CHAPTER IV
BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE IN MIZORAM:
ECONOMY, SOCIETY AND GENDER RELATIONS

The Sailo dominance over the major part of present Mizoram as stated in the earlier chapter brought a common culture, tradition, language and religion. Many of the smaller clans or tribes surrendered to the Sailo and performed a ritual known as saphun to indicate that they could follow all the Sailo tradition and religion. Saiaithanga, who was one of the early Christian converts and who actually saw and knew the pre-Christian culture wrote that Saphun was performed by killing the biggest pig owned by the family and this was killed by the Sailo sadawt (priest).\(^1\)

After killing this pig, they again had to perform hnuai (hnuai-under; pui – great) in which the animal was killed under the house. After performing saphun these tribes were admitted into the Sailo clan and could even eat the meat offered in the rituals which was to be eaten exclusively by the Sailo. Thus the Sailo became the paramount ruler of Mizoram and they proclaimed themselves as “those who glide between the sun and the moon.”\(^2\)

When the Sailo became the ruling clans of the Mizo, they started a uniform system of administration in all the villages. Since all the Sailo chiefs were related they started a new tradition that chiefs would not be killed if wars broke out between them. So even though chiefs were sometimes captured they were never killed. In the case of Khawnglung Run, we find that the northern Sailo chief Vuta and his sons had asked the Zo from Burma to help them. So they

---

raided the village of Khawnglung and the Zo tried to take away the chief’s wife and his son. But Vuta’s sons could not bear to see their distant relatives taken away as captives and so they objected Thuama’s (Khawnglung chief) wife and son to be taken away as captives to the Chin Hills. A dispute then arose between the Zo and Vuta’s men. They somehow could come to an agreement and the chief’s son was taken away by Vuta’s sons while his wife was taken away by the Zo.  

The chief was the secular head of a village but not the ritual head. He enjoyed absolute power and decided all cases which were brought before him. However the chief was assisted by his elders known as upas who were selected from the men of his village. The chief’s youngest son inherited his father’s title and village while the other sons set up a new village of their own. So, it was seen that even though the other sons did not inherit from their father yet they became chiefs and had their own subjects. There were principal taxes which the chiefs collected from their subjects and they were fathang and sachhiah. Fathang was the due payable to the chief by the villagers from their harvest. B.Lalthangliana basing himself on oral sources said that this system was started when the Mizo were still in the hills of Myanmar. According to Mizo legend, when the Hnamte chief Chhanpiala died, the villagers wanted to have a chief who would be able to lead the people. So they went to Seipui village and invited Zahmuaka to be their chief which the latter declined. But after persistent pleas and with a promise that the village would give a part of their harvest to him, and with the consent of his wife, Zahmuaka

---

3 This information has been collected from Liangkhaiha, Mizo Chanchin (Aizawl, 4th edition, 1976) p.68
4 C.Nunthara, Mizoram – Society and Polity (New Delhi, 1996) p.66
accepted to be their chief. So it was regarded that giving a part of their harvest to the chief started after this incident and was soon followed by the other chiefs also. The amount varies between different villages and when the British administered the land, N.E. Parry fixed “six snowflake kerosine oil tins” $^6$ of paddy to be paid as fathang. The other tax imposed on the people was sachhiah in which when a hunter killed some wild animals, he had to give the foreleg of the animal killed as tax. $^7$  The other taxes which were also imposed were chikhurchhiah or salt tax, khuaichhiah or honey tax and thachhiah or labour tax whereby the people of the village were obliged to construct the house of their chiefs. This practice of labour tax was however absent in Rolura’s descendents which ruled in southern Mizoram. $^8$ Rolura was the great grandson of Sailova, the progenitor of the Sailo clan. He was one of the important chiefs of the Sailo in Southern Mizoram.

The Sailo chiefs therefore by their might and astute administration ruled almost the whole of present Mizoram. But as mentioned earlier, there were some tribes of Zo who did not migrate to present Mizoram but had stayed back in the Chin Hills, but in this chapter the life and gender relations of the Mizo who had settled in present Mizoram would be studied. This would cover the period from around the year 1700 to more or less after Christianity was embraced by all the Mizo. To understand the gender relations in the society the economy, social life and religious life of the people needs to be examined.

**ECONOMY:** From the various oral folk tales which are already mentioned, it can be established that the Mizo were agriculturists. They still continued to follow their

---

$^7$ B. Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.286  
ancestors agricultural pattern even when they settled in present Mizoram. The methods used for cultivation and the processes were practiced till the advent of the British and some of them are still used till today. The method which they used was known as *jhumming* and this method is still practiced till date by the major agriculturists. To know about the process of selecting the jhum sites and the various works involved in the fields, information was also gathered from Nguni who was born around 1928 and B.Lalawia who was born around 1932. Their narrations would be corroborated by the writings of British administrators and other Mizo historians.

Every village had their own region for cultivation. All the household in the village were to get a share of the land. The chief and his elders would sit together and check the area. As soon as the area for cultivation was announced, the chief’s brothers would first choose their land followed by the chief’s elders. After the elders, the able or some of the wealthy families whom the chief could depend upon would be given preference. Wealth for the Mizo was mainly decided in the number of mithun a person owned and so the value of property was judged in terms of mithun. Even bride prices were determined in terms of mithun. A person who owned a large number of mithuns was considered to be rich as they also could afford to feast the whole village in the various feasts of merit. A family who had many children who could work in the fields and whose harvest was good was also

---

9 Nguni and B.Lalawia were interviewed in the tradition of oral history as they actually had practiced jhum cultivation in their village Bualpui (H) themselves and the process of the cultivation had not changed through the years. Separate footnotes would not be given for their further narration of working in the fields.

10 B.Lalhangliana, *op. cit.*, p.295

considered to have wealth as they would not face shortage of food. It should be noted that men were the owners of these mithuns and lands as women could not hold any property in their names. So women would be considered to be rich only if their husbands or fathers owned a large number of mithuns. If a woman happened to marry a man who did not own a large number of mithuns then she was considered to have married a poor man. So, these wealthy men were given the privilege of selecting their jhum sites as the chief considered them to be able to provide food to others in need of food. The other population could choose their own jhum site only after the mentioned people have selected the sites for themselves.

The day for selecting their land would be announced by the village crier. On the fixed day, everyone would try to choose the best for themselves. If however two or three persons reached the same site, they would give preference to the one who had first reached the site or to the eldest one among them. Selecting a site for their jhum was considered to be a very important task as their produce for the year depended on the fertility of their land. It should be however noted that selection of the jhum was the work of the men.

After selecting the sites, it was time to clear the forest. Clearing of the forest was considered to be the work of the men. After the trees were felled, they had to be burnt. The next morning, it was the task of the women to sow the seeds. Usually they sow the seeds of pumpkin, maize, mustard, barley and some yams and after some weeks or months paddy was sown. After this, they construct a small house to stay during their lunch and also to sleep if they happen to spend their night. As the

12 Tribal Research Institute, Tunhma Mizo Nunphung, (Aizawl, 1992), p.86, hereafter cited as TRI, Tunhma...
13 ibid., p, 167
seeds began to sprout, weeding was again the responsibility of the women and this was a hard and back aching work. This was usually during the hot summer and also during the monsoon. Even though the weather may not be good, they had to weed their fields so as to get a good produce. During this time, many of them also used to get sick probably from malaria. In the month of the November or early December, it was time to harvest their paddy. Nguni recollected how the work was tough but as it was the time to reap their hard labour, it was a time of joy for them. This work was done both by men and women. So, almost all the families in the village would go to their fields and spend their time till they finished harvesting. Many of them would also take their domestic animals with them. On the last day of the harvest, they would collect their friends and it would be a time of merriment. Nguni’s father used to kill one of their domestic animals and give it to his children so that they could share it with their friends. This account can be corroborated from information available in B. Lalthangliana’s work.¹⁴

After harvesting, the work of the women still continued. The harvested paddy had to be collected from the fields and stored in their storage bins constructed at some convenient place between the fields and the homes on the hill-tops.¹⁵ From these storing bins, they again had to carry up paddy to their hill top homes through the year load after load to meet the needs of the family’s daily consumption in the homes.

Since the Mizo were non-vegetarian, they consumed the meat of their domesticated animals. The domesticated animals included dogs, pigs, goat, mithun and chicken. However meat of dogs and goats were not eaten by women though the

¹⁴ B.Lalthangliana, *op. cit.*, p.10
reason for this could not be ascertained. They also hunted animals and sometimes used traps to catch them. However though they were non-vegetarian, it should be noted that they domesticated animals mainly for religious purposes and for their festivals and sometimes also as payment for bride price. The meat which was offered for sacrifices was eaten later on. These domesticated animals were looked after by the women. Bringing food for the pigs from the forest and feeding the animals were the responsibilities of the females. Though women also eat meat, they were not supposed to eat in abundance. Fishing was also practiced by them. Men usually went to fish in the rivers and streams. Women also went along with the men and this was mainly to accompany their men. Crabs were regarded to be inferior to other meat and were set aside for women. Men did not regard crab as meat. Lalrinawmi for her dissertation interviewed some elderly persons and one interviewee named Upa Malsawma said that before hunting, hunters used to pray to Chawngtinleri, the deity who looked after the animals, but when they set out to catch crabs, they never prayed to Chawngtinleri to grant them success. This was because crabs were regarded to be insignificant and so they were not under the care of Chawngtinleri. So crabs which were regarded to be inferior among the animals and fishes were set aside for women. The most insignificant and inferior crabs set aside for women would infer that women were also considered to be inferior.

Cotton was grown in the fields. Picking the cotton and all the process for making it into cloth such as ginning, spinning and weaving was the works of women. They did this work during the period when they have finished weeding their fields

---

and have not harvested as yet or during the dry season. So it was regarded to be a free time. Thus women did not have any leisure time at all. Even when they did not have to go to their fields they had to work making clothes for the family. They would weave during daytime and unmarried men would go and sit near them. In the folk tale of Lalruanga, Lalruanga went to a girl’s house to court her while she was weaving and that he just sat beside her while she worked. In the evening also boys would go to the girl’s house to court them. Sometimes a girl who was quite popular with the boys would have so many visitors that some of them did not have a proper seat inside the house. This is seen in one of the ballads composed during this time:

Thapui, i run kei ka chan tawk
Ka hawi vela vawkchaw fianin ka biang a chhun e
Ka han thluang a, uikawngkaah kel nghawng ka khan e.18

The English translation would be:

When I visit you in your house
I turn around and the ladle of your pot touched my cheek
And as I stretch my legs, I had to rest them on the goat’s neck.

While sitting with the boys, girls would not just sit idly. She sometimes cooked food for the pigs. After cooking this, she would take out her loom and work on it. Lalhmuaka who was one of the early educated man wrote in his book Pum Titi that when he and his friends went to court a girl in the evening, she sat with her spindle doing some work.19 So, even when men visited them, women had to work and could

18 K.Zawla, Mizo Pi Pute leh an tlahte chanchin, (Aizawl, 1976) p.137
19 Lalhmuaka, Pum Titi (Aizawl, 1985) p.29
not just sit and spend the time as they liked. But it should be noted that the weaving implements and other tools for working were made by men.

Fuel was mainly from the forest. Females both young and old used to go to the forest and fetch firewood for the family. The actual cutting down of the tree was mainly done by men. However the cutting off the branches and chopping of the wood was done by women. In the story of Chalkunga leh Thanghniangi,20 Thanghniangi and her friend were seen to gather firewood while the men, Chalkunga and his friend roamed around looking for some birds to shoot. Seeing the girls, the boys helped them in splitting the wood. It was not the boy’s responsibility to split those woods, but since the girls were their girlfriends they helped them. Moreover helping the girls was one of their tactics to win the favour of the girl they fancied. Girls had to carry it home in the baskets which they put on their back. They usually did this work during the time before harvest and before starting new fields. They had to stock the firewood during this time as they would not be able to do it during the monsoon season.

Pottery was also made by women.21 They were moulded by hands. These potteries were mostly used for cooking and for making fermented drinks.

Tobacco was also grown by the people for their own consumption. The leaves were dried in the sun or over the fire. Both male and female smoke freely. Sometimes they rolled the tobacco with dry leaves. However men usually smoke with their pipe known as vaibel while women smoke their tuibur.22 Women always have a tuibur in her mouth and this was not only to satisfy herself but to supply the

22 C.Hermana, Zofate Zin Kawng, (Aizawl, 1995), p,103-104
men with the nicotine water called tuibur. My grandmother used to tell me how she used to smoke continuously so that her father and later her husband and in-laws would have sufficient tuibur.\textsuperscript{23} If a woman could supply tuibur to her family at all times, she was praised as a hard working woman. So my grandmother had to smoke continuously as she wanted to please her family even though she used to get fed up of it. So women had to smoke not as a voluntary or willing pastime but were forced to do it which reveals how women were controlled in their actions.

**SOCIETY:**

The Mizo society was a stratified society because a hierarchy of groups existed.\textsuperscript{24} The upper group being the chief, his Council of Elders and the prominent men who distinguished themselves as hunters and wealthy family who were called the thangchhuah. The second layer consisted of the common people and the third strata comprised the bawi and the slaves.

The elders were the ones who advised the chief in all his decisions and had the first choice for their jhum. The thangchhuah were the ones who made their village famous and so they were given importance in all the societal events.

The bawi existed as they had done before they settled in present Mizoram.\textsuperscript{25} Bawis were the ones who were owned by the chiefs and as mentioned earlier could be due to different reasons. It could be due to poverty or some wrongdoings. The common people and even the elders could not own a bawi. It was only the chiefs

\textsuperscript{23} My grandmother Hramthluaii who was born around 1895 used to tell me about the works done by women and their place in the society. Her narration would be reliable because she knew many things which were practiced before they embraced Christianity. In her narration she also used to refer to her mother.

\textsuperscript{24} Dr. Lalthanliana, *Mizo Chanchin*, (Aizawl, 2000), p,173ff

\textsuperscript{25} See Chapter II
who could have a bawi. They remained in the chief's house and even if they have built a separate house for themselves, all that they possess and their products were still the property of their owner. They could buy their freedom with mithun.

P.S. Dahrawka, the author of *Mizo Thawnthu* was a bawi during his childhood days. In the introduction of his book, he wrote that after his father died, he and his mother migrated to Ngopa village. After staying in the village for sometime they were taken by the chief Hrangchhuana of their village to be his bawi. Two of his aunts who lived in a different village Kawnzar were also taken as bawi by their village chief Hrangkima as they had no male relatives to depend on. He further wrote that his aunts refused to be taken as bawi and they tried to resist it but could not as the chief's elders forcibly took them inside the chief's house. He then narrated that women who had no men to depend on were easy targets for the chiefs to keep them as slaves. For the chiefs having a bawi meant freely owning a free labourer who could do many of the household chores and for cultivation also. P.S. Dahrawka further mentioned that the chiefs were kind to them but for the bawi it was not a very pleasant experience as they had lost all their personal freedom and had always to be under the control of the chiefs. There were also slaves or sal who were captives from war. The elders and the common people also could have slaves. These slaves could buy their liberty at a price. It is noteworthy that children and marriageable women were mostly sal while men were killed and were hardly taken to be slaves. This was mainly because in the shifting cultivation practiced by the

---

26 P.S. Dahrawka, *op. cit.*, p.ix  
27 *ibid.* p.x  
28 *ibid.* p.vii  
29 *ibid.* p.xiii  
30 J. Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, p.49
Mizo, women played a vital role in cultivation. So people wanted women who could do the many works required in cultivation.

In the Mizo society, the term *tlawmngaihna* played a very important role. According to J.H.Lorrain, *tlawmngai* means to be self-sacrificing, unselfishness, self-denying or persevering. A person who has this quality was regarded in high esteem. It has all the good moral qualities of life. This can be possessed by all the people irrespective of sexes. The qualities which a *tlawmngai* person had to possess has been written about by many Mizo authors, and the main points which they emphasised would be generalised as follows: A man who had this quality should be the first to set out in times of danger and also work harder than his friends when they were out cultivating or hunting. He should be the one to serve his friends. A girl or woman who had this quality should also work hard and always be courteous or polite to her suitors and other people even if she was not feeling well or feeling sleepy. A *tlawmngai* person would always show respect to his elders and would not disobey them. Thus we find that the qualities for men and women to be *tlawmngai* was different. For men it meant bravery and being strong while for women it signified submission to the men. Thus the concept of *tlawmngai* reveals that after the settlement of the Mizo in present Mizoram patriarchy became to be firmly entrenched in the society and also in the societal values so much so that even *tlawmngaihna* which was believed to be of good virtue was also gender biased. The elder men would always see who was the most *tlawmngai* among the young men. Sometimes on special occasion or during their festivals they would give a special

---

cup of wine to the most *tlawmngai* man. This concept of *tlawmngai* however appeared to be strong among the people after the Mizo migrated to present Mizoram. If we look at the history of men who were famous for possessing this quality, it could be seen that they were all dated to the period after their settlement in present Mizoram especially after the Sailo consolidated their power. This concept could have grown stronger when the Mizo had to face a lot of wars in order to consolidate themselves and hence *tlawmngaihna* would be instilled in the minds of the people so that they would be brave. In trying to be the best in the village, men would then compete to be brave and would be useful for the security and safety of the village. It could also be significant to add that the *tlawmngai* values became to be more developed after Christianity entered Mizoram as it was in many ways parallel to the Christian teachings. It should also be noted that in the traditional period due to *tlawmngaihna* men received honour by receiving a special cup of *zu* (liquor) from the elders and chiefs and were regarded in high esteem by the villagers. But for the women even if they were *tlawmngai*, there was no special honour for them inspite of all the hardships and sufferings which they underwent to be *tlawmngai*.

*Zu* or fermented drink occupied a significant place in all the Mizo society. There were different types of *zu*. Every household had their own pot of *zu* at all times. They drank when they feel tired and not feeling well. Some of the drinks were even given to children and infants. They were considered a must in all the festivals. Women also drink but they were not supposed to get drunk. However

---

33 Challiana, *ibid* p.6-7
unmarried men and women hardly drink together except during festivals.\textsuperscript{34} If they were seen to be drinking and getting drunk it was considered a very shameful act.

**Marriage and Family:** In Mizo society, the family was patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilineal. The eldest male was the head of the family and all decisions were taken by him. Monogamy was mainly practiced by the Mizo. However McCall wrote that polygamy was practiced by the people, but this declined as the wives quarrelled a lot and it posed a problem for the husband.\textsuperscript{35} However looking at various anthropological studies of different tribes, the reason for polygamy to decline among the Mizo as written by McCall seems to be doubtful. Men usually wanted to have several wives as it gave them control over many people and so the quarrels among the wives could not be the only reason for its decline. Even though the common people may be monogamous, the chiefs often kept concubines or practiced polygamy.\textsuperscript{36} P.S. Dahrawka mentioned that when he was a *bawi* during his boyhood days, he stayed with the concubine of their chief.\textsuperscript{37} This reveals that the concubines or the other wives of the chief did not reside with their husbands but that they stayed in a different household.

Men courted women freely and it very often happened that men and women took a fancy to each other. If the girl happened to be pregnant and if he refused to marry her, he had to pay a fine of one mithun. If they did not get married but had another child, then the boy did not have to pay a fine any more. If they happened to have a third child, then he had to pay a fine again.\textsuperscript{38} J. Shakespear did not mention

\textsuperscript{34} V. L. Siama, *op. cit.*, p. 69
\textsuperscript{35} A. G. McCall, *op. cit.*, p. 105
\textsuperscript{36} J. Shakespear, *op. cit.*, p. 50
\textsuperscript{37} P. S. Dahrawka, *op. cit.*, p. xii
\textsuperscript{38} J. Shakespear, *op. cit.*, p. 53
why the boy was not fined for the second child. Elderly people were also asked as to why the boy was not fined for the second time, but they could not give any definite reason but answered that it was practiced in the society. However, it could be assumed that the society had the feeling that the woman gave her consent to get pregnant for the second time and so the boy was not to be fined. But for the same boy to impregnate the same girl for the third time, the boy could have promised to marry but when he did not keep his promise, he was again fined. On the other hand, it could also be assumed that the laws did not fine the boy for the second time because the society blamed the girl for being careless and frivolous and so wanted to free the boy from any punishment. Though the exact reason for the boy not to be fined for the second time was not exactly know, yet, it could be argued that the society was lenient with the actions of the boys and so they were not fined when they did something wrong. When the child was still a baby, the mother had to look after it. However, after two or three years, after the weaning was over, the father of the child was entitled to keep the child.\textsuperscript{39} A single mother was not condemned by the society and she could marry a man who liked her but her bride price was sometimes reduced.

In general when marriage was to take place, there should be no resentment from the family members. Men were allowed to marry except his immediate family members as they preferred marriage outside the family. This was mainly because her family wanted the bride price to increase the wealth of the family, and not to merely transfer it from one brother to another.\textsuperscript{40} However Sailo chiefs often married their

\textsuperscript{39} A.G. McCall, op. cit., p.99
\textsuperscript{40} J.Shakespeare, \textit{op.cit} p.49
first cousins as they wanted to consolidate their position as a ruling family. Among the Lusei, girls often got married after they attained puberty and after they were regarded as adults. But among the Lai, this was not always the case. There were many instances of adults getting married but there were also cases of child marriage. Even if they were not legally married, children were engaged with the consent of both the parents. Some of them were married off, and the girl stayed at the boy’s house, but they did not sleep together. When they were of age, they also had to follow the custom of sending intermediaries to the girl’s house and a ceremony was again conducted. If the engaged girl somehow married another boy, she was regarded to be committing adultery and had to be fined. If the boy also got married to other girl, he had to pay a fine. Child marriage among the Lai would indicate that women were sexually controlled and that they did not have any freedom of choice. Though the boy also was married off at an early age, he could marry a girl whom he fancied later on and would not be regarded as committing adultery. However if the girl married another boy, she was regarded to have committed adultery and would be shunned by other people. Thus child marriage was another way of controlling women’s sexuality.

Among the Mizo, when arrangements were finalised, bride price was fixed. This did not change as was described in the earlier chapter. However it should be noted that bride price was seldom paid fully at the time of marriage. This happened because the boy could not afford to pay all of it. Marriage was a civil contract which could be dissolved at the will of both the partners. The Sailo chiefs were very

41 Dr. Sangkima, Mizos-Society and Social Change, (Guwahati, 1992), p, 27
42 C.Laitanga, Pawi Chanchin (Aizawl, 1988), p,140
43 ibid, p, 141
particular in selecting their brides. The bride to be was brought to the man’s house, she had to pose herself naked before the man and he would check whether she had any disability or some abnormality in her figure. If the man was satisfied with her body, the marriage plans would be carried forward. This shows that women were regarded as something of a commodity to be bought and had to be examined fully before buying her. This kind of examining her body would be quite derogatory and an insult for women. There was a system of engagement which was known as *dawn puan phah* which means the spreading of a cloth. By this custom, the girl’s mother would spread a sheet for them to sleep together. A particular cloth called *puandum* (black cloth) is then laid out on the floor and they sleep together. If after this, the boy refused to marry the girl, he had to pay a fine of one mithun.

The Mizo did not have a grand wedding ceremony. On the fixed day, the bride price would be paid to the girl’s family. The bride was brought to the bridegroom’s house accompanied by her friends and relatives. On the way she would be pelted with rice, earth, stones and mud. She had to be guarded from all these and a man called *lawichat* was responsible that she be brought to the bridegroom’s house safe and sound. It was also considered to be unlucky if she slipped and fell on the way. If she did fall, she had to return to her parent’s house and start to proceed to the bridegroom’s house again. On reaching her husband’s house, the *sadawt* (priest) would make them drink *zu* from the same pot and would take some strands

---

44 Dr. Lalthanliana, *op.cit.*, p.186. This was also mentioned by V. Thangchuanga, who wrote about the marriage of Lalbiaki, one of the Sailo chiefs.
45 N.E. Parry, *op.cit.*, p. 33
46 A.G. McCall, *op. cit.*, p. 102
47 Dr. Lalthanliana, *op.cit.*, p. 189
48 TRI, *Tunhma...* p. 74
of the bride and bridegroom’s hair and tie it together. He then chanted some invocation and released their hair. A chicken was then killed to show that they were now married. The chicken which was killed was called *remar* which literally means peace chicken. But this was practiced only by some people who were selective in doing a particular thing. The bride would then return to her father’s house that night and would leave for her husband’s house the next day to stay permanently. On the second night she would take all her belongings and things which she would need in her matrimonial house. The newly bride had to face many difficulties. My grandmother said that women especially the young bride dare not eat to her heart’s content. This was because if they ate a lot of food, they were regarded as greedy. So, they used to eat very little and very often had to stay hungry. My grandmother also said that she used to sneak to her parent’s house to eat some leftovers and sometimes her mother used to cook some extra food for her so that when my grandmother went to their house, she would have something to eat. She also said that this was the case for other women also. So the attitude towards women was that they were expected to do many of the works but had to limit their food consumption which could result in poor health.

There were often cases of separation of married couple. The main reasons for their separation were infertility, adultery, impotence etc. Men also could easily divorce their wife. If he simply said, *ka ma che*, ‘I divorce you’, the wife had to leave with her belongings which she had before marriage. If the bride price was not fully paid, he had to pay it to her parents. The wife also could leave her husband if

\[49\] A.G.McCall, op. cit., p.108
she desired and this was known as sumchhuah. If the wife left her husband she had to return the bride price which was given to her parents. She could take out her possessions which she had before she got married. The other reason for separation was adultery. The Mizo also had the notion that men were free to have any relationship with other women and they were not looked down upon and hence they were not even regarded to have committed adultery.\textsuperscript{50} Even if a husband had a child by another woman, the wife had no redress for his adultery.\textsuperscript{51} However if a wife had extra marital affairs with another man, she was regarded to have committed the worst sin, i.e. adultery. This was one of the reasons that McCall had written that ‘this was a society which is very definitely fashioned for men’.\textsuperscript{52} There were two kinds of adultery, the one which was committed during the lifetime of her husband and the one which was committed after his death. In the first case, the whole of the bride price must be returned to the husband and the wife could not take out her belongings except the clothes which she wore at the moment. Among the Lusei, the man with whom she committed adultery was free of liability. This shows that the society being patriarchal did not mind men having affairs with other married women but that it restricted women. But among the Lai and Zo, he had to pay a pig or a mithun. This would signify that the society felt that the wrong committed by the man should also be punished. After the death of her husband a wife was still regarded to be able to commit adultery. When the husband died, the wife had to perform thlaichhiah ceremony in which animals were killed and relatives were invited to eat. Moreover for three months she had to put aside a portion of the rice she eats at each meal for

\textsuperscript{50} Dr. Sangkima, \textit{op.cit.,} p,28
\textsuperscript{51} A.G.McCall, \textit{op. cit.} p,99
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{ibid}
her dead husband. This is known as *mithi chaw pek*. During these months, she was also not to comb her hair. After the three months had passed, she would then perform another ceremony called *thlahual*. To perform *thlahual* ceremony, a pig or some other animals were killed and eaten by the family members. If during these three months, she was caught sleeping with another man, she would be regarded as adulteress, and would have to be punished in the same way as if her husband was alive. This shows that the society controlled women’s sexuality and that they were restricted by the societal attitude and customary laws even after their husband died. If she did not have any affairs during the three months and after performing the required rites, she would go back to her parent’s house and could remarry. However widows remove their earrings.

After the death of her husband, women could not inherit any immovable property. In Lusei society the youngest son was the heir to inherit property. However among the Lai (except the Fanai tribe) the heir was the eldest son. The things which women would inherit were their mother’s ornaments like necklaces, beads, earring, clothes and baskets. The house which she and her husband had built could not be owned by her but only by her husband. Only in very exceptional cases could a woman, for whom marriage price had been paid by the husband’s family to the wife’s family, inherit property in her own right. She may administer a property on behalf of her sons, but if it was established that she was frittering away the land, they may claim to inherit the property. Moreover, if a man died with no male connections, his property could be inherited by his daughter or if he did not have a

---

53 N.E.Parry, *op.cit.*, p.48
54 J.Shakespeare, *op.cit.*, p.14
55 Tribal Research Institute, *The Tribes of Mizoram, A Dissertation*, (Aizawl, 1994), p.17
daughter, his widow. The right for them to inherit certain specific things and not other properties as they desire highlight their limited right to ownership and inheritance. In Mara society, if a man died, his property would be inherited by his son but if he did not have any sons, his brothers were to inherit it. If he did not have any brothers, his uncle could inherit and in the absence of this, any male relatives were supposed to inherit. The wife could inherit only if the husband did not have any male relatives who could claim it. This reveals that in the Mizo society, women were not regarded worthy to be the family’s heir and that they were not thought to be worthy of looking after the family’s heritage. On the other hand, men were supposed to be able to look after the household property regardless of their personality.

The inheritance law which prevailed in the Mizo society clearly reveal the position of women. As mentioned above, women did not have any proper rights for their security if their husbands were dead. They had to rely on the goodwill of their relatives.

Social Life:

When the Mizo settled in the present Mizoram, they were quite skilled in making their own dresses. The most popular were hmaram puanfen and kawppuizikzial. The former served as a petticoat which was dark blue in colour and reached till the knee. This was mostly worn as a working dress. The latter was also a like a petticoat which was indigo in colour and designed with white thread.

---

56 A.G. McCall, p, 114
57 N.E.Parry, op.cit., p,286
58 C.Hermana, op.cit., p,94
In the society men and women played important roles. Both of them had to participate in all the societal events. When festivals were to be held unmarried men and women busied themselves in preparation. They had to fetch firewood and draw water from the streams. In the festivals, both of them took part in the feast. They also sang and danced all night long. In these festivals, they were allowed to drink beer. But getting drunk was regarded to be shameful. So they would not get drunk except old men.

Men and women were free to mix with each other and there were no restrictions imposed upon them. It was mainly because of this that men would try to have sexual relationship with a girl while many girls would try to retain their virginity. This was practiced because it was believed that when they died, on the way to the place of the dead, a certain man Pawla would be there on the roadside. He would shoot with his catapult the men who had no sexual relationship and girls who had lost their virginity. This belief could be seen in one of the folksongs which was probably composed by a man:

\begin{quote}
Di nei lo Pawlan a sai an ti  
Fam mah ila min sai tawh bil lawng e  
Ka nemrang ka di chawina.\footnote{Challiana, \textit{op.cit.}, p.34}
\end{quote}

The English translation would be:

\begin{quote}
They say Pawla would shoot who did not have a lover  
Even if I die, I would not be shot  
For I have lain with my lover.
\end{quote}
This belief clearly reveals the biasness or the unfairness of the society. Men would always try to seduce the women and would even try to forcibly take a woman to achieve their aim while women would have a hard time trying to remain chaste. This belief also reflect the patriarchal attitude of the society and how the beliefs of the people were also given a religious legitimacy.

When someone died in the village, it was again the responsibility of the young men and women to help the bereaved family. Men would dig graves while women would stay in the house and help in fetching firewood and water for them. It was their responsibility to help the family in any way as they could. Men would then sleep with the family at night time for about a week. This was supposed to console the family so that they might not get lonely.

Another feature of the Mizo during their settlement in present Mizoram was their practice of having zawlbuk. This was the bachelor's house or dormitory. The exact time of establishing zawlbuk was not exactly known. There are some writers who assumed that its origin might be traced from the time when the Mizo lived in China. A Mizo historian Sangkima basing his study on the works of Edwin M.Loeb and Jan M.M.Broek said that "Long houses' or 'Communal Houses’ could be traced back to China as this practice was brought down to Yunnan and to other places in the South-East Asia by the patrilineal Tibeto-Burman people and others.” However oral traditions do not tell us of the existence of zawlbuk during the time of living in the plains. It can be assumed that after migrating to the hills, the Mizo might have started having zawlbuk. When they lived in the hills, they began to have inter-clan

---

60 Sangkima, op.cit., p,39
fights and so all the men's duty was to protect their village and they had to be alert at all times. Since most of the raids were done during night time, they needed to be together to defend themselves. So they thought they must stay together so that they would not have to awake others house to house and also would be able to fight together against the intruders. So having zawlbuk was necessary for the protection of the village. Even though the Mizo might have zawlbuk even when the Mizo were in the hills of Myanmar, yet, this institution would be studied in this chapter as it is clear from oral tradition that this institution was firmly established by the time the Mizo had settled in present Mizoram. Zawlbuk can be said to be the nerve center of the Mizo society. It was responsible for shaping the youth into responsible adult members of the society.\(^61\) The zawlbuk was the place where young men were trained by the elders and discipline was taught. All the male members of the village after attaining puberty had to sleep here. Women were not allowed to enter this house. The Lai and Mara did not have this institution at all.\(^62\) It appeared that the Lai and Mara did not have zawlbuk because they indulged in less war amongst themselves. In the oral traditions it is found that Lai used to raid Lusei villages which created a lot of problems for the Lusei. But there were few instances of Lusei raiding Lai villages. Moreover Lusei waged war not only against other tribes but they often went to war against the other Lusei clans. So, it appeared that the Lusei had to be constantly on alert and be always ready to defend their villages. Hence the establishment of zawlbuk was necessary even for security reason. On the other hand, though there were some instances of Lai raiding other Lai villages, but it was not

---


very frequent and this would be dealt with later in the work. The boys of these tribes used to sleep together at a particular girl’s house where they used to go at night. If there was only one boy sleeping in a girl’s house, the girl was supposed to sleep with him. She had to act as his blanket to keep himself warm. However they were not supposed to have sexual relationship. Among the Lai if the boy tried to seduce her and if the girl did not like him, she could hit him. In this case, it can be known how women were treated as a household property. Girls sleeping with boys could lead to unwanted relationship. The penalty for the boy’s behaviour was also quite lenient. Boys would not care much about girls hitting him and would not be very much bothered about it. Among the Maras also, boys and girls used to sleep together in the girl’s house. According to R.A.Lorrain, though they slept together there were little instances of illegitimate children being born. However if a boy tried to seduce a girl while they slept together and if the girl complained about his behaviour, the boy could be penalised with a mithun.

All the household chores had to be done by the women while men concentrated themselves on building houses. Right from childhood, girls and boys were treated quite differently. Small girls would have their own little loom and would weave small *puan*. They had to do the cooking, fetching of water and looking after the animals when their mothers were away to their jhum. If they happened to have younger siblings, they also had to look after them. So at a young age, females were taught all about the domestic chores. Meanwhile their counterpart male would roam about as they liked. Sometimes they would hunt for birds and even lay traps.

---

63 R.A.Lorrain, *Five Years in Unknown Jungle* (Guwahati, reprint, 1988) p.156
64 Challiana, *op.cit.*, p.2
65 Dr. Lalthanliana, *op.cit.*, p.178
They were allowed to do things as they desired and no restrictions were laid on them. Women had to rise very early, fetch water from the spring which was quite far and steep and this was a tremendous strain for them. She then had to pound the rice in a mortar and sieve it. She then cooked food for the family. By this time, the man would have risen up. Even if he sits by the fire and something overflows from the cooking vessel, he would not do anything but call his wife to attend to it. Doing household chores was regarded to be a shameful thing for a man. If such a man existed, he was often called a *thaibawih* (hen-pecked husband). Hence men would always try to avoid doing such things. After having their food, they then would go to the fields and work whole day. While returning from the field women would carry vegetables and other things on their back. On reaching the house, they still had to cook and do other chores while men would just rest and sit near the fireplace. As mentioned earlier, Lusei women still had to do things at night while men courted them. But among the Lai, the unmarried girls did not do any work at night time but would rather gossip freely with the boys and sometimes even sang songs. Though women worked very hard, they were not supposed to eat lots of food. If they were seen to be eating heartily, they were regarded as greedy.

At night, an unmarried girl would have many boys visiting her or to court her. Even if her boyfriend was among the boys, she was not supposed to show her favour or look at him so that others may know. If she seemed to favour a particular men, she was talked and shunned by the others. If the boys who visited her were displeased with her or her family, they would go to the *zawlbuk* and discuss about it.

---

66 *ibid.* p.180
67 C. Laitanga, *op cit*, p.51
with the others. They then returned to her house and broke their steps or varandah of
her house. The girl’s parents could not retaliate but rather they have to give them a
pot of beer to appease their anger.\textsuperscript{68} The chiefs never interfered in these incidents as
they knew that they had to rely on those men in times of danger.

Though women were not generally seen in the political sphere, instances had
been found that there were some female chiefs after the Mizo had settled in
Mizoram. One was Mangchini Nu, chief of the Thahdo tribe.\textsuperscript{69} Her village was
however subjugated by Ngura, one of the Sailo chiefs. Another woman chief was
Dari, chief of Kawrthah.\textsuperscript{70} She was from Zadeng tribe and she was later conquered
by the Palian tribe and some Pawi. It is not exactly known how these women became
chiefs.

Another woman chief was Darbilhi who was the chief of Muallianpui, a
Fanai tribe village which still exists in southern Mizoram. A.S.Reid mentioned that
in 1889 she had helped Gen. Tregear in showing the way to Hawsata’s (Lai chief)
village in the Chin Hills.\textsuperscript{71} The same author had mentioned that in 1890 she and J.
Shakespear had made a peace pact between her and the British.\textsuperscript{72} She was said to be
a widow, whose husband had been dead for seven years (in 1890) and ruled the
village efficiently. From the brief accounts given by the administrators it can be seen
that Darbilhi was a woman who knew the might of the British and wanted to have a
peace relations with them so that she and her people would not suffer. She proved
herself to be a faithful ally to the new government.

\textsuperscript{68} Challiana, \textit{op.cit.}, p.17
\textsuperscript{69} Liangkhaia, \textit{op. cit.} p.62. Liangkhaia knew about her through the legends about her.
\textsuperscript{70} B.Lalthangliana, \textit{op. cit.} p.229. B.Lalthangliana based his source on oral sources.
\textsuperscript{71} A.S.Reid, \textit{Chin Lushai Land (Aizawl, reprint, 1976)} p.53
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{ibid.}, p.196
Another famous woman chief was Ropuiliani who was the daughter of Lalsavunga and the wife of Vandula. She and her husband were both Sailo and they ruled over Denlung, a village in South Mizoram. After her husband died she ruled over the village as her son had already a separate village. He however came and lived with her later on but she still ruled the village and in fact influenced her son so much that he acted according to her wishes. She was against the British and would not submit to them at all costs. Her son Lalthuama was arrested three times as he refused to attend a meeting of the chiefs which was called by J. Shakespeare. The government later on realised that he was stubborn and was against the British due to his mother’s influence. The government therefore wanted to arrest both the mother and son. They wanted to arrest the woman chief partly because her brothers were powerful Sailo chiefs in northern Mizoram and were allies to the government. So, they wanted to check her influence over her other family members. She collected arms and men from Lai tribes in her village to fight the Britishers. However the government came to know about her plans and suddenly attacked her village on August 8th 1893.\(^73\) She was arrested and sent to Lunglei and was kept in a guard room. She was asked to submit to the government and retain her title and the village but she refused. Even while she was arrested she still tried to influence the other chiefs who visited her to fight against the British. So, seeing her as a threat to the stability of the government, she was sent to Chittagong jail on April 18, 1894.\(^74\) During her stay in the jail she was treated as a state prisoner and was kept in the European ward and she was sometimes allowed to see the sights.\(^75\) She however

\(^73\) Lalsangzuali Sailo, *Tlawn ve lo lahnu Ropuiliani* (Aizawl, 1999) p.135

\(^74\) *ibid* p.157

\(^75\) W.B. Oldham, February 21, 1894 Chittagong Jail Visitors Book in *ibid*, p.156
suffered from dysentery and later died in the jail on January 5, 1895. Ropuiliani therefore died in a jail due to her refusal to submit to the British government. She therefore could be called a martyr for fighting against the British. However in the histories written by the earlier Mizo historians, the authors hardly had written about her and some of them did it only briefly. It was Lalsangzuali Sailo, a woman who had done a research about Ropuiliani. In fact, Ropuiliani was not even listed in a book entitled *Mizo Lal Ropuite* which was about the great chiefs of the Mizo. A martyr who died so that her people would be free from a foreign government but could not even find a place among the great chiefs of Mizo is quite revealing.

The mentioned women chiefs could hold this position because their husbands who were chiefs had died and so their relations to a man enabled them to become chiefs. Moreover in Mizo chieftainship, as soon as they were capable, the sons used to leave their father's village and start a village of their own. Among the Lusei it was generally the youngest son who inherit the property and the chieftainship also. Sometimes the youngest son also wanted to have a village of his own while his father was still alive. So when the father died, there were no sons to inherit the chieftainship. In that case, the widow could look after the village. If the youngest son was still a minor, his mother could look after the administration on his behalf. So it could be seen that the status of a woman could differ according to the stratification of the society.

76 Letter to the Magistrate of Chittagong from the Superintendent of the Chittagong Jail. Dated Chittagong, the 5th January, 1895 in *ibid.*, p.167
It was this society that McCall had said that "it was a country for men before it is one for women". This was reflected in the various sayings which were prevalent at this time. The sayings like 'A woman, a dog, and a walnut tree, the more you beat them the better they be'; crab's meat is not counted as meat as women's word is not counted as word', bad wife and bad fence can be changed easily', 'A women's wisdom does not cross the village spring' clearly indicate the attitude towards women. These sayings seem to have taken shape after the Mizo have settled in the present land. This can be inferred because the sayings were not heard of in the folktales or stories which were told before they migrated to the present land. In the family and in the society also, as have been discussed above, women did not have a prominent place at all. They were never the decision makers, neither in the village affairs nor in the family. Though they spent all their energy and time for their family, they were regarded as inferiors. They could not even eat as they desired. Even if they happened to fall sick, they had to hide it. A woman who was not healthy was shunned by others. So instead of being well-cared for they were regarded to be troublesome for the family. Hence, it was mainly the men who held all authority and power. Women worked hard and they played an important role in the economy but they were not given their proper share. What they worked for and earned was not considered to be theirs. It can be said that they worked for the men. Thus strong patriarchal gender relations appear to have become established by the time the major migration process was over and Mizo settled in their present homeland.

78 A.G. McCall, *op. cit.*, p.26
79 These have been taken from the compilation made by the Tribal Research Institute. See, Tribal Research Institute, *Mizo Women Today* (Aizawl, 1991)p.24
Thus the society remained patriarchal and the Mizo remained unknown to other people of India till Bengal was annexed. The local authorities began to have trouble with the Lushai since the Lushai were in the habit of raiding the plains adjacent to the hills. The earliest record of raid by the Lushai, then known as the Kukis to the Bengalis, on the British territory took place in 1826 when some Sylhet wood cutters were attacked and killed near Simla river. The raid was carried out as wood cutters failed to pay the price of safety to the chief Bengkhuiaia. They also began to raid some tea planters as the Lushai felt that the plain people were encroaching upon their land. Thus the Lushai were a constant trouble to the British. Since the lives of the British subjects were in danger it was felt that the government had to subjugate the Lushai people. Hence several expeditions were carried out at different times and the Lushai Hills was formally brought into British India in 1890. In 1921, the British administration also took control over the un-administered area of the Lakher hills. Though the British administered the land, they did not interfere much in the social systems and followed the policy of non-interference. They also allowed the chiefs to continue their rule over their respective villages. They were mainly concerned with the maintenance of law and order and stopped the frequent raids on the plains and also the inter-tribe and inter-village feuds. However things began to change when the Christian missionaries also slowly entered the land.

The first Christian missionary who arrived in Mizoram was William Williams of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists Foreign Mission who worked in the

\(^{80}\) Alexander Mackenzie, *The North East Frontier of India*, (Delhi, reprint, 1979) pp, 279-280
\(^{81}\) A.G.McCall, *op. cit*, *p. 43*
\(^{82}\) No.165L, Collection No III. General Administration. File No.22
Khali Hills. This was in the year 1891. However he did not stay for long as his main purpose was to explore the prospect of religious work in the Lushai hills. In 1894, the Arthington Foreign Mission founded by Robert Arthington, a Baptist sent two missionary J.H.Lorrain and F.W.Savidge to the Lushai hills. They reached Sairang on 11th January, 1894. They then set their camp in Aizawl. They soon started learning the language and realized that the tribe had no written language. The missionaries therefore worked hard and reduced the duhlian dialect to writing, using the Roman script with slight modifications. They also translated the Gospels of Luke, John and the Acts of Apostles and also compiled a Lushai Grammar and Dictionary which was later printed by the Assam government.

Though the two pioneer missionaries were eager to stay in Lushai hills and work for a long time this was not possible. This was because Robert Arthington wanted them to move to other places as his idea was to spread the gospel rapidly and not to reside in one place for a long time. In the meantime, the Welsh Mission intended to enter the Lushai hills. So the first two missionaries moved aside and allowed the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists to stay in the hills. In 1897 Rev.D.E.Jones worked with the two pioneer missionaries for a few months before the latter left for other places. He was then joined by Edwin Rowlands. The missionaries as soon as they settled in the hills began to preach the gospel. Rev.D.E.Jones baptized Khuma and Khara on 25th June, 1899 and they were the first

83 C.L.Hminga, *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram* (Serkawn, 1987) p.45
84 *ibid*. p.48
85 J.H.Lorrain, *op.cit.* p.v
86 BMS Report for 1903
87 *ibid*
native converts in the Mizo hills. They used to visit other villages to preach. They also used to make a tour of the southern part of the land but could not do so as often as they desired.

In 1901 George Hughes of the Baptist Missionary Society in Chittagong went on a tour to Mizoram and saw the prospect of evangelization. He then appealed to his mission to evangelize the people. They then requested the Welsh Mission to transfer the southern portion of the Mizo field to their care. Arrangements were then made that the north of the land was under the Welsh Mission and the southern part under the Baptist Mission. The Baptist then asked Lorrain and Savidge to work among the Mizo as they were already acquainted with the language. The invitation was readily accepted and they left the Abhors and re-entered Mizoram and settled at Serkawn near Lunglei, the southern part of Mizoram. When these two missionaries arrived in Lunglei they were amazed to find that there were already 125 Christians baptised by the Welsh missionaries.

When the missionaries settled and preached the gospel there was no positive response in the initial stage. But they later knew how to touch the hearts of the people as Lorrain wrote how they presented the gospel to the people as:

‘Our first message as soon as we could speak the language was of a Saviour from sin. But the people had no sense of sin and felt no need for such a saviour. Then we found a point of contact. We proclaimed

---

88 J.M.Lloyd, On Every High Hill (Aizawl, 1984)
89 BMS Report for 1903
90 H.W.Carter, Mizoram Baptist Kohhran Chanchin (History of Mizoram Baptist Church) (Serkawn, 1981) p.50
Jesus as the vanquisher of the Devil...This, to the Lushais was ‘Good News’ indeed and exactly met their great need.\textsuperscript{91}

Many of them became Christians and were baptized. According to C.L.Hminga, the early motives for becoming Christians were freedom from fear of evil spirits and hells; freedom from frequent costly sacrifices; desire for eternal life in heaven and healing from sickness.\textsuperscript{92} However as the missionaries started opening schools and people began to receive education and job, many people became attracted to the religion because of the job prospects. According to McCall, the salaried jobs gave them ‘a relief from the wearisome toil of cultivating a hard land.’\textsuperscript{93} Thus it can be seen that Christianity was also embraced by some people because of education and job potentiality.

The missionaries also began various other activities which the Mizo had not known before. These activities in fact proved to be beneficial for the people and for the propagation of the gospel. The mission’s aim and plan had been evangelization. But in order to communicate the gospel properly, they knew that the people must be able to read the Bible so that they would be able to understand it better. Hence arose the necessity of giving education to the people. The Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in their constitution also recognized education as one of the means to be adopted for the introduction of Christianity.\textsuperscript{94}

Earlier there was no formal education among the tribe. The only system was oral education whereby information was passed orally. The main centre of education

\textsuperscript{91} BMS Annual Report for 1913
\textsuperscript{92} C.L.Hminga, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.62,63
\textsuperscript{93} A.G.McCall, \textit{op. cit.}, p.205
\textsuperscript{94} Ferdaus A.Quarishi, \textit{Christianity in the North East Hills of Asia} (Dhaka, 1987) p.24
was the *zawlbuk* run by the elders or leaders of the village. Since *zawlbuk* was only for the boys it can be noted that girls did not have this privilege. The other sort of education which they received was in their house in which the father used to advice the children. When the missionaries saw that there was no formal education, they knew that they had to concentrate more on education than on other activities. The first Welsh missionary Rev.D.E.Jones started a school in 1898. Prior to the establishment of schools by the missionaries, there were some government schools established which were meant mainly for the sons of the village chiefs. Thus the missionaries began their religious work along with education. In order to work efficient they divided the works among themselves. In the north Edwin Rowlands, a teacher who joined Jones was kept in charge of education. In the south Lorrain took up the responsibilities of pastoral and evangelization tasks and also the work of translating the Bible into Mizo language. Savidge on the other hand took up the responsibilities of spreading education and medical works. The Baptist missionaries also started a school at Serkawn in 1903 and had 24 students. All of them were boys. They used a small Primer and the gospels as text books.

With the spread of the gospel every new convert’s aim was to be able to read the Bible and hymns prepared by the missionaries. Reading and writing was a new and fascinating experience for the people and when they went to other villages they brought the value of education to people who had never seen a book. The youths were eager to learn and they passed their knowledge to their friends. Moreover the Missions were not satisfied with just teaching a few students and they therefore

---

95 Sangkima, *op. cit.*, p.84
97 BMS Annual Report for 1903
emphasized on grass root education. They opened schools in the interior places and they sent their old students as teachers. These teachers acted not only as teachers but also as evangelists.

After the Welsh Mission and Baptist Missionary Society had settled and made their place among the people, the Lakher (Mara) people were still untouched by Christianity or education. Lorrain wanted to preach among these people but could not do so as he had very little time. He then asked his brother Reginald A. Lorrain to work among the Lakkers. Since R.A. Lorrain could not find any church to support him, he founded a mission known as ‘The Lakher Pioneer Mission’. He then gave up his business career and entered Livingstone College for a year’s course of medical training. On January 18th, 1907, Reginald A. Lorrain and his wife left England on their journey to Lakherland. By means of his medical knowledge, Lorrain gained the confidence of many of the people but the confidence of all the people could not be gained. The missionaries achieved the confidence of the people after the birth of their daughter. The Lakher from different villages came to see the baby and it was the first time that they had seen a white baby. They were so pleased to see the baby that they conferred upon her the name of Tlosai Zua No which means ‘princess of the Lakkers’ and insisted upon her bearing that name forever. The acknowledgement of these missionaries in accepting the name Tlosai in addition to her English name in commemoration of the people and county was much appreciated by the people and this was instrumental in sealing the friendship of the Lakkers with that of the Lakher Pioneer Missionaries.

---

99 R. A.Lorrain, *Five ... Jungles, op. cit.*, pp.240-245
As soon as Lorrain has learnt to speak the Lakher language he reduced the language to writing. He also tried to get a few Lakhers together to learn to read and write but this was not an easy task and was disappointed. When he was about to give up, two men from a distant village came to him and requested him to teach them to read and write in their own language. After learning the alphabet they went back to their village and returned back with their friends. In this way the students of the first Mission School was gathered together. By 1912 there were about fifty Lakhers who could read and write in their own language. By 1913, Lorrain had published English-Lakher and Lakher-English Dictionary; Grammar of the Lakher Language; some portions of the Bible; Hymn Book and a Primer in the Lakher language which was printed by the Assam government free of charge. Thus R.A. Lorrain used the same method of literacy, medical work and schools that were being used among the other Mizo in the north and southern region but it was only in 1910 that the first Lakher named Thytu who was only twelve years old decided to be converted.

However by the time of the Jubilee Celebration of the Lakher Church in 1957 the entire Lakher tribe had become Christian.

Thus the administration of the government in the land and especially the works of the Christian missionaries had significant changes in the social and cultural life of the people. Since it was mainly the missionaries who brought education to the masses of the people it can be said that Christianity and education went hand in hand among the Mizo people.

---

100 ibid pp.225-26
101 ibid p.251
102 ibid. p.236
103 Donna Strom, *Wind Through the Bamboo*, (Madras, 1983) p.35
The relation between the spread of Christianity and education in Mizoram can be seen from the table below.\textsuperscript{104}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>No.of Christians</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>No. of Literates</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>82,434</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>91,204</td>
<td>2461</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>3635</td>
<td>4.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>98,406</td>
<td>27,720</td>
<td>28.17</td>
<td>6183</td>
<td>6.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>1,24,404</td>
<td>59,123</td>
<td>47.52</td>
<td>13320</td>
<td>10.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>1,52,786</td>
<td>98,108</td>
<td>64.21</td>
<td>29765</td>
<td>19.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1,96,202</td>
<td>1,57,575</td>
<td>80.31</td>
<td>61093</td>
<td>31.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>2,66,063</td>
<td>2,30,509</td>
<td>86.64</td>
<td>117094</td>
<td>44.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>3,32,390</td>
<td>2,86,141</td>
<td>86.09</td>
<td>178793</td>
<td>53.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BMS Reports and Government Census Report 1901 - 1971

From the table it can be seen that education was more appreciated by the people than Christianity in the earlier stage and that many of the students were non-Christians.

In the earlier years of the missionaries work in Mizoram, girls did not benefit much from education since they were not allowed by their parents to attend the classes. There were very few girls students in the earlier stage. The names which were seen in the records are Nui, Saii, Pawngi and Ziki who received their education in 1903. Apart from these girls, there was hardly any mention of girls being educated. Thus it was mainly the boys who received education and this resulted in a wide gap between men and women.\textsuperscript{105} This was realized by the missionaries and

\textsuperscript{104} BMS Reports and Government Census Report 1901 to 1971
\textsuperscript{105} Chapman & Clark, \textit{Mizo Miracle} (Madras, 1968) p.5
they therefore opened a school for girls. The first school for girls was opened by Mrs. Jones in 1904 at Aizawl. In South Mizoram in the later part of 1907 an Experimental Girls Boarding School was opened by the wives of the missionaries. They also looked after some orphan babies and taught the mothers how to look after their children. But the society did not see the value of it and did not even appreciate it. Since the social values in traditional Mizo society were so patriarchal, women were just regarded as useful appendages to men. So when the missionaries talked of sending girls to school, it was immediately seen as a threat to male domination and word began to spread that only girls of bad reputation would go to school. This attitude can be seen from the lines quoted which was composed at that time.

𝑍𝒊𝒂 𝒆𝒎 𝒓𝒆𝒏𝒈𝒊𝒏 𝒔𝒊𝒌𝒖𝒍 𝒌𝒂𝒊 𝒂 𝒎𝒂𝒘𝒊 𝒏𝒆𝒎 𝒁𝒂𝒘

𝑳𝒆𝒉𝒌𝒉𝒂 𝒉𝒊𝒂 𝒕𝒊𝒂𝒍 𝒂𝒏 𝒄𝒉𝒂𝒘𝒊 𝒒,

𝑵𝒖𝒏 𝒅𝒂𝒏𝒈 𝓽𝒆𝒏𝒈𝒍𝒆𝒓𝒊, 𝓽𝒆𝒏𝒈𝒍𝒆𝒓𝒊

The English translation would run like this:

Wearing skirts they go to school
Carrying books with them
They learn nothing but to flirt.

Sensing the need for women to be educated properly so as to be at par with the men, the missionaries felt the need for full time lady missionaries to work among the women so that the social welfare activities of the missionaries and the church would develop and grow on sound lines. Thus the BMS sent Edith M.Chapman, an

106 H.W.Carter (ed), op. cit., p.86
107 ibid.
educationist and O.E.Dicks, a nurse to South Mizoram to work especially among the Mizo women.108

When Chapman and Dicks arrived, they were initially not appreciated by the society. Since the society was patriarchal, the Lushai men did not want these ladies to teach their girls or women or be under their control. The men also did not want the white women to interfere with their womenfolk. Moreover the male dominated society did not see the need for girls' school. There still existed the belief that women could not possess any knowledge and that their wisdom does not cross the village spring. It was also believed that girls were supposed to stay at home and do the household chores and other works but they were not supposed to study.

The problems faced by the missionaries in all parts of Mizoram was that the people thought that boys sometimes get jobs under the government or the mission but girls were not expected to be able to do that. Since the society did not approve of girls being educated, so, boys would not marry a girl who had been to school.109 This also made the girls reluctant to go to school since most of the girls wanted to marry and settle down. There was also the notion that a literate girl would just use her knowledge to send love-letters to her boyfriend.110 The missionaries sometimes used to come across a bright and intelligent girl and requested the parents to send her to school. But the answer they usually received was that the girl was much too useful at home and hence could not be spared.111

108 BMS Annual Report for 1919
110 ibid
111 Chapman & Clark, op. cit., p.39
In order to overcome these difficulties the missionaries had to break down the prejudice against girls' education if the girls' school was to be a success. The missionaries then spread the message that by being educated, the students would turn out to be better housewives and better mothers and serve the men better so that men could realise the value of education. This would also solve the problem which the men had regarding their attitude to girls' education as mentioned earlier. They also made a plan that girls' education would not spoil them for village life. The things which are to be taught in the school should be appreciated by and helpful to the whole community.\textsuperscript{112}

All the things which the girls studied at school made them more useful wives and mothers when they went back to their village and it also helped in their character training. In their own villages, the girls would read aloud from their note books what they had studied at school. This included how to look after babies, animals, best diet, gardening, home nursing, first-aid, how to clean and look after the house. As what they had heard from the girls had a practical association with their day to day activities, the audiences quickly experimented with what they had heard. When they found that what they had heard and seen was good, they were more open to the education of the girls.\textsuperscript{113} Schools were also opened in the villages and in these schools the old students used to act as teachers. In order to have efficient teachers in the villages, the schools in the headquarters tried to train up teachers who would spread around what they had studied. Hence a teacher training course was given to prepare the future teachers for the village services.

\textsuperscript{112} ibid, p.64
\textsuperscript{113} ibid
Though girls’ education had progressed yet it was a very slow process. This is apparent from the report of the Presbyterian mission of 1928-29 in which Miss Davies wrote:

“There is a good proportion of boys attending the schools in every village but few girls, excepting little girls say under seven years of age. What is the explanation? Much work is expected of the girls immediately they become old enough to look after their younger brothers and sisters, or to carry water and firewood. The men, on the whole have an easy and lazy life. It is true that it is the father who goes out every year to select a place for the family rice field; it is he who clears the jungle. But it is the women who plant the rice, and it is they who do the weeding during the raining months: and they gather the rice and winnow it in addition to carrying the water and firewood day by day, and preparing food and clothes for the family. The hardest work all falls on the women, and the girls are far too useful to be spared to attend school. The consequence is that most of the women are totally uneducated. Very few of them can read or write. Our first need is to educate the parents to believe in the education of their girls. It is to be feared that some send their girls to school simply in order that they may fetch a higher marriage price when they are asked for as wives.”\footnote{The Report of the North Lushai Hills, 1928-29}

Even though the progress of women’s education may be slow yet the missionaries
did all they could for the development of the Mizo women. As a result many of them received higher education and the first woman to finish matric was in 1911 and Lalsangpuii was the first woman to finish her BA in 1942.\textsuperscript{115} Education also opened up more avenues for Mizo women.

From the above discussion we see that Christianity and education greatly affected the lives of the women. These agencies of change affected not only women but the lives and customs of the people. Though the missionaries maintained that they ‘are here not to make them Eastern duplicates of Western Baptist, but to bring them to Christ and to so guide them that they shall develop along their own national lives into a strong Lushai Church of God’\textsuperscript{116} yet the very act of becoming a church member meant a definite break with old traditions, customs and habits.\textsuperscript{117} Thus the new life styles posed a challenge to the traditional cultures and this resulted in doing away with some institutions and ways of living of the people. Some of the important things that were abolished were warfare, zawlbuk (bachelors’ dormitory), communal drinking of zu (liquor), bawi and the various sacrifices. There were also changes that took place among the people and the important changes were hygiene, dress and hair style and employment.

Thus from the various accounts described it can be seen how Christianity and education influenced the people and brought about many changes in the customs and ways of life of the people. As discussed many of the changes were under the influence of the missionaries so that it could be in accordance with the teachings of the Bible. One can also say that it ruined the culture of the people and that the

\textsuperscript{115} John Vanlalhluna, \textit{Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram} (Aizawl, 1985), p.56
\textsuperscript{116} BMS Annual Report for 1913
\textsuperscript{117} M.Eleanor Bowser, \textit{Light on the Lushai Hills}, (Serkawn, 1993) p.17
traditional norms of the people were diluted. But one must understand that because of the changes in the economy, polity and even the society many of the things which were done away with like warfare and zawlibuk were now no longer needed. The people also realised that they do not need institutions or practices which has no immediate utility. Hence they were bound to decline sooner or later. However one needs to see how these changes and the things which were abolished affected gender relations and whether these changes were women friendly or not.

Thus the Mizo in Mizoram were greatly affected by the British government, Christianity and education. These were instrumental in bringing about the development of the people in various fields. After the independence of India, Lushai Hills was also brought under the Indian Union and it received the status of Union Territory in 1972 and State in 1987. On the other hand, the other tribes of Zo in Chin areas who did not migrate to present Mizoram but were left behind were brought under Burma and how they would also have been affected by different agencies like education, Christianity and western influence would be studied in the next chapter. In order to study their changes, their traditional society would also be looked into.