is fishing. Along with fishing, sometime they also catched crabs from the ravines.

Generally, a group comprising of man, woman, and children used to set out for fishing. They used different methods in fishing. Some fished by poisoning the stream or river with poisonous substances ‘GUU’ which are extracted from icaves, reeds, barks, and roots of an evergreen plants growing in the region. Also, fishing is done by diverting the course of river, brooks or drying up stagnant water. Another method is, a team of villagers would fished with their fishing nets. But netting fish is usually undertaken by individuals for their own domestic consumptions.

The most popular and traditional method is, fishing with ‘NGAWI’ (Bamboo-weirs). Here, they bunded the river or stream, so that no fish might slip and glided out except into the NGAWI which was fixed in the centre of the temporary dam. But with the change of time and standard of life, the method of fishing also had gradually
changed. For instance, the Vaipheis who settled on the banks of Nampalaung river, that is, inhabitants of the Kabaw-Valley (Myanmar) and Moreh town (Manipur, India) generally used dynamos for fishing in the lustre river of Nampalaung. In fact, the Nampalaung river is one that added joy and colour to the life and livelihood of the Vaiphei tribes inhabiting this international border of both India and Myanmar.

**DRAWING BEE-HIVES:**

The bees larvae (*Khuai-Nou*) are one of the most valued food among the Vaiphei tribes. And the honey was most valued drink and high fetching price. But, extraction of larvae or honey from bee-hives is considered to be an act of valour, as the venturer are often stung to death. So, a team is usually formed to draw a bee-hive from the trunk or branch of tree or from the hole of high cliffs.

If the bee-hives is to be drawn out of a hole on a cliff or ground, the entrance would be sealed with mud, and slowly smokes prepared from thatches, rice-husks, etc. would be blew through bamboo pipes. When the bees are supposed to die out of asphyxiation or paralysed due to suffocation, the hive is dig out with hoe savely.

To draw out bee-hives which are attached on the trunk or branch of a tree, the venturer would wrap himself with rags as if a living-mummy leaving only the eyes naked. Then, the hives is blew with smokes from dry thatches or the ilks to drive away the bees from the hive. While blowing the smoke, the venturer would grasp to death the queen-bee to frighten away the other bees from the hives. After successfully driving away the bees, the honey or larvae are extracted.

Extracting of honey comb or bee-hives from the trunk of a tree or branch of a tree is usually done by an individual.
MANUFACTURES and HANDICRAFTS: Cottage industries have a very important role in the lives of the Vaiphei people. It is, to some extent, the backbone of their economy, and also provides the people with employment in the slack season. Some of the important industries can be summarized as follows:

Arms and Ammunitions: The primitive Vaipheis seem to have procured the art of manufacturing guns and its pellets from the Burmese and Pawis of Chin Hills (Myanmar). Indeed, the Burmese had procured arms and ammunitions from the Portuguese and French traders before the British emerged.

Most of their guns are manufactured by themselves. A typical gun is generally of the length of three to four feet with a wooden bud, a clapper to strike and ignite the gun powder inside the barrel. It was a duplicate of 'Flint-Lock', but it is differently known as 'SUANGCHIEP-MEITHAL'. And a newer model after this Suangchep was known as 'THIIKNAANG-MEITHAL' which was a duplicate of Tower-Musket and Double-barrel Rifles.

Again, each village manufactured its own gun powder, the three components of which are obtained in the following manner. To produce sulphur, dung or the filth which collects under the house, is placed in a large kind of cradle or basket, and through it water is slowly filtered, the resulting liquor being collected in pan underneath and afterwards evaporated.

Sulphur is also extracted from large red beans grown in the jungle or indirectly imported from neighbouring States.

As a matter of fact, there are many talented Vaipheis who are well versed in manufacturing and repairing arms and ammunitions.
Cane and Bamboo crafts: Comparing with other Zo tribes, the Vaipheis are blessed with craftsmanship. They are, in fact, crafty in making varieties of household utensils and furniture out of cane and bamboo.

They make household needs such as table, chair, rack, stool, basket, etc., out of cane and bamboo. Men, women, and children are engaged in this craft. Young and old, male and female fetched cane and bamboo from the deep woods to mould into varieties of attractive furnitures.

Cane and bamboo works play a vital role in the economy of the Vaiphei people from time immemorial till today in the 21st century. In fact, if you go to one of any Vaiphei village you would see a young or old, man or woman knitting and weaving the splitted bamboo and cane.

Most of the Vaipheis, living in the hills of Manipur, are one of the main supplier of such handicrafts in Manipur and its neighbouring states though the profits does not rendered such help in elevating their standard of living. This humble industry is one of the source of earning daily bread for the povertyed mass.

Cloth Manufacture: It is speculated that they came to have the knowledge of weaving by hand loom and blankets of medium size which were used by both sexes to covered up their nakedness, probably in the 17th century.6

Like the rest of Zo tribes, this industry is carried on by the women alone in Vaiphei society. It is the traditional custom of Vaipheis that a woman must know the pros and cons, the ins and outs of this art, failure of which may mar her future marriage, and prestige in the society. So, a girl would be given training of this art from her early life by her mother or elder sisters.
Cotton is grown in the jhums. It is cleaned in a home-made gin consisting of a frame holding two wooden rollers one end of each being carved for a few inches of its length into a screw, grooved in the opposite way to the other, so that on the handle being turned the rollers revolved in opposite directions and the cotton is drawn between them. The seeds being left behind. The cotton is then worked by hand into rolls a few inches long whence it is spun into the spindle of a rough spinning wheel or occasionally a bobbin is used, which being given a sharp twist draws the cotton into a thread by its own weight. This method admits of diligent ones spinning as they go to and from their jhums. The thread having been spun is thoroughly wetted and then hung in loops some three or four feet long over a horizontal bar, and stretched by several heavy bars being suspended in these loops.

In weaving, the warp is prepared by passing the thread round two smooth pieces of wood, one of which is fastened to two uprights, while the ends of the other are attached to the ends of a broad leather band, which passes behind the back of the weaver as she sits on the ground and, by leaning back, stretches the threads to the requisite degree of tightness. The woof is formed by passing to and fro bamboos round which are wound different colour threads, which are beaten home with a well polished batten made of the sago-palm.

The woman weaves different hues and design of clothes on their looms, and supplies the family requirements. Some of their highly prized clothes are 'KhiangKawi', 'ThansuaPuan', and a quilt known as 'PuanPhawk or PuanLoupi' etc. This quilt has been made by passing round every fourth or fifth thread of the warp a small roll of raw cotton and drawing both ends up. A row of these cotton rolls is put in after every fourth or fifth threads of wool, as that on one side the quilt is composed of closely placed tufts of cotton.
For dyeing or colouring, the juice of the wild indigo is used to give a black or dark blue dye. To obtain red colour, they boiled the cloth with alkaline and turmeric in a bowl for an hour or so, and removed the cloth well dyed. The better black shades are obtained from a strong decoction of indigo. Saplings and barks of different trees are also used to get varieties of hues. However, 'since contact with the outside world, more varieties of dye and cotton yarns have been imported and colourful clothes are woven with magnificent designs and patterns on the handloom.'

**Iron works:** All kinds of iron works has been confined to the village blacksmith or *ThiiksekPu* as already described in the previous chapter-V. The simple tools of the village blacksmith are a set of hammers of graduated weight and size, bellows (*PUUM*) and grindstones on which they sharpen the spears, daos, knives, hoes, and axes. The *poom* or bellows are made on an ingenious principle. A pair of hollow wooden or bamboo cylinders are placed side by side with a common exhaust pipe. The pistons are fitted fairly close and are worked by hand alternately so that the air is forced down one cylinder into the fire while an exhaust is simultaneously by the other cylinder and piston.

When the pistons works up and down smartly, it produces air to the charcoal fire which they kept for heating metals. Though iron-smith was practiced, it seems little is known about brass and silver works among the early people. However, since the last quarter of the 19th century, silver became very popular among the Vaipheis of Indo-Myanmar. Even today, silver wares are much treasured or valued not only by the Vaipheis alone, but also by the whole Zo race.
Pottery: As mentioned in the previous page, silver pottery became popular when the people came into contact with outsiders probably by the last quarter of the 19th century. As a matter of fact, the Zo people had already knew the art of silver pottery and the ilks from their great ancestors who were said to have settled on the banks of Tao river near Lanchou city, in the Kansu region which is located in the northern realm of China and Tibet in about 2000 B.C. However, their advanced or highly civilized life came to wither away since they left Kale-Kabaw valley and lived isolated in hilly deep woods of Chin Hills (Myanmar) and thence, encaved by the crude topography, their civilization dropped down to zero point. Nevertheless, they retain the art of clay-pottery known as ‘Lei-Bel’.

These Bels or pots are moulded by hand. Some of their important Bels are ‘Bu-Bel’, a small circular pot with a mouth some 6 to 8 inches in diameter, used for cooking purposes; ‘Zu-Bel’ which is about 24 inches in height and 15 inches in diameter, tapering to about 9 inches at the mouth, is used for brewing rice-beer. They also produce different kinds of pots and plates etc. 11

Though men used to assisted in preparing the clay or mud, the entire works of moulding and finishing is left to the women. ‘A woman goes to the clay pit and digs out a basket full of clay. She pours water and pounds it in a small mortal until it becomes throughly soft and plastisized. Then she moulds a small pallet in her right hand and a smooth stone, the size of an apple in her left. Placing the stone against the uneven spots from beneath she hits lightly over and over until it gets smooth and even. The finished pots and pans lie in the shade and sun for a month or more and then she burns them in an open furnace until they are burned red-hot. Very little designs are made in the pots. 12
This clay-pottery is not practised any more, since contact with the outside worlds. However, few people continue to manufactured silver wares to earn their square meal.

**Charcoal-Industry**

This is one of the most oldest industry which still play an important part in the economy of the Vaiphei people.

Next to agricultural crops, this industry is the main economic source of the Vaipheis who are settling in the hills of Manipur. Men, women and children are engaged in this industry. Though charcoal industry is believed to be as old as the history of Zo people, it has been the life-line of the Vaipheis till this 21st century.

No scientific technology is required for this industry; nor any sophisticated equipments or implements. The only tools required for manufacturing this tribal charcoal are hoe, dao, and axe. With the hoe, a 4 to 6 foot pit and, the mouth 4 to 6 foot in length and 2 to 3 foot in breadth is generally prepared to lay and burnt the logs and twigs; chopped and splitted with the axe and dao. These logs and twigs are burnt inside the pit, and then the mouth of the pit is again covered or sealed with twigs, green leaves, and earth. At the centre or on any corner of the seal a hole about the size of one's closed fist is fixed to let out the smoke. After all these procedures are completed, one may left for home or dig another pit. As a rule, the seal of the charcoal pit is opened after two to four days, depending on the quantity of faggots laid and burnt in the pit or it depends on the weather conditions.

Sadly, in this contemporary era, charcoal became one among the sources of daily income for the proverted and unemployed members of Vaiphei, especially those in the hills of southern Manipur, and eastern hills of Manipur bordering Kabaw valley of Myanmar. Whereas, rice and vegetables are the main sources of income for the Vaipheis residing in the plains of the Kabaw valley.
Prospectives on the economy of the Vaipheis: As summed up, it seems not much is known about lucrative trade in the ancient Vaiphei society, except small-household-trade in the neighbourhood and nearby villages carried on by barter. Not only in the Vaiphei society, small trade on barter system was practised by all Zo race of the North-Eastern hills of India and the Chin Hills of Myanmar till the last part of the 19th century.

However, with passage of time and, with the advance of human civilization, trade and commerce began to increase by leaps and bounds; and the Vaipheis also became one among the chief suppliers of rice (in Kabaw valley), charcoal, timber, faggots, cane and bamboo crafts, and varieties of vegetables and fruits to the lowland neighbours in North-Eastern region of India, and Kabaw valley of Myanmar. But, in spite of such economic prospects, it is sad to say that about 5% (five percent approximately) are still lagging behind living hand to mouth. However, about 70% of Vaipheis are stabled agriculturalists (i.e. jhumming and settled-plain cultivation); about 16% of them are employed under the States and Union Government of India (Vaipheis in Myanmar are cent-per-cent unemployed, but agriculturalists); and about 9% are engaged in different trades (see Fig VI:1 Pie Chart).

It is, indeed, a fact that explosion of population resulted in rapid increase of consumers, deforestation, dearth of arable land, and extinction of natures gifts (i.e. land and aquatic animals and valuable plants) which gradually and irresistibly led to economic retardation. Besides, the practice of Jhuming or shifting cultivation, which has been very much a part of the life and culture of the Vaipheis in the hills of North-East India and the Chin Hills of Myanmar, coupled with commercial exploitation of forests has led to heavy silting in the major rivers and consequent increase in the destruction caused by floods in the lowlands. The most serious and common impact has been in the form of loss of top soil in the jhuming areas. This loss of top soil has contributed to declining soil fertility and
production. If all these problems went on unchecked, the majority of the Vaiphei agriculturists—approximately not less than 40%, out of 70% agriculturists, whose economy solely depended on jhuming—shall surely confronted the worst kind of economic problem in the near future (see Fig VI:2 Bar Diagram). Of course, it is probable that the hill areas (Vaiphei inhabited areas) that once was a food-surplus zone might become a chronic food deficit area someday within this 21st century.

Despite the eco-agricultural drawbacks and its low returns in terms of output, no viable alternative has been found so far. In fact, the choice of crops in jhum cultivation is normally consumption oriented and varies according to the individual family requirements. Besides, there is very little effort to invest on soil conservation methods and other measures to increase the agricultural returns. This, as a result, left hardly any surplus that could have been effectively invested in other developmental activities. Although the detailed analysis of Jhum cultivation or shifting cultivation, the source of the economy of the majority of Vaiphies will occupy more space, this brief analysis sums up the impact of Highland or Jhum cultivation as indicated in the Table VI:1.

As observed, the future economic prospects of the majority of Vaiphei agriculturists is unpredictable as it moved on closer to a gloomy shadow.

Though the lot of Vaiphei Jhummias are now aware of their cloudy future, they are helpless to take up any measures to prevent themselves from the impending doom. Especially those in the hills of Manipur (India) and Chin Hills of Myanmar are kept unnoticed by the States and Union Governments (of India & Myanmar) from any developmental programmes. No doubt, if the alternative pattern of utilizing the highlands of Jhuming areas chalked out by the North Eastern Council (NEC) reflected in Table VI:2 could be implemented with the efforts or assistance of the States and Union Governments (India & Myanmar), the wrinkled faces of these toiling mass would be promptly rejuvenated.
Fig. VI-1: Simple Pie Chart representing Vaiphei's means of livelihoods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Means (mode) of Livelihood</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Angle at the centre (approx.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>252°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed in Agencies</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>58°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily wage earners</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>32°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>18°</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. VI-2: Simple Bar Graph of Vaiphei's mode of Cultivations in percent

- 40% = Jhum cultivation represented by bar 'J'
- 30% = Wet cultivation represented by bar 'W'

Note: The above Pie chart and Bar graph are drawn as suggested by H. Kaliankhup Khongsai, M.Sc. (EE).
TABLE VI:1

CONSEQUENCES AND IMPACT OF JHUM CULTIVATION

Source: Shifting Cultivation in North-Eastern Region, NEC Publication No. 17, NEC Shillong
TABLE VI:2
ALTERNATIVE LAND USE PATTERN FOR JHUMMING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slope</th>
<th>Approx.% of total area</th>
<th>Land use</th>
<th>Conservation measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower portion</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Bench terracing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Portion</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>Horticulture</td>
<td>Half-moon terracing or horticultural plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top portion</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Shifting Cultivation in North Eastern Region, NEC paper no. 17 NEC, Shillong.

This land-use pattern not only aimed at minimising the loss of soil through erosion but also provided for increasing the cash returns for the Jhummias. In fact, this pattern is specifically suited for the hill slopes of Chin Hills and North Eastern India where the Vaiphei people settled and practice jhumming cultivation till today. But the crux of the question is – how long shall we wait to practicalised such cogent recommendation among the trite and jaded Highlanders or Jhummias.

Having rendered information on the economic background in historical perspective; we shall now summarise the domestic life of the people (Vaipheis) as under:-

Establishment of a village: All aspects of domestic life of the primitive Vaipheis were determined by their belief and customs. There was, in fact, an unique custom of choosing a place or site for establishing a village.

First preference is given to a flat hill-ridge where valuable plants grow in abundant with river or brook beside the slope of the hill. When such place is found, the surveying party would freed the cock they brought with them in that strange
place. Then, if the cock does not crow, they would leave the place and look for another site. But if the cock crows, they would ratify the place for setting up a village. After this formality is done, the priest would perform a ritual with an egg to see if the place is infested with evil spirits or diseases.

Plots for housing is distributed only after the priest had confirmed that the place is healthy enough for settlement. As a rule, the chief is the first to choose the site for his resident. After the Chief, Siamang-Pachong (Ministers and Regent) and then followed by the priest, village crier, village blacksmith, craftsman, and widows chose plot for housing in sequence. A widow is always given preference than the common men (Villagers) in this matter too. The last to choose site for housing are the common men.

After the plot are cleared from trees, bushes and shrubs before construction of each house is started, the priest again performed a sanctificational ritual on each reserved site of the villagers. Thereafter, one is at his own liberty to start the construction work. Then when a house is about to be occupied, the same sanctifying ritual is performed again by the priest. Such ritual is performed with an egg of a hen. It is a ritual to drive away demons, bad-luck, and diseases.

**Structure of Houses:** All the houses were built on the same general principle, but varied in size. They are simple specimens of architectural art. The common factor is that all building materials were of non-ironware material. Logs, bamboo, cane and thatch were the main materials used in building houses. An axe, dao, and a knife alone serve as the main tools of the construction. Big trees and bamboos were felled, split, chipped, trimmed, and smoothed with axe and dao.

As they are settling in hilly regions, their houses are built across the hill slopes in the shape of barrack. Generally, there are four main timber-pillars
called Suut-Lai supporting the middle portions of the roof which runs in parallel from front to rear. The roof is slopping on the left and right sides supported by pillars called Khuam. A main pillar is fixed at the edge of the house building in the upper ground to be called Innmai-Ban or Innmai-Khuam (Front pillar). Next to it another main pillar (another Innmai-Ban) is fixed at the front corner of the lower ground in facing with the one in the upper ground. At a place of equal distance between the two outer or front posts (Innmai-Bans) and in row with the Suut-Lais is erected the chief pillar of the house called Suut-Pi or Maival-Suut. The floored spaced around the mid-pillars or suut-lais forms the inner house of the house proper, where the family dwells. The space is enclosed from four sides by bamboo matting walls which are attached and fasten with bamboo fibres against the pillars (Ban) of the four sides. Flat timbers about four inches thick and about two feet flat are laid on the floor across the breadth of the building in against each of the corner posts (Bans). The flat timber is called Saang-Kil which is thread hold crossed over when entered into the space concerned. The frame of the doors and that of the walls are fitted in with the flat timber.

Usually there are two doors, one in the front and the other in the rear. The front door is called Kawt-Pi (main door) meant for entry and exit. The rear door called Innawm-Kawt is meant for casual exit of the family members. There are few windows but the average house is well lighted and ventilated throughout the day. The bamboo matting walls afford sufficient small, but numerous opening through which the light and the air can come in.

The timber pillars are of considerable size and of such excellent quality, that for twenty to forty years the only repairs required are to the thatch, and their thatching is so good that the roof scarcely needs repair for ten or twelve years. Excellent thatching grass is found usually in the vicinity of the villages; having cut
it, they divest it carefully of every weed and inferior blade, after which they tie it
up in little bundles with strips of bamboo which is long between the joints, pliable
and tough, so tightly that a blade cannot be extracted from the bundle. These little
bundles are tied each other separately to the bamboo of the roof running parallel to
the ridge pole, and thus is formed a thatch impervious to wet and which resists
effectually for years the winds of the high altitudes.

Under the same roof, the house is divided into Innpaw or Innmai-Kem (outer
house) or verandah and then Inn sung (inner house). The outer house or Innpaw is
again divided by the middle front pillar (Maival-Suut or Suut-Pi) into Kemcha
(floored porch) on the downhill side and Sumkul or Summun (the ground porch).
The floored porch is used mainly for sitting room and for social gathering on minor
occasions, and on its wall hangs a chicken coo p or roost supported by wooden posts
and connected from the ground by Ak-Lei, a wooden-ladder for the fowls to climb.
Such chicken roost is called Ak-Gil. The ground porch is used mainly for pounding
and husking grains, stacking firewoods, and for small carpentry and menial workshop.
The place is referred to as Summun or Sumkul, because the Sum (mortar) and the
Sak (pestles) are being kept and used there.

The inner house (Innsung-Pi) covers two third of the house space under the
roof, separated from the outer by the front wall. Immediately inside the main room,
beside the front wall on the downhill side is the dining place. Here are kept the
dining and cooking utensils such as the wooden plates (Tning-Ankuang), bamboo
water reservoirs (Tuithei), gourd pots (Tui-Uum), bamboo spoons
(Haihkhaw), wooden spoon for scooping rice (Thing-Butei), and so on. Adjacent to
the dining place on the downhill side of the house is an elevated (about half foot)
floor which is sleeping place for guest and sawm (village Bachelors). This elevated
floor is called Daw-dan. Opposite to the dining place, beside the front wall of the
up-hill side lies the Tap-Kuang (large hearth), made of earth, solidly kneaded like
brick within a wooden frame. In the centre of the Tap-Kuang are fixed three stones
called Lung-Thu on which the cooking pot rests. Along the wall lie earthen shelves for the cooking pots to rest which also kept the fire from spreading to the inflammable bamboo matting wall. About four to five feet just above the hearth is Gap or Gappi, a shelve made of twigs and bamboo. This shelve is used for storing roasted meat, dried grains, dried vegetable leafs, etc. It is supported by fibres made of soft barksor bamboo which is fastened on one of the bamboo-pole of the roof, and hang down as suspender.

A few feet from the TapKuang is a bed called Laikhunpi (master bed). This is the bed of the parents of the family. Right in the middle of the house above the head hangs a platform of bamboo construction called Zaal-Chung. All baskets and tools are kept on this. On the downhill side of the wall, opposite to the hearth, ishangs a shelf made of bamboo called Saa-Laan for storing vegetables, pots, pans, and especially fresh chunk of meat of killed animal. Beyond the Laikhunpi are beds used by married sons, and the downhill side by the unmarried offsprings.

As a rule, the skull and horns of deer are fixed on the centre pillars (Suut-Lai) which is used for hanging bags, fibres, basket strings and the likes. The entire space underneath the floor is fenced with wall poles called Pal to keep the domestic animals. This fenced spaced extended down the hill slope to embrace certain area called Huan, the kitchen garden. Here, varieties of vegetables and other crops are grown for the kitchen use. A house is fenced around by twigs, faggots, splitted bamboos or flat timbers of varied size, with a Kel-Kawi (gate) some distance from the outer door of the house.

Another important structure of a Vaiphei house is the Inntawm-Kem or Inn-Nung-Kem (the back porch). This back porch is usually supported by pillars called Tawm-Suul, and generally it has no roof though connected with the house. It is
mainly used for drying clothes, for basking in the sun during winter days, for entertaining friends when weather permits, for showering and relaxing, for combing hair and lice, and for treating and slicing killed animals.

As observed earlier in the present discussion, the site of the house was chosen in consultation with the local god through the priest by divination and the beginning of the construction of the house building was proceeded by an offering. The same offering was made when dismantled and rebuilt. The position of the house from west to east could not be altered; nor could the size of the building be reduced or be enlarged. All this element of tradition has testified to the fact that the house compound thus fenced to fortified is a sacred ground. Any violation (Inn-Hek or Inn-Gawlmek in Vaiphei dialect) of it is held as a transgression of the 'Sacred Ground'. Therefore, the ground thus enclosed in the house at large, sacred and inviolable.

Granaries: The family Bu-Buuk or Bu-Inn is generally built a short distance from their dwelling house, closed to the front porch on the downhill side. The size of their granaries are varied depending on the quantity of their annual harvests. Generally, their granaries are thatched with their floors raised, and like the dwelling houses they have their floors and walls of bamboo matting. Their positions are usually well sheltered, and their doors are secured by wooden bolts fastened outside. Besides their grain they also kept other valuable household articles in their granaries.

Furnitures and Household Utensils and Implements: Chutna-Sau (a bench like rough log planks), TongKham (stools hewn from solid log), Savun-Chatna (a small chair made of animal hides supported by systematically plaited bamboo), Tiing-Chatna (plaited cane chair), Lelpi (neatly plaited cane baskets four to six feet high, in which valuable clothes and ornaments are kept), Lei-Bel (earthen pots used for cooking, and storing rice beer).
1. KEKAWT (Gable)
2. KITHAWINA-MUN (Sacrificial Place)
3. INNTUAL-LEITUAL (Courtyard)
4. DAPAL (Fencing)
5. BU-BUK (Granary)
6. SUMKUL/SUMMUN (Ground-Porch)
7. MAIVAL-SUT/SUTPI (Front Pillar)
8. KAWTP-SUT (Main-door Pillar)
9. SUTLAI (Inner Centre Pillar)
10. TAWM-SUT (Rear-Pillar)
11. TAPKUANG (Heath)
12. LAIKHUNPI (Master-Bed)
13. KAWTP (Main Door)
14. INNTAWM-KAWT (Rear Door)
15. TIANG-BAN (Bamboo-bar for hanging and drying clothes)
16. KEMCHA/KEMCHIAL (Floored Porch)
17. TUTHEI-SUL (Dining Place)
18. DAW-DAN (Elevated Floor)
19. Children’s Sleeping Place
20. INNTAWM-KEM (Back Porch)
21. SIAL-KAWT (Cattle Gate)
22. TUANGNUAI/THUANGCHAM-NUAI (Cattle Den)
23. INNUAI-GAWU/INNUAI-PAL (Cattle Fencing)
24. HUAN (Kitchen Garden)
25. Tineo wood-shaft for harnessing destined mithuns and therefore apocriphal as ’Sialu-Sut’ meaning ‘pillar of mithun’s skull’, because the skull are also hanged on the grogns.
Saihu-Uum (a vessel made from dry gourd, in which animal fats are fermented to make salivating curry). Taithei (Bamboo tubes of about 3 feet in length used for carrying and storing water). Tui-Uum (a mug made from gourd), Thei-Khuang (bamboo tubes 1 feet in length for storing salt, chilli, curry-powders, fermented fish and crabs, and varieties of tribal spices). HaiKhaw (bamboo spoon), HaiKhaw-Bawm (bamboo basket for keeping spoons), Butei or Thing-Butrei (wooden-spoon for scooping curry and rice), Sa-Tuul (bamboo-rod for roasting sliced meat). Chempai (a case for daoos and knives hewn from wood), Lei-Dal or Gaw-Dal (neatly knitted bamboo like a cymbal, used for husking rice). Duap (resembling Lei-Dal but much greater in size; used for exposing rice in the open). Pai-Pek (well knitted cane or bamboo pouch), Law (a shallow bamboo-basket resembling a bread-basket). Seng-Zing (tightly and closely knitted bamboo basket, generally used for carrying grains by women). Seng-Vang (slackly knitted bamboo basket used for carrying faggots and ladders). Nam (about 5ft long neatly plaited soft-bark string; about 3 inches breadth and 1½ ft. length flat at the centre, generally used by women for suspending Seng-Zing or Seng-Vang. Nam-Kawi (a string with a wooden flat-yoke, used by men for carrying loads). An-Kuang (wooden plate), Suk-Luk (a small wooden mortar and pestle used for pounding spices), etc. These are some of the important furnitures and utensils of primitive Vaiphei household.

The implements in general used are the axe (Hei-Cha), knife (Chem-Cha), hoe (Tu-Thaw or Tu-Dal), dao (Chem-Pawng), and the implements for weaving, which is a general industry among the Vaipheis. Of the Dao we may say with Colonel Lewin: "The dao is the hill knife, and used universally throughout the country. It is a blade about eighteen inches long, narrow at the haft and square and broad at the tip, pointless and sharpened on one side only. The blade is set in a handle of wood; a bamboo root is considered the best ... it is identical with the 'PARANG LATOK' of the Malays. The dao to a hill man is a possession of great price. It is literally the bread winner; with this he cuts his joom and builds his housetoes; without its aid the most ordinary operations of hill life could not be performed. It is with the dao he fashions the women's weaving tools ... and to the dao he frequently owes his life in defending himself from the attacks of wild animals".
Some of the weaving implements are *Pat-Hek* (Gin), *Mui* (Bobbin), *Shood-Lam* (Spinning Wheel), *Ti-Am* (Wooden weaving rod), *Kawl-Ka* (wooden-rod, forked tips used for suspending the loom), *Tuk-Kot* (small wooden toothed rod, used for the threads linear), *Tuk-Killi* (usually porcupine’s thorn, used for tracing the weaved threads), and the *Kawng-Duap* (a broad leather band, used to lean back upon while weaving).

**Domesticated Animals**  : Primitive Vaipheis reared animals such as dog, cat, goat, sheeps, fowls, mithun and bovines are domesticated lately.

**Musical Instrument**  : Of the many musical instruments, the following are the most prominent and commonly used ones :

i)  **Gawsem**  : A bamboo pipe of seven fixed into a hollow-gourd playing like Bagpiper.

ii)  **Pek-Khuang**  : A stringed bamboo tube with a diameter of 15-20 inches.

iii)  **Diing-Duung**  : Xylophone.

iv)  **Pengkul**  : A trumpet made of bamboo pipe and mihun’s horn.

v)  **Lilu or Heile**  : Bamboo Flute

vi)  **Pheiphit**  : Small Bamboo pipes of 2 or 3 inches long, in 3-sets.

vii)  **Sialki**  : Beating of Mihun’s horn.

viii)  **Daakpi**  : Big-Gong bulging in the middle.

ix)  **Daek-Chal**  : Smaller-gong, also bulging in the Centre.

x)  **Daakbau**  : Plate-like Gong, non bulging, in 3-sets.

xi)  **Khuangpi**  : Big Drum.

xii)  **Khuangneu**  : Smaller Drum.

xiii)  **Ting-Tang**  : A violin made up of hollow gourd, bamboo bar, and cotton string.
SUKE (Pestle)
SUK (MAH)

NAMKOL (BROW-BAND WITH WOODEN-YOKE FOR MAN)

GAWBAL (PLATE LIKE FLAT & ROUND, KNOTTED BAMBOO USED FOR HUNTING GRAINS)

LAW (CANE BASKET)

TUITHL (BAMBOO-TUBE FOR CARRYING WATER)

SENGYANG (BAMBOO-BASKET)

NAM (BROW-BAND)

THING ANKUANG (FAMILY DINNING WOODEN-PLATE)

A MAN'S PIPE FOR TOBACCO

WOMAN'S TOBACCO-PIPE

WOODEN TOBACCO-BOX WITH LEATHER TOP

ME-CHANNA-HAIHAW (BAMBOO CURRY-SPoon)

THING BUTEI (WOODEN SPOON FOR COOKING RICE)

THING-HAIHAW (WOODEN SPOONS)

SA-THU-UM (DRIED BOTTLE-GOURD USED FOR FERMENTING ANIMAL FAT)

THAM -THAIHAW (WARTS ON FACE)

NAM MOH (FAMILY DINNING WOODEN-PLATE)

SA-THU-UM (DRIED BOTTLE-GOURD USED FOR FERMENTING ANIMAL FAT)

THAM -THAIHAW (WARTS ON FACE)
HOUSEHOLD ARTICLES - II

- Lelpl (Cane Basket for Clothing)
- Thei-Khuang (Bamboo Tube for Storing Spices)
- Suk-Luk (Small Mortar & Pestle for Grinding Spices)
- Tui-Um (Bottle-Gourd Mug)
- Paipek (A Small Cane Pouch for Carrying Seeds)
- Tai-Kuang (Wooden Water-Reservoir)
- Lei-Bel (Clay Pots)
- Rice Beer
- Cooking Pots
SKETCHING - VI:3

TOOLS AND WEAPONS OF PRIMITIVE VAIPHEIS - I

- TUDAL (BIG-HOE)
- TUTHAW (SMALL-HOE)
- HEICHA (AXE)
- CHEMPONG (DAO)
- CHEMKON (CURVED-DAO)
- SIALKAL-CHEMCHA (SIALKAL-KNIFE)
- KNIFE (SICKLE)
- CHEMZAM (SWORD) and its sheath
- CHEMPAL SHEATH FOR DAO
- KANGKUI (WOODEN-RAKE)
- THALP (BOW)
- THALCHANG-BAWM (BAMBOO TUBE FOR CARRYING ARROWS)
- THALCHANG (BAMBOO-ARROW)
- CHECHA (SPARES)
- SAVUN-PHAW (SHIELD MADE OF HIDE)
SKETCHING - VI:3

TOOLS AND WEAPONS OF PRIMITIVE VAIPHEIS - II

THIKPHAW (METALLIC SHIELDS)

LOUVAT-CHEM (SLASH-DAO)

MEI-LOUN BAWM (POWDER-HORN)

FIRE-ARMS (SUANGCHEP)

GAW-PHEL (BAMBOO-CATAPULT)

ME-AT-CHEM (KITCHEN-KNIFE)

CHAWT-LEP-SHUK (FOOT-PESTLE)

(THIKNANG) or (SUMSAN)
1. **GAWSEM**: A bagpipe made of bamboo pipes and hollow bottle-gourd;  
2. **HEILE**: Bamboo Flute;  
3. **PEKKHUANG**: Bamboo guitar with 3-4 threads (strings) carved out of the side and tightened by inserting bamboo splint to produce different notes. Besides, a long narrow hole is cut on the back part.  
4. **PENGKUL**: Trumpet, made up of horn and bamboo pipes;  
5. **SIALKI**: Mithun's horn;  
6. **DAKPI**: Large bulging-gong;  
7. **TINGTANG**: Violin, made up of a bottle-gourd, animal urinal-bladder (or intestinal bladder), bamboo bar, cotton string, a charcoal-bit to tighten the string and a thin bamboo rod to play.  
8. **KHUANG**: Drum;  
9. **DING-DUNG**: Three-bar Xylophone;  
10. **PHEI-PHIT**: Bamboo Panpipe.
Games and Sports: The Vaiphei, like other hill tribes have their own traditional Games and Sports. Of the many the following items are common and worth mentioning:

I. Traditional Games:

i) **Kituk tua**: Similar to that of Kabadi and Kho-Kho.

ii) **Kung-Kaan**: High Jump.

iii) **Kichawp**: Long-Jump.

iv) **Kitai-Tet**: Running-race.

v) **Kibawt (Kibuan)**: Wrestling.

vi) **Khut-Kibawt**: Arm-Wrestling.

vii) **Tuang-Kap (Kituang-Kap)**: Shooting tops.

viii) **Thal-Kap**: Target-shooting with an arrow or Archery.

ix) **Thilgik-Dawp (Vangik-Dawp)**: Weight-lifting.

x) **Tiangcha-Khaw**: Throwing of wooden-rod/spear.

xi) **Cheicha-Khaw**: Javelin throw.

xii) **Sukh-Khaw**: Throwing of wooden-pestle (used for pounding grain)

xiii) **Suang-Se**: Shot-put.

xiv) **Kang-Kap/Kawi-kap**: A game played with a Black-seed (about 2 inches in diameter) of 'Angiousperm species)

xv) **Kikai-Tua**: Tug-of-war.

xvi) **Ki-Akchal-Suk**: Cock-fighting.

xvii) **Uphawk-Chawp**: Frog-Jump.

xiii) **Suang-Shui/Suangpek-Kap**: Hopscotch

II. Traditional Sports: The traditional sports are usually played and engaged in the evening time and in the moonlit nights by childrens and lower teenagers. The Collective term of such traditional sports and social pastime is known in the local dialect as "KITAL-HEI." Of the many such items of various tastes the following are the more common and usually played traditional sports and pastime.
Traditional Sports:

i) **Akuk-kuk**: Hide and seek.

ii) **Zawng-Aw-Leilawn**: Sliding.

iii) **Pi-Pe Sel ah kawi, Changnu-Changpa**: Played by two parties. One party sits and watch the other party who stands facing the sitting ones with hands on their back. One walks to and fro behind the standing ones, and kept a ball like object in the palm of the standing ones. Then, the sitting party guess where or in whose palm the object was being kept.

iv) **Sang-Sata-Dawl-lep**: A little identical with the ‘Dragon Dance’ of Chinese. One lad plays the role of a beast by wrapping himself with clothes like a beast and chase the other children in the team.

v) **Luut Hiai-Hiai**: Two child hold each other, and stands like an entrance. Betwixt, and beneath the arms, the other children go round-and-round until one of them is trapped by the two arms.

vi) **Nungak-e, Tangval-e, Ki-eng pimpem**: Usually played by senior teenagers. Holding one another’s hands and dancing round like the ‘Poussette’ and singing ‘Nungak-e, Tangval-e, Ki-eng pimpem ...

vii) **A-Lawnglawng**: A little Identical with “Tig-Tag”. One has to chase the other group of the children and pat one’s shoulder and shout ‘A-Lawng’. The one who is patted become the chaser again, and so on. Simply, it is a racing against folks of children like the cat racing against his prey (mouse).
Festivals: There are a number of festivals celebrated by the Primitive Vaipheis. They called 'festivals' as 'Zupi, Chawn, or Zunek-Sanek'. Any festival is observed by the whole community, which are all coupled with song, dance, festing, feasting and drinks.

In its true form, the festivals are rather like an annual merry-making Social Function because they are usually hosted by a family, a group of family or a group of friends.

Some of the prominent festivals are as follows:-

1. **THA-ZING**: It is generally performed in celebration of the blooming season. As already mentioned in the previous chapters - II, III, it is, in fact, an Autumn festival.

   This festival is said to be the first festival ever celebrated by the Vaipheis. Usually, it last for more than a month. The feast is contributed by the whole villagers one after another. Unlike other festivals, it has its own felicitational song 'Tha-Zing La' and dance 'Tha-Zing Lam'.

2. **BU-AIH**: Simply, this is a harvest festival performed after the grains are transported from the Jhums and stored in the granaries. It is generally hosted by an individual, and usually lasted for two days or more depending on their enthusiasms.

3. **SA-AIH**: It is an exultation festival in honour of successful hunter or hunting-squad. But, as a rule, this festival is often put off to be performed together with Bu-Aih. This is so, simply due to the fact that, there is no Lampak-Thing (Community firewoods for merry-making) when such triumphant occurred. Traditionally, this is not organised whenever a
beast is hunted down, but only when a prominent one, namely—tiger, Boar, Elephant, Bear and the likes.

4. **GAL'LU-AIH**: It is a festival observed rarely, in the sense that it is performed only when the nob of an enemy chopped off in war or action is brought home.

   The girls prepared beautiful plaid 'Thansua-Puan (Gallantry-Plaid)' or red and black cotton and tied them on the warrior's headgear a mark of bravery and distinction. The headswere later hung infront of the warrior's house on a tall bamboo pole... Sometimes celebration lasted weeks.17

5. **GAWIH-CHAWKIK**: This festival is congruence with Bu-Aih festivals in the sense that both are harvesting festivals. But the dissimilarity is, Gawih-Chawkik is an entertainment festival organised after heaping the paddies in the jhum, before transporting into the village granaries. It is, indeed, an entertaining feast hosted by an individual as a token of conveying his gratitude to the villagers for assisting him in mowing and threshing the crops.

   Usually this festival is celebrated for one or two days only.

6. **HAUKATUK and SA-ZAWL**: These are similar festivals congruence to Sa-Aih. The only distinction is - Sa-Aih is observed with the assistance of the villagers with Bu-aih festival whereas. Haukatuk and Sa-zawl are usually organised by an individual.

7. **THA-THAWT**: This festival is also similar with Gawih-Chawkik festival, but it is usually performed during the deporting period of the grains from the jhum to the granaries. It is also organised by an individual, and lasted for about two days.

8. **SA-KAWM**: Than being a festival, this festival is rather like a party. It is celebrated by few families. about four to five families. But such 'Party' may be performed simultaneously in different residences of a village.
Strange, in this festival, only the abdominal organs of the animal butchered is feasted. The rest of the meat is distributed among themselves to devour at home. This function is also performed for only one or two days.

9. PHAISA-ZU: Unlike other festivals, there is no feasting in such festival. It is performed by few individuals in one of their resident. Truly, this is a specially prepared rice-beer drinking party. Like the Sa-Kawm Party, it is often performed simultaneously in different houses.

10. SAWM-ZU: Literally, it is ‘Bachelors’ festival’, and usually organised by the bachelors alone. However, lads who used to accompany them also participated in this festivals. Usually, a swine which had been gifted to them is killed for the feast.

Generally, this festival is observed by teenage-boys and all the Village-Bachelors (Sawm).

11. LAWM-ZU: Literally, this is ‘Friendly festival’, in the sense that any friendly group, of both the sexes, and any age group are licensed to organised this festival anywhere-anytime. It is also celebrated with songs, dances and sumptuous dinners.

12. LAWMCHANG-VAWK: Congruence to Lawm-zu but usually performed by a company of only four or five or more, but less than ten. And, it rather resembles a ‘Picnic-Party’.

13. NAUZU-NEK: A felicitational ceremony of a child-birth (or Swasti Puja). A large quantity of rice-beer is prepared by a mother to be consumed by relatives and neighbours after her delivery. So, after one or two days of her child-birth, in felicitacion of the new born child the head (father) of the family prepared a banquet, and she (the Mother) rendered her rice-beers called “NauZu”. Often, varieties of meat are prepared, v.i.z., mutton, chicken, pork, beef, and even mithun. Except one swine by the child’s parents, the rest of meat prepared are mostly contributions from relatives and villagers.
14. NAUZU-KHAWN-THAK: There is no scheduled date, time or season to perform this festival which is a corollary to “Nauzu-Nek” festival. Now, it is better known as “Nau-Pui” by omitting “Zu (Wine), KHAWN (Cup), and THAK (To bring/Bringing)”. Undisputably, it is the Christian-faith that infused the people to omit those ‘Treasured words’ of their great-ancestors without compunction.

Simply, it is a grandiose feast prepared by the person who gave the name of the child. In return, the child’s parents usually presented traditional ‘shaws’ or ‘plaids’ to him (the one who named the child). In other words, it is a ceremony to deepen the love and affection between the two parties (families).

Although these festivals had been stashed to oblivion as festivals of yore, by the Christianised or Westernised Vaipheis, it is unfathomably gladful that brethren of Phunchongiang (Thanlon Subdivision, Churachandpur, Manipur) still preserved and observed ‘Sa-aih’ with much enthusiasm and solemnity, which is part and parcel of the ‘unique-rich culture’ of the ancient Vaipheis.

Living Condition: Not only the Vaipheis, but also their kindred tribes, must have lived a very poor life when they left Kale-Kabaw valley for the Chin Hills and lived isolated from the rest of the world. It seems, their only distinction from the beasts was - they have language to express their angers, sorrows and joy.

They did not understand the importance of either personal cleanliness or cleanliness at home until the 3rd quarter of the 20th century. We may here notice Dr. Rochunga Pudaite’s account in this respect. “The presence of chickens in the verandah and the pigs and cows under the floor gives the house an unwholesome smell. No progress has been made in the past fifty years of contact with Christianity or the outside world.”

The influence of the new religion caused a great deal of change in their social life and that also led to many other changes.
To add the unwholesome smell, young and old are habituated of smoking and sipping 'Tui-Buuk' (Tobacco juice) excessively every minute of their life, from morning to night, which is of poisonous strength. Its odour is very pungent and penetrating. Though it is open objection on scientific grounds to regard tobacco as either food or drink; it is an ordinary civility to them.

Smells of stools urines, and faeces in the homesteads, of domesticated animals and the ignorant-folks, plus, the tobacco and varieties of fermented substances inside the house makes a hell of untolerable odours. In fact, public or personal sanitation was unknown to them. Even till today, particularly in remote areas, their living conditions are not much developer than those primitive ancestors.

Attires: As stated earlier in the present chapter, until the 17th century from the early 13th century, they have no knowledge about woven clothes or cotton plantation. The only garment they worn was called **"MAWNG-THAAK"** made of hemp confined around the waist by a string.

This *Mawng-Thak* hardly covers the privates. Both sexes worn the same design. By the early part of the 16th century, there was melloration in their dress. They began to worn a coat like *Mawng-Thaak* which was armless, fastened with a string at the waist.

In around the second quarter of the 17th century, they began growing cotton. As a result, they began wearing woven cotton rather than *Mawng-Thaak*. However, until the last quarter of the 18th century, the attires of men were scanty they worn a small square piece of cloth in front, hanging below and covering the privates, and confined to the waist by a string, similar to ‘G-Strings’.

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*Literally "Mawng-Thaak" means 'Banyan-Shoot'.*
The only other article of clothing worn by men is a thick sheet of cotton cloth called ‘Puanjang-ak’, and this only when the weather is cold. This cloth is brought under the arms across the chest and the ends (edges) are crossed around the neck, and tied on the back of the neck.

Unlike the men, the women generally dress better. She would covered herself with ‘Puanjang-Ak’ covering all the delicate parts, between the shoulder and the knee. But it was soon substituted by Puan-ak-awmphel’ (buttonless-waistcoat) and Niiik-Siing’ (petticoat). This crude and unseamed waistcoat and petticoat are fastened with strings.

Between the last quarter of the 18th and first quarter of the 19th century, they invented new designs and styles, ‘Puantumchen’ a kilt like a piece of cloth folded across the waist and twisted or tucked in at the side, barely covering the knee. This is used by both sexes. The other clothings for men are: ‘Dial-Chen’ a sheet of cloth folded, twisted or tucked around the waist, one end behind, like the Bengali dhotee; and ‘Kaipaleng’ a piece of cloth of five by two feet tucked between the fundament, and the end twisted behind the waist, fully exposing the fundament. During cold weather, men worn a sheet of cloth about six feet long and four feet wide. One corner was grasped in the left hand, and passed over the left shoulder behind the back. Then it was brought under the arm across the chest and the end is thrown over the shoulder. They also wore a tunic-like shirt fastened with a string. The women, wore ‘Puan-Chen’ a sheet of cloth about five by four over their petticoat. It is usually folded around the waist, and twisted on the left side of the waist. This top cloth is generally well designed with attractive hues. She also worn a tunic type of blouse either plain or designed.

In regards to attires, great transformation took place from the middle of the 19th century. Garments stitched with needles became popular. Sleeved over-coat became one of the most alluring attire of men. Women began to wear different designs and colours. In fact, most of the cultural or traditional clothes which are still in vogue today are originated from the people of this period, i.e. the middle of 19th to the early 20th century.
Coiffure: In olden time, the male Vaipheis, like their females, wore long hairs. The hair is combed upwards bringing downwards together to the back of the head and knobbed it behind. This knob is called 'Tukh-Cha' or 'Tukh-Cha-Sawm'.

The womenfolk, too, wore long hair which is combed well applying oils made from pig's fat, fowl's fat etc. and is parted in the centre. The two portions are plaied together with a bunch of cotton thread known as 'Sam-Khau'. The plaied hair called 'Sam-Pheek' is thus brought toward the back and crossed each other behind and again brought around over the front, just above the forehead. The meeting end is tieo with a special knob (Sam-Kilh), thus making a special coiffure 'Sam-Kawp'.

Women, particularly, youngwomen having extra long and lustrous hairs was admired by all the women and men alike, which in fact, was an undeclared competition amongst the womenfolk. It is regarded as a special asset of the women.

Aside from the above description, we may bear in mind that 'Tukh-Cha-Sawm' and 'Sam-Kawp' are practised since they acquired the art of weaving cotton in 17th century. It is believed that boys wore shorter hairs than girls, to obviate the difficulty of distinguishing between the sexes. It is probable that a boy child wore 'BelKuang-Sam: - paralielly cut above the shoulder, or the ears. And, little girls, cut in parallel just below the shoulder. Between the period from the first quarter of 14th, to the last quarter of the 16th century, these hair-styles seems to be in vogue.

Ornaments: Among the Vaipheis both men and women wear ornaments. The women have their ears pierced at an early age and gradually distend the holes in the lobes until they are large enough to receive rolls of cotton of considerable size or bamboo ornaments. Brass cylindrical ornaments are often inserted. However, ornaments seems to be worn only from the last parts of the 17th century. Before this period, the people seems to have wore simply scraps of fine bones from fossils as ornaments.

With the passage of time, and frequent contact with neighbouring states, ornaments made of brass, silver, lead, cornelian, and varieties of gems became very popular from thesecond quarter of the 19th century. Cornelian beads of different colours and designs was the most common ornaments worn as necklace. White cornelian beads are worn-by both sexes. Young girls wear metal armlets which are coiled up on the upper arm.
Married women also wear brass armlets. The young men appreciated empty cartridges case and fine bones (especially the tooth of Boar, tiger and lion) as necklace and earrings.

In regards to ornaments, it is confined more to women than man amongst the primitive Vaipheis. A woman is usually ornamented richly. Their earrings are always large and heavy and the necklaces are numerous. The necklaces are of red cornelian shells, beads and a yellow opaque stone which is rare and expensive. This last is round in shape and flat, while the cornelians are oval, sometimes hexagonal, and are polished. Bracelets of different metals are also worn besides the upper arm ornaments. Their legs and ankles are bare of ornaments. Apparently, the numbers and the qualities of the ornaments determines the economical backgrounds of the womanfolk.

Though ornaments are not popular amongst the menfolk, as mentioned above; they worn ‘Zak-Selh’ a heavy bracelets handed down from father to son for generations, occasionally. It is said that these bracelets are worn to prevent their wrist from being wounded by the springing strings of their bows. Another ornament worn by few males is ‘Zouh-Chal’, a headgear particularly worn only by heroes of wars and animal hunting. It is made of cane and bamboo. There are a number of pin-holes to the sides, in which beautiful furs and feathers are attached.

Another dazzling ornaments of the womenfolk was their head-band and belt, which are made of Luangchang seeds and varieties of metals. The head-band and belt made of Luangchang was called ‘PAI-GEN’. Those who could not afforded metal belt worn Paigen as belt and headband. Usually, Paigen is made of looped Luangchang with threads into three to four rows that makes about one and half inches in breadth. The metal belt is made of brass or bronze, and it is usually decorated with different shapes and colours of beads and seeds. These articles are mostly worn by teenage girls and young unmarried women.
These decorated ornaments of the primitive Vaipheis were in vogue till the second quarter of the 20th century.

**SAWM**: One of the most important and significant domestic life of the Vaipheis, in olden times, was the practice of *SAWM*. It is a term or word given to the organized Bachelors of a village. As already mentioned in the previous chapter-V, they are functioning directly under their chief called ‘TUALLAI-PAU’. They did not have separate Dormitory like other tribes. But they usually stay in the Chief’s house or in any other bigger house where there are more than one young women to tend and serve them.

For security points of view organisation of such a *SAWM* had a great advantage in regards to defence and security matters. In those days, when there was insecurity from the enemy or from the wild beast, the village youths who were staying together or concentrating in a particular place could easily be informed and aroused. As a matter of fact, such *Sawm* was the training centre for the young boys. The art of hunting, dancing and singing was taught by the *Sawm*. It was from the *Sawm* that social obligations were learned and the young boys were disciplined. When emergency arose, the members of the *Sawm* were called to meet the emergency such as carrying the sick from the jhums to their houses, dig the grave for the burial of the dead, fetch wood for the house where they stay the nights and water for drinking.

The *Sawm* were disciplinary and moral instructors, and also helpers in times of need as well as the Village Defence Force.

**TAWMNGAINA**: Simply, we may translate *Tawmnga*ina as ‘Love of humbleness’ or ‘Mindless of being defeated’. It is, in fact, the one and only treasure; the most valuable treasure of the Vaipheis, inherited from their great ancestors since time immemorial. All aspects of their social life are influenced by this *Tawmnga*ina.
It is difficult to interpret or define Tawmngaina in its true form or nature satisfactorily. Some writers define it as ‘free services rendered to others in times of need i.e. in times of joy, sorrow, or calamity without expecting to receive a reward’. Another writers considered it as “Self-sacrifice” and “Helpfulness” to the service for others and voluntary services for the unity and betterment of the society or community. And some viewed as “Love of less” which practiced a form of socialism within a community. As a matter of fact, these definitions are one sided, or, we may say that they defined Tawmngaina with only one or two of its essential elements.

Here we may note down the essential elements of Tawmngaina as sum-up by Vanupa Zathang (IPS), which may render us the aptitude to perceive the scope, nature, meaning and characteristic of Tawmngaina: Wisdom, humbleness, patience, oratory skills, far-sightedness, adventurousness, diligence, peacemaking, frankness, bravery, courage, helpfulness, considerateness, alertness, reformative conduct, endurance, pride-less-ness, unselfishness and intelligence. These are the true essential elements of Tawmngaina.

Vanupa Zathang has also pointed out rightly that “Tawmngaina is the cultural life and heritage of the MIZOS (Zo people). The Mizo society lives on and guided by this particular culture of Tawmngaina all alone .... Tawmngaina is not others’ Culture, it is ours, ... inherited from our ancestry, it is our cultural foundation ... if we lose Tawmngaina, it would be that we lose our cultural foundation.”

Indeed, its elements are the guiding principles of the Vaipheis in their day to day life from days of yore. It is, not only the cultural foundation but the ground where it (culture) was laid. It is also the pillar, the wall, the floor, and the roof of the Vaiphei culture from time immemorial. But sadly, it has become a neglected culture, and it is now found growing wilt like the flower due to many internal and external forces. It is, of course in a moribund state under the pressure of chaotic development in the socio-political and economic life.
Tawmngaina become a neglected culture; at a moribund state, especially among the Vaiphei. No doubt, it is greed for money, power, and status that has stolen away loyalty, love, and honesty— which are the layers of the solid ground for laying the foundation of Tawmngaina.

Footnotes:

8. Ibid.: p-31
9. Ibid.
Different types/designs of HAIRPINS and HAIRCOMBS
Before the 17th Century A.D.
Roughly from about 1200 to 1600 A.D.

After the 17th Century A.D.
(1600 to 1800 A.D.)
continuation: Sketching VI:6

PRIMITIVE VAJPHEI MAN AND WOMAN-II

(1800 to 1940 A.D.) (From 1945 onwards)