APPENDICES
Introduction

There are a dozen major hill communities in northern Thailand and northern Myanmar. Karen, Hmong, Lahu, Akha, Yao, H'tin, Lisu, Lua and Khamu are the important tribes in Thailand, whereas the Shan, Kachin, Wa, and Karen are the prominent groups in Myanmar. During my field trip to the provinces of northern Thailand and northern Myanmar, I discovered many cultural aspects which are very akin to that of the Nagas. Hence, it is my interest to mention a few facts about the socio-economic and political institutions of some of these communities which I managed to gather through interviews and literary sources.

1. THE HMONG

The Hmong settlement is concentrated in thirteen provinces of Thailand (Technical Service Club 1995: 16). The Hmong, more commonly referred to as the Meo - a variation of the Chinese term 'Miao' and a name which the Hmong themselves strongly despise - are relatively recent arrivals in Indo-China from their ancestral homelands in regions of central and southern China.

The Hmong are experts in hill-farming, using the slash-and-burn technique of growing rice. This method of cultivation involves cutting down the virgin forest, and when the largest pieces of timber have been removed, the rest is burned so that the ashes act as fertilizer when the seeds are planted at the beginning of the rainy season. Rice-fields prepared in this way can only be
used for two or three years before the soil loses its fertility through erosion of the topsoil under the monsoon rains. New fields must then be prepared while the old ones recover under secondary vegetation. This may take 15 to 20 years, during which time the Hmong may have moved to a new location in order to be within easy walking distance of new fields.

There are about one and a half million Hmongs: Laos about 200,000, northern Thailand 50,000, northern Vietnam 220,000 and China 1,129,000, where they are mainly situated in the southern province of Kweichow.

The Hmong in Laos and northern Thailand (Chiangmai Province in particular) can be divided into two main dialect groups - the Green Hmong and the White Hmong. The names are based on traditional dress colours.

A Hmong village may contain anything up to 70 or 80 households, though the average seems to be about 10. Each clan represented in the village will have its own leader, usually the senior householder, and the various clan leaders make up the council of elders, which adjudicates in cases of disputes within the village. As is the case with the Tangkhul Naga, an amount of bride-wealth is paid by the boy's household to the girl's. A marriage feast is organised by the bridegroom in the house of the bride after which the bride goes to live in her husband's household.

Hmong men often take more than one wife for the basic reason that more land can be put under cultivation. Usually the various wives, of whom the first is recognized as the senior, live in the same house fairly amicably, each responsible for her own children and for her own poultry and vegetable garden.
Maize is an alternative staple to rice, and the Hmong are experts in the raising of cattle, pigs, chickens and goats.

Hmong religion is a combination of pantheism and shamanism with the emphasis on ancestor-worship (ibid: 21). Whenever sick, a Hmong constantly feels himself prey to the whims of a spirit world whose fickleness the village shaman tries to control. Like the Tangkhul Naga community, in case of illness, death or inauspicious events, the shaman will immediately be called in to undertake a ‘journey’ into the spirit-world through trance, and to attempt to mediate by the offering of an animal sacrifice to the malevolent spirits responsible for the current misfortune. All natural and man-made disasters will be seen by the Hmong in these terms and all this must be incorporated into a cosmic view dominated by the hope that the shaman will be able to mediate successfully.

2. THE LISU

There are about half a million Lisu living in mountain villages widely scattered over southwestern China and Burma and Thailand. They are mainly concentrated in China’s Yunnan Province, but other Lisu settlements dot the hills throughout north and northwestern Burma and northern Thailand. The Lisu are found living scattered throughout the nine provinces of northern Thailand (ibid: 34). Their villages vary greatly in size from only half a dozen households to over one hundred. Some of the Lisu villages in northern Thailand, among whom I stayed for a few weeks in the early part of 1998 in relation to my research, are yet to find a permanent settlement. Individual Lisu households may move in and out of the village, and frequently a whole community may change location to escape the visitations of disease, to avoid hostile neighbours or to move to better farming lands when the soil in their area becomes too poor.
Before a village moves, an advance party makes a provisional choice of a new site which, like those practices of the Nagas, must then be confirmed by divination. The Lisu, like the Tangkhul, a major southern Naga group, carefully lay three grains of rice on a ground which they hammered flat with a knife-handle, and cover the grains with a bowl. After about half an hour they examine the grains. If they are undisturbed, the site is deemed good; but if insects have moved the rice, the site must be abandoned as unhealthy. The Lisu scratch out a living from the steep hills by slash-and-burn cultivation of dry hill rice, which is their staple food.

Lisu generally build wooden houses directly on the ground, or build bamboo houses raised on stilts. Roofs are thatched with grass. Inside, like that of the Nagas, the fireplace in the main room is the social centre of the house; sleeping quarters are partitioned off by bamboo walls.

On ritual occasions, Lisu feast on pork washed with liberal quantities of maize whisky. Lisu village society, at least in those hamlets I visited in northern Thailand, is extremely egalitarian. Lisu communities seldom feel the need for a headman. Usually village leadership is vested in a group of elders. The most revered man in any Lisu community is the keeper of the village shrine, who like the guardian spirit himself, is addressed as ‘Old Grandfather’.

Above the village level Lisu are organized into a number of patrilineal clans, but apparently these have little significance except that persons of the same clan cannot marry.

Besides those of their ancestors, Lisu recognize a multitude of spirits which include forest spirits, the household spirits, the
spirit of the locality, ghosts of dead men and supernatural beings, for example Wu-sa the Creator. Most Lisu supernatural beings may be safely ignored unless they cause trouble, whereupon spirit-doctors undertake to determine which spirit is responsible and to perform the necessary propitiation. In everyday life the priests and spirit-doctors are farmers like everyone else, but a priest has a special responsibility. He is the 'keeper of Lisu custom' and his specialized knowledge of traditions and Lisu folklore is essential to preserve the identity of the Lisu people.

3. THE SHAN

The Shan are members of the Thai group of peoples which is the most widely distributed in Indo-China, and includes the Ahom of Assam in the West, the Shan of Burma, the numerous Thai of China in the north and those of Laos and Thailand in the east. Although there is no satisfactory explanation of the meaning or origin of the name, 'Shan' is commonly accepted as applying to those Thai-Shan found in Burma. In Burma alone there are around 2 million Shans.

During the several centuries between the fall of Pagan and the rise of Tabinshwehti, Shan ruled at Ava, Sagaing and at Katha and in some parts of lower Burma as well as in the Shan States itself. There was, however, little unity among them, and the saophas, chiefs, were constantly making war against each other. Even in the periods when there were powerful kings at Pegu and Ava, the saophas enjoyed almost complete autonomy within their own states and this lasted through the Burmese ascendancy under the Alaungpaya dynasty until the British annexation was concluded in 1887.
The eastern plateau of Burma, which the Shan inhabit, is officially designated as the Shan States. This is an area of some 60,416 square miles of which 57,816 square miles represent the Shan States proper while 2,600 square miles represent the Wa State with which it was amalgamated for administrative purposes. Pockets of Shan communities exist in other parts of Burma. Like the Nagas, the Shan are able agriculturists and rice is their staple food.

The height of the Shan plateau is between 2,500 - 3,500 feet with peaks rising to 6,000 - 8,000 feet. Although the Shan are often referred to as a hill people, the most densely populated areas are the low river valleys.

4. THE WA

Like the Nagas, the Wa are best known as the legendary headhunters of highland Burma; they inhabit a wide area in the border zone between Burma and China. The Wa population is around 400,000. Most Wa, who speak a Mon-Khmer language, can be found in a 100 mile long block of mountains running north-south between the Salween and Mekong rivers. 'Wild Wa' or Kawa inhabit the Wa States of Burma, whereas 'Tame Wa' or Lawa are found occupying the larger surrounding areas of the Burmese and Chinese Shan states and also in Northern Thailand.

The Wa villages, of 200 to 700 houses, are continually engaged in warfare and headhunting like the Nagas. And, like the Nagas, they occupy high ridges and are protected by fortified earthen ramparts which are themselves often surrounded by deep moats. The entrance consists of a single narrow tunnel of up to 10 metres in length through which one crawls to a heavy wooden door.
Alliances between villages are formed only for the purposes of warfare and have little political or economic significance. Powerful villages will occasionally attempt to take tribute from weaker neighbors, but this is normally economically insignificant.

The Wa are very diligent cultivators who use the entire mountain slope beneath their villages, growing maize, beans and various other crops and rice on the warmer slopes, often several thousand feet below. A good amount of rice is used in the preparation of alcoholic beverages. Marriages, funerals and rituals relating to the agricultural cycle are occasions for great feasts. Here the quantity of food prepared and cattle slaughtered by a particular host expresses the power of his ancestors, and serves as an offering to assure future prosperity and fertility. The symbolic proof of prosperity is the number of buffalo skulls trophies displayed in front of a house. Human skulls are used in much the same way as buffalo skulls among the more prosperous groups.

Among the Wa, headhunting serves many of the same functions as ritual feasting among surrounding groups. Through ritual, a captured head is transformed into a kind of pseudo-ancestor of the captor, and as such is considered able to increase the fertility of the crops. If prosperity cannot be assured at least starvation can be averted. The mounting of the skull trophies on poles in the sacred grave outside the village is often accompanied by a sacrifice and a feast.

Headhunting is not a sporadic activity among the Wa but a regular part of the agricultural year. It has a season, March through April, just before sowing, and is well integrated into the ritual cycle. Heads may not be taken from within the village, and it is considered impolite to take heads from villages on the same ridge. Rather, it is said that heads taken from the greatest
geographical distance have the best effect on crop yield. However, heads are not generally taken outside Wa country as they are apparently only ritually powerful if taken from groups competing within the same economic sphere.

The greater the number of heads taken, the better will be the harvest. The prestige of the individual who captures a large quantity of heads is equivalent to the great feast-giver of wealthier societies. Headhunting is of such social importance that those who have failed to obtain a requisite number of heads will have difficulty in procuring a wife.
APPENDIX II

THE MIZOS

Introduction

Besides Mizoram (Mizo = hill-man; ram = land), the Mizo (Fig. 16 & 17) are found in Tripura, Manipur, Myanmar and Bangladesh. It was my pleasure to be with them from October to December 1997. In my endeavour to know about their culture for comparative study, it was a pleasant surprise for me to find so many cultural traits which are so similar with that of the Nagas, in particular the Tangkhul, the community to which I belong. I, therefore, consider it a privilege to relate some of these interesting findings.

1. Festival

Three festivals are observed in a year. They are:

(i) Chapchar Kut: It is celebrated in March, and is the greatest festival of all. Best garments (Fig. ...) are worn and much rice-beer, Zu, is consumed during this festive occasion. They stuff meat and eggs in one another’s mouths, and no undesirable atmosphere is allowed during this festivity. Young men and women perform that beautiful dance, Chai, in a big circle (Fig.16).

(ii) Mim Kut: It is a festival of the dead, and is celebrated in August when the maize harvest is over. Not much pomp and rejoicing as that of the Chapchar Kut. Offerings are made to the family members of the dead. August, therefore, is known as Thitin Thla in Mizo which literally means “the month of Farewell to the Dead”.

247
(iii) Pawl Kut: This festival, celebrated in the month of December after the paddy harvest is over, is primarily for children. Pawl Kut literally means "the ingathering feast".

2. Marriage

The bride is purchased with a sum of money demanded by the bride's parents. This sum is distributed among the near relatives of the bride. The bride brings with her a set of clothing such as Puanpui, Puandum, and loin cloths. Also she brings a basket called Thul for keeping her personal belongings.

On the marriage day the bride's family kills a female pig for fruitful offspring. Half of the pig is presented to the bridegroom's family.

3. Death

The Mizo believe in life after death. They bury their dead in a carefully dugout grave. They believed that the spirit did not go to the Land of the Dead, Mitthi Khua, at once, and that is why they kept a little portion of the food in a bowl for the spirit whenever the family set down for meal. The spirit of the dead roamed about the village and often visited the house for some months. The spirit proceeded to the Mitthi Khua after the performance of the farewell festival given to the dead, Mlm Kut, in August. The spirits were believed to go to the Mitthi Khua by way of "Rih Dil", a lake on the Mizoram - Myanmar border. Mitthi Khua (village of the dead) is considered much inferior world where life is more troublesome and difficult than in the world of the living, and to avoid going there, the Mizos try their best to fulfill all the possible social obligations like acquiring human-
heads (that which enhance their social status), kill tigers (which prove their valour), and so on. Those who die after the success in earning a good name for themselves are immediately admitted into the Pialral (paradise) where they live in perpetual bliss with plenty of food.

4. Religion

The Mizo people worshipped Pathian or Pu Vana, which literally means “one who dwells in Heaven”, as the giver of blessings and protector. They employed a priest, Sadawt, to perform sacrifices that were offered for blessings, good health, war and productive harvest.

They were scared of the devil called Ramhuai, which literally means “the spirit of the jungle”, who dwelled in caves, big rocks, mountains and jungles.

As Ramhuai was thought to be the source of all the evil things like miseries, diseases and death, he has to be propitiated with offerings of meat and zu (rice beer) and sacrifices of pigs, chickens and other domestic animals. Puithiam, the village priest, offered these sacrifices.