CHAPTER SEVEN
SOCIAL CELEBRATIONS

The humming activities of year round tribal life among the Kukis revolve within the ambit of earning bread for survival without consideration for future growth and development on an agro-based economic system which has no place for saving, consumption being conspicuous and community bias. Such a life of routine nature becomes obviously monotonous which must find expression in various forms of social celebrations to give vent to their longing for a life away from sacrosanct. In doing so, their structural functions of life are made often manifest in more than one way as illustrated below:

SAWM KIVAH or SAWM JUNBH:

Under the present system of Sawm, some boys sleep together in different houses, where there are girls who are at the back and call of the boys. They live so closely with the family of the girls that they become almost identified as being members of the family of the girls. The boys of one particular 'Sawm' help the family of the girl in all possible way, even in the matter of cultivation when the family members of the girl fail...
to complete it in time. When there occurs a feast of
the Lawn of the village, the girl and the boys of her
'Sawm' go together taking care of each other during the
feast. Sometimes it so happens that the girl becomes
inebriated by over-drinking of rice-beer. In such a
situation, all the boys of the 'Sawm' take special care
for her and bring her home safely. Likewise, the girl
also take care of the boys. Even the parents and other
members of the family regard the boys as part of their
family.

With the passage of time, a stage came when most
of the 'Sawm' members grew up. Some of them pursued
diverse interests. Some had grown enough to fall in
love with some other girls. Even the 'Sawm' girl had
fallen in love either with a boy other than her own
'Sawm' members or with one of the 'Sawm' members.
They felt that time had come to part company and that
the 'Sawm' be disbanded. Under such circumstances, they
considered that it was best to have a farewell party
provided the parents of the girl gave consent to the
proposal. When such a situation arose, the question of
'Sawm Kivah', meaning thereby a feast of the 'Sawm'
cropped up for consideration.
When such a 'Sawm Kivah' is proposed, the members of one particular 'Sawm', the number of which varies between ten and twelve, discuss the proposal with the parents of a 'Sawm' girl. If they agree, a date for it is decided upon and preparations start for the same. Normally, the young boys buy a small pig which is kept under the charge of the parents of the girl. As the day for such 'Sawm Kivah' approaches, the girl of the 'Sawm' also requests her close friends to prepare a few pots of 'Zu' by way of helping her for the occasion. Those girls will, in their turn, ask their friends to help them. Thus, a chain of help for preparation of 'Zu' for the 'Sawm Kivah' is sought. Ultimately almost all the girls of the village are involved in this function. The same is true in the case of the boys of the 'Sawm'. Each of the 'Sawm' member asks his close friends to join him on the occasion. Ultimately, boys of the whole village are covered. In accepting such invitations each of the boy friend invited contributes one pot of 'Zu' on the day. Finally, it becomes usually the affairs of the whole village, though it is initially thought to be an affair only for a small group of ten or twelve boys. Of course, the particular boy members of the 'Sawm' bear the bulk of the expenditure for the occasion.
In the previous evening of the night before the 'Sawm' Kivah*, the members of the 'Sawm' serve one pot of 'Zu' to the parents of the girl wherein the Chief of the village along with his Council of Ministers, the Priest, the 'Tucha' and 'Becha' relatives of the parents of the girl are invited. The 'Sawm' members will request them all to join them in the feast and to extend all possible help to make the occasion a success.

Early the next morning, the 'Tucha' and the 'Becha' relatives of the girls' parents do all the needful. They take up the entire responsibility for the function. As the meat is cooked, all the invitees are asked to have it to their heart's content. But the Chief and his Council of Ministers, the Priest and the father of the girl or, in his place, his 'Becha Bul' will take the 'Sapang' or the head portion of the pig. In addition to this group of people, another group of the members of the 'Sawm', which hosts the feast and their 'Sawm-Nu', the girl of the 'Sawm', are given a portion of the meat kept apart by the 'Becha' of the girls' parents. The rest of the people take the feast at random, as normal feasting is done, without any formality.
On this day, the drinking method of the 'Zu' is such that apart from all other pots of 'Zu' served on the day, two particular pots are separately kept and these are served at a special place. One of them is the pot contributed by the boys of the 'Sawm', who host the feast. The other is the pot contributed by the parents of the girl. The 'Zu' contributed by the boys of the Sawm is first sipped by the Chief, followed by the Priest and then the father of the girl. Sometimes the mother of the girl is also included in this sipping spree. The style of sipping is that one full bottle of water is the measuring level called 'Aleng'. The bottle of water is poured to the pot of 'Zu' without ceasing, and whoever sips the 'Zu' is made to do so without ceasing until his level of sipping is finished. The level of sipping for the above VIPs is made double of the normal level. The same is done to the other pot of 'Zu' offered by the girl's parents, which is given to the boys of the 'Sawm'. The order of sipping among the 'Sawm' members is that the leader of the 'Sawm', called 'Sawm Upat', sips first. He is followed by others in order of seniority. While the 'Sawm' members sip, they are tied with a rope on their waist and bound to a place upon the rafter of the building, so that they do
not run away being unable to do justice to the level of sipping fixed for them. Thus, the 'Zu' contributed by the parents of the girl is sipped by the boys of the 'Sawm' and the girl, while the pot of 'Zu' contributed by the boys is sipped by the Chief and his Council of Ministers, the Priest, the father of the girl or his 'Becha' simultaneously. All the other pots of 'Zu' prepared on that day is served for drinking only and not for sipping.

The next day is meant for the Chief and his Council of Ministers, the Priest and the 'Tucha' and the 'Becha' relatives of the girl's father. A feast is arranged for them only and the pride of place is given to them by offering the head portion of the slaughtered pig. In doing so, each of those who had the privilege of eating the 'Sapang' brings one jar of 'Zu' each. On the other hand, the boys of the 'Sawm' who host the feast provide the meat for the day. They may buy another pig or some of their friends may make a gift of some cocks for the purpose. These are flayed, cooked and eaten along with the leaders who are offered the meat with 'Zu' on the day. After the feast, the elders retire. With the approach of the evening, the young boys and girls collect themselves at one place with a view to passing the night in singing and dancing.
On the stipulated third day of the feast, the young boys and girls, belonging to some other 'Sawm' would come with gifts of 'zu' and other eatables to help their friends who hosted the feast. In this way, they continue the feast for the third day. On this day, however, the elders do not take part in the feast or in the drinking bout. At the close of this day's feasting and drinking, the 'Sawm Kivah' comes to an end.

Thus, the beginning of gradual dissolution of the old members of the 'Sawm', which has hosted the feast, is initiated. On this occasion some of the boy members get betrothed or marry a girl. In case there is a younger sister of the disbanded Sawm girl, the sister continues to care for the remaining junior 'Sawm' members who may like to continue in the same 'Sawm' where they have so long been junior members, instead of joining some other 'Sawm'.

It is, therefore, in an entirely different situation that the 'Sawm' institution survives today. In view of the fact that the society is changing, most of the boys and girls have started looking for greener pastures of social mobility in the urban areas of the country. Despite this, the old system of 'Sawm' in somewhat decentralised form still survives.
'Lawm-siel-Kai' meaning thereby, fetching of the Mithun for the Lawm festival which is used to denote the festival itself, is decided by the members of the 'Lawm' for the purpose of having a feast of all the members in a year. When such a decision is taken, one jar of 'Zu' (Rice-beer) is offered to the Chief of the village by way of putting up an application for permission or approval. Every member who engages the 'Lawm' in his or her field offers one jar of 'Zu' to the members in the evening at his or her residence. When the turn of the senior member, called 'Lawm-Upa', comes to do so, instead of giving the 'Zu' to its members at his house in the evening, it is taken to the house of the Chief. The senior boy and the girl members accompany the 'Lawm-Upa' to the Chief's house. The Chief then enquires from them if such a costly affair could be undertaken in view of the prevailing economic condition. The 'Lawm-members' having considered the economic condition earlier say that there is justification for holding the feast which is called 'Lawm-Kivah' or 'Lawm-Siel-Kai'. After the matter is approved by the 'Semang-Pachong', council of Ministers, in a meeting, the Chief gives his consent. For the meeting, the Council of Ministers are given a jar of 'Zu'.
Then the 'Lawm' members go again with one jar of 'Zu' called 'Zubel', to the house of the Chief to formally place their request for allowing the Thiempu (Priest) to officiate in the cleansing rites of the village and dedicating himself to the proposed festival. This done, the 'Thiempu' is given a full cup or 'Umkhat' of wine. He takes the same and goes round all the lanes and byelanes of the village covering all the places. Prior to this, the 'Thiempu' performs divination by cutting the leg of a chicken which is kept covered with a kind of grass-turf called 'Phoipi'. The act of practising divination is to know the future of the village and is called 'Phoitan'. Some do this with eggs also and this is known as 'Ahtuisaan'. If the proceeding is found good, the cleansing rite of the village is considered to have been gone through properly. After all these formalities, the boys and girls of the 'Lawm' start preparations for the festival.

The 'Lawm', in doing so, first decide the amount or quantity to be contributed by every member of the 'Lawm'. They also allot some work to the girls for preparation of 'Zu' and also for pounding of rice every evening for the feast. They then decide whether the 'Mithun' for the feast called 'Lawm-Siel' belonging to a particular person
of the village or elsewhere has to be brought in cash or kind. The 'Mithun' for the feast is also brought and kept ready for slaughtering.

As per custom, the young boys of the Lawn hunt rats for presentation in the festival. Symbolically, 3 to 5 rats are counted for each girl member of the Lawn. In order to fulfil this obligation on their part, the young boy-members go in for rat hunting called 'Lawn Zuvai'. Whatever is caught by every boy is kept smoke-dried. In case of any shortage, they lengthen their period of hunting of rats until the required number is caught. On completion, they pool together all the rats and hand them over to the leaders of 'Lawn' who sort out the rats and tie them together in three or five in a bundle called 'Zulom'.

An evening, preferably in the month of November, is fixed for the Lawn members to decide the date of the feast. This meeting is generally held in the house of the Chief. Coupled with this, the 'Lawn' leaders find out partners of a boy and a girl from amongst the Lawn members. For that meeting, five to six jars of 'Zu' prepared beforehand are served. When the proceedings of the meeting are in progress, the leaders who confidentially hand-picked the pair of boy and girl partners earlier, announce by surprise about the different pairs of junior 'Lawn' members, much to their embarrassment. The purpose of such
declaration of the couples is to drink, dance, dine and work together during the feast. Such arranged partners are called in pairs and are made to drink wine together that evening in the meeting from two Mithun-horns, the ends of which are tied together by a string as a token of an official announcement of the pairs being accepted as partners for the feast. Drinking of wine from the two Mithun-horns bound together signifies their obedience, loyalty and devotion to the orders of the leaders. After drinking, the boy is asked to present the rat bundle called 'Julom' bound in threes or fives to his girl partner, thereby putting their seal of willingness to drink, dine, dance and work together during the Lawm feast. With the announcement of partners, the real atmosphere of the festival is created.

The 'Julom' (a bundle of rats) need not necessarily be rats. It may be substituted by any flesh of dried meat called 'Sagop' and cock or hen, depending on the availability and capacity of the 'Lawm' boy-member for presentation to his girl partner.

Paddy for the occasion is contributed only by the boy members of the Lawm for brewing rice-beer called 'Zu'. Such paddy is collected and put together at a place which
is called 'Chang-Hai'. The place of collection and storage may be selected anywhere. Every evening, the girl members will pound some quantity of the paddy for preparation of the occasion. The boys good humourly and in a jovial company help the girls in pounding the paddy. The paddy thus pounded is distributed among the girls for preparation of beer for the 'Lawm-Kivah' (Lawm feast). Rice for the feast is contributed exclusively by the Chief or his nominee in whose house the 'Lawm-Kivah' is to be held. Otherwise, normally the feast is held only at the residence of the Chief. Such contribution on the part of the performer or the Chief of the village is, in the like manner, pounded by the young boys and girls of his 'Tuchas' and 'Bechas'.

The 'Mithun' to be slaughtered for the occasion is called 'Lawm Siel'. This has to be purchased only from the contributions made by the young boy members of the 'Lawn'. The 'Mithun' may be from the village itself or from any other neighbouring villages, answering the right size and weight. A group of young boys is sent out to find a suitable 'Mithun' for the occasion. In the meantime, every girl of each pair contributes rice about one pot each for preparing beer which is known as 'Ah-Zu' and a jar of 'Siel-Zu'. Thus, contribution for
the occasion is divided among the boys and girls in two parts - the boys contribute paddy for the beer called 'Chang-Hai' and the price of the 'Mithun' called 'Lawm Siel Man' and the girls contribute only the beer known as 'Ah-Zu' and 'Siel-Zu'.

The boys and girls of the 'Lawm' fix a day or days for collection of firewood for the occasion. On such day or days, they go beating drum, gong and Mithun-horn while proceeding to the jungle for collection of fuel. On arrival, they settle down and start cutting and collecting the firewood. The collection of sufficient quantity of firewood over, they start homeward carrying the bundles. Before proceeding towards home, they dance and sing for three rounds, in accompaniment of drum, gong and blowing of 'Mithun-horn'. The leader of the firewood-collection team is called 'Lawm-Upa'. The song for such dance runs as follows:

Incidentally, the group is divided into two who sing in responsive style to each other.

First group:  
Thing gapou te,  
Gol ge nuto chonthing  
Gapou te.

Free translation:  
Let us go to fetch fire-wood,  
Let all the members of the Lawm  
Who are bosom friends, fetch the  
Fire-wood for the occasion.
Second group: Chon thing pohna, responding: Gol ge nu, in Chorus: Dai cham lah a, lengval ye.

Free Translation: The Lawm members are extremely busy gathering the fire-wood for the occasion of the festival.

(This song is sung on occasions of great festivals, such as, 'Lawm-Siel-Kai', 'Chon', etc.)

While singing this song two girls and one boy, selected for the dance, are to dance in the midst of the whole group who encircle them. After this, they prepare themselves to go back home in a procession. Such procession is led by a virgin girl who has no blemish in her body, which means that she does not have any defect in her person. On returning home, they form a circle without alighting their loads. Thus, the two girls and one boy who would dance in the jungle unburden themselves while others carry their load and thus commence dancing as the rest of the boys and girls start singing. They do the same thing for three rounds while others continue to sing with their load. After doing this for three times, the whole 'Lawn' alight their loads simultaneously with an exclamation - 'ho, Ho, Ho'. As they exclaim for three times, they also go to the jungle for the firewood for three times. They are welcomed on return with rice-beer
by a set of people called 'Lawn Tucha'. These Lawn Tuchas are selected from amongst the Lawn members by the Lawn leaders. Likewise, there are 'Lawm Becha' and 'Lawm Tungvah'. Such persons are selected by the leaders of 'Lawm' in consideration of their efficiency in performing the task assigned to the customary social people whose set of duties are already fixed as per custom. After collection of firewood, if the rice-beer called 'Chang Hai Zu' is found ready for consumption, the young boys of the 'Lawm' prepare themselves to go in search of a 'Mithun' for the 'Lawm Kivah'. Finding the right type of 'Mithun' for the purpose, they bring the same home. They will be welcomed by the girl members of 'Lawm' and also other people in general. The welcome song is as follows, which is sung after they are offered rice-beer by the girl members:

Siel lo hung veo vin,
Kholen kho siello hungveo vin,
Kholen kho siel abei leh eima kho ah
Leng siel tam nante.

Free Translation: Come, see the Mithun,
Come, see the Mithun of big village,
If the Mithun of big village is not available,
there are plenty of our Mithun village-Royal.

While singing the above song, the selected boys and girls for dance continue to dance until they do so three
rounds. After this, the whole crowd proceed towards the site of the Lawm feast. That night all the Lawm members sit drinking and dancing. The next day, all the Lawm girl-members who prepare 'Ah-Zu' and 'Siel Zu' start distilling their respective 'Zu' for the festival which is to start from the following day. This is called 'Zu Lhoh'. The leaders of the 'Lawm' go on around to every house to check the taste of the beer on invitation of each girl. While doing this, the leaders often get drunk. The tempo for the festival is thus created. The following day, the Lawn leaders go to inform the Chief and his Council of Ministers that everything is set for the festival. On receipt of this information, the Council of Ministers formally announce among the villagers to the effect that 'Lawm Kivah' festival is going to be held from the following day, and that no one should go out of the village. In case a person is found absent in the festival, the devils called 'Thilhas' consider him or her not as a villager. This may make the absentee fall an easy prey of the 'Thilhas' resulting in his/her ill health. The day is called 'Ah Zu Hom Ni'. In the early hours of the festival day, the village priest will propitiate with his 'Juphi' or spraying of 'Zu' inside the building where
the festival is to be held. He will also do the same in the front and the rear portions of the house. That done, all the girl-members of the 'Lawn' will bring their own 'Zu' together to the house where the festival is to take place. All the villagers sit together at the place fixed and the leaders of the 'Lawn' once again call the rolls and enquire if there is any person left out in the gathering. This precedes the distribution of 'Ah Zu Hom'. The distribution of the beer is done in the following manner:

The leaders of Lawn select one girl from amongst the Lawn members. Such girl has no blemish, which means that such girl must not have any defect in her body, nor has she have character-defamation nor is she morally loose and has lost her virginity.

The girl thus selected leads all other girls in the distribution of beer to the public. Each girl is supplied with bamboo cups prepared by her boy partner. So, being led by the selected girl, each girl offers her own brewed beer to all in her bamboo cup. While drinking, most of the villagers normally get drunk before the round is completed by all the girls. Often it is found that distribution of the beer by the girls continues till late at night.
The next day is the 'Siel Juneh Ni' meaning, the day of the beer being served for the 'Mithun'. The procedure is the same as above. The village priest does his propitiation and is soon followed with the announcement by the leaders demanding the presence of each and every villager. Before public assemblage, the Lawm boys and girls bring the tree with which the 'Mithun' is to be tied up and killed. This is called 'Lawm Siel Khuom'. They bring the 'Siel Khuom' and, on their arrival at the place, they erect the same at a spot which is earlier sanctified by the village priest. This is followed by the distribution of wine in exactly the same manner as the 'Ah Zu Neh' had been done the preceding day. The selected girl again leads other girls for the distribution of wine, while other girls distribute their respective wine to each and every one in small bamboo cups provided by their male partners. In this connection, it may be mentioned here that after completing the carrying of firewood for consecutively three days, on the fourth day, the boy members go to cut 'Lawm Siel Khuom', i.e. the post for the 'Mithun'. The cutting of 'Lawm Siel Khuom' is, therefore, done in between the collection of firewood and the 'Lawm Siel Zu Neh'. The kind of tree for the 'Siel Khuom' is the type of tree called 'Sething', 'Sahi'
in Manipuri. The beautiful bushes with straight trunks are selected and cleaned while keeping the bushes at the end of each branch, including the tompost bush of the main trunk.

On the erection of the 'Siel Khuom' the same day, all the girls and boys perform a dance in a circle mixing themselves alternately, and standing slightly bending forward. They do this dancing for three rounds. As they finish it, they sing in a doggerel as 'Li, Li, Li, Li, Li' and 'Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha'. Then they stand erect and again slightly bend forward on their waist, clap in quick succession as they move sidewise in rhythm with clapping, to the right first producing at the same time a sound 'Bru...U'. This is done three times. All the boys join hands on their shoulders leaving the girls in between them with their feet apart. As they are in such a pose, they bend thrice on the right side first and then, as they do so each time, they slightly move their body towards the left also three times. While doing so, they produce a sound 'He.....E'. After doing this, they straighten themselves and produce the sound 'Li, Li, Li, Li, Li' and 'Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha'. The old and the young are to take their position on a platform usually erected in every Kuki house which is called 'Kem'. The boy members of the Lawm
then bring out the 'Mithun' kept underneath the floor in an enclosure fenced with planks called 'Hongnoi'. As they bring the 'Mithun' out, they tie the same and the village priest propitiates it by saying - "This is friendly fun. Do not be offended with humiliation. Accept it sportively, and do not harm the youth with anger". Thus, the priest symbolically appeases the 'Mithun'. This is called 'Siel Lhai Na'. After this, the young boys of the village wrestle with the 'Mithun'. This is called 'Siel Bot'. The young boys are necessarily to wrestle it at least three times. If by that time it is not tamed, they continue the wrestling for two more times. It is believed that the Mithun should not be wrestled six times. It has to be necessarily three or five or seven times. Thus, when it is found sufficiently yielding, the Mithun is made to stand erect for high jump competition by the young boys and other strong married men who know the skill of high-jump. This is called 'Siel-Kal-Kitet'. He who jumps the highest is praised and recognised. He is offered with more 'Zu', specially by the old and married ladies, for generally girls feel shy to offer anything to the boys for their victory. This programme usually takes almost the whole day.
After this, the boys and the girls take the Mithun to a place earmarked for the procession to honour the man or men for their capabilities in different fields. This act of honouring a man or men is called 'Pah'. As they take the Mithun round the village towards the place of the 'Pah', they sing all the way. as follows:

Siel Kakai ye,
Changsiel len len (Some says alien lien),
Kakai ye.
Changsiel lenguikhao Vo tange,
Gol to nitnin Kanomme.
Gol to nitnin Kanomme,
Gol to tangkho kalamme.
Kasiel patchon kaba peh e,
Sijol apah vil velle.
Sijol banna Phungchong pah e,
Kadongma toh te ngon ne.

Free Translation:

Mithun is being harnessed,
A big Mithun is harnessed.
The big Mithun is tightly roped,
The occasion is being spent with exceeding joy.
The occasion is being observed with exceeding joy with friends
Dancing ceaselessly with friends on the occasion.
The Cotton earings of the Mithun looks magnificent,
Glittering as the field of Cotton flowering called 'Sijol'.
Seeing the beauty of the Mithun with earings of cotton
I cannot but compare it with my fiancee.
As they sing this song, the girls offer the Mithun all kinds of decorations. Many girls volunteer to remove their copper bangles and put them on the horns of the Mithun. Sometimes, they put cotton wool in the ear of the Mithun as earings. At this stage, the Mithun becomes fully tamed and the boys and the girls consider it as one of the members of the Lawm. Likewise, the Mithun appears to understand their treatment. This endears it to the members of the Lawm. For this emotional attachment, often many Lawm girls cry when the Mithun is killed for the feast.

On arrival at the scene of the 'Pah', all the boys and girls start singing and dancing. Some of the boys and girls, however, prepare the 'Zu' brought along with them and offer the same to the man and his wife who have been asked to sit in the middle of the group forming a circle in front of the house called 'Leituol'. The man refused the offer saying that unless his 'Tucha' and 'Becha' are with him, he cannot either entertain them nor can he keep their request. So, the Lawm leaders are forced to fetch his 'Tuchas' and 'Bechas'. On arrival of the 'Tucha' and 'Becha', they all are made to sit in the following order:
The man of the house sits on the extreme right, on whose left side his wife sits, parallel to them the Becha of the man sits near the man while the wife of the 'Becha' sits on the left side of the wife of the man. The 'Tuchas' of the man sit behind them as they wish to sit.

They are now offered rice beer which the man accepts. As they start sipping the beer, the members of the Lawm begin singing in praise of the man. The song of the occasion is:

Nang Kipah e, Ingipu (whoever is the man is to be mentioned)
Nang Kapah e.
Ingipu na sing sungah
Zu le sa beimo e.

Free translation:

We honour you, owner of the house,
We honour you.
The owner of the house,
May meat and 'Zu' flow
In plenty in your house.

While singing this song, they keep on dancing to show the happiness and joy of the Lawm. It is now the turn of the man to tell them what he intends to do for them for what they have honoured him. But, his 'Becha' officiates for him. His Becha speaks his words. It is usually the promise to offer a feast to the Lawm for such an act of honour, normally he kills a pig for them.
They sing, dance and drink for the whole night in praise of the man whom they have honoured. Such celebration continues for two to three days at different places giving honour to different persons. At last, when honouring of the individual persons of fame or riches is over, they come back to the site of the festival. Before leaving the place, however, after performing the ‘Pah’, a farewell song is sung. It is as follows:

Chun in Junbang Neilhao Vin,
Senna Golho Chetange,
Senna Golho Chetange,
Khumihan Lam Bang Jontange.

_Free Translation_: Lady of the man, 'Chun' (Mother)
bid us farewell so that we,
your children (members of the Lawm) may depart happily.

Bid us farewell,
so that we might depart for our homes.

This song is composed by the leader of the Lawm.

With the song in their lips and joy in their heart, they proceed towards their place where they will start their festival. On arriving the festival place in the morning for the big feast, the killing of the Mithun takes place. Before killing, the village priest performs his propitiation called 'Ganlhaa Lhai'. In doing this, the priest sprays a mouthful of wine on the Mithun and then pours the whole wine contained in a gourd, starting from its head to tail, following the line of its ridge. This process
is called 'Gan-Lha-Lhai', meaning thereby appeasing the soul of the Mithun. The killing of the Mithun is done by the 'Becha' of the family in whose house the feast is held. The method of killing is by piercing a bamboo-spine beneath the left fore-leg and through the heart, so that the animal dies instantaneously. This act is called 'Sa-Sut' or 'Sa-Dawt'. In the case of 'Sa-Ai' and 'Chang Ai', the killing of the Mithun is done by the senior man called 'Upa' of the performer (elder-brother). On that day, the feast is meant for the whole village, irrespective of age, sex, caste, creed, etc. A special category of meat is set apart, which is composed mainly of the Head portion of the animal. It is called 'Sapang'. This meat can only be partaken or eaten by some selected people who are normally aged, including the Chief and his selected council of Ministers called 'Haosa' and his 'Semang Upa'. The persons entitled to eat this meat are normally selected on behalf of the Lawm. In such selection the Chief usually makes it a point to include persons belonging to different clans and lineages living in the village, besides the indispensable village elders and the 'Semang Pachong', Council of Ministers. The village priest, the family 'Becha' and the village Chief are compulsory persons to be included in this category of persons.
The next day is the day of gradual recession of the festive mood. On this day the rice beer prepared by the Lawn girls called 'Siel Zu Hawm Ni' is taken. The procedure of taking the beer is exactly in the same manner as had been done earlier. A girl having no black spots morally or physically is selected for the purpose and she leads other girls for distribution of their beer to the whole community without anybody being deprived. For such occasion, an announcement is once again given by the leader of the Lawn. Drinking of the 'Zu' is done in the same procedure as followed in the case of 'Ah Ju Neh Ni'.

The next day of 'Siel Ju Neh Ni', is the third phase of the festival counting from the day of 'Ah Ju Neh Ni'. On this day, all the persons who are entitled to 'Sapang' meat bring one jar of 'Zu' each, which is called 'Jubel'. They are accompanied by their respective 'Tuchas' and 'Bechas' to officiate for the man and to help him serve the people in offering the 'Zu'. This day is called 'Sapang Suoni', which means the day of those who have been priviledged to take the special meat called 'Sapang'. The method of taking the 'Zu' is at random. No formalities or procedures are observed in this sort of drinking.
The day following is called 'Innei Suoni', the day of the family in whose house the festival has been held. The family offers to the Lawm members one big jar of 'Zu' prepared for this purpose and reserved strictly for the occasion. On this day, while the 'Zu' of the family is sipped from the pot of 'Zubel' through a bamboo pipe called 'Dawn', all other pots of 'Zu', specially the 'Zu' prepared by the Lawm girls, for the occasion are distilled and drunk from bamboo cups. The particular way of sipping through a pipe called 'Dawn' signifies the importance of the occasion and the offer of 'Zu'. The procedure of taking the rice-beer is as follows:

The 'Tucha' and the 'Becha' of the family prepare the 'Zu' and insert in it one piece of stick as the measuring rod called 'Leng' for the level to be sipped by an individual invitee. This is called 'Aleng Si'. Everyone sipping the 'Zu' will do so only upto the measurement level marked on the rod. The 'Becha' of the family distributes and supervises the sipping-turn of the Lawm members, while the 'Tucha' sees to it that everyone invited does so neither more nor less of 'Aleng', or, the 'Tucha' regulates the sipping level as per 'Aleng'. At the beginning, the 'Becha' calls upon the leader of the Lawm called 'Lawm Upa'
to do the sipping first. This particular pot of 'zu' is served only near the central pillar of the house. This place occupies importance and signifies its status. When the Lawn leader reaches the place, a rope is tied to the rafters of the house. The other end of the rope is hung downwards to the floor. This end is tied round the waist of the leader of the Lawn as he is about to start sipping the 'zu' up to the measuring level. As a rule, he is to take double the general level meant for others. He must not go away or run away from the place till he can finish his level of 'Zu-Leng'. The next man in the Lawn hierarchy is 'Lawn Tangva'. There are usually two persons for this office. They are called 'Lawn Tangva' and 'Lawn Upa'. Then comes one male-Tucha of the Lawn and two Lawn girl-Tuchas, who are below the Lawn 'Nungah Upa'. The office of the 'Lawn Nungah Upa' is held only by one girl and is in between the 'Lawn Tangva' and 'Lawn Tucha' in the organisational set up. These seven persons are supposed to take double the normal level. No other person, including the Chief and his Council of Ministers and the man of the family, is given any importance on this day, as is shown from the way of sipping or drinking the 'zu'. The Chief and his Council of Ministers, the man of the family and the priest of the village drink the 'zu' in
cups along with the general public. The Lawm girls, in the meantime, also offer 'Zu' for the general public which is prepared by each Lawm girl for the occasion. From every 'Jubel' (pot of beer) given from such preparation, one gourd called 'Umkhat' is kept apart. Thus, as the preparation of 'Zu' continues one after another, the number usually goes up very high at the end of the day.

On the next day, the Lawm boys and girls specially invite all the old and the young men of the village for taking a drink. They offer them the 'Zu' saved from the previous night and one gourd each from every 'Jubel' is offered to the public. Again, they invite all the village old people also separately. In this function, the pots of 'Zu' saved are only the best portion from every pot of 'Zu' which is served on this day. Such portion of 'Zu' is called 'Zu Chih Chah', i.e., the most valued and highly intoxicating portion of the wine. The formalities of serving the 'Zu' on this day is as follows:

The Chief and his Council of Ministers, including the Thiempu or priest, are made to sit on a guddi made of traditional cloths called 'Puonmongvom' or 'Thangnang' or 'Saipikhup' which is spread over on the ground. The Chief sits on the extreme right-hand side, the village
priest on his left and the Council of Ministers sit next
according to their official hierarchical order. In this
connection, it may be mentioned that a man always lets
his wife go or sit on his left-hand side, either on formal
occasion or informal occasion. Then each girl selected
from amongst the senior Lawm members brings out one bottle
or gourd of 'Zu' and gives the same to those who are made
to sit on the guddi. This kind of forced drinking con­tinues till they gulp it down to the dregs. No other person
can drink or touch the beer until these people's drinking
is over. This is in reciprocation of the manner in which
the senior Lawm leaders have been made to sip on the pre­vious occasion. This is done by the man of the family
called 'Innei' Soni'. When the Chief and other village
elders have finished their share of drink, the general
public are allowed to start drinking which continues for
the whole night. Thus, on the next day comes the end of
the 'Lawm Siel Kai'. The enthusiasm, spontaneity and joy
associated with it for all during the Lawm festival are
great. The festival over, a girl feels lonely and re­
collects the happenings of the festival in her mind. She
composes a song to give vent to her emotion in the
following song:

Goltoh Changang Kikhennin,
Vai Lou Konning,
Kisiel Lavao Gamjanga Tang Lamme.

Kisiel Lavao Gamjanga Atang Lap,
Lenchom Levao Kajah Lonlhi Longe.
Free Translation:

After the Lawm festival, when I went to the paddy-field, the beauty of the Mithun horn in the festival kept flashing back in my mind.

In as much as the beauty of the Mithun horn kept flashing back in my mind, it also kept ringing in my ear the drum-beat sound of the festival which made me cry recalling the exceeding memory of the occasion.

II

Voicha Kih:

This occasion has originated from amongst the members of the 'Lawm' in the village. As there are very few social occasions through which the monotony of the day-to-day life can be broken, some plea is forged for organising a social occasion for the young boys and girls of the 'Lawm'. In the present case, the 'Lawm' members try to find out a well-to-do villager to organise a social occasion for them by working in his field in more efficient manner. In doing so, the boys and girls of the 'Lawm' decide that they would go to the field of the selected man for the 'Voicha Kih'. Then they would all go to work in the field of the man chosen. While working in the field,
they would suddenly stop the work and return home before time. They would then inform the owner that they have stopped work. Being asked, they would inform the field owner that they prefer to work in the field on some other day in an organised way and in a happier mood. When he agrees to organise the 'Voicha Kih', a day is fixed. On such a day, they all go to the field as on the previous occasion to work in the field of the man. On this day, every member of the Lawm would carry with him one lunch packet each without curry. The rice thus brought by the members is pooled together for tiffin during the day.

The owner of the field, on his part, prepares curry for the entertainment of the group. In doing so, he kills a pig which is dressed and cooked by the 'Tucha' and the 'Becha' of the man. After the meat is cooked, the 'Tucha' and the 'Becha' of the owner of the field bring it to the field to be offered to the young workers. On this day, they really work hard with an aim to compensate for the loss they have incurred on the previous day. They are offered a sumptuous mid-day-meal. The man also remains present in the field to encourage the boys and the girls in their work. In the evening, when the day's work is
done, they prepare themselves to return home. In doing so, they carry the man on whose field they work in a 'Litter' which is prepared earlier for him on that day. On their return to the village, they enter it with much gaiety and applause, singing and dancing while carrying the man in the 'Litter'. This is called 'Pal Lhun'. This is usually done from the outskirt of the village. On return, they are offered with 'Zu' at the residence of the man on whose field the work was done and they continue to sing and dance the whole night.

On the following morning, the boys of the 'Lawm' arrange to get a pig at their expense, while the girls contribute 'Zu' for the occasion and they feast together at the residence of the man on the excuse of harvesting or sowing. On this day, all the elders of the village, the Chief and his Council of Ministers as also the Priest are invited. The usual way of sharing the meat by the elders, the Chief and his Council of Ministers is followed. The Priest performs the propitiation ceremony of 'Kaolhai', which means pleasing the devils responsible for casting a spell of ill-health on the congregation. In doing this he takes one piece of liver, sprinkles a mouthful of 'Zu' on it after a short invocation and then throws it away in a symbolic act of offering the same to the devils.
The 'Sapang' or the head portion of the slaughtered animal for the occasion is offered to the Chief and his Council of Ministers, the Priest, the owner of the house and some other selected elders of the village. No other person is entitled to this portion of the meat. In addition, another portion of the meat called 'Sachan' is given to the lady of the house, the 'Tucha' and the 'Becha' relatives of the family as special shares. The rest of the meat is cooked and eaten by the general invitees and the young boys and girls. On this day, the 'Zu' offered by the boys and girls is the only rice-beer offered to the invitees. All the drinks served are only done by sipping from the Zu-Pitcher or pot.

From all this, it is seen that their agricultural life is punctuated with the social life of feasting and merry-making.

The next day is marked by the contribution of 'Zu' by 'Tuchas' and 'Bechas' of the man in whose house the festival takes place and by those who had been given the privilege of having 'Sapang' and 'Sachan'. The 'Zu' brought by the Chief and those who had been given the privilege of having 'Sapang' is called 'Sapang-Zu'. Likewise, it is 'Becha-Zu', 'Tucha-Zu', etc. The lady of the house also offers a pitcher or pot of 'Zu' and it is called as 'Innei Zu'. There is no formality of drinking the 'Zu' on this occasion.
This is an occasion for merry-making and fun spinning for the members of Lawm boys and girls. The girls attempt at ridiculing the boys so much so that the boys could not go ahunting, as they are painted as unfit for the shooting expedition. Even the petticoat or 'Lungi' of a girl is made the butt of ridicule by the boys. Such jokes and banalities in the matter sometimes take a serious turn on the part of the boys. Ultimately, the boys snatch away one of the petticoats of the girls and spread it over at a place as the target of their shooting competition. At times it so happens that best shot boys fail to show their shooting skill. Everyone present becomes surprised and then it is ascribed to a certain superstition. It is believed that if the petticoat is removed by the girls from their thighs through their private parts, the same is very difficult to hit as a target. The older generation interviewed confirm this. Likewise, a boy or a man known as a shooting expert fails to hit the target, but an unworthy hit it better. Such an instance is that of Pao-khuochuon, who has been, then, in his mid-teens, with no experience in shooting.
When the Lawn members decide to hold the 'Puon Kâap' competition, the Lawn leaders approach the Village Chief to permit them to organise such a competition. They submit their prayer along with a pot of 'Zu'. This formality is a must, for the Chief is supposed to know everything that happens around him. He in consultation with his Council of Ministers and the Village Priest normally gives consent to this. On receipt of the permission, the Lawn members start organising the other details of the competition. Meanwhile, they contact a person in whose paddy field they would go for the work on the day the shooting competition is organised in the midst of their work in the field. They also make preparations for offering one pot of 'Zu' to each by the girls, while the boys contribute for rearing up a pig for the feast. The cost of the 'Zu' for the occasion is shared by the boys and the girls and this is called 'Changhai'.

On the day of the competition in the field of the man already selected, the Lawn members come prepared with their lunch packet. All the girl members of the Lawn also come prepared with 'Zu'. On the part of the man in whose paddy field they will be working also come prepared to feed the Lawn members by killing a pig or whatever he can afford along with 'Zu'. In doing this, his 'Tucha' and
'Becha' relatives take the most active part in all works connected with the occasion. Thus, he asks the Village Chief, his council of Ministers and the Priest to join him at his field on the occasion.

On their arrival at the field, the Lawm members start working in the field as is done on any normal working day. They continue to do the work throughout the afternoon, i.e., till their mid-day meal is served by the man of the day. That done, they become busy in preparing for the shooting competition. When everything is ready, the Priest does the ritual invocation for the welfare of the family on whose field the shooting competition is organised. The ladies' 'Lungi', known as 'Pon Lhai', required for the competitors and the girls who contribute the 'Lungis' for the competition are arranged. Formalities, like drinking, eating, etc. are not observed during the competition in the field while they work, and also after the competition. When the competition is over, some of the Lawm members, who in the meantime, prepared one 'Litter' for the owner of the field in whose farm or field the competition is held. He is made to get into it. When they proceed towards his home, the owner of the field is carried all the way in the litter upto his house by the boys of the Lawm. On returning
home from the outskirts of the village, the Lawm members keep themselves in a befitting joyous mood by singing and dancing and making all sorts of sound. This is called 'Pal Lhun', i.e., arrival in jubilation with ovation to the owner of the house. Thus, on their arrival at his residence, the man offers them one pot of 'Zu' by way of expression of thanks. On the next day, the Lawm members kill the pig they kept ready for the occasion and feast together at the residence of the man on whose farm they had the shooting competition the previous day. In the feast, the Chief, his Council of Ministers, the Priest and 'Tucha' and 'Becha' relatives of the man of the day are invited. The Lawm girls and boys busy themselves in preparing other things, including serving 'Zu' to the quests. In the meantime, 'Tucha' and 'Becha' relatives of the owner of the house become engaged in preparing the meat and cooking the food-stuffs and meat. The pig slaughtered for the occasion is done by the 'Becha' of the man. While the meat is cooked and consumed by the public, the Lawm members and other guests, some portions of the killed animal are kept apart for different categories of people in the following manner:

'Sapang': This is the head portion of the animal killed. This is meant exclusively for the Chief and his Council of Ministers, the man of the house and the Village Priest. No other person is entitled to eat this meat.
'Sachan': This particular piece of meat is meant for 'Tucha' and 'Becha' relatives of the man. In normal course of distribution of the meat, these categories of relatives would have been given the waist and the rib portions, respectively, if the occasion is actually organised by the person whose house is used by the Lawm members. But this being the occasion of the Lawm, 'Tucha' and 'Becha' relatives of the man are not entitled to get their due share. It may be noted that since the man of the house is involved in such affairs of the Lawm, by virtue of their relationship, which is based on mutual respect and involvement, 'Tucha' and 'Becha' of the man take active part on the occasion. In the 'Sachan' includes the pieces of the best portion of the meat.

Although it is the day of the boys and the girls, they are not entitled to have any special privilege in the eating formalities, nor in the distribution of the meat. They all are to eat in the company of the general public. Everyone eats at random, but those who are entitled to take 'Sapang' have some eating formalities. They are to eat in the inmost recesses of the house called 'Intom'. There, they distribute food in the manner of the age-old tradition. Regarding those who are entitled to 'Sachan', the 'Becha' of the family arranges things in such a way that the share of each person is already kept earmarked and when they eat the particular share of meat is served to them.
The people who are entitled to eat 'Sapang' and 'Sachan' sit together in a camera and decide that each of such men should offer one jar of 'Zu' to the Lawm members the next day. On this day, the 'Zu' prepared by the Lawm girls are served for drinking. It is customary that any kind of 'Zu' offered by the Lawm boys and girls is served in cups for drinking and not for sipping. This is indicative of the importance given to them and less importance put on others during the occasion, as per custom. The occasion being organised mainly by the boys and the girls, the jar of 'Zu' offered by each person entitled to 'Sapang' and 'Sachan' is served only in cups. Thus, the offer of 'Zu' by such persons comes only on the following day of the feast with the pork arranged by the Lawm members. Such counter entertainment on the part of the elders to the boys and the girls takes one more day. Then comes the end of the 'Puon Kaap' competition festival.