Chapter - VIII

PRIMAL RELIGION

Though they were described as 'Animist', they have a memory of a Supreme God (Pathian) who is the creator of the Universe.
CHAPTER- VIII

PRIMAL RELIGION

Primitive religion is generally defined as the belief in numerous deities, which are concerned with human affairs and are capable of helping or harming man’s interest. The same belief holds true to Vaiphei traditional religion. However, their ritual invocation and their traditional lyrics often recite, 

*“Chungah Pathian leh Khuavang in ei hawi hen”*. In addition to this, whenever a Vaiphei is about to sever the neck of any animal for feast or ritual, he would mumble, 

*“Chungah Pathian in lei awi nam, Jia gancha gawl hi jiagual ahin aat di ka hem?” [God of Heaven, would you allow me to slice the neck of this poor animal?].* Saying this, he would shove the blunt side of his cutting tool to and fro against the neck of the destined animal.

For the primitive Vaipheis, *Chung-Pathian and Khuavang* represent the highest deities in the hierarchy of Gods and may be called the chief Gods. *Pathian* is regarded as the creator of the universe who had left the earthly powers to *Khuavang*. In other words, both of them are like the *Yin* and *Yang* of the Taoist (Chinese Religion) conception. But, in the true sense of tradition *Khuavang* seems to be the titular head of the two opposing and distinct deities of this world. These deities, according to the primitive Vaiphei’s concept, who were divided into two groups: one group was considered as harmful, and the other as helpful dominated this earth.

*“Chunga Pathian leh khuavang in ei hawi hen”* mean *“May the gods of heaven and earth spare me.”*
These deities are evil-spirits or demons who were worshipped in the form of mountain, river, cave, lake, forest, etc. They are attributed to every illness and calamities. Dawi is the general term as well as the collective name that represent all forms of these earthly deities. In fact, as said above, demonic or evil-spirits of varying degree of potency are believed firmly, to reside in most of the natural objects or in most of the topographical features. They bear various names with reference to the places of their habitation. For example, the spirit of Manipur-river (Chin- Hills) is called Ngun- dawi, which they personified as ‘THANGNEL’ (THANGNEL), 1 lili lake (Rih- Dil in Lushai dialect) is called and personified as ‘LILIPI-DAWI’. In the same practice, the mountain or hill spirits are named ‘Koupuru (Kouburu)-dawi, Kahlam-dawi, Tawnglawn- dawi, Lungthul- dawi, Lungleen-dawi’, etc. 4

The prominent deities which are helpful (beneficent) are Gupli (Serpent), Pheisam (one legged imp), Tant-Nuagak (a fairy-benefactress of hunters), and Pugau – Pagau (spirit of ancestors). The first, second and the fourth deities are said to be both beneficent and harmful. They are believed to be helpful and beneficent only as long as they are offered sacrifices but harmful unless regularly offered. Spirits of rivers, streams, springs, brine-springs, swamps, rocks and trees are viewed as most noxious. Demons such as Chawnmu (elf), Zounupi (a giant-female spectre), and Kau (evil-spirit possessed by man) are considered hostile to man and are extremely nocuous. All these spirits are propitiated and appeased time and again.

From the above passages we find that the primitive Vaipheis were *‘ANIMISTS’, whose religion was based on sacrifice and worship to avoid the wrath and curses of the spirits. However, it may be safely pointed out that the Vaiphei religion, in its strict sense does not mean bowing down or kneeling before any object like the Hindus and such like. Their altars and poles do not represent idol or totem, but the place of sacrifice. The sacrificial function is, as said, to ensure that his mind, body, and soul were free from the attack and captivity

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4 Under the influence of Sir Edward B. Taylor (1832-1917) many writers used this term universally to describe the religion of the tribals or indigenous communities. However, this study too finds the term as the outcome of misinterpretation by anthropologists, christian missionaries, British government of India, Burma, and Theologians of the 19th and early 20th centuries. You will find a vivid description of the nature of early Vaiphei religion in Annexure - XIV.
of the demonic powers around him. The function of sacrifice and worship is therefore, to maintain the physical, mental and spirit of man in a state of vigorous and active conditions. It can be likened to the role of medical services of modern time. Also, his material needs and wants to maintain his physical existence in this world are owned by some of these earthly deities, or say, demonic powers. So he is again compelled to proffer sacrifices to the concerned that he may be granted what he wants. Thus sacrifices and worship has its own unique and ultimate objectives, namely, personal physical well-being of man, material happiness and prosperity on earth and longevity of the span of life here and now. So Vaipheis religious attitude was intrinsically temporal or idolatry not in the sense that they worship images of deities, but in the sense that the gods, goddesses and spirits to which homages are paid had no ethical attributes.

In Vaiphei dialect, the worshipping or paying homage to spirits is branded as 'Dawi-Bia or Davi-hou', and the rite of propitiation is 'Kithoi' similar to Rai-Thawi in the Lai terminology. The Thiempu (village priest) plays the leading role in worshipping or appeasing spirits. He is supposed to know which spirit is causing the trouble and what form of sacrifice should be performed to appease the spirit. He feels his patient's pulse, looks sapient, asks a few questions, and determined from the replies which spirit caused the sickness and how to appease, and what to be offered. Generally, like the 'HO' tribes of Sinhabhum in Bihar and Mayurbhanj in Orissa, the Vaipheis commonly sacrifices fowls and swine, for atoning the spirits. The meat of the butchered animal for expiation are usually devoured by the priest if it is small. But if the destined animal is a swine, or a dog, or a goat, he invites some friends to assist him and hosted a ritual grand dinner party.

The fresh and warm-blood of the killed animal is usually spilled or smeared over the patient. If not in this manner, the patient is insisted to swallow in one gulp a cup of the same. Such expiational ritual is always coupled with varieties of incantations. It may be worthy to point out that any sickness or ailment is considered as the curse or doing of evil-spirits. So in its true sense, for the primitive Vaipheis, rites of propitiation means exorcising or warding-off the sickness (disease) which is an evil-spirit. Further, the sacrifices and worships are always accompanied by different types of 'ZEK-leh-Buak' (taboos).
(1). Creation Theory:

As hinted already, the creation of the universe is ascribed to the heavenly deity called ‘Pathian’. The universe is a composite of three realms, namely, Vanchung (over or above the sky), Leichung (the flat surface of the earth), and Leinuai (beneath the earth).


FREE TRANSLATION OF THE FOREGOING:

“The heavenly God is the creator of the universe and all the things (living and non-living) within it. But mankind, though aware of his power and that they were his creation, could not worship him as they were pestered by evil-spirits who were expelled from heaven under the leadership of Khuavang by God.

All the livings and objects on this earth are dominated by these rebellious spirits. They have the power of life and death upon all the livings. So it is better for them (Vaipheis) to worship and appease these spirits who surrounds them”.

Undisputably, from the above narration we find clearly that it was circumstances and not their conscience that had compelled them to practised animism. Yet, they could not abrogated from their innermost feeling the presence of Pathian in heaven who is always watching over them. Though they were barred and obstructed to have a spiritual contact with Pathian, they hallowed his name as Chungmangpa (the King of Heaven/Prince of Heaven)
in their lyrics and during formal conversation from ancient of days. No doubt, the creation theory or say, the concept of creation held by the Vaiphei tradition have close affinity with the first text of Genesis in the Old-Testament. Further, it may be worth mentioning the original birthplaces of mankind and some domesticated animals as maintained by oral history as under:

(i). Hiling (Mankind)- in Khul; (ii). Vawkcha (Swine)- in Buan-Nel; (iii). Uicha (Dog)- in Tunglull; (iv). Siial (Mithum)- in Zingium; (v). Kel (Goat)- in Teuthawppi; (vi). Akcha (Fowls)- in Mualkawi. These birthplaces or land are unlocatable till today. But the general presumption is to be in Tibet or China.

(2) **Origin of God (Pathian)**:

In regards to the cult of *Pathian*, this study finds good reason to assume that the word *Pathian* may have had its origin in the belief of Heaven, which was deified as *T’ien* in Chinese. Because, this term *T’ien* closely resembles *‘Thian’* as in *Pa-thian*. And, again, the Chinese vocabulary contains another name *Pa-hsien* which represents eight immortals living on high mountains such as Kunlun, etc. in central Asia. The Chinese cultural history records that *‘Pa-hsien’* is of Tao culture. Therefore, it seems that the Vaiphei divine name *Pathian* and the Chinese *T’ien or Pa-hsien* were one and the same in origin. In the light of this historical fact, it has been evident that this *Pathian* cult was undisputably originated and brought down from central Asia with the people.

As a corollary to the above, traditional history never viewed this *Pathian* as bearing any demonic characteristic feature although it was not clearly conceptualized. It represented a living divinity and it looks like the messenger of a higher deity dwelling somewhere in the celestial space who left Khuavang (or Lungzai/Nungzai) as the owner and controller of all the earthly things which was his own creation.

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*Note: ‘Pathian’ qualifies ‘Holy Father’, and ‘Khuavang’ qualifies ‘god of fate’*
The concept of MAN and his SPIRIT:

According to the Vaiphei terminology, human being is termed 'Mi' or 'Mi-hing', and his spirit is termed 'Tha-Gau'. Though they had not left us acute definition, the primitive Vaipheis firmly believed man as having two 'Tha-gau' (Spirit or soul). One is termed 'Tha-Inngak' and the other 'Tha-Gamleng'. Literally, Tha-Inngak means the soul or spirit within the body, and Tha-gamleng is the spirit that used to leave the body while at rest. Tradition surmised that dreams are the personal experiences (encounters) of tha-gamleng whilst the body is in deep slumber. And, again, this tha-gamleng is said to be of two types—harmful and harmless. The harmless Tha-gamleng has no extra-power except the power or capability of screening his own world of adventures into our mind-eyes while we are in a coma at night. However, some people are embodied with a super-tha-gamleng, in the sense that their tha-gamleng could work as a kind of satellite to empowered them with clairvoyance. On the contrary, the harmful tha-gamleng can be branded as an evil-spirit possessed by man that used to flee its body (possessor) from time to time to injure or harm other livings, i.e. man or animals. This type of tha-gamleng is labelled as 'Kau' in Vaiphei dialect.

Some families or clan are regarded to have descended from a male or females who possessed such noxious spirit, which in Vaiphei is called, Kau-nei-sung (or Kau-nei-Nam). 'Nei' means possessing, and 'sung' is family and 'Nam' is clan or tribe. Particularly, woman descending from the supposed Kau family were despised as a low caste and were generally avoided for wife-to-be. Their spirits were believed to be the most active and strong in manifestation and in efficacy. Sometimes their spirits (Kau) caused dead to their victims, viz. Man and animals. Till today, there are many untold stories of victimization by such powerful spirits in the society of the Vaipheis. However, when the possessor of such spirit died, it seems the kau also vanished into thin air. Because there has been no record or account that a Kau existed among the livings after the demise of the possessor.

From our study, it becomes evident and clear that the term 'Tha-Gau' has been a corruption and contraction of two different words 'Tha' and 'Gau' like soul and spirit in
English. ‘Tha’ is often referred to the ghosts or spectre of a man who died. For example, 
_Tha_ means the ghost or spirit of the dead, which used to appear in the form of the dead 
man. Whereas, Gau is never used to referred the ghost of the dead. When people die, it is 
described as ‘Tha-kia’ or ‘Tha-Pham’ instead of referring as ‘Thagau-kia’ or ‘Thagau-
Pham’ but sometimes as ‘a thagau in a chia san’ (his spirit and soul left him). Tha-kia or 
Tha-Pham means ‘dropping or fallen spirit’ or in more accurate sense ‘spirit fallen’. It is 
undisputably clear enough that ‘Tha’ is the English ‘spirit’, and ‘Gau’ is ‘Soul’. For example, 
Tha-niian means ‘highly-spirited’, and also the English vocabulary never used ‘soul’ in lieu 
of ‘ghost’ or ‘spirit’ of the death. In the same way, ‘gau’ is never used in terms of ‘tha’, i.e. 
‘thi-gaumu’ or ‘nithi-gaumu’ meaning ‘seeing the soul of the dead’. But a man would 
claim ‘tha ka mui’ or ‘a tha ka mui’ meaning ‘I saw a ghost’ or ‘I saw his spectre’. 
From its usage, the word ‘Tha’ is ambiguous. Sometimes it is used to denote the English 
’spirit’ and some other time it is used to designate ‘ghosts or spectres’. So, safely it may be 
noted that ‘Tha’ is a common word used to denote the English ‘spirit’ and ‘ghost’.

In support of the above explication, and to be more explicit we may illustrate one 
error made in translating the Holy-Script (Bible) into Vaiphei dialect as under:

‘...la lungthim, la thagau uleb la tak-sau..... (1 Thessalonians-5: 23)

In this line of words. ‘Lungthim’ has been used unmindfully to imply ‘spirit’ whereas 
there is immeasurable chasm between the two words in regards to their meaning. The Vaiphei 
word ‘LUNGTHIM’ is the exact counterpart of the English word ‘MIND’ in physiological, 
philosophical, psychological, lexicographical, and in grammatical sense etc. And, again, 
‘THAGAU’ or spirit + soul has also been putrided to denote the English version of ‘Soul’.

It is always such wrong usage of vocabulary that often misled Historians, Scholars, 
Theologians and the like to arrive at the most satisfactory conclusions or evidences.

Frankly and explicitly speaking, the above illustrated Bible script should have flowed 
as, ‘...la tha, la gau uleb la tak sa uli...’ so as to bring out the exact spiritual or theological
message latent in the English version, particularly. From traditional standpoint, the spirit
(Tha) and soul (Gau) are two similar conscious incorporeal beings possessed by man. Both
of them are commonly or collectively termed as ‘Tha-Gau’. However, they (Vaiphei) also
recognized the dissimilarities between the two incorporeal beings. According to their
conception, ‘Tha’ is the immaterial element that makes the human mind or brain to feel and
think, and also that could disclose its face, which personalizes the man who possessed it.
Unlike the ‘Gau’ or soul, Tha can be seen with our naked eyes when it reveal itself but not
touchable. It is supposed that Tha is not manifested to be perceptible by the eyes of
every person, but to a very limited number of people. Instances of experience have led
people to believe that the Tha (spirit) of those who died of accident (violent or unnatural)
were often manifested after death. On the other hand, Gau is not apparitional like Tha.
But it is the core of the spirit (Tha) and the body of man. In other words, ‘Gau’ is a
powerful force, which is invisible and untouchable. It activated and propelled the Tha and
*Taksa* to be effective. According to traditional belief, all living and non-living things on
this earth possess ‘Gau’. For example, instead of using Tha or spirit; *Tui-Gau* (the soul
of water) *Thing-gau* (soul of tree), *Giul-gau* (soul of snake) and so on. In the primitive
days, if a person is drowned, it was said to be caused by the ‘gau’ of the river. It is, the
excessive force of the ‘gau’ that turned the ‘tha’ of some people to become unrestrainably
harmful spirit called ‘kau’.

In a Vaiphei society, the mother’s side of family is generally termed ‘Pu-te’
regardless of ages. And, it is the social obligation to maintain the Pu-te’s satisfied and
pleased with the *Tu-te* (children of the Pu-te’s daughters). Dereliction of this filial duty
the part of the Tu-te may invoke the anger of the Pu-te, and this anger or resentment is
believed capable of manifesting itself as an efficacious force to cause varieties of sufferings
upon the Tu-te. This kind of unseen power or force is called *Pute-Gau* in Vaiphei dialect.
Also, it is from such belief and fear that the primitive

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*‘taksa’ stands for the English ‘body’ and ‘flesh’.*
Vaipheis had practised 'ancestor worship' to be free from the curse of their 'gau'. Ancestor worship is called 'Pu-Gau, Pa-Gau hou' meaning, 'worshipping the soul of ancestors'. All this tradition shows that 'Gau' is a kind of spiritual energy that propelled the man and his spirit. Thus the life and death of a man is virtually determined by the life and death of his 'Gau'. The belief goes on to the extend that when a man is about to die, the Gau dispatched the Tha to places he frequented before and to those whom he is more mindful of. So it may be said that 'THA' is the immaterial substance that used to wander in separation from the physical body of man to execute the strong desires of 'Gau' not only during the sleep but also during the wakefulness, and even after the death of the physical body.

According to all this, Gau seems to be the real soul of man, which is immortal. His departure from his dwelling place (body) marks the event of death to the body. Also, the Tha (spirit) vanished to be seen no more when the 'Gau' departed from him. This fact clearly pictures that man's 'Gau' is somewhat like the sustainer or guardian of man and his spirit (Tha).

(4). Interpretation of DREAMS, and Phenomenal-Omens:

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) or Freudian theory holds dreams simply as the reflection of the repressed wishes. But in Vaiphei belief, almost all dream symbols are regarded as prophetic signs and some are taken as the shades of wandering spirits in their entirety. In their belief, dreams and omens afford an unerring presage of the future. Does this mean that their dreams are as substantial and possess the same measure of reality as the facts of their waking vision? If this conclusion were legitimate on these facts, the dream life would have continuity with the waking life, and possess a specific "reality" for them.

The interpretation of unusual dreams are left to the Thiempu (Village priest), or to some wise old man - "Tekse-Thuhe le Chingthei". However, the meanings attached to dreams of an ordinary nature were comprehended naturally.
To be attacked by animal, i.e., reptiles or four-legged, in a dream is universally held to be a sign of bad-luck and sickness. To be bitten by a snake or a dog is an omen of very evil portent, and also it is regarded as a proof that witchcraft is directed against them. To have a shower is indicative of emancipation from all forms of worries. To build a house, or to have a big house means good luck and prosperity. To wore beards and longhair is indicative of good fortune or success. To dream a fire portends unrepairable disaster. The most unwelcome dream is seeing slain animals or feasting with meat; it is universally held as an omen of violent-death to the person who dreamt or in the family. To copulate with someone, or to stay unclothed means to face dishonour or to fall from grace. To dream of winning a race or such contest means success in life. To dream sunset, dark-clouds, night, and floods indicates calamities and frustrations. Wearing nasty clothes, or tight-fitted also possess the same prediction as above. However, adorning with loosely fitted white and clean garment is an omen of good fortune. Among the lucky dreams none is more welcomed than that of climbing a tree, a roof, a ladder, a hill or a mountain. But to fall from rooftop, from a tree top, and walking down a hill is a warning of disgrace and misfortune. Seeing a beehive is also held as bad luck. Strangely, it is held that if someone attacked us in our dream it is good luck, while to attack others is a token of misfortune. To shake hands is a warning of departing, i.e. if husband and wife, it shall be divorce or death. To dream sunrise means successful in life. To die is an omen of long life. To shoot slings, arrows, and guns means increase in offsprings.

Being an animist, Vaiphei people believed that even animal possessed a spirit and that their behaviour often foretells an event that shall occurred in the near future. Not only this, they even goes to the extend of believing that the spirit of a tiger used to roam around their village and that it could hear and see them every moment of their life. In their belief, natural phenomenas also forecasted something good or bad, which shall occurred in future.
On a journey, meeting a snake is very unlucky so they always try to secure and kill it. If a cat cross one's path, it is a token of bad luck. A snake or bat should not be allowed to escape from the house alive if they entered, otherwise they carried away with them all good luck which are in store for the house owner. The crying of dogs and owls indicates a funeral. Pigeons and cats are likely to desert a profligate home. One should not ravage the nests of birds, and beehives that attached on the roof of the inner-house or verandah; because their settlement in the house is a blessing or prosperity. The cry of a rooster by dusk is an indication of a violent death in the village, but if it cries late at night it is a sign of good luck for the hunters. If a hen crows, it is a sign of deserting the village. It is said that if a couple eagle parted ways high above the centre of a village, it symbolized the sudden death of a beloved spouse. Croaking of a green bee-eater forecast a grand-feast or fortune. A cat crying in and around the house presages the death of near and dear ones. Sudden or rapid increase of rodents and locust is a portent of famine. Sighting copulating snakes brings bad luck. The creaking and croaking of chameleons and frogs forecast precipitation.

Some words may here be added again in respect of omens from natural phenomena. It is universally held that storm or rain under the daylight-sun foreshadow a violent death. Too much of gales and storms by the dawn of a new year indicated drought throughout the year. A whirlwind by daylight symbolized war or violent death. Sudden envelopment of the sky by dark-clouds is bad omen. An eclipse foreshows epidemics. These are few of the prominent ones we could illustrate, in regards to interpretation of dreams and natural phenomenas.

Before the advent of Christianity, these omens were highly valued. All the dreams, the crises of domestic and communal life omens are taken in order to determine the issue of the future. The daily life of the Vaipheis was regulated by their dreams, and by the natural phenomenas that comes forth. It may not be exaggerating to say that their dreams were the main determiner of their daily rosters. As a matter of fact, they were phobic to
dreams and phenomenas. They were spellbound and swayed by their superstitious belief. Obviously due to lack of scientific knowledge the primitive Vaiphei lived a morbid or phobic life under the gloomy influence of ignorant prejudices.

Apparently, it was the English missionaries that alighted them from their superstitious loads, and emancipated them from the chains of phobias. Positively, the religion brought by the White-men was a panacea that tranquilized the excessive palpitation and perspiration of the sickly lot. Nevertheless, the belief in dreams and omens had deep rooted into the veins of the people that they are occasionally tempted and even easily convinced by their dreams rather than by their newfound Faith till date. Palpably, it is hard to deviate oneself from 'reckoning dreams', which was, and is still extant or prevailing as the common culture of the pious, the layman, the good, the bad and the ugly of this planet. As annexion to this fact, often dreams or omens also comes true to be more convincing to surprise and decoy the feeble, and even the shrewd and the stouts.

From the foregoing observation we find that the primitive people were absolutely superstitious: from scientific standpoint. But, it would be wise to remind ourselves that, without any practical experiment or experiences, we would be making a big error to simply accept such mere scientific evaluation as the legitimate conclusion. It may be pointed out that there have been many uncountable instances where the dream life have a continuity with the waking life. As enumerated already, to the Vaiphei belief not all but some natural movements appear not just as a freak of nature, but as a sign of divine activities. In fact, religion is, in its strict sense, the recognition on the part of man, of some unseen power as having control over his destiny. This recognition is indicated by his practical life, resulting from his belief. So, Vaiphei too, believe in the existence of the one (Pathian) who controls the future events, and this power is believed to have disclosed itself through the medium of dreams, and natural movements or events. We find many instances in the Holy books of several religions that gods and goddesses revealed themselves or
manifested future events in different manners. Even in the *Holy-Bible* we find that God led the Israelites by means of dreams and natural movements, and the same is to other religions such as the *Islamic*, the *Hindus* etc.

Now, this study, from religious point of view, find out that sometimes dreams are substantial and possess the same measure of 'reality' as the facts of their waking vision. Though not absolutely like in the days of yore before they embraced Christianity, it may safely be pointed out that the Vaipheis still take into account any peculiar dreams and some eccentric events, which is not a total objection to their newfound faith, too. Obviously dreams seems the most influential sign taken into account by the Vaiphei people till today. Because they still retain and practice the custom of wishing good dreams to one another, this custom is said to be as old as the history of the people (Vaipheis). Whenever two persons are about to part, they usually exchange words of farewell in which they say, "*Mangpha hiti le*" or "*Mangpha-tak man hiti aw le*" meaning, "*Let us dream good dream*" or "*Let us dream the most excellent dream*". These words have similar sense to "*good-bye*" and "*good-night*" in English culture. It is also a common practice to send someone 'sweet-dreams' through another person by saying, "*Mangpha-tak ka thawt hi*" or "*Mangpha ka puak hi*" meaning "*I send him sweetest-dream*" or "*I send him good-dream*". As a rule, it is again the duty of the receiver to response by saying, "*Nang ale*" or "*Awe, bihe le*" meaning "*Same to you*" or "*Yea, let it be so*". From all this instance, it is clear enough that it has been neither superstition nor ignorance but the spiritual and social customs impelled them to reckon peculiar events and dreams, which sometimes possesses specific "reality" to them.

(5) **ZEK-leh-BUAK (Taboos)**:

The term "*ZEK*" literally meant 'forbidden or prohibited' and the term "*BUAK*" means 'unclean or impure'. However, these words are collectively used to simply mean "taboo" in English. And, sometimes observation of the Zek-leh-Buak means a total rest or holiday called "*UM-MIT*". Some other times, this Zek-leh-Buak is a kind of restriction that concerns either individuals or groups or a family or the whole village.
All social and religious rites are characterised by a prohibition of the normal relation with other social units, and the whole village or individual members of it are often "ZEK-Chang" or 'under prohibition'. Sometimes this state of things lasts a day, sometimes several. The person or the people who are "Zek-Chang" are restricted to do any works or to stroll about without the consent of the village priest who is always the chief of all the rites. Automatically, when they are Zek-Chang, the house of the individual or say, the whole village becomes "ZEK". The 'Zek' may be against the entrance of strangers, or the exit of members or of both, or, allowing the entrance of strangers but disallow their going into houses, etc. Any one who defiled or breached the rule of 'Zek' become "BUAK" or impure. and is, or are subjected to severe punishment or separate rites of sanctification.

On the other hand, Zek-leh-Buak, as hinted above, is also like a social-cum-religious codes which qualities and stands for 'dos and do not' for the individual or individuals. Under this form of codes, every individual is accounted in the sense that they are all subjected to abide by the Zek or restrictions (prohibitions) and they are not allowed to shirk any of the codes of Zek in their daily life. Some of the prominent 'Zek-leh-Buak' which are in the form of 'dos and do not' may be enumerated as under:

1. During pregnancy, neither she nor her husband must not participate in any rites or festivals.
2. One must not whistle or sings while fixing an animal trap.
3. One must not shave or pluck the eyelash.
4. Children must not participate during the funeral and burials of an infant and violent victims.
5. Salam or Sialpi-Salam feast must not be taken by Children.
6. Whenever a household ritual is performed the 'Sawng-gau or Pu-te' (wife or mother's relatives) must not eat in the inner house.
7. One must not built a house in the direction facing his elder brother's house.
8. One must carry with him onions, turmeric or ginger when staying out in the jungle.

9. One who is going to hunt wild beast or who is to go for war must not sleep with any woman.

10. One must give regards and respect to his elders besides his parents.

11. All who participate in a burial must wash their feet with the spelled-water arranged by the priest.

12. Take care or be affectionate and kindly to the poor, destitute, aged-people, and widows.

13. Do not tell lies.

14. One must not covet other's property.

15. One must not ill-treat or ravage other's property.

16. Be righteous, to become prosperous and long lived.

17. Do not steal other's property.

18. A mithun destined to be feasted for any kinds of ceremony or festival must be pierced to dead by the eldest male members of the family or clan. (usually with an iron-rod or spear).

19. The eldest male members of a family or clan must not perform any rituals at the residence of his younger[s] or brother[s].

20. One must not build his house on the downhill side of his maternal relatives.

21. One must not comb his hair with the hair-comb of a 'Kau-nei' (one who possessed evil-spirit), and also never eat the remains of what they have eaten.

22. One's head must rest towards the east when sleeping.

23. Watch and guard your tongue always.

24. A husband or wife must not plait or comb their hair when one of them died, until the last funeral rites is performed.

25. A newly married man or a lone male issue of a parent must not be allowed to go for war or hunting.

Besides these individual 'Zek-leh-Buak', there are many other taboos observed during several ceremonies. The regular features of 'Um-mit' (rest), which subjected the villagers to be 'Zek-chang', are, namely, Khaw-Hou, Khaw-bawl, Khawpi-Ai-Kam, death-
ceremonies, festival of all kinds etc. Of all the Um-mit, Zek-leh-Buak is strictly followed in the Khaw-Bawl, Khaw-pi-Ai-Kam and Dai-phu which have already been explained earlier (refer chapter-V, VI and VII).

In ancient days, Zek-leh-Buak is observed strictly, and each of the individual’s life was to be in conform with the taboos. Infact, the Zek-leh-Buak are succeeded in actually tyrannizing the life of the primitive Vaiphei in those gone olden days. But happily for the civilized Vaiphei or modern Vaiphei, the many practices once rigidly considered taboo are now being looked upon as normal, except the ‘Zek’ which have moral or ethical values for the individual and for the community.

(6) **PU-SHA (Ancestor-Worship):**

The culture of “Pu-gau, Pa-gau hou” or ancestral worshipping have been practiced among the Vaiphei people since time immemorial. It is popularly better known as “PU-SHA, PA-SHA”, and is regarded as the most significant deity in the sense of religion. It is the chief god of all the household gods. The word ‘SHA’ is an ancient language which meant ‘SIAM’ or ‘A-SIAM, A-SHAK, A-BAWL’ in Vaiphei dialect, meaning ‘he had made, created, or fashioned’.

From ancient of days, the Vaiphei hold the view that ‘Parents are deities whom we could see with our eyes’. As such, even after they might have turned to dust and soil their soul or spirits are believed to have the power of blessing or cursing them. In other words, this Pu-sha is much revered and regarded as the household benefactor. The prosperity and fortune of the individual or a family depends on whether the “Pu-sha” is pleased with them, or not. So, an annual or once in a lifetime, according to the fate and condition of the family, a swine particularly without blemish is slained as an offering to the “Pu-sha”. However, there is no date or time fixed for the rites of offering. It may be added that the rites does not involves only animal sacrifice, but also cereals and drinks.
Whenever they are swooped by mishaps, they presumed as being 'Pu-sha 'n aweihek' or twisted anti-clockwise by the Pu-sha. Then, they would be busy like a bee to perform the rites of atonement for the Pu-sha. One feature worthy to note in regard to the ancestral worship is the three words "MIACHAL, NIACHAL, NELACHAL" which are recited first before the real incantations is performed. Some historians opined these words to be the names of their ancestors of time immemorial, as the exact meaning and origins are obscure till date.

The rites of propitiation of the Pu-gau, Pagau is called "Inn-Dawi hou (bia)" meaning 'worshipping the household deity'. It is usually performed in the late afternoon just before the dusk. As a rule, this ritual service demands the participation of only familial relatives. The main worship service is performed in the Inn-sung nung meaning 'innermost of inner house'. A tiny cane-basket called "SAWLSAK", specially crafted for this ritual is attached underneath the outer roof of the house on the uphill side. There, they would incant with the priest these words: "Sim ah hung kuan Pu-gau in ei sha'n. Ka-pu Suata-k-pa gau in ei sha'n. Pu-gau sawm in suhen, Kawlmangnu la sak bang in ei sha'n lah. Kawlmangpa la sak bang in ei sha'n la". Free translation of this incantation flows as this: "Bless me. ancestors from the south; bless me, my progenitor-Suantak. Let ten of my ancestors release me. and bless me like the *King(s) and Queen(s) of the Burmese*. " This incantation symbolized supplication of blessing, and deliverance from evils and adversities. One strange feature of this rite is the making of holes on a bottle gourd. The side of the gourd is sliced opened length-wise and breadth-wise. This ritual gourd is called 'Bou-leh-Hai'. Inside it, varieties of cereal grains and a killed chick are stashed. What this 'Bou-leh-Hai' exactly signifies is obscure.

Note: The meaning and origins of those three words "MIACHAL, NIACHAL, NELACHAL" has already been dealt with in Chapter-1.

* "King(s) and Queen(s) of Burmese" refers to the people called "SHAN" or 'NANCHAO', or "TAI". Tradition apppellated them as "KAWLMANG" meaning "Ruler(s) of Burma" or "NUAIMPANG" meaning "Ruler(s) of the Lowland/Valley (Burma)".
Carcass of the slain animal is sliced and slitted in accordance with the customs and boiled. The cooked organs, the lung, the heart, the kidney, the liver, and several intestinal parts are again segmented and trussed into a bamboo-rod, and fasten on a small bundle of thatch grass, they are fixed on the roof of outer house usually on the uphill side. This bundle of pieces of organs and thatch grass is called ‘Bi-Phou’. Lately, mention may be made that only one bamboo rod is used to truss the segmented organs by the oldest clan ‘Neilut’ members. This symbolized that they performed the ritual mainly in reverence to their progenitor ‘Suantak-Gau’, whereas the other Vaiphei clans, namely-Vanglua, Thangniang, Sialiap, etc. used two bamboo-rod. One of the rods is for ‘Suantak-Gau’, and the other is for their ancestors (or their “Pu-Gau”) who were the descendants of Suantak. As hinted already in Chapter-III, unlike their cousins (Siyin/Sijang Saantaks), the Vaipheis are labelled as “VAWKPI-DAWI HOU” meaning ‘worshipping with Vawkpi (female of the Pig/Mother-Pig)”. Except for the feast or banquet, mithun is never used as an offering in religious or other ceremonies.

As annexure to the incautious, the priest addresses the deity of his sacrifices with reference to the personal names of the forefathers. He recounts the list of the pedigrees and asks them to be well-pleased with what he offers and to bestow upon the family good health and prosperity. On such special occasions, or say ancestor worshipping day, the family members in the house are ‘Zek-chang’ in the sense that they are not allowed, or they are forbidden to loiter out of the house and also to prepare the feast. Except the worship service, the other activities are handled by filial relatives. Therefore, at the end of the ritual, the sacrificial meat is distributed among the relatives according to their filial rank and position in the familial relationship, as well as according to their designations in the ceremony.

(7) **BIRTH Ceremonies**

Unlike some other tribal, there is no separate and rigid couvade for the father after the birth of a child. But, there are many taboos to abide during the family way. For instance, the father is not allowed to slain animals nor to ill-treat them.
In Vaiphei tradition, the navel cord is snapped with a sharp bamboo-blade sliced from the bamboo pole attached to the frame of the outer-door. Then, the priest stowed the navel cord and the bamboo-slicer into a hollow bottle gourd, and would hang up on the outer wall of the downhill side of the house. There the navel cord is exposed to decompose and to desiccate. This bottle-gourd containing the navel cord is discarded by any member of the house at their convenience and discretion. There is no rule or code concerned with squandering the bottle gourd of navel cord except suspending on the wall by the priest.

Immediately after delivering, the child is immersed and unstained in lukewarm water. The mother is helped to sip rice-beer to her heart’s content, as a token of felicitation called “Kipakpi-etsuk-na” in Vaiphei dialect. Besides, the rice-beer is used as to boost her veins and nerves in order to excrete all the fouls from her womb. After one to three days from the child’s birth, a special religious ceremony is hosted by the parents called ‘Nau-Zunek’ as already shown before in Chapter-VI. Generally, this ceremony is often coupled with naming the child if feasible. But if the person selected by the parents to give the name is from far-off place, naming is performed at any other time. This Nau-Zunek is usually performed in the evening after dusk.

In regards to naming of the child, they usually make haste not to delay more than a week. The simple reason for such a rush is that, a child without a name is easily preyed by diseases and evil-spirits. During the first year, the child is prohibited to be taken outside the village. If an unavoidable circumstance compelled, the soot on the outer base of the cooking-pot is daubed on the forehead or between the brows of the child so as to ward-off wicked-spirits, or as a protection from any diseases.

On the birth ceremony ‘Nau-Zunek’, the mother of the child is ‘Tha-thaw’ (felicitation-cum-blessing) with a fowl by the priest, which is a free contribution from him. The feathers around the private of the fowl is made into a wreath and is garlanded to the mother. This feather wreath is called “Aok-Nel”. Lately, it may be noted that the first
and second child receives their name from their paternal grandparents, if they are a boy and a girl. But if both are male, the second will receive his name from his maternal grandfather. In Vaiphei custom, names are not given at random but are compounds of the paternal and maternal grandparents, or those of other near relation. This custom of naming is practiced till today.

(8). **NUPTIAL (Kichen-Na):**

We have already hinted some features in regards to wedlock-ceremony in chapter-VII but not the solemn rites. Therefore we shall lay down few words about the custom of connubial rites of the primitive Vaipheis here.

*Kichen-na* or *Kigawp-na*, meaning 'uniting of the bride and groom' better known as 'Moul-Lopna' (felicitation of the bride), is the last and the most solemn ceremony in the process of conjugation. As connotated already, this *Moulop-na* is performed on the morrow of the bride’s arrival in the groom’s house. At the commencement, the bride and groom are seated before the priest, followed by an incantation. The incantation usually flows in this manner: "Ni nuai ah ka lak. Tha nuai ah ka lak. Chanu-chapa chawi dingah ka lak. Ka Sakhau kihual bang hin kihual khawn unlang, khawjing in hawi unlang, khaw-vuk in hawi unlang."

Here we may roughly translate the matrimonial incantation as this: "I have chosen under the sun. I have chosen under the Moon. I have chosen to convey me sons and daughters. Be knotted like my sack, and let the day and nights protect you". Immediately, after he had incanted, the priest squeezes the neck of the fowl he had brought as a *Tha-Thawna* to the wedded. This is done to take omens in order to determine the future life of the couple. The convulsive struggles of its death agony afford a more reliable indication of the future and so it is carefully examined. How its legs are quivering and crossed, how its feathers are

*Tha-Thawna—felicitation-cum-blessing.*
shedding, and it is most unwelcomed if it excreted. When all these rites are finished, the priest would garland the couple with a cotton-wreath (i.e. made of thickly threaded cotton) called "SA-AH". Following the garlanding, a pot full of rice-beer is laid before the newly wedded husband and wife. Two sucking-pipes, one each for the couples are attached in it. As soon as the bride and groom take their sips, singing of traditional songs particularly "Lachawm-La" and "Lakhiang-La" by all and sundry, sessions of advice, and varieties of entertainments follows until the grand bridal-feast in the evening.

Sometimes, this ceremony lasted for two or more days, as described earlier in chapter-VII. It may be noted that this 'Moulop-na' or 'felicitiation of the bride' is often followed by another ceremony called "MOUKHAM-DELH" or 'gratitude over the dowry (or gifts) from the bride'. In Vaiphei custom, a bride must bring with her motley of articles (Mou-kham) to distribute among the "Chanute" or female relatives of the groom as a gift. However, it would be good to note that 'Moukham' is rather obligatory than compulsory. It is neither fixed nor forced. As related, the one who got the biggest or most valued article generally hosted this 'Moukham-Delh' ceremony-cum-feast. But, this is also obligatory. In regards to Moukham and Muokham-Delh, unlike some other tribals, though it is obligatory, there is no hard-and-fast rule coded upon it. Even from the nomadic and barbaric days, there has been many instances where there is neither Muokham nor Muokham-Delh. In fact, the conscience of every 'pure-Vaiphei' (true descendants of Suantak) felt inhuman and lowly to expect or demand such expensive customs if beyond the capacity of the bride's family, and the Chanute. 17

(9) DEATH Ceremonies:

All the Vaiphei bury their dead. But not all the dead are buried inside the village or in the usual burying place. In the first place the children of tender age who die before they are weaned are often not buried in the ordinary grave but close to the house or under the house. In the second place, those that die outside the village must as a general rule is buried outside the village. though there is either a ceremonial burial in the usual place or the burial

*Chanute-female members/relatives of the groom.
of some part of the remains or belongings of the deceased. In the third place, under
the influence of eschatological belief: the dead who die by violence, who are killed
in war, die in childbirth etc (you may refer Chapter-VII for details), are buried apart
from the generality of the village.

The dead are usually buried outside their houses within their homesteads. Where there are no family graves near the house, the dead are generally buried at the
village cemetery. Burial takes place, as a rule, on the day following death except in
the cases where a village Chief die, knights or wealthy families die they are left to
decompose or smoke dried before slow fires, for a considerable period sometimes
even for a year. For all the dead, generally, the corpse is attired in its best dress or
best-suited garments: placed in a wooden casket along with the articles used by the
dead during his lifetime. Until the dawn of the 20th century they (Vaipheis) have no
knowledge of casket: they placed the dead on a plank or bamboo-mat.

All the death except aged man or woman, they are believed to be inflicted to
die by the evil-spirits. So, the womenfolk would weep and the men folk (i.e. relatives
of the dead) would roar with rage. A male member of the dead would chop a log
fasten on the frame of the outer door, which was attached intentionally for this act.
At the same time, he would thud his feet umpteen times on the floor with a loud
roar of this: “Ka-pa cha pa, ka pianni nikhat, ka thini nikhat. Tak-Chapa. Neilut/
Vang-lua/Baite etc. tupa. Vawmpi katha. Ngalchang katha. Kua ahem kaPa/Kanu
that? Ami huantia le kalau pui. Tak-Chapa, powsal, bang ahem ei bawl?”. 13
Here is a free translation of those words: “I am my father’s son. I was born one-
day, and shall die one-day. I am a male child, descendant (or great-grandson) of
the name of the progenitor of his clan. I killed a Bear, a Boar, who had killed
my father/mother? etc. I fear not even a giant. I am a daring son. What has
happened to me?”. 
Now, we may concern ourselves with the conspicuous features on the ceremonies of death as below:

(i) **THI-GAL-NAW:**

Literally it meant ‘driving-off the death’s enemies’. It is a kind of farewell dance usually performed before the burial. The number of the dancers varied according to the population of the village, and also, it is determined from the age and status of the dead. However, the number of dancers does not exceed twenty. This dance is performed only by adult males. Generally, as a rule the dancers are separated into two rows that means, if twenty, ten each in the rows. On their right-hands one spear each, and on the left-hand a shield made of buffalo-hides, mithun-hides, or bamboo and cane.

When the dance took place it is called “Gal-Lam honna” meaning, ‘clearing/opening the path’. The dancers from side to side shuttle to and fro with short steps; crouching slightly they leaped and jerked their feet backward bumping their buttocks and would grumbled “Hum... hum... hum...” by waving their shields and spears to and fro, up and down. The dance is accompanied by all types of primitive musical-instruments, but no single rap, dirge, or waltz. Candidly speaking, the dance and music makes the atmosphere eerie and appalling. Yet, the dance was alluring to the eyes, and the thundering and creaking noise of the instruments were sweet and lulling to the ears.

(ii) **MITHI THAKDAW-NA:**

These words literally meant ‘fare-well to the dead’. It is usually performed after the ‘Thi-Gal naw’. In the first place, the village priest ties a cotton thread on the wrist of the dead. Secondly, he ties the wrists of the dead’s family, one after the other with the same. In the third place, the priest directed them to snap the thread tied on their wrist; at the other end, tied on the dead member’s wrist. Finally, the priest served
a cup of rice-beer into the mouth of the dead, and rattle this: "La pu min ahileh jia chu, jia khu. La pa min jia chu ahin, jia pa min sak chu ka hi tiin la. Lam-pi tui-paal ah chambang lon hial in chia inla. La tha la mat jousian lanung-lamah hun jui in tin uh. Thikhua lapu-lapa, lagual-lapai te um na mun chu la jawt ding ahi". [Tell the names of your ancestors, and the name of the person who gave you name. You must not lagger on the way. The spirit of the animals you have hunted down will be on your back and front. You must keep on moving until you reached the 'Home of the death' (Thi-khua) and meet your ancestors, and your buddies].

Immediately after the above message is conveyed to the death, near and dear ones would serve or offer rice-beer as the priest did. Small pot of rice-beer and a small basket full of meat, cereal, etc. are also usually kept beside or inside the casket as a farewell offering by friends or relatives. And, if the dead is a male; his close friends would salute him with blank-fires, just before the grave is sealed.

In the graves are placed various articles for the use and comfort of the deceased in the world hereafter. Cloths, spears, daos, ornaments, shields, drinking cup and supplies of food and drink are buried with the corpse. In the grave of a woman, usually her cooking pots, her hoe, ornaments, food and drinks, her weaving instruments, her walking-stick, her water-tubes, and the brow-band (num) which in life she used to carry loads from the fields. For all the death in common or as a custom, a dog is killed to keep them company on their journey to the 'Land of the Leal'. The internal organs of the killed dog—the spleen, liver, heart, lung, kidney, and intestines are sliced into small pieces and are placed beside the corpse in the casket. In the absence of a dog, or if a dog is not available, it can be substituted by a pig. Another common feature of the burial ceremony for all the death is the non-stop tolling of the big-gong. The resounding noise of the big-gong could make one's hair stand on end until it ceased by the crack of dawn after the burial.
(iii) *Vuak-Nga*:

Killing animals on the day of the burial is termed as ‘Vuak-Nga’. The affluent kill a mithun, a buffalo, a cow, a swine, a goat beside a dog, which is compulsory. Others manage a cow or a swine. They are killed before the grave is dug, and are feasted after the burial by the whole community in the village. Usually, these animals are contributed by the dead’s paternal and maternal relatives, as a token of condolence and also to guard the dead on his way to the “Death’s Abode”.

Feasting of the ‘Vuak-Nga’ (the animals killed) is again termed as “THI-TUANA or THAN-SA” in Vaiphei dialect. Literally it means, “feast of homage to the dead or feast of burial”. This feast is arranged, particularly for the deceased and for the folks who shouldered all the tasks in the funeral and burial ceremonies. Unlike some other tribals, as hinted already in chapter-VI, every walk of life in the Vaiphei society is based on the basic principles of ‘Tawmngaina’ and as such all the villagers except the children, have their respective tasks on the occasions of joy and sorrow. All the village bachelors and male youth have the task of digging the grave, arranging rooms and seats, etc. The maidens and girls fetch faggots and water, serve Zu to the mourners, chaffing and pestling grains, cooking, etc. The old-folks assemble around the relatives of the dead and consoled them earnestly. Like this, the young and old are engaged nip and tuck to their respective tasks. As a result of this, it is much obligatory for the deceased relatives, i.e. kindreds and clan members, that they have to arrange such feast though it might somehow be expensive.

As a rule, the skulls of the killed animals are placed on the wooden-prongs, which are thrust in the mound of the grave. If the dead is a warrior or hunter, the skulls of human and animals he had preserved are also placed along with the others. This task of decorating the grave is also executed with the efforts of the village bachelors.
The obsequies are not really completed till the spirits of the deceased have been laid to rest finally (i.e. to go to the abode of the death) and forever by a second rite in which the community as a whole takes part again. This rite is known as "INN-THIANSAK", which shall be discussed below.

(iv). **INN-THIANSAK**

Literally it meant "Cleansing the house or Purifying the house". Until this rite is performed, dirge, dance, or music are not allowed to resound in the deceased house. However, the bachelors of the village stay in the house to assist and warmth the mourning family until the Inn-thiansak is performed.

On the other hand, the families (inmate of the house) of the deceased continuously put food and drinks on the downhill side of the family dining place, i.e. near the place where water tubes are stored. This food and drinks are replaced each morning and evening for the spirit of the dead, until the last rite 'Inn-thiansak' takes place. It is called 'Thi-An-Sia' meaning 'food for the dead'.

There is no fixed date or month to perform this rite. It depends on the convenience of the bereaved family. To perform this rite, the family of the dead must procure a pig, or goat, or buffalo or even mithun if they could afford. On the day of performing this rite Inn-thiansak, the village priest placed or buried the articles, on which the food and drinks for the dead used to be placed, under the earth of the mound of the grave. This service is known as "Thi leh Hing kikhenna" meaning, 'departing of the living and death'. From this moment onwards there is no more placing of food and drinks for the dead. After he had buried the utensils, all the members or the folks inside the house are informed to stay outside the house. Then, the priest sweeps every nook and corner of the house with a broom or with a bundle of wild-grass. While he broomed he would also sprinkle Zu all around the inner-house. After he felt that he had broomed enough the inner-house, he would proceed out of the inner-house. Again, he would continue
the same procedure on the homestead. Then, finishing his task of purificating the deceased house, he would inform the mourners and the inmates of the deceased to enter and to begin songs and dances.

On such day, they usually crooned their traditional song called 'SALU-LA'. Before, or say in the far primeval days, 'Bawlawng-La' used to be the main dirge.

As the folks enter the house they would sing: "Thou lai ah thou lai thial; Lanu-te thou lai thial e. Zing-sunsukah val tui chawi ah; Lanu-te thou lai thial e". [Wake up to work; Maidens wake up and work. Pound and hask the grains, and fetch water for the morning has broken. Wake up maidens, for your morning chores]. Humming this song they step inside the house with gongs, horns, drums and other musical instruments to dance and sing to the tune of "Salu-La" which they sung repeatedly. The Salu-La sung at the commencement of every Inn-Thiansak is this: 15

1. Sa hung lawi, sa hung lawi aw;
   Aw, Len-na hualsa hung lawi aw.
2. A lian tu lah ka ti lou, a-neu tu lah ka ti lou;
   Aw, Len-na hualsa hung lawi aw."

*Free translation of the above text*

1. Oh, wild-beast come along, come along;
   Oh, the beasts of Lentang hill, come along.
2. I did not meant neither too big nor too small;
   Oh, come along, the beast of Lentang-hill.

After they had sung to their hearts' content the lyrics illustrated above, another simpler Salu-La follows:
“1. Tulai tak ah ka huingup dang umlou aw;
   Thi-mel mu-nan thangvan dawng hawng nuam ing e.
2. Thi-mel mu-nan thangvan dawng hawng nuam ing aw;
   Aw. sinna sia sa ni-khat mel mu nuam ing e.”

Free translation of this lyric reads as this:

1. This moment, there is nothing I desired more than this;
   I want to open Heaven’s door and meet the dead.
2. Oh, how I wanted to open Heaven’s door and meet the dead;
   Oh, one of these day, I craved to see the dead who had been sealed.

The elderly folks sing this traditional songs and they danced to its beat or rhythm to cheer-up the mourning family. The maidens served them Zi continuously until the purification-feast takes place. The feast of Inn-thiansak is usually prepared or cooked by the paternal relatives (Be-Chate) and female relatives’ issues (Tu-Chate) but often assisted by maidens and bachelors of the village. In other words, or in its true sense, this Inn-thiansak feast can be described as “The Last-Supper with the departed soul”.

The evening session is usually handled by the young-folks of the village, but it does not meant the absence of the older-folks. As a rule, in the night session, the whole community takes part, i.e. children, bachelors-maidens, young girls and boys, man-woman young and old sing and dance to the rhythm of traditional songs such as ‘Jangcha-la, Bawlong-La, Salu-La’ particularly. However, as stated above, unlike the day session all the bachelors and spinsters guided the singing and dancing all night long. Besides the songs mentioned above, such as Thajing-La, Thangsoi-Lapi, Medawng-
La, etc. are also sung to add colour to the session. But, if the dead was a bachelor, or a married man with no male-offspring (or issueless), only “KUMSING-LA” would be sung. This ‘Kumsing’ is said to be a person. He died without heir, and the song composed on behalf of him during his funeral came to be known as ‘Kumsing-La or Kumsing’s Song’ (the Song of Kumsing). Few of the oldest, or the early and earlier songs composed as Kumsing-La may be narrated below:

(I) 1. Kumsing. Kumsing mi’n ti luai-luai a, a;
    Thaineilou in tha akia hi aw a.
  2. Eisanga ni bangah lun jawcheng dawnlai aw;
    Tha te akia hi aw e.

(ii) 1. Ka chumnu hung aia chit le aw;
     Ka semgua nau bang ci hun thot aw e.
  2. Simlei lanu chan ta na leng aw;
     Thi-khuu ah lanu kasai nading e.

(iii) 1. Nam-juchan vok ‘a maleng aw;
      Ka chumnu buam-chit ei pai hi aw e.
  2. Nam-ju tak tak ah lei bawl leh aw;
      Kumsing lautha kei ka hi hi aw e.

(iv) 1. Thilmu chan zu leng ta na leng aw;
      Ka Zuapa’n kangthal ci pai hi aw e.
  2. Thilmu tak tak ah lei bawl leh aw;
      Kumsing lautha kei ka hi hi aw e.
Free translation of the foregoing dirge reads as this:

(I) 1. Everybody knows you and call you Kumsing, Kumsing;
    But you died without an heir, Oh-no.

2. Oh, you are more handsome, youthful and affluent than us;
    But you died without an heir, Oh-no.

(II) 1. Oh, Mother, if you are wise enough;
    You would sent me my bamboo-piper.

2. Oh, though I had missed maidens of the earth;
    I will lure and court maidens here in the abode of the death.

(III) 1. Oh, I manifest as a rodent;
    But my Mother spat on me.

2. Oh, Never mistook me as the real rodent;
    Oh, I am the spirit (ghost) of Kumsing.

(IV) 1. Oh, I manifest as an eagle;
    But my Father arrowed me.

2. Oh, Do not mistook me as the real eagle;
    Oh, I am the ghost of Kumsing.

Sometimes, this cheering-up communion used to last for many days or more than a week. In most cases, the mourning family insisted the bachelors and maidens to continue this community singing and dancing until they could arrange a special feast for them. So, such communion continued every-night till the day the deoid’s family arranged a departing or fare-well party on behalf of the youths of the village, who tirelessly cheered them. This kind of feasting-party prepared on behalf of the bachelors and spinsters is called "Ki-thakna ankuang". Literally, it meant "fare-well feast".
As they had done on the burial day, the skulls of all the animals killed on the Inn-thiansak are again placed on the wooden-prongs of the grave. It is interesting to note here, that in its true sense, Inn-Thiansak is a sending-off ceremony of the deceased's spirit. The departed soul is believed to be lingering in and around the house as well as in the village until the Inn-thiansak rite is performed. At the same time, unless this rite is performed the deceased family members are forbidden (ZEK-Chang) to do their economic and social duties. As such, they make haste to perform it. Particularly, and moreover if the dead is a spouse, the husband or wife who is left is restrained to the extent not to comb or braid his or her hair for many months. Such uncare hair is called "Samse-pu" or "Athai-ah-pu". And the period they wore such hair is called "Samse-pu-Hun". This is done as a sign of showing their deep regards and love to the deceased who is his or her beloved-spouse. And also, it is a symbol of lamentation when one's wife or husband died. According to the traditional custom, this "Samse-pu" is to be effective until the rite of "Inn-thiansak" takes place. However, as hinted above, after performing the aforesaid ritual, the period of Samse-pu depends on the individual's will and conscience.

(10) Vaiphei's Eschatology:

Previously we have got and seen enough information on how the dead are sorted out according to the manner of the death they die. The common belief with respect to persons who meet with a violent or an extraordinary death is that were they to be buried in the ordinary place, their fate would overtake others. As such, only ordinary cases of death are liable to be buried in the ordinary graveyards with the customary ceremonies (as discussed earlier).

Tradition considers ordinary death, or long life in this world as blessing and views it as reward for keeping the social order of the community. Death, particularly violent death, on the other hand, is considered as a terrible misfortune, and is often interpreted as divine punishment for the breach of the social order. It is also believed that the dead does not go to his abode at once, but stays at home or in this world for a certain period of time until proper farewell rites are performed.
Tradition again pictures the existence of man after death as that of the real man leading the very life of man here and now: he would work; he would drink and eat; he would grow and marry there, and so on. So the life of man after death is conjectured as the continuation of the worldly life in the other realm. Whether a man is honest or dishonest in his worldly life is of no consequence in the next world. There is no moral code, the observance of which ensures the pleasant abode or the breach of which leads him to a miserable realm. In his life after death, one is still what he has been in his human life. If he is of high status in the world he still retains his worldly status in the next world, too. He would bring with him to his abode the materials and things that are offered and all the animals sacrificed in his honour at his funeral occasion. This belief has already been clearly expressed in the songs of Kumsing'. Therefore, the dead is treated like the living one until the final ritual ‘Inn-thiansak’ is performed.

Tradition further maintains that the dead could not cross “Thi-Khua-Tang” (Mount of the deads), which is better known as “LUNGLEN-TANG” (Lonesome-Mount) until they are properly appeased with solemn departing (farewell) ceremony, obviously Inn-thiansak. Yet, they are again obstructed by a mythological female monster called “TAWMI-NU” (Kulsem-nu, as her poetic-name). She is said to wore a curly and unattended long hair. The lices on her head are big worms. Only those great warriors and fortunate hunters during their life could go scot-free from the daring clutches of this female-monster. Children and women, and men with low status are often enslaved to bag her lices of worms. However, the dogs and other animals killed on the day of their burial and Inn-thiansak promptly rescued them. So, particularly the grown-ups and adults are buried impressively. The grave would be fenced with logs on the four corners. Besides the skulls of man and animals they killed, a piece of red-cloth would be hang on a bamboo-pole close to the wooden-prong symbolising that he had killed enemies and tigers; and white-cloth to symbolised that he had entrapped or killed elephants, bears, bison and such likes. On the wooden-prong where the skulls are placed, another basket like article known as “AKNGE-SAWM” made of cane is usually attached. This Aknge-Sawm is decked with the quills of the wing and tail of falcons and roosters which symbolised ordinary beasts and large wild-birds; and the two types of “SAWN-SAN” (the tail of a goat dyed red) - the full ‘Sawn-San’ symbolised rhinoceros, elephant, and wild bison and the curtailed symbolised that he was a hero of wars and hunting.
According to traditional belief, all the articles and materials that symbolised several things helps the dead on his way to the "THANPIAL-KAWT" (Celestial gate or Gateway to the deads' abode). The spirits of the animals killed on the burial and Inn-Thiansak will divert the attention of the female-monster; and the flag-like clothes, quills, and the Sawn-San will frighten away the said monster. Their belief further drove them to accomplished an unique customary practice upon the corpus of a minor (particularly unweaned). In the cavity of the finger-tips (i.e. between the flesh and nail), mustard or tobacco seeds are stashed; lamp soot (or cooking-pot soot) is daubed on the cheek or brow; and one egg would be placed beside the corpse. If enslaved by the female-monster to bagged her lices, the child would gnashed the seeds as it were the lices. Then the monster will be impressed much and that she will free the child at once to reached the "MITHI-KHUA" (Home of the deads). The lamp soot on the face signifies two things. In the first place, the black-mark will confused the monster whether the child is a human or a beast, and then she will not coveted the child to be her slave. In the second place, to recognise the child when it "Ki-ZIIL" (reincarnation) or rebirth in a new body. The egg buried with the corpse is deemed to be the most useful device when the child neared the place where the monster resided. Getting closer to the stead of the monster, the child will roll the egg to captivate her eyes and attention. As expected, while the monster is side-tracked as she rushed to grab the rolling egg, the child will fled the place and will reached the abode of the deads safely.

The domain in which the dead lives is surmised to be more pleasant because Khuavang (Nuaizinman) or Lungzai or Nungzai), king of the evil-spirits of the earth, does not reside there. This belief gives one the impression of the abode of the dead as the realm much more blissful than that in which man lives. In this temporal world man struggled all his life to appease the earthly wicked-deities. He lavished his treasures to procure the favours of the evils that whirl around him. But in his next life, in the abode of the dead, there is neither sorrow nor pain. Who died an infant, or a child will
have grown: the maidens and bachelors will have married and lived in this abode with
their children; the insufficient on this earth will be living sufficiently; husbands and
wives who had been departed by death will be reunite, and so on. This traditional
speculation of "MITHIKHUA" (Abode of the Deads) is quite identical with some modern
eschatological description of 'Paradise' or 'Heaven', in the sense that both depicted a
state of eternal rapturous delight after death.

Mithi-Khua is the final destiny of man. Reaching this place, one will lead a
pleasurable life. There will be no more famine, starvation, wars, diseases, or fear of
evil powers like on earth. 'Pathian' will be the only deity in power over them. He will
be their guardian and protector, who provides them all their needs and wants. They will
never be longing anymore for this vile world. There will be no distinction as on earth.
in this "MITHI-KHUA" (Abode of the deads). Yet, it may be noted that the deads who
did not received farewell offerings, i.e. a dog on the occasion of burial, and varieties of
animals and articles on the day of burial and Inn-Thiansak, seems to be enslaved by the
mythological female-monster "TAWMI-NU" for eternity. It was, due to this
eschatological belief that the primitive Vaipheis never failed to accomplished the
traditional customs of funerals, which we had described in detail earlier.

We find clearly from our study that Mithi-khua (Abode of the Deads) seems to
be somewhere high above the earth where the most powerful deity 'Pathian' is said to
resided. It is the final destiny or home of mankind. All the spirits of the deads goes to
this place. Once they reached this celestial palace of Pathian (God of Heaven), the
deads never yearn for this terrestrial domain anymore. But, it seems that the deads are
nostalgic unless they are pacified with solemn rituals to cross the imaginary celestial
mountain called "Lunglen-Tang". Again, it is noteworthy that the people pursuit worldly
things, that is, hunting down eminent wild-beasts such as rhinoceros (Chingpi), elephant
(Sai), tiger (Sakei), etc. and bagging human heads not to gladden or impressed Pathian,
but to be able to get free from the dreadful gigantic monster. Tradition maintains that a person, particularly male, who have a number of skulls of man and beast to his credit is rather feared and revered by the giant monster ‘Tawmi-mu’, who is surmised to resided between ‘Lungleu-Tang’ and ‘Mithi-Khua’. The spirits of the killeds becomes the vanguards on his journey to the next world. Apparently it was their eschatological belief that stirred them to hunt wild animals and human-heads as many as they could, and also to kill a number of animals on their death ceremonies.

Traditional belief further implies that the dead could reborn and live in a new body. As we had hinted already, primitive people firmly believed in reincarnation, which they called it “KI-ZHIL” or “PIANGKIT”. It was instances and experience that have led the primitive Vaiphei to believe that those who died of a violent death, and those who died at a minor age in particular, reborn again in the same family or elsewhere in another community. Tradition further maintains that any reincarnated person usually have the mark which has been smeared (lamp-black) on their dead-face or any other parts of their corpse. Apart from such identification marks, the reincarnated person also used to confessed their first life on earth, the family where they first body belonged, the names of the place where they had lived, how they had died, and so forth. So, in those ancient days, parents would examined the body of a new-born baby with much curiosity to find if it possessed any peculiar mark. Also, they would lend their ears to received any doubtful remarks or tales from their minor issues. Undisputably, tradition maintains that minor children are likely to confess their first life than grown-ups. If such strange behaviour of confessing a first life is uncovered, the parents would at once procured a black-hen without blemish and boil it for the child. It is said that after the child had eaten such boiled hen, it never prattle again a queerly stories about first-life (hinkhua-masa).

According to all this, it is evident that the spirit of man sometimes landed into the womb (or foetus) of another mother to exist on earth again as another living man. This shows that sometimes the spirit of the dead takes shelter in another human body.
than dwelling in "Mithi-Khua". But it may be noted that this traditional doctrine of transmigration of the soul after death seems to contradicted from the Hinduism's 'Karma'. Because Vaiphei traditional belief does not advocated transmigration of the human soul into another beings except into another human body. Palpably, Hinduism also firmly believed in reincarnation like the primitive 'Vaipheism', but it goes a little further to the extend of classifying how and where the souls of the good and bad reincarnated, and thus side-tracked from the Vaiphei's concept of life after death, or reincarnation. It may also be added that to the Vaipheis, reincarnation (Karma) - (Ki-Zill) happened occasionally and not to all the souls of the deads. Furthermore, and to be frank, though the primeval Vaipheis believed and experienced such rebirth, they did not concluded it as the ultimate destiny of the soul like the Hindus. For the Vaipheis, reincarnation seems to be a rare occurrence and it is viewed as phenomenal.

It is now found that the terms 'Karma' of Buddhism and Hinduism, and 'Ki-Zill' of the Vaipheis have the same implications, that is - Transmigration of the soul 'or' reincarnation of the soul. Yet, there is unfathomable antagonism in advocation. Karma (or rebirth) is the ultimate destiny of man for Buddhism and Hinduism, particularly. It is also a doctrine for each of these popular religions but for the traditional religion of the Vaipheis, the term 'Ki-Zill' is not advocated as a doctrine. It is simply viewed as one among the natural phenomenas that manifested rarely. Also, this 'rebirth' is opined to be caused by those souls of the people, who are short-lived on this earth due to sudden death (or violent death), and of those unweaned children. So, now, it is clear enough that reincarnation is not for all the deads, nor their destiny. The final destiny of man is, according to the traditional belief of the Vaipheis, Mithi-Khua (a celestial home for all the spirits of the deads). For the rebirths, also, there is no second-third or more rebirth: when their second life (or rebirth-body) is snuffed out, their spirit goes to 'Mithi-Khua'. This Mithi-Khua is commonly poeticized as "PIAL-GAL' or "VANGAM" literally it meant "Beyond earth" or "Heaven".
Sacrifice and Worship:

Reference have already been made that sacrifices and worship are two essential elements of Vaiphei religious system. Intrinsically having temporal objectives such as the physical well-being of the spirit of man, the material happiness and prosperity of man on earth and longevity of the span of life here and now. Thus sacrifice and worship, which are the religious principals, had no ethical or moral attributes.

Now, it is clear that the Vaiphei religion is based on sacrifice and worship with no moral attribution, but to propitiate or appease the spirits which they believed to have inflicted them with different ailments and calamities. So, sacrifice and worship means to pacify evil-spirits in the form of solemn rites coupled with offerings. Though the primeval religion was dubbed as “DAWI-HOU” which means, in its strict sense, ‘worshipping evil-spirits” but truly they were not worshipping. They were only administering the rites of propitiation (Ki-Thoi) to pacify the evil-spirits by offering things. In other words, the rites of propitiation is also somewhat like a prophylactic measure as the rites are also administered by the advent or near approach of epidemic sickness.

Sacrifice and worship, or in its proper implication ‘the rites of propitiation’ always involves the offering (sacrificing) of animals and things that are regarded as valuable in the sense of wealth and treasure. For example, the graven images (from clay) of man, woman, mithun, dog, goat, musical instruments, tools, utensils, etc., are displayed to appease the spirits of the object or beings they worship. And animals such as mother-pig, piglet, goat, fowl, and dog are generally sacrificed for atonement of the spirits they worship. The offering are usually placed on an altar-like platform made with boughs or canes.
We may now summarize some of the conspicuous rites of propitiation practiced by primitive Vaipheis as under:

(i) *Nuupi-Kitoith*: Here the word ‘Nuupi’ implies sickness such as T.B. (tuberculosis), and Asthma. These chronic diseases are believed to be inflicted by ‘Pu-gau, Pa-gau, or Pusha (or Inn-Dawi)’. Tradition also further maintains that this ‘Nuupi’ rites of propitiation is one of the most remarkable among the rites of warding-off sickness. On such rites, a dog, or a bitch is usually slain. The patient is seated before the priest. Firstly making an abracadabra, the priest would recite “god of water, god of the earth beneath” and followed by recounting the names of renown hills and mountains he would recite this: “Ka Pu Suantakpa, Guite pa, Thomtepa, Thadoupa, Thachangpa gau ka biak in a -savem-a-hen in sut un” [Let the spirit of my progenitor Suantak, and the spirits of Guite, Thomte, Thadou, Thachang, whom I had worshipped unknotted what they had knotted]. Finishing these formal incantations, with an abracadabra the priest cut in one go the throat of the destined dog (or bitch). The streaming blood is again collected on a plate. This fresh and warm blood of the slain dog is mixed with varieties of herbs and is served to the patient.

Patients who are treated under such rites are subjected to abstention (*Zek-Chang*) or prohibition. The patient must shut himself inside the house consecutively for seven days. Strangers, visitors, or guests should not be entertained during the days of abstention. On the day of administering the rite (i.e. the first day), all the villagers are also subjected to *Zek-Chang* in the form of shutting themselves inside their houses. In fact, it is observed as the day of “Um-Mit” or total-rest. Especially, while the ritual wooden-prong is raised beside the gate of the patient’s house, all except the priest and his assistants much confined themselves in their houses. Confinement does not mean only staying inside, but to shut the gate, windows, and doors of each house in the village. Tradition believed that if one looked at, or if any door is opened, their spirit used to stick into the hole made for fixing the wooden-prong resulting in dead or uncurable sickness upon the physical body.
One curious act of the ritual is, blowing of the urinal-bladder of the slain dog (or bitch) into a ball, and thrusting it into the hole along with the wooden-prong. Having raised the wooden-prong, a bird's nest-like called "Vabu-Zial" made from hems and grass is placed betwixt the prongs of the wooden-pole. Bamboo-sticks trussed with sliced plant called 'Suanvawm' or 'Aai' (resembling turmeric) are attached on the Vabu-Zial. On the top of this decorated Vabu-Zial, the skull of the sacrificed animal is placed. This totem-like wooden-post is also removed after the expiry of the seventh-day.

It may be noted here that not only for the aforesaid diseases, but other serious ailments are also occasionally treated with this rite "Nuapi-Kithoih".

(ii) Tha-Kouna: Literally it meant "calling the spirit". This rite of calling the spirit can be classified into two, namely : Tuigaldou-Kithoi-na (calling the spirit on the other bank of a river), and Tualthekna (cleansing the ground).

Tradition believes that whenever Tha goes out of his body the man suffers bodily illness and when it re-enters the body he is well again. The belief goes as such that when one is severely ill after returning home from a journey, his spirit lingered to the place where he has been before and thus necessitated to perform rite of calling home the spirit. Calling back of spirit under such circumstance is commonly or popularly known as "Tuigaldou-Kithoina". Traditional belief goes further that if the Tha is not called back, the man dies ultimately.

Before going further, it may be worthy to mention that in administering "Tha-Kouna", there is no sacrificial articles. In the first type of Tha-Kouna, viz., Tuigaldou-Kithoina, the rite is usually performed at the bank of the nearest river from the village which had been crossed by the patient. A cotton thread is fasten on the other bank of the river, and the other end, of the thread, is fasten on the other bank of the village side.
This thread is placed as a means to support the Tha while it crossed the river towards the village. However, in cases where there is no river to be crossed, or where the patient had not crossed any river, the priest would fill a hollow bottle-gourd with rice-beer for the Tha-Kouna. He (the priest) would take a sip of the rice-beer and spat around the homestead of his patient by incanting this: "Tha hung-tha hung in. Tual hungting-tual hungting suthiang in. Tual thimjing suthiang in. La khaw-hingkhua hun juan in. Sin-ah-khal-ah Suantakpa taikuang chan ah lei vat ah. tual athek bangah ka thek la hi. Zahong tual lei vat ka le-na. Ngampa chem choih ka le-na. Khuduapmu ka le-na. Khuduappa ka le-na. Sanzapnu ka le-na, Sanzappa ka le-na". [Come home spirit, come home and clear out the misty place. Clear out the misty place. Come among the living man. I am cleansing you as much as Suantak cleansed the blood of his victim beside the wooden-bowl in the distant past. Here I rescind the daring bloody-swords of Zahong, Ngampa, Mother-Khuduap, Father-Khuduap, Mother-Sanzap, and Father-Sanzap]. This incantation is used in all types of calling a spirit (Tha-Kouna).

The second type of Tha-Kouna (i.e. Tualthekna) is administered at the place where the corpse of a victim of violent (unnatural) death is found. According to tradition, the Thagau (spirit / soul) which on and by death is separated from the body and is treated in much the same way as when united with and immanent in the body, is believed to remain at or near the place of death or at the place where the wound which caused death was inflicted, for some time after death. As hinted already, if the Thagau of such victim is not pacified in the form of warding it away from the place where he had died, the spirit could render uneasiness or disturbance among the living. In fact, violent death is a phenomenon which touches the communal life very deeply. Apart from all considerations of private grief and ordinary death, an extra-ordinary death puts the nerves of Vaipheis on the stretch. It is feared that the fate would overtake others. Like follows
like, and there is not a Vaiphei: who does not believe that there is a great deal of truth in the saying that the greatest of all misfortunes is always followed by one still greater. As such, Tualtheikna (cleansing the ground) is not negligible so as to free themselves from harmful and fatal consequences. Solemnly the priest would recite the foregone incantation and then would pour and scattered the rice-beer on the spot where the accident took place. After this formality is finished, it is believed that, the spirit has gone away from the place towards Mithi-Khua.

(iii) Gamlian-Thoihna: The word 'Gamlian' has been derived from the sickness called 'Gamvei'. This Gamvei disease seems to be pneumonia, typhoid, and malaria of the present day. This rite of propitiation is also sometimes known as "Natchawm-Kithoina". Such sickness is believed to be inflicted by a powerful evil-spirit that lived in the deepwoods. It is one of the most important or remarkable rite.

This Gam-lian-Thoihna is usually performed at one corner of the compound, far from the site where the house of the patient stood. A mother-pig is slain for this rite. Graven mithun, man, woman etc., are placed on the altar-like cane-platform called "Tiang-yang". These graven articles are usually smeared with the blood of the slain animal. They are included as a symbol of sacrificing the real ones, in exchange with the spirit of the patient who is believed to be captivated by the evil-spirit. Similar to the Nuapi-Kithoith, the patient is subjected to Zek-chang for seven days during which he is also not allowed to meet or entertained anyone except his inmates.

The skull of the butchered swine is placed on the tip of a wooden-pole beside the aforesaid platform. All the articles concerned with the rite are placed at the site mentioned above without altering it for seven days, too.

(iv) Dawise-Thoithna: Dawise is the name given to arthritis, or inflammation of several parts of the bones. Such disease is believed to be inflicted by the spirits of caves. In
this rite, only a fowl is offered. With an abracadabra the priest would slice the throat of the fowl, and he would spill the blood on the place where it was flaming.

The fleshy portions of the fowl is boiled and given to the patient. And, the bones are stashed in a bamboo-can which the priest himself hung up upon the wall of the Inntown (Back rear of the house). The ritual can is discarded, as a rule, when the patient recovered. This rite of propitiation is said to be originated from “KHUL” (Stone-cave) where all the Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi tribes were said to have originated; from a woman by the name “NEMNEK”, who is claimed to be the aunt of Suantak (or Zahong).

(v) Ganchang-Thoihna: This rite is administered for two purposes. It is used for showing reverence to Gulpi (serpent), and also it is used for treating a patient who could not recover from other rites. In ancient days, the serpent is regarded as a water deity, and to be associated with dangerous travail, so that sacrifices are offered to it on behalf of woman in labour too. Tradition believed that the serpent is the most powerful deity that can bless with riches, and can curse man to be physically and mentally abnormal. When they met a serpent on the road, or when they happened to see it in a river, the primitive people never failed to address it with much regard. On such event they would say to the serpent. “Oh, Prince. Do kindly slide out of my sight”. This rite “Ganchung” can be dubbed as the rite of appeasing the serpent; for prosperity, or for curing uncureable ailments by other rites. Indeed, it is the most expensive rites. Three animals without blemish, namely, Dog, swine, and goat are offered to the spirit of a serpent.

As hinted already, this rite is generally administered for acquiring wealth, or health (for personal and cattle); When this rite is performed, a wooden-pole with three prongs is fasten on the outer wall of the downhill side of the house. On the tips of the prongs, the skulls of the sacrificed animals are placed. Also, grass and boughs are attached on the ‘Suul-pi’ of the outer house as a sign of signalling neighbours and visitors that they are forbidden to enter the house.
With an abracadabra the priest usually cut the throat of the goat, and the dog. But the swine is slaughtered in an unique manner. Firstly, it is made lying on the ground, and secondly a pointed bamboo-rod is thrust deep into the body until it reached and pierces the vital organ. Strangely, any animal pierced to death in such manner can never bleed. We can find it out from the incantation the priest recite: “Kagaw tiangcha tawh tidam in dawt ing ka. Lu-dam in dawt ing ka. Thi-leh-man katuak dingleh a tul mukah thi hung pot in”. [I will pierce with much precaution, to make neither pain nor panic. If I am destined to die or be cursed, blood would spurt from the tip of my rod].

On the occasion of administering this rite, the priest usually drawls this:

“Khawpi Ten ah hung kuan chin-Tanpi zawl ah. Chongtui zawl ah hung chu chin. Chongtuipi hun sa chin. Sumtuipi hun sa chin. Hinna ei sha-teh. Damna ei sha-teh. Ka-pu siam ngai. Ka-pa siam ngai. Chanu ei sha-Chapa ei sha. Sum-lam ah ei sha-teh. Sa-mang kap-pa ei sha-teh. Ga-i-mang kap-pa ei sha-teh. lam-sung niang ah ei sha-teh. Lou-Gam niang ah ei sha-teh. Nang jia chengah lei shak ahi leh, keima ‘n ka vawk-non tam-in hun shang kah”. [You came from the plains of Tan, and then settled at the plains of Chong. You enriched Chong, and Sum-village. So, give me life. Give me health. You had blessed and enriched my ancestors. Give me sons and daughters. Make me affluent. Augment my mithuns. Make me as an excellent hunter. Make me to be a victorious warrior. Make my home prosperous. Make my field to be productive. If you give me all these; I will repay you with a number of my piglets]. Here, water is used to symbolised a place (i.e. village, town, or city). Literally “’Tui” means water. In the poetic form village (or town, or city) is referred to as ’Tui”. Probably, ’Tui could have been an expression of an ordinary village, and ’Tuipi could have been a large village, or a town, or a city. Because the word ’PF is usually used to refer any object which is tremendously bigger or larger than its usual size, or its counterparts.
This rite is said to be first initiated by one of the ‘DULIAN’ clan member. According to the oral history, this Dulian member was bedridden nearly for a year. All the rites of the Vaipheis has no effect upon his ailment. Then, one of his servant (a Burmese) advised him to make ‘ganchang (a number of animal)’ sacrifice to a serpent (Gulpi). Having no other alternative, he at once responded to the advice. To his astonishment and belief, he recovered instantaneously. So, from that time onwards all the Vaipheis began to worshipped the spirit of serpents with ganchang to obtain health and wealth. Thus another form of rites of propitiation called “Ganchang-Thoihna” sprouted from the said incident: and became one of the most expensive and popular rite.

(vi) Kang-Guiaam/Uithiang-Thoihna: This term simply meant- ‘the rite of Kang-gui (fibre made of an endosperm species)’ or ‘the rite of sacrificing a dog (a bitch)’. Sometimes it is also known as ‘Bum-le Kithoi-na’ which meant ‘rite of rescissioning evil-spells (witchcraft)’. This rite of propitiation is used for two purposes as indicated above. It is used for warding-off evil-spirit as well as to entrap someone under evil-spell. The abracadabras and incantations are similar to that of “Nuupi-Kithoih” as well as the animal being sacrificed on the altar.

When a person is suspicious, or sceptical that his body is entrapped by the spirit of others or witchcraft, such rite is administered to ward-off the enchanting-spirit or any other devilic-spirit from the body. In short, it is the rite of purifying the body from any evil stains. And also, on the other hand, it is used to entrapped others (or kill others) through the power of the spirit being worshipped.

The procedure of this rite goes like this. Firstly, the blood of the sacrificed animal (a dog or a bitch) is served to the patient. Then again, the same is smeared on all the limbs, and on the forehead of the patient. Secondly, a palisade of forked carefully peeled wooden-post are erected around the homestead. Thirdly, wires made out of
'Kang' barks are fasten on the forked posts. Fourthly, the Kang fibres are rolled into a small ball, and are suspended on the wires that had been attached to the forked-posts. Similar to the Nuapi-Kithoih, the patient is subjected to seven days Zek (abstention). This means, the patient is forbidden to keep in touch with outsiders until the expiry of the stipulated days. This procedure is applied as the purification rite, or for rescinding evil-power that demented or enchanted a person. However, for entrapping others under the spell of black-magic, or say to demented, to enchant, or to kill; another more procedure is added besides the procedure mentioned above. The foot-print on the ground (dust foot-print), which was taken already before performing this ritual, is stored inside a Theikhuang (bamboo-tube). This bamboo-tube is again filled and sealed with sliced 'Ai-suamvawm' (uneatable ginger family), with an abracadabra and, by reciting their main objective or scheme. Then it is put inside a clay-pot or under the bed, of the person who had hired the priest for the purpose, for a day or a night. Promptly from the next day, the person whose foot-print they had spluttered upon became void of sanity, or wealth, or health, or even life etc. depending on what was spelled. Now it is evident that this magical rite has no remedial importance in the lives of the primitive Vaipheis. Its main purpose is not curing of diseases but to expell or infuse black-magic. To purify one's body from sorcerical power, or to stain others with the power of sorcery. We can safely taxed this rite as having two face. The faces can be dubbed as "consecration ceremony" and "ceremony of sorcery".

(12) Um-Mit :

As we have hinted already, it is simply a kind of holiday or total-rest observed by an individual or by the whole village. Um-Mit has two meanings. In its first loose meaning it refers to a sort of holiday on which no work may be done by the people of the entire village. But the people are not subjected to 'Zek-leh-Buak' in this kind of Um-Mit. Its observation simply depends on the conscience of each individual. Such um-mit
are observed mostly on account of merry-festivals, but they may also be due to any unusual occurrence or a natural calamity. The second and stricter meaning of the term is associated rigidly with 'Zek-leh-Buak'. Um-Mits coupled with drastic restrictions are concerned either individuals or groups or the whole village. It may be worth to note that at all these Um-Mits the ordinary routine of life is profoundly modified if not broken off altogether.

The first type of Um-Mits are occasioned usually by events such as the birth of children, the birth of domesticated animals in the house, naming of children and finally the death of domesticated animals in the house. These actions affect all those who are normally inmates of the house. Their durations varies as it depends on each individual conscience and discretion. Such Um-Mits are also caused by the action of individual members of the village, as for instance, by those who propose to erect a memorial stone, or by those who proposed a marriage ceremony. Automatically natural calamities such as ordinary or violent death, burning of house, eclipse and earthquakes also compelled the whole villagers to observed Um-Mit, though they are not directly subjected to 'Zek-leh-Buak'. Apart from all these, Um-Mit of the first type are generally caused by Chawn (festivals), too.

The second and stricter type of Um-Mit are generally concerned with healing rites. For instance, a person who underwent a remedial ceremony is subjected to total rest and total confinement in the house with many forms of Zek-leh-Buak. Such rites even some time binds the entire village. We have seen in the case of Nuupi-Kithoith that all are confined in their house while fixing the wooden-prong. We have also learnt already that the entire village was subjected to Zek-leh-Buak on the occasion of Khaw- Bawl and Khawpi-Aikam (refer Chapter V and VII). Thus observation of prophylactic measures binds all the individuals of a village to abide several Zek-leh-Buak along with the Um-Mits. Another interesting instance in respect of this stricter type of
mit is the restriction imposed upon the females of a village before and after the burial of an infant. All the weaker sex who had not yet attained menopause in particular are forbidden to go beyond the realm of the village. Because it is believed and feared that the infant might reincarnate from the one who bumped upon the morning dews, especially on the day after the burial of the deceased baby. According to traditional belief, the Thagau (spirit + soul) of the deceased baby usually transformed into dews particularly on the morrow of the burial. As such, on the second-day after the burial, the weaker sex are liberated to go to their fields under the supervision of a barren or manopaused woman. Any one who breached this custom naturally becomes Buak (unclean), and necessitated to undergo a purificational rite.

It may be noted again that though there is no stringent Zek-leh-Buak for the Chowns (festivals), any adult who did not participated in any of these events are liable to be inflicted with a fine of one pot full of rice-beer.

Structure of a GRAVE and How a CORPSE is sorted:

A ‘KHUL’ (trench) is first made, and at right angle to this a KAW-TOU’ (burial chamber) is excavated into which the dead is inserted. Kaw-Tou is shaped like a vault and it is the most important part of a grave. The digging continued until it exceeded the length of the dead. It is dug with the head of an axe which is fastened at one tip of a bamboo pole. One could crawl inside this ‘Kaw-Tou’ in a genuflect or crouching position. Literally, ‘Kaw-Tou’ means ‘Upper-hole’. Customarily, it is burrowed on the western wall of the ‘Khul’ so that its mouth face the east and thus the head of the dead. Except its roof, slabs of stones are placed over the walls and the mouth is filled and closed with ‘Khul-Si’ (a considerable size of flat stone).

Regarding ‘THII-LUANG’ (corpse of the dead), it is shrouded, and then strapped with ropes of braided ‘KHAUCHANG’ fibres at three points against a plank. Generally, this procedure is carried out after all the ‘death ceremonies’ are performed. According
to custom, the corpse is inserted inside the Kaw-Tou from its foot so that the head
certainly point the east, or, the mouth of the Kaw-Tou. Again, it may be worthy to note
that, according to Vaiphei concept, a "THAN" (grave) comprised the surface (i.e. over
or above the ground) of the Khul plus, the Kaw-Tou. From time beyond memory, this
custom of burial was followed till the end of the first quarter of the 20th century A.D.

SKETCHING VIII : 1 GEOMETRICAL SKETCHING OF A GRAVE

Note: It is most likely that this tiresome yet unique custom of digging a 'Kaw-Tou' was prac­
tised only after they inhabited the rugged and sleepy Chin Hills. And simply because the
topography compelled them to invent such structure to prevent the graves from expositions by
violent evulsions.
Recapitulating the religious side of their world, one may simply be itching blindly to dub the Vaiphei primal religion as “nasty, hollow, and brutish”. In fact, there are rites which can only be explained as intended to propitiate some personality capable of being influenced by gifts of good cheer and strong drink. There are rites which do not admit of this explanation, and which seem to be inspired by a “blind dread of the invisible and unknown, of which they could give no reasonable account to themselves or to others”. Hence, though there are dealings with agencies conceived as personal, there is always present the consciousness of power, mysterious, immanent in the world around them, and manifested by dangerous activity. But such mysterious ways of their belief must make one to realise how much deeper was their religious philosophy than the fashionable religions of the present century. Their humble and crude rites were the main factors of integrity, that encompassed them in every walk of life. We also found from our study that they make the most of every notable event, dwelling on the memories of the past and enhancing the value of the future by anticipation. The break in the routine of their lives, when it does come, produces an atmosphere of nervous exaltation. The slow progress and the extreme scrupulosity of their attention to the minute details of the periodical ceremonies, festivals, and Umi Mit are accompanied by, perhaps directly produce, a nervous tension often amounting to a state of frenzied excitement. The sudden swift occurrences of some terrible calamity in their midst sets them into a fever of fear and emotion, to be relieved on the principle of “similia similibus curantur”, only by a solemn rite. As a matter of fact, one cannot simply conclude that the primal religion was based on mere superstitious belief. If it were mere belief, how could they have the conception of creation, spirits, Ki-ziil(Karma), and Mithi-Khua which are still prevalent in most of the religious belief of the 21st century. We can not blindly eschew the primal religion as obsolete, or as a thing of yesterdays. There lies in it uncountable ‘latent philosophy’ which shall take many years to come to dig them up.
Footnotes:

1. SingKhawKhai
2. Suantak. Paoneikhai
3. Baite. Samuel
4. Suantak. Paoneikhai
5. Singkhwakhai
8. Singkhwakhai
9. Hudson, T.C.
11. Ibid - 18
12. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Suantak. Paoneikhai
16. Singkhwakhai
17. Ibid : 127
18. Ibid : 187
20. Hudson. T.C.

: Zo people and their culture, p-158
: Custom and Culture of Baite tribe, Moreh. 2003, (unpublised), p-5
: op. cit., p-128
: op. cit., p-6
: Ibid.
: op. cit., p-5
: op.cit., p-131
: Ibid : 127
: Ibid : 187
: British Burma, 1878, p-271
: op. cit., p-125