CHAPTER – II

TRADITIONAL SOCIO – CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS
In this chapter, a study will be made on every aspect of the social and cultural institutions of the pre-British Mizo society. A study of the period will help us to understand better the changes that had occurred in Mizoram after the coming of the Christian missionaries after the British occupation of the Hills.

A. Social Structure:

(1) Family:

Family, perhaps, being the oldest institution in human history has always occupied an important and prominent placed in the history of the Mizos. It is constituted through the institution of marriage. Polygamy is said to have existed among the Mizos but in the long run, such a practice was confined to the chiefs only. It gradually ceased to exist among the common class people and thus monogamy came to be practiced among them.¹

The Mizo society was purely patriarchal one in which the father exercised all powers in the family. The mother had no say in the family unit. On the death of the father, the power devolved not to the mother but usually to an appropriate person, who like the father exercised the same nature of power. Everything in the family belonged to the father, the mother had no share. Even the right to inheritance was reserved for paternal descent. The lineage was also traced through the line of a male descendant.²

The position of the women folk in the family was so low that they lived in what anthropologists commonly called patrilocal extended families.³

² J V. Hluna: Education and Missionaries in Mizoram, Krishna Kumar Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, Assam, 1992, p. 10
³ C.L. Hminga: The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram, The Literature Committee, Baptist Church of Mizoram, Lunglei, 1987, p. 27
The Mizo family usually comprised of good number of family members including grand parents, parents, children and grand children which were some what like a joint family system. But there was no such established social order that the pattern of family should necessarily be a joint family pattern. There was also a practice among them that whoever entered into marital stage will live in a separate house after 2 or 3 years after their marriage. Even if they lived like a joint family, when there was too many family members, it was up to the father to allow his sons to live in a separate house.

The family unit of the Mizos was a haven of peace and calm. Meat times were the opportune moments when all the family members meet each other and the head of the family normally gave instructions of the family members what they should do and what should not do. Thus, meat time was an important occasion for the Mizos where manner and etiquette were imparted by the head of the family.

Among the early Mizos, a wife never called her husband by name. When occasion demanded, she addressed him without named before they had a child. After a child was born, she addresses her husband as the father of the child. Their relationship in the society was never mutual companionship but avoidance even to talk to each other in public except in a dispassionate way. However, this did not seem to reduce the mutual bond and love created by marriage.

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In the Mizo society, as time passed by, the authority of a wife began to be raised in the family circle because of managing the household affairs besides doing her duty of caring for children while her husband was away in search of food or hunting.

In the traditional Mizo society, if there were no male offspring in the family, the nearest male relative among the male line only would inherit the property after the death of the father. All powers in the family would be exercised by the same person.

(2) **Position of Men:**

The Mizo society was a patrilineal society. As such, the rule of descent is strictly based on the male line only. All property belonged to males and they alone could inherit. In the absence of a male inheritor, females of the same family might be allowed to inherit property under special circumstance. The males were solely responsible for the family affairs and collected all the necessary material for construction of house from the jungle. They were also solely responsible for clearing the jungles for the jhum and to acquire the required jhuming tools. Other hard works like hunting, fishing and the like are all done by men. In their spare time, married and old men used to stay at Zawlbuk and bachelors were engaged in courting girls and sometimes they also accompanied to the jungles to collect firewood. The bachelors' slept together in the Zawlbuk and were ever ready to meet any emergency.

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11 Dr. Sangkima: *Op. Cit.* p. 30
(3) **Position Of Women:**

In the early Mizo Society, the position of women was very low. She had to look after all the household affairs but her status was insignificant. She had no right either in the family or in the society. There was a dominant role of men folk over the women folk in the family and the society.\(^{12}\) As such, her place in the family and the society was full of miseries.

From her childhood, the position of a girl is quite different from that of a boy. What is considered to be the job of a girl would not be touched even in a jest by a boy.\(^{13}\) As soon as she was capable of helping her mother, she would help her mother in all domestic works. It was the duty of a women to get up early in the morning and get everything ready before sunrise like filling up of bamboo container with water and husking of rice by pounding. It is no surprise to learn that a husband sitting near the fire and seeing the pot boil over would call in the wife to look after the cooking even while she was busy pounding rice outside.\(^{14}\)

During daytime, along with men, they went to the field and spent their time in working in the field with men. There also, she had to cook, collect firewood, vegetables and the alike to take home for the family. She also looked after domesticated animals and birds like pigs and fowls.\(^{15}\) As such, her presence in the family was indispensable.

At night, she had to entertain Inleng (suitors), if she was a young unmarried girls of marriageable age. She also had to spin the cotton for cloth for the whole family and

\(^{13}\) *Mizo Women Today*, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, 1991. p. 1  
\(^{14}\) Dr. Sangkima: *Op. Cit.* p. 30  
\(^{15}\) Lalrimawia: *Op. Cit.* p. 17
such women who are good in spinning the cotton are like by man for their wife. She might not go to bed till the men folk retired. She would cook the pig’s food for the next day and also could not go out without the permission of her men folk. She hardly found leisure time.

There are many Mizo phrases and idioms indicating the low status of women in the traditional Mizo society.

(a) Hmeichhe fin in tuikhu ral a kai lo, meaning women’s wit does not go beyond the water point.
(b) Hmeichhia leh palchhia chu thlak theih anni, meaning wife and old fence can be changed.
(c) Hmeichhia leh chakai in Sakhua an nei lo, meaning women and crabs have no religion.
(d) Chakai sa, sa ni suh, hmeichhe thu thu ni suh, Meaning, just as crab’s meat is not counted as meat, so also women’s word is not regarded as word.
(e) Hmeichhia leh uipui chu lo rum lung awi mai mai rawh se; meaning, Let a women and a dog bark, it please them.

From the above phrases, we learnt that in the traditional Mizo society, men folk looked down upon the women and had a low opinion of them. She could be divorce or driven out of the house by her husband empty handed at anytime. The prevailing custom and usages also did not allow the women to make any claim on property.

16 Selethanga: Op. Cit. p. 21
18 Lalrimawia: Op. Cit. p. 18
Thus, the position of the early Mizo women was very unsatisfactory. We can agree with E. Chapman and M. Clark comments on the treatment of the Mizo women in the early Mizo society which run as follows. "A woman had no right at all. Body, mind and spirit she belonged from her birth to her death, to her father and her husband. Her men folk could treat her as they liked and a man who did not beat his wife was scorned by his friends as a coward. A woman possessed nothing not even the few clothes she ware.... A woman began her day's work before down and continued it unceasingly until into the night."19

Though the status of women in the traditional Mizo society was very low, they played a vital role in the family circle. She along with men works in the field and did all the domestic works. In the community life of the society, they also participated in the various festivals like Min Kut, Chapchar Kut, and Pawl Kut, They also collected firewood and drew water for the family. Her presence in the family was in no way inferior to that of a man. Chatterji claims that the status of women in the Mizo society was in no way inferior to that of a man and she suffered none of those derogatory and discriminatory treatment meted out to women in some more advanced society.20

(4) Inheritance:

The Mizo word for inheritance is Rokhawm. In the Mizo society, the son alone had a right to inherit his father's property. A daughter has no share in it.21 If there is only one son in a family; he used to inherit the entire property of his father. But if there are more than one son, the youngest son or the Fatlum is the formal heir of the father's

property. The youngest son is treated as the legitimate heir because he will look after his parents in their old age and lives permanently with them. All his elder brother will settled independently in separate houses after marriage and will not be in a position to look after their parents. In the event of the death of the youngest son, the right of inheritance of the father would come to the next youngest son and so on. Very often, a father divided his property among his sons before he died and that was usually accepted by his sons. The youngest son as the formal heir gets the first choice of the articles he wants out of the estate of his father. If there is cash, the youngest son would get two shares to one share of each of his brothers. But if he (youngest son) failed in his duty, he can not claim the privileges of the youngest son when the father’s property is divided up.

The law of inheritance among the Lushei chief and the Paite clans was quite different. Among them, the eldest son inherited the father’s property including the ancestral home. If a man has no legitimate son to inherit his property, Hmeifa or son by a concubine can inherit. If he has no Hmeifa, sawn or illegitimate son can claim to inherit his father’s property. Again if he has none of the above, a nearest male relative among the male line only would inherit the property. Thus, in the Mizo society, inheritance was only through the male line and the chances of inheritance for daughter or widow was bleak and it rarely happened it.

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22 C.L. Hminga: *Op. Cit. p. 31*
25 N.E. Parry: *A Monograph on Lushei Customs and Ceremonies, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, Reprint, 1988. p. 83*
B. Institution of Marriage And Divorce:

1 Marriage:

Marriage among the early Mizos was a civil contract and was normally arranged by the parents. The parents exercised utmost care and solemnity in the selection of a life partner for their children. They did not look only at the outward character and accomplishments for the life partner of their children. They carefully enquire into his or her lineage, the reputation of the parents, grand parents and even the earlier ancestors.26 Many characteristics such as insanity, epilepsy, talkativeness, thieving, drunkenness or laziness are considered hereditable and the children of such persons have a lower value in the marriage market. Usually, the Tlangvals or young men like to marry only those whom they have not had any part in pre-marital sex.

1 Courting or Nula-Rim:

Nula-Rim is a Mizo word for courting. It is a common practice among the Mizo boys. Usually, a young man who is courting a girl goes off to the girl's house at night and they sit down and talk which in the long run developed into matrimonial relationship. If the man felt like seeking the girl in marriage, he will mostly suggest that they should in the future help each other in their work. If the girl agrees, they came to a definite understanding and the man will escort the girl while bringing fire wood or water for her parents' family. During, this time, the girl had the opportunity to judge her suitor whether her suitor is likely to make her a good husband or not and if she thinks that he is likely to be a satisfactory husband, she yields to his advances which might even take the form of premarital sexual relationship.27 Once this happened, the young

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26 Dr. Sangkima: Op. Cit. p.27
man will visit the girl in her house every night after her parents have gone to sleep and
the girl will keep the door open for him and sit up and wait for him, while the boy will
come and slip into her bed without the knowledge of the parents. If the girls’ parents get
wind of what is going on, however, they will wait up one night and catch the man as
soon as he gets on to the Khumpui28 and will claim Khumpui Kaiman. The man will
either have to pay Khumpui Kaiman or else marry the girl.29

Since Nula-Rim became so much a part of their life and custom, the young man
should take proper precaution and suitable restraints to enable himself to take a stand
against any possible unfair attack. For this, he would take a young boy from the
ZawlbuK who is known as Puar Ak while courting his loved one. The main duty of the
Puar Ak was to act as a witness to the whole issue of the intimacy between the lovers in
case of occurrence of any dispute or misunderstanding between parents or lovers
themselves.30 In the absence of Puar Ak to act as a witness to the whole issue of the
lover’s intimacy, the young man was liable to payment of a fine of Rs.40/- to the girl for
defaming her. However, in spite of the freedom in regard to premarital sexual relation, a
girl who is still a virgin when she gets married is more highly esteemed and was more
sought after than the others.31 A virgin woman is known as Tawnsabawp.32

Courtng was also practiced by the young married man known as Pathlawi. The
girls often preferred these young married men to the unmarried men because of the
more mature ways of practicing the art of love and greater experience by the former.
The girl’s parents were also less suspicious of their daughter’s mixing with the young

28 Khumpui= Main Bed or Family’s Bed
married men as they think that the Pathlawi were visiting them and not their daughter. On the other hand, the unmarried girls found it possible to make their relationship more close to the married man on account of their parents’ attitude to the married men to be more free with them without, being shy. However, a married young man had to be very cautious against being ensnared into a position of paying heavy fines on his inability to marry a girl who allowed his advances on such assumptions.33

(2) **Khawnthiang:**

In the selection of a bride, the early Mizo society did not confined itself to one’s own village. In fact, the search for a bride from other villages is considered to be a sign of wealth, power or something above the ordinary34 and most of the young man wanted to search in other villages. If a young man court/search a girl from other village and at the same time, the girls parents knew that the man wanted to marry their daughter, the girls father can make it Khawnthiang for his daughter and her suitor. It is a kind of formal engagement between them and after performing it, the boy must marry the girl. It cannot be done if both the boy and girl were from the same village. Therefore, those who can do Khawnthiang were very proud of themselves.

(3) **Zawl Puan Phah:**

It is just like an engagement when a marriage cannot be solemnized for some unavoidable circumstances. It is done with the knowledge of the girls’ mother.35 For this purpose, the girl’s mother will spread on the floor of the house in a separate place from the usual sleeping place, a shawl where the boy and the girl were allowed to make

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34 Lhabiakhang: *Op. Cit. p. 18*
love usually during day time. After this, they were to marry at the earliest convenience. However, if the boy refuses to marry the girl for any reason after this Zawl Puan Phah, he is liable to a fine of one Mithun.  

There can be no excuse for this.

In searching a bride for the son of a chief, the hand of a girl from another village, preferably the daughter of a chief is sought. The son of a chief will go to another village to look for a girl. The girl then will hang a cloth round the bed and only with a skirt, she will go to the bed. There, they will look at each other whether there were some marks or any disfigureness in each other. If they agree to marry, the male side will send Palai who will fixed the marriage date and all the marriage price. After this, both sides will make preparation for the marriage ceremony.

(4) Preparation For The Marriage:

In the early Mizo society, the form of marriage was ‘marriage by purchase’. As marriage was by purchase, if a man wanted to get married, he would send two mediators called Palai to the girl’s parents to know the willingness of the girl and to consider a reasonable marriage price which the boys’ family were prepared to pay. The girl’s parents then will ask their daughter whether she is ready to accept her suitor or not and if the girl is ready to accept the proposal, the parents will inform the Palai and from that time onward, they are considered to be betrothed. The wedding date depended on the agreement between the parents of the boy and the girl. It should, however be mentioned in this context that though in the early Mizo society, boys and girls enjoyed ample liberty in selecting their mate for marriage, but sometimes, the

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37 Lalthangha: *Op. Cit. p. 18*
38 C.L. Hminga: *Op. Cit. pp. 30-31*
parents, specially the girl’s parents would interfere in the matter and select a groom for their daughter according to their choice. Thus, the institution of marriage in the early Mizo society made room for couple’s own selection and also the selection by parents. Of course, the more prevalent practice, rather the usual practice was couple’s own selection. However, either of the party can breach off the engagement if they wishes between the date of betrothal and the marriage date without incurring any penalty. The Palai would cite the poverty of the groom whereas the bride’s parents demanded the highest Sum. Ultimately a settlement was reached at and the date of the marriage was fixed.

It is obligatory for a bride to provide herself with some of the property before marriage and take with her on the day of marriage. These includes (i) Pawnpui, a kind of rug used by the Mizos as a blanket, (ii) Thul, a kind of basket made of bamboo for keeping valuables by the Mizos and (iii) Zawlken puan dum, a special kind of black cloth for wrapping the dead body of her husband in the even of his death. If the girl did not have any one of the three, she will try to have it before the marriage ceremony. It is considered extremely disgraceful on the part of the girl if she cannot go to her husband’s house without such possessions. However, she can prepare them in her husband’s house but if she makes them in her husband’s house after marriage or her husband buy a Puanpui and Thul, her marriage price is reduced to a Tlai or Rs.20/-.  

(5) **Marriage Price:**

As marriage among the early Mizos was marriage by purchase, the price was also originally varied from clans to clans, the highest being the price for girls of Sailo.

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40 Dr. Sangkima: *Op. Cit.* p. 28
chiefs. However, it also depended on the mutual agreement of both the parties whether price is required to be paid or not.\textsuperscript{42} Usually marriage price was calculated in terms of Mithuns. The price which the Sailo’s had determined in terms of Sial (Mithun), which was of three kinds are (1) Sepui Ngal kal (grown up Mithun) (2) Tlai Sial (young Mithun) and (3) Pui sawm sial (a newly born Mithun).\textsuperscript{43}

In the early period, the settlement of bride price was crucial because even though prices were determined in terms of Sial, they were usually paid in certain goods or articles which are considered equivalent to Sial which sometimes prevented the marriage. However, sometimes, they were very lenient and could even accept a very simple thing as equivalent to Sial. For instance, long time ago, when Lianchhiari of Chuauhang clan was about to marry a commoner, Chawngfianga, a Hnamte clan, her father, a chief knowing the pecuniary position of Chawngfianga understandably agreed that he should accept a broken axe as an equivalent of Tlai Sial.\textsuperscript{44}

A marriage price of the Mizos consists of two parts (i) Manpui (Main price) (ii) Mantang (Subsidiary price)

The Manpui is paid to the bride’s father or in his absence to the bride’s brother.

In case, if she have neither of the two, the main marriage price will go to the one who was responsible for her upbringing, may be her nearest male relative or even her mother provided that they were responsible for her upbringing after her father’s death. In case, she was a child born outside conventional wedlock and was not recognised by her

\textsuperscript{42} Customary Law, (Mizo Dan, 1956, as Amended in 1960), M.C. Awia, Aizawl, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition, 1992. p. 8
\textsuperscript{43} Vanchhunga: \textit{Lusei leh A Vela Hnam Dangte Chanchin}, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, 1994. p. 220
\textsuperscript{44} Dr. Sangkima: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 26
father, the marriage price used to be paid to the mother.\textsuperscript{45} The Manpui should be Rs.100/- at the maximum and the amount of a bride with Thuam/dowry was increased by Rs.20/-.\textsuperscript{46}

Besides the Manpui, the Mantang or subsidiary prices which was distributed amongst different persons consists of the following:

(i) **Sumhmahrhai:** It consists of Rs.20/- payable to the bride’s father or brother. It means principal of the bride price. It was given by those who could not give the Manpui, instead gave a Tlai Sial (Rs.20/-) which was counted as Manpui.\textsuperscript{47}

(ii) **Sumfeng:** It is Rs.8/- and was payable to the bride’s father or brother.

(iii) **Pu Sum:** The perquisite of the nearest male relative on the mother’s side or of a person specially chosen as the bride’s ‘Pu’ or protector. It varies between Rs.4/- and Rs.10/- but in the case of a chief’s daughter it is a Mithun.\textsuperscript{48}

(iv) **Pa Lal:** Palal is a person or man whom the bride may select as an adopted father. In return, the Palal is expected to look after her interest throughout her whole married life. It is much needed when a girl married a man of other village. It appears to have been a measure of additional security in her future difficulties. He was given Rs.5/-.\textsuperscript{49}

(v) **Ni-Ar:** It is Rs.2/- payable to the bride’s paternal aunt. If there are several aunts, the eldest takes the Ni-Ar of the eldest niece and the second aunt that of the second niece and so on. It is possible for a niece to refuse to allow her aunt to

\textsuperscript{45} N. Chatterji: *Status of Women, Op. Cit.* p. 9
\textsuperscript{46} Customary Law, Op. Cit. p. 8
\textsuperscript{47} K. Zawla: *Op. Cit.* p. 91
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46 Customary Law, Op. Cit. p. 8
48 J. Shakespear: *The Lushei Kuki Clans*, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, reprint, 1988, p. 51
take the Ni-Ar and to select another person of her own family.\textsuperscript{49} If the girl did not have aunt, it was given to her nearest relative who could take the place of aunt.\textsuperscript{50}

(vi) **Nau Puak Puan:** It is paid to the bride’s elder sister for having carried the bride about in her cloth while she was a baby. Each sister receives this from the husband of her next younger sister. Among Sailo it varies from Rs.20/- to Rs.40/-; in other families, it is only Rs.3/- or Rs.4/- . In the case of the eldest sister, it is taken by some near female relative.\textsuperscript{51} If the bride was the lone lady, it was given to some other person who was suitable to take it.

(vii) **Thian Man:** The ‘thian’ or friend is a female Palal, but she only receives a small sum from Rs.10/- downwards.\textsuperscript{52}

All the marriage prices are never paid out at once. It was a custom in the Mizo society to allow it to remain unpaid for many years. However, as a rule, a certain amount of the Manpui was paid before the marriage which is called ‘Sum Hma Hruai’ meaning price before taking.

Besides, the above commonly practiced form of marriage, there were other forms of marriage, namely widow remarriage and marriage without the consent of the parents which were practiced in the early Mizo society. In these types of marriages, the marriage price may be increase or reduced. Some of these types of marriage are:

(i) **Fan:** If a man live with a girl in her house without the consent of the parents, as her husband, such kind of marriage is called Fan. It is considered very

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid
\textsuperscript{50} Seletthanga: *Op. Cit.* p. 42
\textsuperscript{51} J. Shakespear: *Op. Cit.* p. 51
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid
disgraceful for a man to be fan and as compensation to him for the disgrace incurred, the marriage price was reduced by a Tlai.

(ii) **Luhkhung:** It is a kind of marriage in which a girl would voluntarily go an live in the man’s house as his wife before they have got married according to custom. It is considered disgraceful for the girl and as a compensation to her for the disgrace incurred, her marriage price was increased by a Tlai or Rs.20/-.

(iii) **Tlandun:** It means an elopement. It is a kind of marriage in which both the boy and girl run away to another village and get married without the consent of their parents. This kind of marriage is considered very disgraceful for the girl and as compensation, when the marriage is regularized the girl’s price is increased by Rs.20/-.

(iv) **Charsut Phawi:** If the younger sister married before the marriage of her elder sister, such kind of marriage was called Charsut Phawi. Such kind of marriage is considered very disgraceful for the elder sister and as a compensation, the groom had to pay a Tlai or Rs.20/- in addition to the usual marriage price.

(v) **Sa Zu Meidawh:** It is a form of marriage without marriage price. Marriage with a widow’s daughter was generally called Sa Zu Meidawh. The Palai had no role-play in such kind of marriage. Both the party came to an agreement and would solemnize the marriage.

(vi) **Widow Remarriage:** In the early Mizo society too, widow remarriage was practiced. However, if a widow remarried again after the death of her former husband, her marriage price was only Rs.20/-.  

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55 *Ibid*
Thus, in the early Mizo society, there were forms of marriage, some of them gave the couple honour and respect in the society whereas some forms of marriage were considered very disgraceful and were looked down upon in the society.

(6) **Sebomawh:**

It is a very difficult word to translate into English. It simple means the payment of earnest money by a man to do a certain thing he is contracting to do. There are different kinds of Sebomawh:

(i) The first kind of Sebomawh is Luhkhung in which the girl voluntarily goes and lives in the man’s house as his wife before they have got married according to custom. This is considered disgraceful for the girl and as a result the price is increased by a Tlai or Rs.20/- which was not counted as her price and could not be returned back to her husband incase they divorced on ground of Sumchhuah. As it was equivalent to Tlai Sial or Rs.20/-, it is called Sebomawh.\(^{56}\)

(ii) The second kind is Sawn Pai. If a girl got pregnant before marriage it is called Sawn Pai and in such case, the man responsible for it must pay a sum of Rs.40/- for the child born out of wedlock. Even if they married after the Sawnman was paid, Rs.20/- out of the Sawn man should be counted as Sebomawh for disgracing the girl and even if they divorced on ground of Sumchhuah it will not be return back.

(iii) Another kind of Sebomawh is Charsut phawi man. It is a kind of marriage in which the younger sister is married off by her elder sister. It is disgraceful for the elder sister and as such, the groom had to pay Tlai or Rs.20/- extra apart from the marriage price which is not included in the marriage price. This cannot be claimed by the groom if they divorce on ground of Sumchhuah.

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\(^{56}\) K. Zawla: *Op. Cit.* p. 93
(7) **Marriage Ceremony:**

After the Palai had discussed the marriage price, the marriage date was fixed. After this, both the parties prepared Zu for the marriage feast. On the wedding day fixed, the groom would send two of his representatives known as Palai to the bride's parents to pay the agreed amount of the marriage price. On this day, the Khawchhiair (village writer) will record the fact of the marriage, the total amount of the marriage price, the amount paid on the marriage day and the amount still due in the presence of two witnesses and a copy must be given to each party for their future reference. The two Palai were always sought to give evidence in case of any dispute about the marriage price in future. It was very often that the total amount of the marriage price could not be paid in one installment on the wedding day and hence the balance amount used to be paid in easy installments, sometimes covering a very long period of time.\(^{57}\)

The marriage day is known as 'In Sawi Ni'.\(^{58}\) On this day, some controversies arise almost invariably on account of the marriage price. In his earnestness to be a successful negotiator, a go-between may undertake commitment regarding the payment of the price of the bride beyond the resources of the groom. Quite often also, the dispute may arise if the groom's family had a pregnant she-Mithu to offer as the price. The owner would try to delay till the she-Mithun calves, while the bride's father would like to take possession before that but these controversies can be easily solved and the Palai will give the marriage price which they can bring. The grand-father of the bride will count the money and will distribute among all those to whom it was to be given. After this it was for the bride's father to kill an animal, a

\(^{57}\) N. Chatterji: *Status of Women*, Op. Cit. p. 8
Mithun, a cow or a pig for the feast, which was divided into two halves and the head was given to the groom's side. Feasts are given in both the houses where relatives and friends are fed. If the meat of the animal killed by the bride's family fall short, the groom's family has to help with another animal to meet the shortage.\textsuperscript{59} At night, the bride was escorted/taken to the groom's house for the first time which is known as Lawi chhiat Zan which means temporary visit. On this night, the bride was escorted by a man known as Lawichal who was the guardian and protector of the bride, who always calls out “fanu fapa kan lawi pui e” or we are taking along the bride to have many sons and daughters.\textsuperscript{60} On the way to the groom's house the young men of the village would try to throw mud, water felt on the bride and it is the duty of the Lawichal to protect the bride from them. If in trying to save herself, the bride falls down, it is considered a bad Owen which resulted in extreme cases, to postponement of the wedding. If the Lawichal hits anyone in his attempt to protect the bride he is within his right and is not liable to any fine.\textsuperscript{61}

When the bride reached the groom's house, she was welcome by offering a cup of Zu. Then the village priest will tied the hairs of the bride and the groom together and pronounced certain chants and then untie again their hairs. After this, the priest killed a fowl of the groom side and a fowl of the bride side which is known as Rem-Ar Talh, meaning 'the fowl of agreement'.\textsuperscript{62} It signifies that the couple were really married. The sacrifice of the fowls and the chants are known as Rem-Ar and Arzanguuak.

\textsuperscript{59} Lalbiakhanga: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 20  
\textsuperscript{60} N.E. Parry: \textit{Monograph, Op. Cit.} p. 31  
\textsuperscript{61} Lalbiakhanga: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 20  
\textsuperscript{62} C.L. Hminga: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 31
On the first night, which is known as Lawichhat zan, the bride and her friends were to return back to the bride’s parents house. However, before the groom offered a cup of Zu to the bride, they were not permitted to return back. While offering a cup of Zu, the groom said, “Hei ka tawk a che, nak zan ah lo leng leh ang che’ meaning I welcome you came back tomorrow night. After the groom had offered Zu to the bride, the Lawichal will escort again the bride to her parents house.

The next evening, the bride was presented with her belongings to the groom’s house to live with him permanently, by the Lawichal. This night is known as ‘Lawi That Zan’. It is also known as ‘In Duh Zan’. On this night, all the family members of the groom had to spend the night in others house and only the couple were to be in the house. Since the groom slept in the Zawlbuk, he was taken to his house at night by his friend. Before they had children, the groom used to sleep at the Zawlbuk and at late night he used to come to his house. But early in the morning, he went back to Zawlbuk. As her husband went back to the Zawlbuk early in the morning, the bride also went to her parent’s house and took food there for quite some time. However, she had to work at her in laws house.

2. Divorce:

The Mizo word for divorce is In then. There are different ways of divorce practise in the traditional Mizo society.

(i) Ma or Mak: The divorce initiated by the husband was called Ma or Mak. When a man wanted to divorce his wife in this form, he simply says ‘Ka ma a che’ meaning I divorce you’ and the woman is then divorced. If a man divorce his

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64 Informant, Khuangpuithanga, 92, *Interviewed on 8.8.2003*
wife in this form whether the wife is "Thisenpal" or Thisen pallo at the time of divorce, he has to pay up the whole of the balance of the woman's marriage price including the Thutphah. The woman's can take all her personal property including her Thuam or dowry. The husband should take his wife to the place where she was to stay if he divorces his wife in this form. It is a disgraceful for the woman to be divorce by her husband in this form.

(ii) Sumchhuah: If a woman cannot remain with her husband and leaves him, this kind of divorce is known as Sumchhuah. In this kind of divorce, the wife was obliged to bear the burden of repayment of marriage price already received by her relatives. She is entitled to take all her personal property including the Thuam or dowry. This kind of divorce is considered to be a disgraceful for the husband.

(iii) Sumlaitan: This is a form of divorce by agreement whereby on the basis of mutual settlement, the whole marriage price will be shared equally by the two parties. This applies to both Manpui and Mantang. For instance, if the Manpui is Rs.120/- and the husband has paid Rs.40/- till the day of divorce, he will have to pay another Rs.20/- to make up half the marriage price which he has to pay. Again, if the husband had paid up all the marriage price, the wife will refund half the marriage price to her husband.

(iv) Peksachang: It is another form of divorce by mutual agreement. If a husband and wife divorce in this form, the man will not claim the return of any part of the marriage price he had paid to the relatives of the woman nor the wife will not

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65 Thisenpal- a Mizo word means a woman who has children by her husband.
66 Thisen pallo- means a woman who has no children by her husband.
67 Customary Law, Op. Cit. p. 21
claim any amount that may still be due. However, the woman can take her personal property.\(^{69}\)

(v) **Atna vanga Inthen or Divorce on account of Madness:** Divorce on the ground of madness of either husband or wife was called Atna Vanga Inthen. This kind of divorce could be possible only after three years’ treatment of the person who became a victim of such madness and when the disease was found incurable. For example, if the wife goes mad, her husband had to look after her for three years and after that if the wife had not recovered, he can divorce her as Pek Sa Chang but if he leaves her before three years, he can divorce her as Mak or ma and have to pay the balance of the marriage price. On the other hand, if the husband goes mad, the woman had to look after him for three years and after this period, if the husband has not recovered she can divorce her husband as Peksachang. However if the woman leaves him before the expiry of three years, she is known as Sumchhuah and will have to refund the entire marriage price which were already paid.\(^{70}\)

(vi) **Chhuping:** If a wife owing to physical disabilities is unable to have sexual relationship with her husband, the husband had to look after her for three months. Even after three months, if she was the same, her husband can divorce her and can get back all the marriage price he had paid, the woman leaving him Sumchhuah.\(^{71}\)

(vii) **Zangzaw or Impotence:** Divorce caused by impotency in a husband was called Zangzaw. If a man is impotent and is unable to have sexual relationship with his wife, according to the old custom, the priest will look after him and after three months, the man is still impotent, the woman is entitled to a divorce.

\(^{69}\) *Ibid* p. 48  
\(^{71}\) *Ibid* p. 47
known as Peksa chang and will not return the marriage price already paid. However, if the woman can not lived with her husband for the period agreed upon, she is known as Sumchhuah. The woman is also known as Uire if she married another man during the agreed period or have sexual relation with another man during this period. Again, if the woman accuses her husband of being impotent and her husband denies it, a man is placed to sleep near the couple to see whether they can have sexual relation or not. If the man is not impotent and can have sexual intercourse the woman have to pay Rs.50/- to her husband.72

(viii) Pasal Awmloh Hlana Chhuak: A divorce on account of long absence of husband from wife is known as Pasal awmloh Hlana chhuak. In this form of divorce, if the wife was unwilling to live with her husband when he returns from a prolonged absence, she is treated as Sumchhuah. On the other hand, if the husband who returns from a prolonged absence and refuses to live with his wife, he had to face the same consequence as in Ma or Mak regarding marriage price. However, if a wife can not get on with her husband’s relations and prefers to stay with her own people while her husband is away, she is entitled to do so and can not be treated as Sumchhuah on this account.73

(ix) Nupui Tlansan: Divorce which occurs on account of the abandonment of wife by husband is known as Nupui Tlansan. In such form of divorce, the wife had the right to acquire possession of the properties of her husband. His children also goes to his wife and she will get the marriage price of their daughters.74

73 N.E. Parry: Monograph, Op. Cit. p. 45
74 Ibid p. 46
Kawngka Sula Mak: Divorce on account of husband’s involvement with another girl was called Kawngka sula mak. In such a case of divorce, a man who had fallen in love with another girl and prefers her to his wife and divorce his wife and the same day or the next day marries the girl. The literal meaning of Kawngka Sula Mak is that the old wife goes out of the door as the new wife comes in.  

In such kind of divorce, the divorced wife will get her full marriage price and certain property of her husband known as Buhbal which includes paddy and Maize, rice, millet, kochus. If they have children they can go either with their mother or their father whichever they prefer and the father cannot stop them from going with their mother. If the couple were occupying the Khumpui or big bed before they divorce, the wife can claim Buhbal and they will divide whatever they have earned in a year into two equal halves. However, if the husband’s parents were still there and they were occupying the Khumpui, the woman cannot claim the property of her husband as all the Buhbal belongs to her husband’s father.

Uire: The English word for Uire is Adultery. Uire is considered to be the most serious offences and usually ends in divorce. If a married woman committed adultery either while her husband is alive or after the death of her husband while she is still in her husband’s house, she is known as Uire. If she committed adultery, she has to return back all the marriage price already paid and she can not take back any of her Thuam. If the woman committed adultery three months after the death of her husband or after performing the rite of Inkaih Chhuah, she will not return the marriage price already paid. However, if she committed adultery while she lives in her

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75 Ibid. p. 47
husband's house, she cannot claim the balance of the marriage price. After the death of her husband, the woman had to perform Mitthi chaw pek which means putting aside a portion of the rice she ate at each meal for her husband for three lunar months. The wife, however, as a sign of mourning should not comb her head for three lunar months. At the end of this period, the parents of the widow will perform a ceremony or rite known as Inkaïîchhuah to absolve their daughter form the marriage bond. After performing Inkaïîchhuah ceremony, she would return to her parents house and was free to marry any person and in such case, she was not considered as Uire. However, if she desires, she could go back to her husband’s house and lived with their children if she had any and it was also up to her to live in her parent’s house.

C. Village System:

In the early period, all the Mizo villages were built on the hill tops most probably for health reasons. They took utmost care in selecting the site for their village. For selecting the site, a team went and slept over the proposed site for, one night with a cock. If the cock crow before dawn, the site would be considered suitable and if not, the site would be considered unsuitable. After selecting the new site, the Chief's house and the Zawlbuk would be built first and then followed by others.

(1) Chief:

Every village of the Mizo in the early period was an independent unit, ruled by its chief, assisted by a number of officials who helped the chief in discharging his daily duties. In theory, the chief enjoyed absolute power but practically he could not assume absolute power because of the nomadic instinct of the people who could leave their

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77 Dr. Sangkima: Op. Cit. pp. 28-29
78 Ibid p. 42
chief at anytime if he ruled cruelly, and migrate to another village with a more benevolent ruler who would welcome them with open arms. Therefore, the chief was constrained to rule his people according to custom so as to have many followers which determined his power.

(2) Upas:

The Upas or the Council of Elders were the chiefs advisers in matters of village administration and judiciary. They were appointed by the chief from whomever he deemed fit but usually they were chosen from among the Thangchhuahs who were reputed public figures or from amongst those representing a particular sub-clan or sub-tribe. The chief also had the power to dismiss any or all of the Upas at anytime without assigning any reason. One of the Upas was designated as Upa-Min, chief of the Elders.

The council formed by Upas and headed by the chief administered all cases in the village. They would try all cases of disputes, civil and criminal. In deciding a case, the chief and Upas are guided entirely by the Lushai customary Law. While deciding a case, if any member of the Council including the Chief had any connection with the case, he should not participate in the deliberation nor would he interfere with the decision or the findings of the other members.

The Council imposed and received fees known as Salam from the party who loses the case. These fees which are their only remuneration were expended on a feast. Besides the Salam, the party who lost the case were also punished by finding them to

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79 Mangkhosat Kipgen: *Christianity and Mizo Culture*, The Mizo Theological Conference, Mizoram, 1996, p. 59
offer a Mithun or a pig or a fowl to the party which won the case as compensation. If the person fined refused to pay the fine, proportionate property would be forfeited from him. In the trial of cases, rape was viewed seriously. The punishment inflicted on the person who committed rape crime was shearing off a portion of his ear and nose. Socially, he would virtually become an outcast. Again, the chief in consultation with the Upas had the right to order capital punishment also when occasion demanded.82

Trial of all cases, civil as well as criminal are held by the council of elders, headed by the chief. However, trial of cases concerning love affairs’ can be heard in public and anybody was allowed to present in the trial.

(3) Other Officials:

Apart from the Upas, the chief also appointed other village officials who were assigned to discharge specific functions. They were, Zalen, Ramhual, Tlangau, Puithiam, Therdeng, Khawchhia, Sadawt and Tlahpawi.

(a) Zalen: The Zalen is a person who helped the chief with paddy or any other necessary items when the later runs short of it. For his service, he was exempted from paying Fathang83 to the chief. But he was not exempted from cooly labour by the government. They also selected their jhum plot before the common people were allowed to choose their lands.

(b) Ramhual: The Ramhuals were the people who advise the chief in the matter of selection of sites for jhum cultivation. The office was coveted one. The chief appointed the Ramhuals from among the villagers who had sound knowledge about jhum cultivation. The Ramhuals were good cultivators. They would get first preference

83 Fathang- Tax or Tribute paid usually to a chief by his subjects.
for selecting their jhum plots next to the chief. For that privilege, the Ramhuals were required to pay Fathang at a higher rate to the chief than other villagers.

(c) **Tlangau:** The Tlangau was the village crier who was appointed by the chief. It was his duty to announced the orders of the chief to the villagers and also the distribution of obligatory works of the villagers that were to be done the next day. As a remuneration, he was entitled to get a basket of paddy as Fathang from each household of the village. He was exempted from both Fathang and cooly labour.

(d) **Puithiam:** The Puithiam is the village priest who was appointed by the chief for performing all kinds of ceremonies for the villagers. He was remunerated in paddy and receives one basket of rice from each householder for whom he performs the sacrifices connected with his cultivation.\(^{84}\)

(e) **Thirdeng:** The Thirdeng is the village blacksmith who was appointed by the chief. It was his duty to make and repair the agricultural tools of the villagers. As remuneration, he was given a basket full of paddy by every family attached to him. The villagers were not bound to go to the official Thirdeng for repairing their tools. They can also go to a private Thirdeng. The Thirdeng can also claim the Thirdeng Sa which consists of the spine and three ribs from the villagers who shot or trapped animals. If this is not given, he can claim Rs.20/- compensation. The official Thirdeng was exempted from cooly labour.\(^{85}\)

(f) **Khawchhier:** The Khawchhier was the village writer who was the British creation. He writes all letters and reports for the chief, kept the vital village statistic, registers, the village house list, kept the roster of people who are to be called

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\(^{84}\) J. Shakespear: *Op. Cit.* p. 43  
on for coolie work and a list of all guns in the village. He was also exempted from cooly
labour and from paying house tax to the chief.86

(g) Sadawt and Tlahpawi: Sadawt is the private priest of the chief
who conducts all sacrifices and ceremonies in the chief’s family only. He was assisted
by another priest called Tlahpawi.

(4) Chhiah or Tax Payable to the Chief:

Traditionally, the Mizo chief was very busy, acting as administrator and
protector of his village and did not have sufficient time for cultivation and hence
enjoyed certain privileges. This custom of receiving privileges originated from the first
known Mizo chief Zahmuaka, who received ‘Fathang’ (paddy due) and Sachhiah
(animal due). Apart from these two taxes, the Mizo chief also received other taxes from
his subjects. The following are some of the important taxes received by the chief from
his subjects.

(i) Fathang: Every household in the Mizo village except the Upas and
some of the village officials have to pay a paddy tax to the chief called Fathang. It was a
due payable to a chief by every household of his own village or by any one from
another village who cultivated his land.87 Originally, there was no uniform rate to be
collected form his subjects by the chief. Later on, a uniform rate of six kerosene oil tins
of paddy was fixed as Fathang by the British.

(ii) Sa Chhiah (Hunting Due): It was a chief’s share of any animal
shot or trapped by any villager living in his village. Normally, it consists of the animal’s
left fore leg and the chief cannot choose any part of the animal he prefers. If Sachhiah is

86 Ibid.
87 Ibid. p. 12.
not paid the man responsible for it was fined Rs.40/- and Salam as compensation to the chief. However, no Sachhiah is pay to an animal which has been found dead having been killed accidentally or by other wild animals.  

(iii) Chi Chhiah (Salt Tax): It was a tax payable to the chief for collecting salt from the salt well or spring within his jurisdiction. One tenth of the quantity collected was given to the chief as tax.

(iv) Khuai Chhiah (Tax on Honey): It was the chief’s share of honey collected by his subject from the forest within his jurisdiction. An equivalent of one man’s share during the extraction of honey was given to the chief as his share.

(v) Se Chhiah (Tax on Mithun): It was a tax payable by the villagers to the chief for selling a grown up Mithun to other villages.

(vi) Tha Chhiah (Labour Tax): Thachhiah was a service rendered to the chief in building and repairing his house voluntarily by every household in the village. No one can escape from this voluntary work.

(vii) Thirdeng Sa: Besides the above taxes and labour services rendered by the villagers, they also had to pay the Thirdeng chhiah, a due payable to a village blacksmith who made and repaired the tools of the village people. For every animal killed, the blacksmith was given the spine or three ribs as his share and failure to give it is punishable with a fine of Rs.20/- as compensation.

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88 Ibid. p. 13

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(5) **Warfare:**

Before the advent of the British in the Hills, there was war and inter tribal feuds among the Mizos which endangered the peaceful life of the people. There were two kinds of war which the early Mizo used to fight. The first one is known as Leilawn Mal Zawha Indo. In this war, the whole community were not involved. To fight in this war, both the parties will select a good fighter who will fight on their behalf. For this, they will select a place and will dug a grave and over it was put across a beam. The two fighters will meet at the centre of the beam and fight. The one who fell down first will be the loser and the one who knocked down his enemy will be the winner. This combat will be taken as final and the winner side of the village will be the victor in the war. In this way, the whole village did not take part in the war.

The second war fought by the early Mizos was known as Vawk lu vuak thlak a indo. It was common among the Lusei clan. In this war, one warring party tried to throw down the skulls of pigs usually displayed in the courtyard of the enemy. On the other hand, the opposing group tried to defend them with any instrument and weapon they had with them. If the enemy could bring them down, they won the war. Such was the custom practiced among the Mizos in the early time.

(6) **Dress:**

In the very early period, before the Mizos wore clothes made of cotton, the Mizo women wore a kind of shirt called Siapsuap, a small piece of broad-cloth woven from the reeds or the bark of trees. Siapsuap means to swing or to flap. More than one piece,

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93 *Ibid.* p. 52
94 Dr. Sangkima: *Op. Cit.* p. 45
would be worn together, tied round the waist, reaching only above the knee. A man wore Hnawkhal, a cloth made of the same material as the women Siapsuap but woven in larger pieces. This cloth was used to cover the upper part of the body to protect it from cold. After the Mizos learnt the art of cotton cultivation and invented its use, the man’s cloth was replaced by a Puanhlap an ordinary cloth made of cotton. Later, Dawlrem Kawr, another piece of dress was added to the women’s attire. The women wore Hmaram Pawnsen, a peticoat which was coloured with various designs. The two most beautiful designs used by the Mizos women which are still very popular among them are Lenhuangthuam and Kawppuzikzial.

(7) **Ornaments:**

Both Mizo man and women wore ornaments in the early time. The most valuable one are Saingho Bengbeh (earring made of ivory) and Thihna (amber necklace). They also kept long hair alike and used hair pins, called Thimkual and hair sticks called Dawhkilh made of bamboos. A head-dress known as Vakiria was worn only on important occasion like Khuangchawi by Thangchhuah celebrant which was made and composed of parrot’s feathers and porcupine quills inserted into a bamboo ring. Combs made of bamboos were also used by the early Mizos.

(8) **Dances:**

The social and cultural life of the early Mizos are also marked by dances. The three most popular are Cheraw, Khuallam and Chheihlam. Cheraw dance, which was commonly known as ‘Bamboo dance’ was performed by both men and women in honour of the departed soul of the untimely death with a view to speeding up the soul.

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96 *Ibid.* p. 16
97 Lalrimawia: *Op. Cit.* p. 27
on its way to Mithikhua or Pialral. Khullam was performed on important occasions like Khuangchawi, Kut, etc. Chheihlam, the last one is also known as Zu hmun lam as it was generally performed when Zu drinking was held. Besides, the above three dances, there are also other forms of dances like Puma Zai, Sakei Lu lam, Sarlam Kai, Chai, etc. Which are performed by the primitive Mizos.

(9) Musical Instruments:

The early Mizos had different kinds of musical instruments some of which are still used among them. Of these musical instruments, Dorkhuang, which were mostly imported from Burma but adopted as indigenous resource had occupied an important and significant place in the Mizo society. There were two sizes; the larger one being called Dorkhuang and the smaller, the Darmang. These are commonly used on the occasion of Khuangchawi feast. Other important musical instruments includes Khuang (drum), Mizo Tingtang, Phenglawng, Bengbun, Rawchhem, Lemlawi, Tuiumdar, Tumphit, Tahkhuang, Seki Khawn and Mau Tawtawrawn.

(10) Games and Sports:

The Mizos in the primitive time too played games and sports. The most common games played are Inbuan (wrestling) and Ritchawi (weight lifting). Inbuan was held regularly every evening at the Zawlbuk. Here young men trained themselves by seeing, participating and watching their elders play. Visitors to a village were challenged by the local young men and fair competition was fought till one of them stood up unchallenged by the others.

98 Dr. Sangkima: Op. Cit. p. 46
100 Dr. Sangkima: Op. Cit. p. 47
Ritchawi (weight lifting) was another important and popular game of the early Mizos which was done only on certain occasions. The stone used as Chawilung (stone used for weight lifting) was about 75 – 100 Kgs.\textsuperscript{101} Every village had their own Chawilung.

Besides the above two games, the Mizos boys and girls also played different games like in- ulen, in kawl vawr, in buh vawr, in vei lunghlak in mati, etc. The favourite game among the boys was inkawihnakw or Inhnawk meaning a ‘bean game’. It was played with a large flat bean seed called Kawi. They held the bean seed in one hand and they had to do with various stages in a compete round and the party who knocked away the other’s beans most won the game. The favourite game of the girls was in kawibah or inbah. In this game, they held the bean between the thumb and first finger of the left hand and propelled by the middle finger of the right. The players divided into two parties, each in turn placing their Kawis in a row on the ground to serve as a target for the other party.\textsuperscript{102} Boys also played a Kahiibhu, a spinning top and Kalchhet.\textsuperscript{103} For both boys and girls hide and seek was a common game.

D. Economic Life:

In the primitive period, the Mizo society was purely agriculturist and rural. Agriculture was the backbone of their economy and practiced the system of shifting cultivation or jhum cultivation. Besides agriculture, hunting, fishing, cottage industries and rearing of domestic animals formed a part of the primitive Mizos’ economic life. In

\textsuperscript{102} Lahrimawia: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 25
\textsuperscript{103} J.V. Hluna: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 15
fact, the primitive Mizo economy was simply to meet the demands of the basic needs of
day-to-day life.\textsuperscript{104}

(1) \textbf{Agriculture:}

In the primitive period, the entire population of the Mizos can be classified as
agriculturists or cultivator as only a few people like blacksmith and professional priests
lived on contributions of rice and meat given to them in exchange for service rendered
by them to the community. There was no shop-keepers.

The primitive Mizos cultivated their land by jhum method. It consists in felling
all the bamboos and trees in a piece of jungle and when it has completely dried up,
setting fire to it. The ground is thus not only cleared but manure by the ashes at the
same time. Timbers which are not burned completely are gathered together and burned
or dragged to the side of the field; and used for rough fence to keep beast out of the
field. At the first sign of rain, the cultivator goes to the jhum with a small basket of
seeds slung over his shoulder with a small hoe or dao in his hand and thus started
sowing seed in the field. Usually, he starts from the lower end of the jhum, Very often,
the whole village would join together in corporate labour in sowing seeds.\textsuperscript{105}

The main crops of the Mizos are rice and maize and rice was the staple food of
the people. Before rice was cultivated, maize, millet, arum-bulb, gums, sweet potatoes
are their staple food.\textsuperscript{106} Tradition says that rice was first cultivated by the Mizos only
when they reached Lentlang\textsuperscript{107} or the present Chin Hills of Burma. Besides the above
mentioned crops, the primitive Mizos also grow peas, job's tears, chillies, etc. cucumber

\textsuperscript{105} Rochunga Pudaite: \textit{The Education of the Hmar People}, Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission, Sielmat,
Manipur, 1963. p. 45
\textsuperscript{106} V.L. Siama: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 17
\textsuperscript{107} Dr. Sangkima: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 48
water melon, melon, etc were other fruits grown. In course of time, they also grew cotton and developed the art of spinning and weaving. They also dyed their clothes by using indigo grown in the locality. With other crops, they also cultivated tobacco for local consumption.

(2) Domestic Animals:

In the economic life of the primitive Mizos, domestic animals like Mithun, pig, dog, chicken and goat played a very important role. Apart from being important sources of food they are used for sacrifices and ceremonies.

Among the domestic animals, Mithun was the most valued indigenous domestic animal and played a very important part in the economic life of the early Mizos. Apart from being important source of food, and used in rituals, it was used as the marriage price of a girl (in sense that the marriage price was determined in terms of Mithun). It was also used for exchanging the captives and other valuable properties. Its skin was also used for shields. A man’s wealth was also judged by the number of Mithuns he possessed. Mithun occupies such a dominant place in the primitive Mizo economy that some writers suggested the ‘Zo culture’ as ‘Mithun culture’.

Another indigenous domestic animal of the Mizos was pig. Every family domesticated pig and are fed on a species of arum and rice husks boiled together. They are killed for sacrifices and ceremonies. Their socio-economic and religious values are very great to the early Mizos.

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108 Pialral, Op. Cit. p. 21
109 Ibid. p. 35
Dog was another domestic animal of the early Mizos. Dogs are eaten freely, and their chief value is derived from the demand for sacrificial purposes.\textsuperscript{112} Dog's meat is one of the favourites of the Mizos.

Chicken or fowls are domesticated by every family in the early period. Their importance in the socio-economic and religious life of the primitive Mizo people was very great.

Goat, another domesticated animals, of the primitive Mizos was used for meat and for sacrificial offering. Though it was the indigenous domestic animal of the Mizos, it is not known when it was first domesticated.\textsuperscript{113}

(3) Hunting and Fishing:

In the economy of the primitive Mizos, hunting and fishing or trapping played an important role in the past. They were good hunters and fond of fresh meat and tried to catch every kind of animal. They make large hunting parties and frequently made expeditions into the uninhabited parts of the forest in search of wild animals like elephants, wild Mithun, deer, tiger, bear and others for food. Their most favourite game was the wild elephant,\textsuperscript{114} which were hunted for their tusks and meat for food. The party camps at a certain spot for weeks until they are satisfied with the number of animals they have killed.\textsuperscript{115} However, there was time that a large hunting party will return home without catching one or more animals.

The return of the hunting party was well publicized by firing guns before reaching the village and the whole village turns out to welcome them with a plentiful

\begin{footnotes}
\item[112] J. Shalespear: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 31
\item[113] Pialral, \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 36
\item[114] T.H. Lewin: \textit{A Fly on the Wheel or How I Helped to Govern India}, Tribal research Institute, Aizawl, reprint 1977. p. 138
\item[115] Rochunga Pudaite: \textit{Op. Cit.} p.51
\end{footnotes}
supply of rice beer. Besides animals, the Mizos also killed birds for food. To supplement these animals and birds, the early Mizos also catches fish. The ordinary way of catching fish was by casting net and sometimes with spears or daos at night by torchlight. However, the most reliable method of catching fishes was by trap known as Ngoi (Ngawi), build of bamboos and timber aeinforced with stones and earth which stretches from side to side of a running water. They also caught fish by poisoning the small streams with the fruits of a tree called ‘ru’ or the roots of certain tree called ‘rulei’ and the bark of a certain tree poured into them. In this way, the early Mizos catches animals and fishes to satisfy their hunger for meat.

(4) **Raids:**

The Mizos in the early period were war like tribes and often indulged in intertribal wars and also carried out raids to loot and to get slaves which brought wealth to the family. These slaves were employed for economic works to work in the jhums or domestic work. In this way, the slaves brought wealth to their owners either in the form of increased labour power or by the considerable prices they fetched in the local markets.

(5) **Hnatlang (Community Work):**

Another important aspect of the economic life of the early Mizos was Hnatlang or community work on free services rendered by the people when need arose. In the village, the weaker sections of the people were uplifted by this system. The chief’s house and the Zawlbuk are built by this system. Cleaning of village spring, making of

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inter-village path and jhum path are done by the local people through this system. In this kind of Community work, at least one person from each house must come forward for the work except widows and disabled persons who really deserved exemption from the service. Otherwise, the absentee family will be fined as demanded by the participants.

(6) Common Salt:

In the early period, the Mizos used to obtain their salts from the salt springs by means of evaporation. The number of salt springs was very limited and as a result, it became a valuable economic asset for the Mizos. Inter-tribal feuds often arose as a result of dispute over the possession of the salt springs. However, such dispute ceased gradually after the annexation of Cachar by the British in 1832 when salt trade was carried out by Bengali traders at the trade marts set up at the foothills. As the demand of salt was very high, the traders brought in a huge quantity of salt and sometimes charged exorbitant rate out of their greed on the pretext of high cost of transport.

(7) Cottage Industry:

Cottage industry played a very important role in the economic life of the early Mizos. It includes cotton weaving, basket works, pottery, brass work, iron work, manufacturing of musical instrument, etc. Cotton weaving of every kind was exclusively the work of the womenfolk. They were expected to make cloths for all the family members by spinning the raw cotton which they grow in their jhums. As Major McCall remark about Mizo weaving, "The weaving is excellent, and is done on

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120 Dr. Sangkima: *Op. Cit.* p. 49
complicated indigenous hand looms, home-grown cotton being used. The whole process requires patience and time.\(^\text{122}\)

The practice of basket making was chiefly carried on by man. There are different designs and size required for various purposes and the material used for making these are generally bamboos and canes which are available in the jungle. There are different types of baskets used for various purposes such as Thul, Deron, Em, Bomrang, Paikawng, etc. The Thul is a basket which had a conical lid and was used chiefly for keeping valuables at home. It was made quite waterproof. Deron, another kind of basket was used for carrying goods. A basket called Em was similar to the Deron but about half the size. The Bomrang, another type of Basket with an open-work with a oval mouth was used for carrying goods on long journeys. The Paikawng, another type of basket which was similar in shape to the Em was used for carrying wood, water tubes, etc. Besides, these there are several types of baskets made and used by the Mizos in their homes. Pottery was another Mizo handicraft which was in vogue among the women folk in the indigenous period. There were two types of pots- a small circular pot, used for cooking and a large jar, used for brewing rice beer. It is believed that some people had acquired knowledge in Brass work. The early Mizos also acquired knowledge in iron work and was one among the Mizo handicraft in the indigenous period. This was proved by the existence of blacksmith in every Mizo village in the early period who manufacture and repair tools and implements of the village.\(^\text{123}\) The indigenous musical instruments of the Mizos includes gongs, drums, rotchem, tingtang,


bengbung, phenglawng, lembawi and tuium dar.  

Besides, the early Mizos also made Thimkual (Hair pins), Dawhlilh (hair stick) etc., by using bamboos. All the above were the Mizo handicrafts made for their own use which are the product of their cottage industry.

E. Social Institutions:

Roland De Vaux said, “Institutions are the various forms in which the social life of the people finds expression ...”  

Most of the social customs practices among the Mizos in the present time are survival of the social institution in the ancient Mizo society.

(1) Zawlbuk:

Zawlbuk had been the most important institution in shaping and moulding the early Mizo society. It is the bachelor’s house or dormitory. It occupies a central position in the organisation and administration of the early Mizo village and functioned as the most potent institutionalized mechanism of social control. It shaped the Mizo youths into responsible adult members of the society and also fostered and nurtured a pure and uncorrupted life among the early Mizos and contributed for the good of their society. Its importance in the early Mizo society had been accredited by N.E. Parry in the following words: "I ascribed much of the indiscipline among the Lakhrs to the fact that they have no bachelors house or equivalent to the Lushei Zawlbuk".

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126 Dr. Sangkima: *Op. Cit.* p. 38  
The origin of Zawlbuk, though not definitely known may be traced back to China where such 'Long Houses' or 'Communal Houses' were found. Loeb and Broek thought that the 'Long house' was brought down to Yunnan and to other places in the South-East Asia by the Patrilineal Tibeto-Burma peoples and others. Such bachelor's house was also found amongst the tribes in the South China. Obviously, the Mizos brought it down from China long ago.\textsuperscript{129}

Though it is believe that the Mizos had brought down the idea of making Zawlbuk from China, it is not known the exact time when the Mizos had started making Zawlbuk. When the Mizos were at Thantlang and Lentlang, they did not have Zawlbuk. It is believed that, Zawlbuk was started when they are at Tiau range.\textsuperscript{130} Before Zawlbuk was started, the young men of the village i.e. those unmarried and those who had up to two children slept at the chief's house to face any emergency, whether it be war, death or attack of the village by wild beasts.

The earliest time, the Mizos had Zawlbuk can be traced back to one of the earliest Mizo village, Selesih Sangsarih. As seven chiefs joined together; it is believed that there was 7 Zawlbuk. It is believed that it happened around 1740-1750 A.D. Its earlier name was Zalbuk but later on it was changed to Zawlbuk.\textsuperscript{131}

When we study the early history of the Mizos, we know that they were a war like people. The earliest war they fought were known as 'Vawklu vuakthlaka indo'. During those days, the different Mizo clans put on the skull of the pig in the village which they used for sacrifices. As time passes, those different clans started 'Vawklu vuakthlak' and started attacking each other. For the youths to stay together at one place

\textsuperscript{129} Dr. Sangkima: Op. Cit. p. 39
\textsuperscript{131} F. Lianhmingthanga and B. Lalthangliana: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 69
to face such unforeseen happening, they need a big house. As such, they built a big house known as Zawlbiuk. 132

Zawlbiuk is usually built almost at the most central place in a Mizo village which is near the chief’s house. It was constructed through the free labour of all the male members of the village, aged between 11 years to 70 years. 133 To build a Zawlbiuk, a large number of wooden poles and bamboos were used. The main beam which was really the backbone of the Zawlbiuk was called ‘Tlun’. To provide support to the sloping roofs on all the sides of the central line, timber and bamboos rafters were fixed up in a crosswise pattern, this being known as ‘In chhun’. On these ‘Inchhun’ thinner bamboos were also tied up securely with the ‘Inchhun’. At the ends of the sloping roof, long leaves known as ‘Diso’ in Mizo language were allowed to protrude from thatches giving Zawlbiuk thereby a particularly distinctively look. 134

At the point of the entrance of a Zawlbiuk, a bamboo wall was fixed with the entire roof leaving about 5 feet below it over the platform. The vacant space between the wall and the floor was known as ‘Awkpaka’. A very big log to cover the entire breadth of the Zawlbiuk was collected from the forest and placed on the platform which the Zawlbiuk dwellers had almost to roll over the log to find their place within the Zawlbiuk. This big log used to be called ‘Bawhbel’ which is also known as Pawmpual. 135 In side the Zawlbiuk, a place was set apart for the Zawlbiuk fireplace. There was also a place set apart for stocking of firewood which was to be used for the whole night.

Zawlbuk was placed under the charge of a leader called Val-Upa who was chosen from amongst the bachelors.\(^{136}\) He was responsible for organizing the group to take up definite responsibility over the village and it was customary for every Zawlbuk dwellers to obey him. He was assisted by a number of lieutenants who were assigned with the charge of day-to-day vigilance and service of the village. Decisions in the Zawlbuk were taken unanimously majority voice.

The Zawlbuk inhabitants were divided into two classes, the Tlangvals or young men and the Thingfawm Naupang\(^{137}\) which is also known as Thingnawifawm. To control ‘Thingnawifawm’ monitors were appointed who are known as ‘Thingnawifawm Hotu’ from among the younger Tlangval (youths). The duty of the Thingnawifawms were to supply the Zawlbuk with firewood and water everyday and night and also to do any jobs that the young men ask them to do. They collected firewood from the nearby jungle or vicinity of the village during daytime. It was the duty of the monitors to see whether the Thingnawifawm had collected sufficient firewood for the Zawlbuk everyday. Just after sunset between 6 and 7 p.m. the boys are all called up for a roll call and the monitors find out whether the boys have all carried out the tasks assigned to them.\(^{138}\) Any failure to comply with the day’s collection of bundles of firewood was severely punished by doubling or trebling the bundles the next day\(^{139}\) which was known as ‘Thingnawi vawi.

The Zawlbuk primarily served as a dormitory where in all the lads of the village slept at the night. In the evening, older men also assembled at Zawlbuk and told stories

\(^{136}\) Dr. Sangkima: *Op. Cit.* p. 39  
\(^{138}\) *Ibid.* p. 10  
\(^{139}\) C. Nuthara: *Op. Cit.* p. 72
concerning great events and deeds of bravery chivalry, heroic efforts in the past as well as customary laws of the Mizos from which the Zawlbuk dwellers learned old traditions, customs and many other things. As all the young men stayed together at the Zawlbuk, they were always ready for any emergency whether it be war, death or attack of the village by wild beasts. Everyone was ready to surpass their friends in chivalrous act and bravery in such possible emergency. In the event of death, the relatives of the deceased in other villages were to be immediately informed and there would be instant competition for the first one to go as messenger. To be ready for such emergency, some have never really slept for fear of not being able to be the first one to wake up at the first sign.

Zawlbuk is also a place where the young Mizos learned Tlawmngaihna. The word has no exact equivalent in English but the spirit of Chivalry is the single word which has the nearest meaning. There was competition in bravery and chivalrous deeds in war and peace among the inmates of Zawlbuk. To show this spirit of chivalry and bravery, everyone tried to surpass their friends by being the first one to rescue domestic animals when tigers or other wild beasts attacked them. The braves who distinguished themselves in the above manners were offered a special cup called the 'braves' cup on any important occasions as a recognition of his status by the society and even the chief would not touch his share of rice-beer until the brave’s first drank from their brave’s cup. This was considered the highest honour a man could get.

Zawlbuk also served as a place where the young boys were looked after. Since there was no school during that time, they started learning many things from the

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140 ibid. p. 73
141 Dr. Sangkima: Op. Cit. p. 43
142 C. Nunthara: Op. Cit. p. 73
Zawlubuk. They also learnt about the art of the Mizo style of wrestling and many other gymnastics.

Even though the Zawlubuk was primarily a place for young people of the village to stay, it was frequently visited by the old one who would often sit by the Zawlubuk fire for long period and recall their past experience. The young men, after listening to the stories told by their elders and a few rounds of wrestling bouts which was compulsory for all the inmates, they went to pay visit to their loved one in batches of one, two or in a groups between 8:30 P.m. to 9:00P.m which is known as ‘Tlangval Lenglen Hun.’ The girls and their parents were expected to show courtesy to the young men.

If the parents were harsh and did not behave properly in a way expected of a girl’s parents’ a meeting would soon take place at Zawlubuk and a decision reached to punish the offending parents or girls. In such a situation, even the chief was powerless to stop the young men and instead he supported them. Thus, the Zawlubuk was instrumental in bringing about organized actions in any emergency.

The Zawlubuk also served as an inn for a man from another village. It is difficult for a traveler to carry enough cloths (Puanthuah) to use at sleeping time. They used to go to Zawlubuk and spent the night there. At the Zawlubuk, the dwellers used to have wrestling out with the traveller and after the traveller was rendered overtired, he was shown favour and given enough cloths to be used at night.

In spite of its very conspicuous place in the Mizo society, the Zawlubuk system was not devoid of serious points of weakness. The staying away of the newly married young male folks from their wives during the night led to many cases of

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143 Challiana: *Pi Pu Num, Latriiniana & Sona, Aizawl*, reprint 1991. p. 18
144 Dr. Sangkima: *Op. Cit.* p. 39
misunderstanding which often led to divorces. Zawlbuks also sometimes proved to be a very uncanny force in miscarriage of justice because of the unity of its dwellers. Even if some of the Zawlbuks indulged in sex offences and cases were brought to the chief, and his Upas for trial, justice could not be done because of the unity of the young men which prevented rightful redress being available to the women folk. Another important weakness of the Zawlbuks was that the frequent absence of young male folks from the family as a basic unit of the social system as also the filial ties with the parents.\textsuperscript{145}

Whatever may be its usefulness in moulding the Mizo society, the Zawlbuks was a very powerful institution which exercised the greatest sway in establishing social norms and customs among the early Mizo people.

(2) Bawi Custom:

Like other societies, the early Mizo society also had various institutions. The Bawi custom was one of such institutions. It was one of the oldest and the most popular institutions of the early Mizo society. A Bawi was an individual who was dependent upon a Lushai chief for any reasons.\textsuperscript{146} If such Bawis were able-bodied, they were expected to work for the chief and in return, they would get food, shelter and security of life from the chief. According to Lewin, “Boi (Bawi) is the term in their Mizo dialect, which betokens a person who has lost the right of individual freedom of action, but in all other respects the word ‘Slave’ would be in applicable.”\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{145} N. Chatterji: \textit{Zawlbuks as a Social Institution}, Op. Cit. p. 22
\textsuperscript{146} A.G. Mc Call: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 121
The origin of the Bawi custom is not known but is believed that it was as old as the politics of chieftainship in the Mizo society.\textsuperscript{148} It was none but only the chief who alone could keep Bawis with them in the early Mizo society.

Traditionally, there were three categories of Bawis in the Mizo Society, viz

(a) Inpuichhung Bawi;

(b) Chemsen Bawi; an

(c) Tuklut Bawi.

Besides the traditionally recognised Bawis there was another category of Bawi known of Fatlum Bawi.\textsuperscript{149}

\begin{itemize}
\item[(a)] \textbf{Inpuichhung Bawi:} \quad The first category of Bawi were the Inpuichhung Bawi. ‘In’ meant house, ‘Pui’ big and ‘Chhung’ meant within.\textsuperscript{150} Thus, the term Inpuichhung literally meant ‘within the big house. This term was applied to all those persons who took refuge in the Chief’s house due to poverty or hunger, sickness and distress. Widows, Orphans and others who are unable to support themselves and had none to support them formed the bulk of this category of Bawis.

The Inpuichhung Bawis were treated as part of the Chief’s household and do all the Chief’s work in return for their food and shelter. The Chief, like his subjects had his own jhum. So, the male Inpuichhung Bawis cut and cultivate his jhum and attend to his fish traps. The female Bawis that is both women and girls used to undertake all the household works of the Chief such as fetching up water and wood, cleaned the daily requirement of rice, made cloths, weed the jhum and also look after the Chief’s
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{149} Lalbiakthanga: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 25
\textsuperscript{150} A.G. Me Call: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 121
\textsuperscript{151} J. Shakespear: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 46

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children. They have to do very little more work than they would have to if they were independent. Moreover, they are free of all their anxiety for their tomorrow. In return for the labour they rendered, the Bawis got food and lived in the chief’s house and some of them often wear the Chief’s ornaments and also used guns and weapons belonging to the chief as if it were their own.

The Inpuichhung Bawis are allowed to acquire private property. They can purchase their freedom by paying one Mithun or its equivalent in cash or goods once he or she entered the Chief’s house.

When a male Inpuichhung Bawi reaches a marriageable age, the Chief would procure a wife for him. In that case, the new couples had to serve the chief for three years and lived in the Chief’s house after which they can leave the chief and live in a separate house if they so desired. But the period of three years would be extended to another three years if the male Bawi married a female Bawi that means the new couple have to lives six years in the Chief’s house and had to work for the chief during this period. After this period, he set up a house of his own and is known as Inhrang Bawi. ‘In’ meant house and ‘Hrang’ meant separate. Therefore, Inhrang Bawi literally meant a Bawi who was separated from the chief and lived in a separate house. The Inhrang Bawi had to work for himself but he is still in some respects a Bawi. If he kills any animal, he has to give a hind leg to the Chief and failure to do this would entail a fine of one Mithun or its equivalent in favour of the Chief. If the Chief is in want of rice, the Bawis

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152 Ibid.
153 Ibid. pp. 46-47
were expected to help him if they have any surplus and at the same time, if a Bawis is in want, he can look to the Chief for help.\textsuperscript{154}

When a female Bawi attained a marriageable age, she was allowed to marry. In such case, the Chief would receives the marriage price but would make no further claim on her or her family. But if she become a widow and remarry again, the Chief will again receive whatever sum is paid as her marriage price.\textsuperscript{155}

The Inpuichhung Bawis were by no means slave in the accepted sense of the term. In fact, many clever Bawis had risen from being a Bawi to the Chief's most trusted adviser and it is by no means unusual for a Chief to take a favourite Bawi into his own family by performing a ceremony called Saphun, meaning adoption.\textsuperscript{156} In such case, the Bawi would lost his former clan identification and would be considered member of the Chief's clan.\textsuperscript{157}

(b) \textbf{Chemsen Bawi:} The second category of Bawi in the early Mizo society was the Chemsen Bawis. Chem means knife/dao and Sen means red or in short Chemsen means a murderer.\textsuperscript{158} Those criminals who, to escape from the consequences of their ill deeds took refuge in the chief's house. Also, debtors, thieves and another vagabonds, who to avoid punishments for the wrongs they committed took refuge in the chief's house by touching the chief's Sutpu\textsuperscript{159} to escape revenge at the expense of their own or their children’s freedom. Then, the chief would grant refuge to those who were

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\textsuperscript{154} Ibid p. 24
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid
\textsuperscript{159} Op. Cit. p. 20
Dr. Sangkima: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 40
Dr. Sangkima: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 40

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in danger of being killed by those they had injured or their relatives and as a result of it; they became a Bawi of the chief. After this, no one could do harm to him as the avenger would be counted enemy of the chief if he continued to make attempts of vengeance.

The Chemsen Bawis do not live in the Chief’s house and had a separate house to lived in and work for themselves. But they remained as Bawi during their life time and their children are also considered Bawi just like them. However, such Bawis could purchase their freedom by payment of She-Mithun, Calculated as equivalent to Rs.40/- in the pre- 1928 period. Such Bawis, however, had one obligation that the marriage price of their daughters were generally given to the chief.

(c) **Tuklut Bawi:** The Tuklut Bawis were the third category of Bawis in the traditional Mizo society. Tuk means promise and Lut means to enter. Therefore, the Tuklut Bawi means the Bawi who promised to enter. This type of Bawi comprised of only those who were defeated in war or raid and to save their skins deserted their party and joined the victors. They promised that they and their descendants would obey the victorious chief and will become the chief’s Bawi.

A Tuklut Bawi could lived in a separate house with his family. He can also purchase his freedom by payment of a Mithun or its equivalent in value to the chief. If there are three or four persons in one household, one Mithun will release them all. And as a rule, the daughters of Tuklut Bawi are not considered Bawi.

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161 Ibid p. 41
163 Ibid p. 122
165 Ibid
Besides the above discussed Bawis, there was another type of Bawi known as Fatlum Bawi. Fatlum means youngest child; and the word child here signifies a son. Therefore, the youngest son, who inherits the ancestral property of his father also inherited the Fatlum Bawi. Such a Bawi could not purchase his freedom and would remain as Bawi throughout his life.

The Bawi custom which evolved through the ages became a recognised institution in the early Mizo society. No one was forced to became a Bawi and they became a Bawi from their own free will. The children of the Bawi became Bawi by birth but he could buy back his freedom. When he became Bawi, he was protected by the chief and was given food too. As such, the chief’s house became a paradise for vagabonds as well as offenders. The British administrators, however, did not fully understand the system which had prevailed among the Mizos before they advanced into the Lushai Hills and merely referred the system as slavery. The Bawis were not slaves in the real sense of the term. Their conditions were quite different from that of a slave. They were miscalled slaves only by those ignorant of their real condition.

(3) Sal:

Sal is a Mizo word for slavery. Sals are persons captured in raids and are the personal property of their captors who could be sold from one to another. As there were inter tribal feuds and inter clan feuds among the early Mizos, many people were made captive and those captives became the Sal of their captors. As such, every household was entitled to keep as many Sal as it could collect. But they could be

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165 Lalbiakhanga: Op. Cit. p. 25
166 Dr. Sangkima: Op. Cit p. 41

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redeemed by paying a big ransom. Unlike the neighbouring state of Tripura, the number of Sal among the Mizos was very few.\textsuperscript{169} As a rule, the Sals were well treated by their captors.

(4) \textbf{Tlawmngaihna:}

Tlawmngaihna is one of the most valued traits of the early Mizos. The early Mizo parents taught its value to their Children at home. The word has no exact equivalent in English and is very difficult to explain clearly. It means to be unselfish, courteous, considerate, courageous, industrious, kind, generous, persevering, and in short, it means possessing all good qualities of life.\textsuperscript{170} A man who possess Tlawmngaihna must always be ready to help others and must try to surpass others in doing his ordinary daily tasks efficiently. Shri J. Malsawma says that Tlawmngaihna is doing good things for other without expecting any reward.\textsuperscript{171} Thus, a man who possess the precepts of Tlawmngaihna did not expect any good things form other but was ready to help others and even spent what he had for others.

It is very difficult to give an exact definition of Tlawmngaihna. It can be better understand by its examples and can be shown in different ways.

(a) \textbf{Helping the Sick:} It is customary for the Lushais to help the sick person in different ways. If a person is sick, all the villagers combined and carry the sick person to the hospital. If some one from a far away village has to be carried into hospital, he is carried by his own villagers to the next village and the villagers of the next village will carry the sick person to the next village and so on until the hospital is

\textsuperscript{170} Dr. Sangkima: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 43
\textsuperscript{171} C. Lalluia: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 8
reached. For this, two young men are sent as Zualko\(^{172}\) to the next village to inform the next villagers that a sick man is on the way. As soon as they get the news, a village that possess Tlawmngaihna will go to meet the convoy at the boundary of their lands and will carry the sick man to the next village. Again if a man falls sick in the cultivating season, his fellow villagers are expected to weed his fields for him free of cost to show their Tlawmngaihna. Supposing some one got sick while on hunting or while going to his field and was not in a position to go by himself to his house, all the available male will carry him to the village or if they were not in a position to carry him, they have to called other to carry the man to the village. Thus, Tlawmngaihna can be practiced by a village as a corporate body as well as by individuals.\(^{173}\)

(b) **Zualkova Tlan (Going as Messenger):** In the early days, there was no post system among the Mizos and letter could not be send among them. Whenever they wanted to send anything to other places, they sent Zualko who will carry message. If someone died in a village and their relatives in other village were to be informed, they will send Zualko, for which the young men are always ready. Those Zualko will go and informed the relatives of the deceased in other village and immediately will return back after imparting the information. At all time the young men were always ready to go. This showed their Tlawmngaihna.

(c) **When Someone Died:** If some one died in a village and there was an order not to go out, all the villagers will stay in the village. All the parents will go to the house of the deceased person to console the bereaved family. All the young men will dig the grave and all the ladies will collect firewood from each house and will carry


\(^{173}\) *Ibid*
water for the bereaved family. They will also tried to help the bereaved family where it was needed. They will do all these to show their Tlawmngaihna.

(d) **Went Out on Hunting or Shooting:** When a group of people went out for hunting, there was a moral competition among the young men to exhibit Tlawmngaihna. A man who possesses Tlawmngaihna should do more than the other, should work more in building the shelter for the night and in collecting wood for the fire and should take less food than other. Again, when they met the animal, one who possessed Tlawmngaihna should ask his friends to shoot first. Moral code, which concerned man only was called Mipa Tlawmngaihna.\(^{174}\)

(e) **Nula (Girl ) Tlawmngaihna:** Tlawmngaihna among the girls was measured in different ways. The girls had no leisure time from their childhood. They have to do many things like fetching water, carrying firewood, pounding rice, cooking food, etc. When they grow up, their Tlawmngaihna was measured by the way they received and welcomed their Inleng or suitor.\(^{175}\) Sometimes, she had many Inlengs but even on such night, she had to chat till very late at night and till they leave, she has to show her smiling face. Even though she chat with her Inleng till late at night, She have to get up very early in the morning to do domestic works pounding of rice and when the sun arose, she should have gone to Jhum. When she goes to jhum, she have to carry the implements of the young men and she also have to wash their dirty cloths and stitch their cloths. Under such condition, it was not possible to be continuously cheerful but they have to do it to show their Tlawmngaihna.

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\(^{174}\) Dr. Sangkima: *Op. Cit.* p. 43

\(^{175}\) *Ibid*
Many other instances can be cited of the operation of Tlawnngaithna but the above will suffice to explain its operation in practice. It is really a very good moral code enforced solely by public opinion.\textsuperscript{176}

Those who possessed much Tlawnngaithna did not go unrewarded. Val-Upas always noticed and watched the movements of each and every young men and rewarded the one whom they thought possessed the most in a village. Such person were rewarded by organizing a special function in which rice beer was offered in a cup called Tlawnngai No, usually made of the biggest horn. As a mark of honour and felicitation, he was offered the first drink, followed by the chief and the rest. That No was the highest Award ever presented to a meritorious person among the early Mizos.\textsuperscript{177}

F. **Kuts/Festivals:**

The exact origin of Kut, a Mizo word for festival was lost in oblivion. Some believed that it had its origin from Thlanrawkpa, a famous Mizo legendary originator of feast when he performed the Khuangchawi feast.\textsuperscript{178} It appears that Kuts had been observed while the Mizos were in Burma, more specifically while they lived between the Run river and the Tiau river.\textsuperscript{179} There are three kinds of Kut- Mim kut, Pawl Kut and Chapchar Kut and the people eagerly looked forward to all these Kuts as they enjoyed themselves on such occasions.

(1) **Mim Kut:**

This Kut is generally held in the later past of August or early part of September when the first crops particularly maize was ready for reaping. It was held in honour of

\textsuperscript{176} N.E. Parry: *Monograph, Op. Cit.* p. 21
\textsuperscript{177} Dr. Sangkima: *Op. Cit.* p. 43
\textsuperscript{178} K. Zawla: *Op. Cit.* p. 50
\textsuperscript{179} Dr. Sangkima: *Op. Cit.* p. 62
the dead and was also known as ‘Thitin’ meaning departure of the dead spirit. It was also known as Tahna Kut, meaning ‘feast of weeping’ as the women wept, longing for their love one who had die. In this Kut, offerings of Maize, vegetables, bread etc. were made to the deceased. It was sometime called Mitthi Kut, meaning festival of the dead.

It is said that this Kut had originated form the legendry lovers. Tlingi and Ngama. Both felt in love and got married. Soon after, Tlingi, the wife died, leaving Ngama, her husband alone. Ngama felt so lovely after the death of his wife and wept and wept and one day while weeping he felt into a state of trance and went to the Mitthi khua and met his beloved wife Tlingi and found her very thin. When he ask the reason, his wife told him about the scarcity of food and told him to go back and made offering of maize, cucumber, vegetables, etc. So that she can eat to her satisfaction. Ngama, when he wakes up from his trance did accordingly. Ngama once again felt into a state of trance and visits the Mitthikhua and found his wife very fat and asked her the reason. Tlingi told him that she was fat because of the offerings he made. When Ngama wake up, he told his friends what he had experienced and made offerings to his wife every year.\(^{180}\)

Normally, this Kut lasted for 3 days. During these days, offerings were made to the dead one. After the third day, the offerings were taken back and eaten.

(2) **Pawl Kut:**

This festival was celebrated soon after the harvest was over, sometimes in the month of December. Everyone is presumed to have completed his harvest and gathered his crops when this festival is celebrated. Sometimes, it may be called a sort of harvest

\(^{180}\) K. Zawla: *Op. Cit.* pp. 54-55
thanks giving or harvest festival.\textsuperscript{181} None can lay claim to any crop left over in his field after this festival. Although this Kut was meant for children only, the adults freely took part in it.

Its origin can be traced back to the time when the Mizos lived in the Shan state in Burma. When they were living in this area, a famine known as ‘Thingpui Tam’ (tea famine) visited the Mizos which continued for three consecutive years. The next year, they were relieved from the disaster and had bumper crops and everybody had plenty to eat. The chief attributed this to the blessing of the God called Khawzim Pathian and suggested to his Upas that they should honour the gods by preparing a public feast in which all the people might enjoy meal to their heart’s content. The Upas agreed upon and the Tlangau proclaimed the orders and everyone even the poorest was asked to kill a cock or a hen and invite their neighbours to share one’s meal. Some even killed pigs. Every year, they celebrated this festival at the same time and thus came into existence the Pawl Kut.

A few days before the festival starts, men went for hunting and setting traps to catch animals, birds and fishes for this occasion. If they could not procure enough meat, they would kill fowls and some even killed pigs.\textsuperscript{182}

On this day, children were dressed up in all their fine clothes and in the evening, the mothers escort their children with food, eggs and meats and gathered together at the memorial platform at the out skirt of a village where they enjoyed what they called

\textsuperscript{181} Dr. Sangkima: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 63
\textsuperscript{182} B. Laiithangliana: \textit{Mizo Chanchin, Op. Cit.} p. 309
Chhawnghnawt. On this occasion, they tried to put food and meat to one another’s mouth in spite of already full mouth. Men and women of young age joined the children in the feast. On this occasion even the poorest in the village also killed fowls and eat meat and egg was a compulsory item. This Kut lasted only for a day.  

(3) Chapchar Kut:

It is the most popular festival of the primitive Mizos which was celebrated with great pomp for 4 days. It was usually held sometimes in the end of March or in the beginning of April every year. It is a spring festival celebrated first after the cutting of the jhum. The general notion of the festival was that it was to offer thanks giving for completion in cutting of jhum successfully in spite of the risk of physical danger. This festival was set apart mainly for the adults although all the people in the village took part in it.

The origin of this festival can be traced back to the time when the primitive Mizos lived in the Chin-state of Burma. When the Mizos lived in this area, once after the cutting of the jhum, the villagers along with their chief went for hunting. But they returned home without success. On this occasion, the chief ask his followers to contribute a pot of Zu and he contributes a big pot of Zu. Then they started drinking Zu and they were very happy. In the next year too, they did the same thing at the same

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183 Chhawnghnawt- It was a feast held on the Pawl Kut (Festival) and Chapchar Kut occasions by children and young people in the village square or near the memorial platforms. Children, young men and women stuffed meat and rice into one another’s mouths amidst merriment.
time. As they drink Zu and dance at the same time every year, the ‘Chapchar Kut’ came into being.187

To celebrate this Kut, the villagers prepared rice beer and the men folk went for hunting animals and catching fish for the feast.188

On the first day, the Lusei clans killed pigs, fowls and Zu was drink. The next day, the Ralte killed pigs, followed by the other clans. On the first day, the young men and women should dance the whole night otherwise they could not dance again the other night. In the evening of the second day, the whole population gathered in the open space in the village, dressed in their best. They brought rice, eggs and meat and tried to force the food down the throats of their friends which is known as Chhawnghnawt. After dark, the young men and girls came together in houses of well-to-do people and performed dance called ‘Chai’ till daylight. In the Chai the young men sat with their backs to the walls, each with a girl between his knees with her back to him. Individual performers dance in the middle, the remainder singing and clapping hands.189

On the third day, which is known as Zuthing Chawini, more Zu is drunk and they continue to drink Zu until the supply runs out. On this day, the young men and women gathered together in the centre of the village and form a circle, every girl being between two youths, whose arms across over her neck, holding in their hands cloths which hang down behind like a curtain. Inside the circle, a drummer or a gong beater was there who chants continuously, the young people taking up the refrain and trading a slow measure in time with the song, while cups of zu are brought to them in rotation.


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The fourth day was known as ‘Zuthing ni’ which was passed in drinking zu. The performance was repeated again if the liquor holds out.\textsuperscript{190}

This festival was the happiest occasion in the social life of the Mizos and they all looked forward to the advent of this festival with great eagerness. During these days, no couple’s quarrels nor no squabbles were permitted in the family.\textsuperscript{191} On these days, no one was allowed to go to the Jungles. It was a common belief among the Mizos that anyone going into the jungles on these days would be devoured by a tiger. Therefore, all should observe public holiday.\textsuperscript{192}

G. Head Hunting Practices:

Head hunting, a tribal way of life was practiced by the Mizos in the past. They were, therefore, known as ‘Milula Hnam’, meaning ‘Head Hunters’ or ‘Head-Hunting people’ by the British and other people of the plain. They took pride in killing and cutting the head of men as the person who was most admired in the early Mizo society was ‘Mi that Sakap’ which means ‘slayer of both men and animals’. As Shakespear said “… a man who had killed his man was though more highly of than one who had killed his man was thought more highly of than one who had not, and therefore, when a man did kill a person he brought the head home to show that he was speaking the truth….\textsuperscript{193} As such, head hunting became a part of their life.

The early Mizos carried out head hunting mainly for sacrificial purposes. They first needed head to be used at the ceremonies performed at the funeral of their chiefs; secondly they needed heads to supply themselves with servitors in another world either

\textsuperscript{190} ibid.
\textsuperscript{191} Challiana: Op. Cit. p. 6
\textsuperscript{192} Dr. Sangkima: Op. Cit. p. 64
\textsuperscript{193} J. Shakespear: Op. Cit. p. 59

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in Mitthi khua or Pialral and lastly they also needed heads to prove that he was a warrior and a slayer of man.\textsuperscript{194} The heads which he collected would be displayed as trophies in the Zawlbuk.\textsuperscript{195}

In the early period, the Mizos were not allowed to kill woman and carry away their heads. But in course of time, it became a constant practice among them to kill and carry off not only the head of women but also that of a pregnant women which was taken as equivalent to killing two persons at a time.\textsuperscript{196}

When head hunting expedition was carried on, even if a single person is killed in the raid, every person in the attacking party is entitled to all the honours pertaining to a slayer of a man.\textsuperscript{197} After the raid, a fore runner was sent to their families at home to convey the news of the raid. When the heads of the enemies were brought home, even children were given dao to hit the head which was considered as tanta/mount to killing his enemies. Thus, among the early Mizos, head hunting became a part of their life and continued this custom till the British occupation of the Lushai Hills.

\textsuperscript{194} Pialral, \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 54
\textsuperscript{195} F K. Lehman: The Structure of Chin Society, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, reprint 1980. p. 186
\textsuperscript{196} John Rowlins: On the Manners, Religion and Laws of the Cucis or Mountaineers of 'Tipra', \textit{Asiatic Researches, Vol II}, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, reprint 1979. p. 141
\textsuperscript{197} J. Shakespear: \textit{Op. Cit.} p. 60