CHAPTER V

ZELIANGRONG CULTURE AND RELIGION: A PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE
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The important issues that are normally addressed in the philosophy of culture and religion require a critical study for the proper understanding of the Zeliangrong culture and religion.

Concept and Nature of God

God is thought of as an ultimate reality, the source or ground of all else, perfect and deserving of worship. Such a conception is common to both Eastern and Western religions. Some trace this to human psychology or sociology: Freud regarded God as a projection of a perfect, comforting father-figure for wish-fulfillment. Marxists see belief in God as arising from the capitalist structure of society. Believers, however, trace their belief to religious experience, revealed or authoritative texts, and rational reflection.

Philosophers flesh out the concept of God by drawing the inferences from God’s relation to the universe (‘first-cause theology’) and from the claim that God is a perfect being. ‘Perfect-being’ theology is the more fundamental one. Its history stretches from Plato and Aristotle, through the Stoics, and into the Christian tradition as early as Augustine and Boethius; it plays an important role in underwriting such ontological arguments for God’s existence as those of Anselm and Descartes. It draws on four root intuitions: that to be perfect is perfectly to be, that it includes being complete, that it includes being all-inclusive, and that it includes being personal. Variously balanced, these intuitions yield our varied concepts of God.

Criticism of the perfect being theology have focused both on the possibility that the set of candidate divine perfections may not be consistent or unique, and doubts as to whether human judgment can be adequate for forming concepts of God.
Views of God’s relation to the universe vary greatly. Pantheists say that God is the universe. Panentheists assert that God includes the universe; or is related to it as soul to body. They ascribe to God the limitations associated with being a person—such as limited power and knowledge—but argue that being a person is nevertheless a state of perfection. Other philosophers, however, assert that God is wholly different from the universe.

Some claim that God created the universe ex nihilo, that is, from no pre-existing material. Some add that God conserves the universe in being moment by moment, and is thus provident for his creatures. Still others think that God ‘found’ some pre-existing material—this goes back to the myth of the Demiurge in Plato’s Timaeus, and also entails that God is provident. By contrast, deists deny providence and think that once God made it, the universe ran on its own. Still others argue that God neither is nor has been involved in the world. The common thread lies in the concept of perfection: thinkers seem to relate God to the universe in the way that their thoughts about God’s perfection make most appropriate.

The Zeliangrong believed that the benevolent Supreme God is the creator God who reigns with limitless power in heaven and earth. They also believed in the existence of many other lesser gods both benevolent and malevolent with limited power. They claimed to worship God in spirit and not idols, rivers, mountains, forest, fields, trees and other natural object but the spirits dwelling in it but this is doubtful. As for instance, they make stone fetish (sometimes even dressed them up), and placed the offered sacrifices in front of it with the sense of reverence and chant prayers. They even consider that stone fetish and even the place where it is kept is considered sacred. If that is not idol worship then how do we draw clear cut boundary of idol worship and worship of the spirit dwelling in certain object is a big reasonable question.

Nature of Man

For many thinkers like the Hedonists, or the materialist, man is a material being. For them “man is what he eats” The mind is just a process of the brain. There is no immortal soul. Besides this, we have even religion who
does not believe in the permanency of the soul like Buddhism. But for many other thinkers like Descartes and many who follow other religions like Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism etc., and many other primitive or traditional religions believe in the existence of the material body along with the soul. For them, man has a dual entity; the momentary material body and the permanent soul. For Aristotle, man is a rational being. For socialist, man is a social being. For Freud and Feuerbach man is a feeling, willing and thinking being. To all these I would add that man is a moral being too.

For many who believe in the immortality of the soul like the Jainism, Hinduism and so on believes that man is born with the past karma so the soul is impure. For Christianity too, man is born with the original sin (coming from the first fall). Even Buddhism who does not hold on to the permanency of soul yet believing in the transmigration of soul (like a flame or fire from a dying wick of a candle can be transferred to another new candle) believe that man is born with that past karma and so there are sufferings in life. Now, we look at what the Zeliangrong belief says ‘man is born with soul and life of man is most of the time identified with the presence of the soul in the material body made out of clay’. Their creation myth says that it is the soul-breathe of God that makes man lives. But they do not believe that the soul is either born with the past karmic properties or with sin as is understood in Christianity. Sin (or nuan) is committed or accumulated from one’s present life only. When they refer about the ‘coming of life’ through the breath of God in man, it is not clear to what type of ‘life’ it is being referred to. It is being used as an analogy to some important concepts or not, is not clearly explained. Animals and other living beings do have life but according to the creation myth, there is no mention of any anything as God breathing on animals to make them live.

Problem of Evil and How Do the Zeliangrong Understand It

For many people it is, more than anything else, the appalling depth and extent of human suffering, together with the selfishness and greed which produce so much of this, that makes the idea of a loving Creator all powerful God seem implausible and disposes them toward one of the various
naturalistic theories of religion. From earliest times an attack upon the
existence of God and an attack upon the possibility of knowing that God
exists have been based upon the premise that there is evil (or in some sense
suffering) in the world.

Evil refers to physical pain, mental suffering, and moral wickedness
that would be better off without it. The last is one of the causes of the first
two, for an enormous amount of human pain arises from people's inhumanity.
This pain includes such major scourges as poverty, oppression and
persecution, war, and all the injustice, dignity, and inequity that have occurred
throughout history. Even disease is fostered, to an extent that has not yet
been precisely determined by psychosomatic medicine, by emotional and
moral factors seated both in individuals and in their social environment.
However, although a great deal of pain and suffering are caused by human
action, there is yet more that arises from such natural causes as bacteria,
viruses and earthquakes, storm, fire, lightning, flood, and drought. So we
have evils of different kinds like the natural evil, moral evil and the third kind
which is injustice when good man meets a grim fate while bad, corrupted
people prosper in this world.

As a challenge to theism, the problem of evil has traditionally been
posed in the form of an Epicurean dilemma: if God perfectly loves, God must
wish to abolish all evil; and if God is all-powerful, God must be able to abolish
all evil. But evil exists; therefore God cannot be both omnipotent and perfectly
loving.

There are three main theodicy or Christian responses to the problem
of evil: firstly, the Augustinian(354-430 A.D.) response, hinging upon the
concept of the fall of man from an original state of righteousness which is to be
located in the free will of man choosing the lesser good to higher good (re-

Limited, 2004
Limited, 2004 p.39
179 Ibid., pp.39-40
occurrence of Plato’s idea of plenitude) or to be understood from the aesthetic point of view or as seen from the understanding of evil as privation, secondly, the Irenaean (c. 120-202) response, hinging upon the idea of the gradual creation of a perfected humanity through life in a highly imperfect world smoothening the rough edges of life bringing out the finer qualities of man, making a better man through sufferings of life; and thirdly, the response of modern process theology, hinging upon the idea of a God who is not all-powerful and not in fact able to prevent the evils arising either in human beings or in the processes of nature. We do see some problems in each of this case. The process theology explains away the traditional questions itself in saying that God is not all powerful, Irenaean theodicy too is not free from Achilles heel as in the process of making man to be a stronger person, undergoing pains of this life to bring out the finer qualities of man and to smoothen the rough edges of life, many could not withstand the pain and many had collapsed in the process. Augustinian theodicy too is not applicable to all as all evil are not simply because of sins, as even from Christians Scripture we do know of Job who though not of his sin suffered when his faithfulness was tested by Satan.

Looking at how an evil is viewed from some major Eastern religion like Buddhism or Jainism, we know that it has much to do with our karma or deeds and accepted as the fruit of our actions; thoughts, mind and deeds. Pointing to the immense inequalities of human birth, one person is born with a healthy body and a high IQ, to loving parents with good income in an advanced and affluent society, so that all the riches of human culture are available and the individual has considerable freedom to choose his or her mode of life. Another is born with a crippled body and low IQ, to unloving, unaffluent, and uncultured parents in a society in which that person is highly likely to become criminal and to die an early and violent death. There is not much injustice, randomness, no arbitrariness in that as one is considered to be getting what one has sown. In Hindu belief system too, there is not much injustice as one is getting what one has sown and in the meantime some sect would consider as unreal and those will be solved when one attains the
knowledge of being one with the Brahman, when one's illusion (avidya or maya) is removed. In Far East religion like Confucianism, too severe calamities are because of one's deviation from the way or path particularly the responsible persons like the leader or emperor or head. In Zoroastrianism too evil is due to the evil force as there are two forces one good god and the other evil one constantly at war with one another. Most of the reasons been given by these religions are also associated with some difficulty.

Generally, the religions of the world have offered three main types of solution:

(i) There is the monism of the Vedanta teachings of Hinduism, according to which the phenomenal world, with all its evils, is maya, or illusion. But this view is defective for this purpose because it simply re-describes the problem and does not attempt to solve it, for it leaves unexplained the evil of our suffering from the compulsive illusion of evil.

(ii) There is the dualism exemplified mostly in ancient Zoroastrianism with its opposed good and evil deities Ahura Mazdah (a good God) and Angra Mainu (an evil god). The former creates goods, while the later creates evils. Some believe in the existence of God and Devil constantly warring with each other. Plato offered a much less extreme dualism. He describes goods to be the idea of the Good, the highest idea of archetype, and evils to matter (hyle) which resists the activities of the idea of the Good. Aristotle ascribes goods to God, who is pure activity, and evils to matter (hyle) which is entirely passive, and yet resists God's activity. But such explanation is not satisfactory because it necessitates a statement that either any of them be more powerful or dominate the world or there must be a third to overcome them and rule the world. This type is also found in various finite deity doctrines of such modern thinkers and Western Philosophers as J.S. Mill and Edgard Brightman.
(iii) Thirdly there is the distinctive combination of monism and dualism, or of an ethical dualism set within an ultimate metaphysical monism (in the form of monotheism) that has been developed within Christianity.

Since the terms of the problem of evil vary with character of the religious beliefs which gives rise to it, a separate study is required for each of the great religious system. Zeliangrong religion is very close to the Judeo-Christian religious understanding and belief of God in many respects like the belief in benevolent Almighty or Supreme God who is all loving. According to the Zeliangrong religion, the answer to the untold sufferings and miseries that man faces in this world is either because of man's sin (nuan) or because of the malicious works of the devil (rasi) for no false of theirs.

Malevolent spirits simply demand people to give him sacrifices or offerings and it is his work to torture people. That's the reason man offers animals' or fowls' blood to bring forgiveness of sins and so the animal and birds sacrifices were made through the priest. Sometimes, offerings were made to appease the evil/malevolent spirit for the healing of diseases. But here too in the strict sense, the Epicurean question posed in the form of dilemma is still unanswered.

Whether morality and religion can be separated or whether morality is an offshoot of religion and vice versa

The relationship between religion and morality has been of special and long-standing concern to philosophers. Not only is there much overlap between the two areas, but how to understand their proper relationship is a question that has stimulated much debate. Of special interest in philosophical discussion has been the question of divine authority and the moral life. If there is a God, how are we to understand the moral status of his commands? Are there moral standards that even God must acknowledge? Or does God's commanding something make it morally binding? The impact of religion on moral selfhood has also been much disputed. Secularists of various stripes have insisted that religion is not conducive to moral maturity. Religious
thinkers have responded by exploring the ways in which one's notion of moral maturity is shaped by one's larger worldview saying if we believe that there is a God who has provided us with important moral information, then this will influence the ways in which we understand what is to count as a 'mature' and 'rational' approach to moral decision making.

Both religion and morality covers a large ill-defined area. Each involves a more or less clearly articulated set of beliefs, practices, attitudes, and motives. What they have in common is that they are fundamental to the way of life of an individual or of a society, and it is not surprising that they should be closely connected. But to know the relation between them well, finding out the historical and conceptual connections becomes mandatory. There are different kinds of motives which lead men to act morally; (a) Enlightened self interest, (b) Respect for rules, (c) "Others regarding" motives. Structurally, we see a moral system containing

i. beliefs about the nature of man,

ii. beliefs about ideals, about what is good or desirable or worthy of pursuit for its own sake,

iii. Rules laying down what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, and

iv. Motives that incline us to choose the right or the wrong course.

We find that unreflective morality is inclined to lay more emphasis on rules than on ideals. When we were children we were taught to be unselfish, truthful, honest, helpful, kind, and generous and to follow a host of detailed set of rules covering different aspects of life. Philosophers on the other hand, attempt to incorporate these miscellaneous rules into a coherent system, although they are divided about the relative importance of rules and ideals. Deontologists regard rules as fundamental. Moral rules are worthy of obedience in their own right. The act itself is important. They are not that concerned of the ends. For instance, the rule that one ought to pay debts is a special case of the more general rule that one ought to keep promise; and the rule that one ought not to kill is a special case of rule that one ought not to do
injury. Teleologists, on the other hand, regard moral rules as rules for producing what is good and avoiding what is bad; they are to be judged empirically on the basis of their tendency to promote what is good and prevent what is bad, we are under no obligation to keep promise because “a promise is a promise” if it would clearly be more beneficial to break it. Most moral systems try to find a compromise between these two extreme views.

Now we see at how the Zeliangrong people view at this. They seem to consider that rules are rules made for the good of the whole individuals of a community and rules ought to be obeyed. The collective rules become an authority and should be obeyed as they are rules but since they believe that rules are made for the good of the whole individuals in the community, it is neither fully following deontological view nor teleological view because they emphasize that the act also must be right.

Looking at the content of morality we find morality to be concerned with relations between men, with how they ought to behave toward each other, with what general rules governing relations between man and man in a society. The need for morality arises partly because men are social animals. Man cannot survive by itself without the help of anyone. Man normally delights in each other’s company. But, along with the direct and indirect need for the company of his fellows, man has the tendency to disrupt the society. When goods are scarce, his limited generosity and his desire to preserve his own life leads each man into competition with his neighbours. When along with this motive and we might add pride, jealousy, and sheer stupidity- get the upper hand, there results what Hobbes called a condition of war (in his *Leviathan*, Ch.13).

“....and such a war as is of every man against every man...In such conditions, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no culture of the earth, no navigation nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no
letters; no society; and, which worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."

Men have devised the systems of rules which we know as law and morality to avoid this intolerable condition. Though these systems differ widely in detail, their common origin and purpose in overriding need to preserve social harmony ensures a broad similarity in fundamentals. All moral codes condemn aggression, injustice, and deceit, at least within the social group. But at times, being human, when man breaks the rules, the Zeliangrong people always find ways and means to compromise or reconcile for the better end. In that way, they are neither following a strict deontological view nor a strict teleological view but seem to go in between.

For most people, beliefs in God and in an afterlife are the essential ingredients of religion. But if we include these in a definition of religion, we shall find ourselves committed to excluding many primitive and some advance religions. In Buddhism, for example, there is neither a personal god nor personal immortality. That which is essential to religion in common that we can understand is

i. belief in supernatural powers, which may be thought of as persons or impersonally, as "forces";

ii. appropriate emotional attitudes, a sense of the sacred or numinous, and an attitude of humility or reverence in its presence; and

iii. rites, ceremonies, and other religious duties. Where the supernatural is thought of as person or persons, these duties are either thought of as duties toward supernatural persons or as enjoined by them, usually as both.

For the Zeliangrong, the concept of religion applies to all the above three mentioned points. They believed in personal God and even other supernatural forces; they have a sense of sacredness on what they believed to be matters relating to religion. They observed many rites, rituals and

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religious ceremonies in almost all affairs of life that the people even sometimes find it hard to have private time for individual welfare and also sometimes people complaint that they find it hard to prosper materially for there were too many rites and rituals involving too many sacrifices of fowls and animals.

Since the publication of Sir Henry Maine's *Ancient Law*, the following account of the relation between morality and religion among primitive peoples has become an accepted orthodoxy. In primitive communities, it was held, there are rules that are handed on from one generation to another. Some of these rules are what we would call technological-traditional methods of agriculture, hunting, and carrying on of the other useful arts; others are moral, concerned with human relations; others are religious, concerned with the supernatural. No distinction is drawn between technological and religious rules and between moral and religious rites. It seems technological, moral, and religious, are thought of as having been ordained long ago by supernatural beings and recorded in the traditions of the community. These supernatural beings are not only the sources of all rules; they provide the authority and the sanction for them. Moral rules are not thought of as obligatory in their own right or as conducive in some direct, non-magical way to the welfare of the community; they are the commands of the supernatural beings, and are worthy of obedience simply because they are his commands. The penalty for disobedience is disaster in this world and damnation in the next. If we consider morality, in this view, then morality is wholly dependent on religion; it is not just that if there had been no religion men would never have learned morality; it is rather that without religion there could be no morality.

If this account of the origin of morality were true, it would be of great historical interest; but it would have no tendency to show that morality is dependent on religion and cannot exist without it. But this received account of the origins of morality and of the ways in which primitive peoples regard their moral rules is seriously mistaken. Although, religion plays a large part in their

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lives, it is by no means all-pervasive as the received theory makes out. Modern anthropologists assure us that their technological practices are, like ours, based on what they learned about natural phenomena, unconnected with their beliefs about the supernatural. Bronisław Malinowski wrote of the Trobriand Islanders:

"The savages have a class of obligatory rules, not endowed with any mystical character, not set forth "in the name of God," not enforced by any supernatural sanction but provided with a purely social binding force... There are among the Trobrianders a number of traditional rules instructing the craftsman how to ply his trade. The inert and uncritical way in which these rules are obeyed is due to the general "conformism of the savages" as we might call it. But in the main these rules are followed because their practical utility is recognized by reason and testified by experience. Again, other injunctions of how to behave in associating with your friends, relatives, superiors, equals and so on, are obeyed because any deviation from them makes a man feel and look, in the eyes of others, ridiculous, clumsy, socially uncouth. These are the precepts of good manners, very developed in Melanesia and most strictly adhered to. Here are further rules laying down the proceedings at games, sports, entertainments and festivities, rules which are the soul and substance of the amusement or pursuit, and are kept because it is felt and recognized that any failure to "play the game" spoils it. ¹⁸²

Talking of moral rules, however, Malinowski and other anthropologists still sometimes cling to the theory of a religious origin and suppose them to be obeyed for fear of supernatural sanctions, in spite of the fact that their own detailed accounts of the savage’s way of life point in a quite different direction. Moral rules are obeyed partly from fear of social rather than of supernatural sanctions, partly from habit, and partly from recognition of the

value of these rules to society. This recognition is as rational as is their recognition of the value of technological rules. The main "social binding forces" to which Malinowskí refers seems to be loyalty, mutuality of service, regard for the rights of others, a sense of fairness, and fear of reprisal or of social disapproval. These are moral, not religious motives. It is rare to find supernatural sanctions invoked unless the rule concerned is not a moral but a religious one.

Many anthropologists think that religion operates, indeed, in every department of the savage’s life, in his work, his play, and his relations with others; but within each department, religion is concerned only with what the savage does not understand. His normal routines, based on experience, are liable to interruption by normal occurrences (floods, droughts, tempests, earthquakes, pestilence, diseases, epidemics and the like) which he cannot control. It is mainly to these catastrophes to which he mainly attributes a supernatural origin and which he attempts to ward off by the performance of religious duties. In the context of the Zeliangrong this may be true to a great extent but this analysis is insufficient because, they did perform much more regular activities like thanksgiving offerings to the Supreme God annually without expecting things in return. That means it is not only for personal gain but an acknowledgement of the very existence of the benevolent God in faith. We may ask again ‘what is being so moral in offering a thanksgiving sacrifice? Giving thanks is cultural, moral and religious virtue which is difficult to separate.

A further difficulty for the view that morality is based on religion arises from the striking contrast between the similarity of moral and the dissimilarity of religious beliefs, rules, and practices. Moral instructions are very much the same everywhere. For instance, the instructions which the Murray Islanders give to their children are “reticence, thoughtfulness, respectful behaviour, prompt obedience, generosity, diligence, kindness to parents and other relatives in deed and word, truthfulness, helpfulness, manliness, discretion in dealing with women, quiet temper...The prohibitions are against theft, shirking
duty, talkativeness, abusive language, talking scandal, marriage with certain individuals" 183

The moral values imparted to the young initiates in a tribe in olden days are very much the same as what we might call a present day’s accepted moral virtue.

In view of the present days’ popularity of “cultural relativism”, it may seem surprising to insist that moral rules are everywhere similar. Here the claim is only for the broadest moral in principles like condemnation of aggression, injustice and deceit. But cultural relativism is itself based partly on a failure to distinguish between moral and religious rules. The contrast between the similarity of moral rules and the great diversity of religious rules, taboos, rituals, and practices is not easily explained on the hypothesis that morality is an offshoot of religion. 184. This is also true when we look at the Zeliangrong practices with other practices.

Are there Influences of religion on morality? According to MacBeath, the contrast between the evidence which anthropologists produce for the independence of morality from religion and their frequent theoretical assertions of its dependence upon it can be explained by their failure to distinguish between two different questions:

(1) How far and in what ways, if at all, do the beliefs of primitive people about the supernatural, the emotions which it evokes, and the performance of ritual or strictly religious duties directly or indirectly influence their attitude and behaviour towards their fellows- that is, the nature and performance of their strictly moral duties?

(2) How far, and in what sense, if any, do primitive people regard their moral duties to their fellow men as being also religious duties, in the sense that they are prescribed or sanctioned by their religion?

It is one thing to say that religion affects moral character, quite another to say that religion either prescribes or sanctions moral duties, that a man's religion tells him what his moral duties are, provides a justification for performing them, and provides a motive, in the form of supernatural penalties for disobedience. The full claim that morality depends on religion so far may not therefore be supported by saying, however truly, that religion has an influence on moral character.

For the Zeliangrong religion too, here we seem to find again that in the archaic form of their religion, the concern of averting disaster and for a better life in the life after death seem to be the core of their religious practice. But in the strict sense when we delve deeper it is not the case but we find that in order to live a good life in the land of the dead (taruai ram) one has to follow strict moral and social rules. In their religious instructions, many unthinkable consequences are stored for people who led a bad or immoral life on this earth. No doubt from folk tales we find that the gods do approve good moral behaviour of man and reward accordingly. So for the Zeliangrong too, though it is difficult but in some sense it may be able to differentiate morality and religion. Yet religion approves morality and much beyond that morality is a part of religion. And therefore some morality is an offshoot of religion but not necessarily all morality.

But to make morality dependent on religion in this way is to assume first, that law is a product of the arbitrary will of a lawgiver and second, that morality is analogous to law. Both these assumptions can be questioned. If we adopt the arbitrary-command view of law, we shall have to say that there is nothing intrinsically right or wrong in the acts which are enjoined or forbidden by law. It depends for its validity solely on the arbitrary will of a lawgiver. On the alternative and more usual view, God is the promulgator rather than the creator of moral rules. The acts that he forbids are, in themselves, really wrong before he forbids them, but human beings would not know that they were wrong unless God told them so. Any act which contravenes a rule may be considered under either of two aspects: (1) as an act of a particular kind (for example, homicide); and (2) as a breach of the
rule. On the first view (that God creates moral rules), an act can be wrong only under the second aspect; disobedience is the only sin; on the second view it is wrong under both aspects. Those who say that morality depends on religion, in the sense that morality requires an author, must take the first view. On the second view, this difficulty does not arise. There are recognized and agreed ways of discovering what the rules of a game are, but we have no comparable way of finding out what God's moral rules are. Different religions appeal to different books, and to say that such and such a rule must be a genuine divine command because it is in the Bible or in the Koran or in the Bhagvad Gita is to argue in a circle. Above this difficulty, how do we view what Kierkegaard spoke of the ethical suspension and going to the leap of faith in the religious stage that God honoured Abraham complete obedience to sacrifice his own son as a sacrifice is another interesting subject. The God who says “Do not kill” commanded Abraham to offer Isaac his son as a Sacrifice to God himself. Here, like Kierkegaard, even though God approves morality, faith and obedience is more important. Basing on this, it is to be concluded that morality is just a part of religion though some difficulties are also here.

Is there autonomy of morality? Suppose that the above-mentioned difficulty has been surmounted and that I am satisfied that God really has commanded me to act in such and such a manner, it still makes sense to ask whether I ought so to act. Since the time of Kant, most moral philosophers have taken the view that morality must be "autonomous," that so far from requiring to be based on something else it can admit of no such external basis. The argument for this is quite general: any set of beliefs offered as a possible basis of morality would have to commend itself to our moral judgement before it could be accepted as a valid basis, so that to base morality on it would always be to argue in a circle again. The view that morality can be based on religion is just one example of this circular type of argument. From the study of Zeliangrong culture and religion it is also found that there is difficulty in finding out the autonomy of morality instead the relation are too close that seems concomitant to any observer.
Religion and morality may be separable for the Zeliangrong in some sense though they are closely intertwined. Religion is a thing which concerned more of man's relation with God and, of course, it reflects in man's moral behaviour to a very great extent yet there can be minimal morality in some sense without bringing the concept of religion. But at the same time not following the rule of the society or doing something wrong against other human being ('morality' as understood as a relation between man to man) made him a sinner (nuan phungmei). In that way, the concept of sin or sinner is more to do with religious elements. Here we see the breach of social moral law (which seemed to be autonomous) is a sin (now a religious element) to the Zeliangrong. Therefore, it is very, very difficult to separate morality from religion.

Relation between Science and religion

In the nineteenth century scientists and theologians came into open conflict, the sharpness which is apparent in, for example, T.H. Huxley's lively volumes of essays. It is often said nowadays that the conflict is a thing of the past. Science is said to have become less materialistic and hence more favourable to theology, whereas theology has allegedly become more sophisticated and thus less vulnerable to attack by science. While Scientists like Arthur Eddington and J.H. Jeans have tried to use the theories of modern physics to support a spiritual interpretation of the universe, there has been a withdrawal among theologians, in that most of them would no longer wish to defend the literal truth of Biblical stories such as that of Adam and Eve or of Noah's ark. Those who still hold that there is a conflict between religion and science are quite commonly considered naive and old fashioned. There are new areas of controversy which were not envisaged by previous generations or at least did not take a prominent place in their thought like the efficacy of prayer, immortality of the soul or religious experience and the like.

Today, however, theologians have generally given up the view of the Scriptures as being literally the word of God and have become content to think of them as inspired by God in some weaker sense, whereby the
Scriptures can quite well be supposed to contain the outmoded cosmological, geological, biological, and historical speculations of pre-scientific man. It is this retreat on the part of the theologians that has made them safe from many attacks which T.H. Huxley and his contemporaries used to delight in making against them. This may in part explain the view that science and religion need no longer be in conflict. Nevertheless, it is far from clear that the theologians has entrenched themselves in a position that is safe from all attacks by science. Important religious tenets like those of immortality of the soul and the efficacy of prayer seem to be particularly hard to reconcile with modern scientific ideas.\textsuperscript{185} This conflict becomes even sharper than before.

**Immortality of the soul**

Very important part of Zeliangrong belief is the doctrine of the personal immortality. Soul is a personal immaterial self that survives death. The doctrines of survival as purely immaterial spirit clearly conflicts with many influential philosophical doctrines. Some philosophers elucidate mind (or soul) in terms of bodily behaviour, and others defend the doctrine that conscious experiences are brain processes. If such views are true, then according to them, there is clearly no such thing as immaterial mind that could survive death. But even if some form of philosophical dualism is accepted and the mind or soul is thought of as something over and above the body, the empirical evidence in favour of an invariable correlation between mental states and brain states is extremely strong: that is, the mind may be thought of as in some sense distinct from the body but also as fundamentally dependent upon physical states. Without oxygen or under the influence of anaesthetics or sporadic drugs, we rapidly lose consciousness. Moreover, the quality of our consciousness can be influenced in spectacular ways by appropriate drugs or by mechanical stimulation of different areas of the brain. In the face of all evidence that is being accumulated by modern research in neurology, therefore for some, people find it hard to believe that after the dissolution of the brain there could be any thought or conscious experience or

whatever. Zeliangrong religion clearly express the belief in existence of the soul which can be either material or immaterial but assuming spiritual bodily form that can be recognized by one another. So when dead bodies are being buried they even buried along some necessary tools and implements and foods or some items of the necessities of life so that they can use it in the land of the dead. Above that they would even send to their dead relatives or love ones who had gone long before through somebody’s funeral time.

Another important philosophical puzzle is that where in accordance with modern cosmological views, can the land of the death be located where the dead soul's bodies are living. But on the other extreme, the Zeliangrong people have strong belief which put them into practice that immortality of soul is not at all to be doubted but is like a continuation of life in one form. Even the Priests and priestess profess to meet or converse with the dead people of certain families and bring messages from them to the living relatives on earth. One such prophet is now a member of the Christian Church. On 21st August 1985 he made the following statement "The land of the dead is a very strange land. We have to cross the Chakaguiki river over which there is a very narrow bridge; actually only an iron bar. When I reached the land of the dead I felt as if I was surrounded by burning coal, it was very, very hot, I met all the villagers who had gone to the land of the dead. They asked about their relatives on earth and were happy to see me. But since it was so hot I returned to earth as soon as possible. These visits gave me a lot of sun-burn and so I gave up this business and converted to Christianity".\(^{166}\)

It is said that when certain prophet carries messages and gifts to the land of the dead, he sleeps for two to three days on earth. However, when he wakes up from such sleep without any marks of sunburn on his body, he is not taken to be a true prophet. Therefore, for the Zeliangrong, it is impossible to convince that there is no immortal soul even if it may conflict with many mechanistic scientific arguments. However, it is also to be noted that neither all scientists or doctors are agnostics, nor deny the immortal soul as there are

also claims from some people had undergone operation under the influence of anaesthesia who have had near-death experiences (NDEs) saying that their soul or something popped out of the body and saw their disembodied self and saw everything of what was being done by the medical doctors to them even though their ears and eyes were shut literally. Some researchers on NDEs are convinced that there is something that lives on after we die.\textsuperscript{187} This is nothing new but a reaffirmation of the immortality of the soul.

Then we may ask whether Zeliangrong belief in the immortality of the soul stems from moral point of view as offered by Emmanuel Kant. Though he was at one point of time, a Sceptic and an agnostics, yet, in the later analysis he says that from moral point of view good deeds or persons must be rewarded with good and bad deeds or person must be given negative reward but seeing all the injustices that we see in this world that many are facing, he concluded that there is the immortality of soul in which the soul will have to reap the harvest of what one is sowing. From Zeliangrong point of view, it is not from this kind of reflection but mostly from their account of religious encounter with the supernatural elements around.

\textbf{Efficacy of prayer}

At one time the efficacy of prayer was an issue decidable by experiment, as for instance as is shown in the Old Testament of the Bible story of the contest between Elijah and the priests of Baal so also is for the people of Zeliangrong that right from the beginning of the year to the end of the year prayers, offering sacrifices, performances of rites and rituals, are inseparable part of their religious lives. They have a strong believe in the efficacy of prayer in every sphere of their lives. However, generally looking from worldwide point of view, now, a more sophisticated attitude is likely to be adopted. The efficacy of prayer is not usually put forward as an empirical issue by many people, for whatever happens is most of the time taken to be the will of God, and if prayers are not seen to have the desired result or

\textsuperscript{187} Reader's Digest (From an article on \textit{AFTER LIFE The scientific case for the human soul} by Anita Bartholomew), October 2003, pp.80-86
answer it is presumably taken as because God in his own inscrutable way, knows better than we do what is best. Again, many religious people do not seem to be strongly inclined to pray for someone’s recovery from disease when they have much modern medical knowledge of its diagnosis and prognosis. Some will continue to pray for a miracle, but many will not do so with confidence. As weather and disease increasingly come within the scope of scientific law, so a prayer for rain or for disappearance of lesions comes more and more like a prayer that sun should stand still in the sky. This is not to say, of course, that even the agnostic will regard all prayers as inefficacious. They would say that this is because prayer itself is a psychological process which has perfectly natural effects. Thus one can deny the supernatural efficacy of prayer and still believe that a prayer for recovery can relieve a disease, if, for example, the disease is psychosomatic and the patient both believes in prayer and knows that he is being prayed for.  

However, it may be argued that if prayer is to have supernatural efficacy, then its working must be at variance with our scientific beliefs about how things happen. For instance, presumably, all natural causes and effects of the behaviour of the weather or of the human body or brain will be the same after prayer has been offered as before. How, then, could the weather or the body or brain become different from what it would have been without the prayer? The entire matter is quite inexplicable. A theologian might make a bold reply to this criticism by maintaining that the entire matter is indeed inexplicable and by suggesting that a sufficiently careful meteorological, physiological, or psychological investigation would reveal causal anomalies— that is, actual breaches of scientific law. This, however, would be a retreat to the old conception of the efficacy of prayer as a scientifically testable issue, and the theologian might be reluctant to re-enter the lists in this way. So the conflict continues. The Zelianrong too never give up the belief in the efficacy of prayer. It is a part of life and nothing can stop them from believing in it.

Religious Experience

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Philosophy is interested in religious experience as a possible source of knowledge of the existence, nature and doings of God. The experiences in question seem to their possessors to be direct, perceptual awareness of God. They may be wrong about this, and many philosophers think that such experiences are never what they seem, and that no one has a veridical experience of the presence of and/or activity of God. But the main philosophical reason for supposing that such experiences are in fact sometimes veridical is a principle according to which any apparent experiences of something is to be regarded as true unless proven contrary. If we do not accept that principle, we will never have sufficient grounds for taking any experience to be veridical-religious, sensory or whatever.\footnote{Edward Craig, \textit{Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy}, vol. 8 London: New York: Routledge, 1998, p. 250}

There are critics who think that we do have sufficient reasons to the contrary in the case of religious experience. For one thing, we do not have the same capacity for inter-subjective checks of religious experiences that we have with sense perceptions. But in philosophical sources of knowledge sense perception alone does not represent the only way in which we can achieve genuine cognitive contact with objective reality. The Zeliangrong people do believe in religious experience. One of the main reasons for establishing their faith in God, spirits or supernatural beings is through religious experience that many people experienced and ultimately had handed down their testimony through oral traditions to the succeeding generation. Many Zeliangrong still claim to be having religious experience in one form or the other.

\textbf{Separation of Religion and Science}

It would be wrong to suppose that the peculiar characteristics of twentieth century science make it necessarily less inimical to religion than was the science of the nineteenth century. Eddington and Jeans used to argue, on the basis of modern physics for idealist metaphysics, but their arguments would not be accepted by many contemporary philosophers.
Eddington, however, compared the scientist to an ichthyologist. Using a net of two-inch mesh, the ichthyologist catches fish that are never less than two inches long. That does not prove that there are no fish in the sea less than two inches long. But it means that this net will never catch them. In the same way there are facts which the scientific method will never "catch".

An explicitly noncognitivist theory of religion has been put forward by R.B. Braithwaite and, in a slightly different form, by T.R. Miles. If religion is essentially noncognitive, then, like morality and art, it cannot possibly conflict with science. These writers eliminate all factual content from religion: they interpret Christian doctrine purely as a collection of stories, myths, or parables that are used to inculcate certain way of life- "agapeistic behaviour", as Braithwaite calls it. Certainly, if religious belief can be construed correctly in this way, then there can be no logical incompatibility between religion and science. But, commonly, a religious creed is construed as making factual assertions. For example, most Christians would wish to say that in fact Christ rose from the dead, that in fact there is life after death, and so on. This kind of claim and belief can be extended to any other religion as well and here, particularly to the Zeliangrong religion. So the two seem to separate from one another in different aspect.

In Zeliangrong understanding religious elements are not of noncognitive aspect, they believe in the existence of God, man's next life in the land of the dead as real. Many even claimed to see gods in the form of man. They strongly believe in the efficacy of prayer and religious experience as something even testable and so very real. So it conflicts with materialistic science.

The method of knowing

For the Zeliangrong, the ways of knowing about their religion is greatly based on oral tradition. Since they had lost their script while migrating from distant land, they passed on information and religious instruction through verbal or oral tradition. Their method of knowing is based mainly through their encountering of the mysterious nature and forces surrounding them. It is
based mainly on their experience with the nature and also on religious experience. The prophet and prophetess too gave a lot of religious instructions. So the main source of knowing is through experience whether it may purely empirical experience or religious experience or mystical experience experienced by various individuals down through the ages.

In that way Zeliangrong religion is neither a pure form of natural religion nor a revealed religion and cannot be understood by comparing from a rigid kind of understanding in relation to other thinking but it will have to be understood from its own point of view. That means it will have to relapse into relativism again and relativism is also not free from criticism. So, loose post modern method of cultural and religious study not attaching to water tight compartment type of study is preferable to understand this culture and religion better.

**Comparison of the Concept of God With Reference to Some Major Religions of the World**

According to the Zeliangrong traditional religious belief, the Supreme God is above all and non can transgress, overtake or thwart his power. He is the giver of life. Man resembles him as is found from the creation myth that man heavenly creative agents were ordered to make man in god's image. He is an all-knowing God. He loves man more than any other creature as is found from many folk tales of God helping or saving mankind from the clutches of the evil one. He is understood in terms of a singular male father figure. The concept of rta as is found in Hindu culture and religion is not found here because in Hindu culture we find that this moral order is above all and even the gods cannot transgress it. It is also different from Christian's concept of the Triune God or of the trinity that is understood in Hindu's term. The God himself is a moral God.

**Equality and Democracy in village community polity**

It is said that "All men are equal" and their community governing system is purely democratic at the rudimentary level. No doubt, there's no
caste system as is understood in other Indian culture nor a distinction made in terms of colour. The rich and the poor are one in the eyes of the society or the customary law. There is no king among them and the head of the village council selected by the vote of majority of the representatives in the council literally even cannot out do or go against the wish and desire of the whole village community. Village council is a type of self governance which can go well with the term democracy been defined by ........ “Democracy is a government of the people, for the people and by the people”. This is quite true in the case of Zeliangrong culture too up to a great extent but Zeliangrong culture is not truly democratic in the strict sense of the term like many other male chauvinistic cultures of the world. Even if women folk influence a lot through their indirect voice through their husband or families members yet they do not have the voting rights in the village council nor are there any representative who was or is a woman or female.

Therefore, the society has pure democracy only for the male folk but not for the female folk. Such society is hard to call a truly democratic society when women, that is, half of the population of the land are discriminated.

Is Zeliangrong Culture Separable from Religion?

It is difficult to say whether Zeliangrong culture is separable or inseparable from religion but what we can say is they are closely connected most of the time. Socio-anthropologists sometimes tried to distinguish between technological practices from religious one. They point out that it's because technological practices are not distinguished properly from religious practices among the primitive people that they tend to be confused with the relation between the two and consider inseparable. But for the Zeliangrong, even technological practices are most of the time associated with rituals, rites and taboos. Dances, songs or almost each and every action is believed to be acting before God, gods or spirits, their minds are always preoccupied with religion. For almost all the regular festivals they celebrate the year round excepting few irregular ones are associated with religious rites, rituals and important significant events.
Punishment

The Zeliangrong intention and motive of giving punishment is not only from the perspective of deterrent idea nor for reformative aspect alone. It is not only even retributive. Of course punishment is justified by the law of morality itself that one should reap what one has sown. Either positive reward or negative reward is morally justified according to what one has done. It is his desert getting what one deserves from moral point of view. Punishment like imposing fine in the form of animal or land or worst one which is banishment from the village is not imposed hastily but after serious discussion by the village council. Intentional criminal acts were not left unpunished even if the people of Zeliangrong are imbued with a great sense of forgiveness and a strong sense of reconciliation (like for instance when two friends go hunting and in illusion the other friend saw his friend to be an animal in the forest and shot him dead. Such person is normally forgiven and not given punishment). In their custom, marriage within the close relatives meaning from the same clan is considered incest and is a taboo. When such thing takes place, the persons involved both the wife and the husband will be given punishment and when they ask forgiveness and want to re-enter the village after sometime, serious act of purification will have to be observed. This shows that traditional cultural practices and religion are closely intertwined and the erring act is not only against man but against the divine being.

So, punishment is being given to the erring ones mainly to ward off unwanted God's curse which may befall upon the people of the village. Though the people do not follow rigorous retributive theory but a kind of mollified form, the concept of imposing punishment is more than just retribution.

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190 Norbert Disinang Kamei (Ed.), Souvenir, From the Shadows to Light, North-East India Zeliangrong Festival-Cum-Seminar, (p.1 A Note from Convenor) Imphal: North-East India Zeliangrong Festival-Cum-Seminar publication, 1995.
Conflict resolution

Dispute will be tried to solve as amicably as possible but in case there are extreme disagreement, the people even invoked the nature to interfere and bring justice to tell them the truth. For example the two parties or even neutral groups would agree to come together on one particular appointed day and catch hold of a tiger’s teeth or canine and would invoke the nature to be their witness calling the tiger to come and bit the wrong one. People really believe in this and this step is one of the most serious and worst things that anybody could think of. Another example would be to select representative and go to a big river or pond and would invoke God and the nature to judge them by saying and agreeing that the erring one will not be able to dive and stay inside the water but the right one will be able to do so for longer time. In this way they are judged when human beings could not bring satisfactory judgment to both the disputing parties.

This type of judgement is difficult to rely fully because one of them may be expert, may have the habit or practice of diving deep inside the water for catching fish as is very common with the people, and so he may be able to stay inside the water for a longer time even if he may be the erring one. Here also the traditional cultural practice could not be separated from religion invoking divine intervention. In the meantime, it is difficult to say whether this system of judgment can fully ensure fair justice to everyone when it is based so much on belief.

Inheritance:

Zeliangrong Naga society is a patrilineal society. The youngest son has the right to inherit the lion’s share of his father’s properties. He is also responsible to repay all the debts of his father. All other brothers have a very small share. Taking a stand from the legend behind youngest son’s right to inheritance is accepted as a divine provision. There are slight differences from village to village. Daughters normally do not have a share in the inheritance even in the absence of male child in the family. In such cases nearest male relative will inherit all the properties and will also be responsible
to look after the daughters until they all are married. However, daughters also received lots of gifts and present from their parents and have also rights entitled to various customary gifts from their brothers, family and relatives. Daughters have share of inheritance of whichever belongs to her mother. The sons do not inherit that. In the absence of a daughter the mother's belongings are normally given to her sisters or nearer female cousins and not given to their sons or daughter-in-law.

Despite the fact that daughters are treated with great love and care and there being no dowry system nor sati system among the Zeliangrong, even women are priestess in the religious level too, yet, daughters normally do not have the right to inheritance of immovable ancestral properties excepting for unmarried daughters and divorcee who come back to their fathers' house.

However, it is to be understood here that these rules are strictly observed so as to retain the family or clan's name and properties down to the future generations so that they will not be landless. But we find an important issue here because in spite of the claim of equality of every human individual there is huge inequality, unfairness or discrimination even among the children of the same parents; older, younger and youngest son, or whether male of female in terms of gender.

**Marriage System:**

The Zeliangrong take marriage to be something to be very serious. It is strictly based on clan exogamy and it is a taboo to marry from the same clan. The kinds of marriages according to the Zeliangrong are: 1. **Khamthan** (Holy marriage), 2. **Noumangmei** (getting bride as wage for one's service towards the girl's parents, marriage by servitude at matri-local residence), 3. **Samtuanmei** (Elopement), 4. **Maduangzaimei** (Marriage by abduction/kidnapping), 5. **Marian-mi** (A girl who is slave to a family gets married before her redemption by her parents), 6. **Kakhaomei**: The widow of the older deceased brother can be married by his younger brother if both of
them agree so (but not the older brother of the deceased), 7. *Nruammei* (Marriage between close relatives/same clan considered as incest or taboo).

Polygamy is very rare. The society does not permit polygamy but in some cases, polygamy is practiced and condoned. As for example, if a woman is barren she cannot stop her husband from marrying another woman. Polyandry, is however unknown. A widow can either live in her husband’s family or can go back to her father’s family if death has separated her from her husband. It depends on her choice. She can get married again if she wishes so after fulfilling certain formalities like resigning from her husband’s family and after going back to her father’s family. But in that case her children will be separated from her and she can no longer claim the children as her own.

In spite of all the presence of the bright side of marriage’s institution found among the people, we also find some elements which are bias towards female gender. When the wife dies, the husband too can marry another woman again but his children will always be his children but when a widow marries another man, she can no longer claim her children and have no authority in decision making and so on.

The fourth type of marriage (*maduangjaimei, marriage by kidnapping*) is extremely unfair for the women folk.

There is no practice like *sati*, dowry system nor child marriage but at times, young girls were tagged by some relatives for their sons’ wives when they grow up (*singkham loumei*). The girl child in ignorance agreed as an obedience but there were cases when such girls grew up and did not want to marry with those persons again.

There clan exogamy system of marriage among the tribals stands in need of redressal. But this is one of the core foundations of tribal structural identity that the tribal culture will run into massive change which many will not appreciate. However, looking from modern scientific biological point of view, allowing first cousins’ marriage though from different clan is even more risky
for the offspring than getting married within the same clan but with much farther blood relation.

**Adultery (Nou Soumei)**

Adultery is considered a serious crime in Zeliangrong culture. Punishment to the adulterer is more if that act is committed in the woman's house than somewhere else. When the crime is caught with enough prove then the relatives of the husband can take action and even assault him physically. In some cases even his house can be dismantled. If the offender runs to anybody's house for protection, the host has to protect him whatever may be the case and should take care till the matter is settled. Such cases are judged in the Village Council (Pei) in the absence of the offender. Whatever fine is imposed upon the offender, he has to pay. He cannot appeal to the court of justice (here Pei). The usual fine are giving away of cultivable land or a water pond (duikhun) etc., to the woman's husband and a big pig to the Village Council. In some cases the offenders are even expelled or banished from the village.

If the offender is a wife, she or her parents must give one mithun or at least a pig as fine to the injured party and may end up in divorce. In the above case also, if they desire so they may go for divorce.

**Bride Price:**

Giving of the bride price is a basic feature of Zeliangrong marriage. The bride price is fixed depending upon the status of the bride, that is, whether she is a virgin or a widow or a divorcee. The bride price will be the highest for a virgin. It is neither the looks nor the economic condition of the girl's family but it is the chastity that counts. Chastity is considered a high moral value in the Zeliangrong culture.

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The bride price is a burden for the poor families. However, this system of paying bride price has some advantages. The woman is made to be faithful to her husband. One who cannot pay bride price is considered as unworthy man. This system spurs men folk strive hard to be successful. The bride price system keeps the marriage bond alive throughout their lifetime and even after their death. The kinship system is strengthened and there is strong cohesion because of this too.\textsuperscript{193}

No doubt the Zeliangrong tradition respects the chastity of a woman and so the bride price for a virgin lady is the highest but if we critically analyze this we may consider a case of a virgin given highest regard but after marriage when found to be barren the husband can marry another woman which is a very hard thing for any wife to take particularly from a society where polygamy is not encouraged. In such a case, a question may recur whether chastity is more important or fertility for producing children for continuity of future generation is more important in marriage. Why can’t they be consistent in their moral judgment following the line of absolutism or are they following situational ethics (like John Dewey’s standard of morality) in which moral values depends on the situation and is giving room for compromise at times for some gain is a questionable issue.

Widow’s price (\textit{Maiguang maan} literal meaning is old person’s price)

This practice is burdensome for her husband’s family too paying price after price. Moreover, even if widow price is paid by the husband’s family to the wife’s father, she is not to be treated as slave but as wife.

Bone price

This last payment for the bride really speaks of how women are considered important and cannot be taken lightly but this is a big burden for the man’s family paying price after price for the same person.

Dormitory System *(Morung or Khangchiu and Kailiu)*

Dormitory system is an admirable institution. The *morung* disciplined and educated the young; united the householders and was an instrument in which the elders could control the public body. Here the youth of a society are trained in different fields of life. Young girls and boys learn any kind of tribal education and moral discipline including cooking, nursing, weaving, knowledge of cultivation, basketries, wood works, household wares, dance and music or songs, moral and social education, or social etiquettes, making or learning of various arts and handicrafts, forefather's belief and tales, religious values and even the art of warfare and the lists go on. They were also taught the art of fishing, hunting, fighting and any rites, rituals and taboos associated with it. They were taught how to socialize oneself since their very young age. The most important thing they learn from here is the spirit of co-operation and unity and the realization that one must place the community's interests above oneself in order to have a good life.

The purpose of having dormitories in village is also to impart knowledge to the members and to defend the village against intruders, wild animals, to help the widows and widowers of the village, to work as a social guild, and to perform social work and cultural activities like dancing and music and so on. Dormitory's inmates clean the village water ponds, make village paths, clean and repair existing path and so on. It is also because they enjoy being in the company others.

Besides the many positive aspect, we may also find some element here which is likely to affect the young boys and girls and the youth to a very great extent. As social life is given too much importance, the closeness between the parents and the children or even among the siblings have been affected. Social life which has to be balanced with the individual family life must have affected badly. When sick parents or single parents need their children's company also, many times they could not get help because

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everyone is supposed to go and sleep together in the morung (khangchiu or kailiu). It is also said that people were so enthusiastic to go to the morung in the evening after they return from the field, many people used to neglect their work in the field and sometimes use to leave their work without coming to the finishing line for the day. And most of the time whether good or bad, the people must be for most of the time carried away by the crowd’s attitude with little room for self expression of views and ideas. Development or inculcation of newer knowledge must have been hampered or slowed down besides age-old traditional knowledge even though age old practice cannot be underestimated but still opening of more rooms for development is also a necessity.

**Head hunting:**

Like many other tribes, the Zeliangrong Nagas were also head hunters basing on their belief. The philosophy behind such practice was due to their beliefs that the spirit or the energy, or essence of great power of man lies in the head of man that if the head is cut off and brought into the village, the head taker (or the head hunter) is strengthened in power by the addition of the spirit's power of the head that has been chop off. The power of the beheaded man is believed to have transferred to the chopper and accordingly to the village in which the head is been brought. It was also believed that it would increase the fertility of the land and crops' yield.

Looking from olden days’ perspective head hunting may not be so bad. But from today’s' perspective it can be said that the practice of head hunting was a kind of manifestation of the olden day’s mentality of the people when 'might was right' which is applicable to animal kingdom and not of human kingdom who have values for morality. Immanuel Kant was so much against using others as a means. If head hunting was done purely as revenge or retribution it is understandable to some extend but if it was being carried out with a motive to gain something then it needs critical analysis. So here, showing brevity by head hunting to proof their manliness or to woo women is not right from Kant’s perspective and others because no one should be
treated as a means to some desired end. Even if it brings power, prosperity and fertility, why should people take which are not theirs'? In spite of the many respects they have for values, other's properties yet, here they failed terribly if head hunting is carried out only for selfish gain.

FESTIVALS, SONGS AND DANCE:

The Zeliangrong festivals are connected with their agricultural activities. Like all traditional communities, festivals are also meant for offering prayers to the deities and the Almighty. Almost every activity is connected with rites, rituals or taking of omen with their belief in the supernatural beings' guidance and blessing. There are about nine major important festivals. Rites and ritual accompany the festivals. In Chakaak Ngai everyone should eat meat on Plantain leaves. Outdoor games and sports are being played. Prayers are offered to the gods for protection and safety of the children. Rites to ward off evil spirits from the village are also performed. Annual Sacrifices are also made. Rites and duties were performed towards the dead. There is also feasting with libations to appease the departed souls. In Gaanh Ngai, the Kabuis (now called Zeliangrong) use to enjoy drinking and eating all night long singing and dancing. So even when many have become Christians, they keep up with this kind of tradition singing the whole night for many Christians celebration. Blowing of horn is the main part of the Gaanh Ngai festival. Use of musical instruments like drums, flutes, and other stringed instruments, hunting, fishing, and other activities which were put to stop during the working period in the field (since the time of sowing seeds i.e., spring) is opened again. Many musical instruments are being played with great joy with lots of dances and singing of songs marking this grand post harvest festival. Other important ceremonies like piercing of the children's ear (Nohnu roumei) and performing final rites for the dead (Theih kanoimei) are also carried out in this festival. It is believed that the dead does not leave one's earthly home till the final rites are performed. During this festival, songs


196 Ibid. 102-103
are sung and dances are performed with grand celebration. In Chaga Ngai is also known as 'Rih Ngai' (Festival of war). This is exclusively male festival. Genna is declared and no stranger is allowed in the village and no stranger is allowed to enter the village during this festival. Men do not touch women and foods cooked by women are also not taken during this festival. Fire used in the house earlier is not used. Fresh fire is made (Mai alap thanmei mai using traditional method of making fire by rubbing bamboo in a wood) and this is used for cooking. They enjoy eating, drinking, chatting and telling stories.

Another important and interesting feature of this festival is shooting or throwing feathery lance (Raangh keapmei) to take signs and omens about war, hunting and cultivation. If any woman who by mistake, eats or drinks the food meant for the male participants of Chaga Ngai, she should join the throwing of the spikes to get forgiveness for her misdeed and mistake\(^{197}\).

Another feature of this festival is choosing site for the year's jhum cultivation by collecting a particular bamboo and taking sign from that. On a particular day, the owner of each and every dormitory will throw a feast to all the members of the concerned dormitory. After the meal, two priests (portent taker) will fast till this important event of taking omen or sign for getting the right site for forest clearance for the year's cultivation is carried out the next day with help of two young bachelors. Actual beginning of the shifting cultivation starts with this practice of taking omen sometime in November taking from the taking of portent of bamboo. After taking the above portent for specific block of site, on one early morning, the owner of this block of forest or land along with young man who have abstained himself from unclean and immoral act will go and perform a rite called “Singhiumei” to ward of injury or wound especially while clearing the forest for the annual cultivation. And the village observes genna the whole day.\(^{198}\)

\(^{197}\) Dichamang Pamei, Liberty to Captives, Tamenglong: A ZBCC Platinum Jubilee Publication, P.27

\(^{198}\) Norbert Disinang Kamei (ed.), From the Shadows to Light, Souvenir North-East India Zeliangrong Festival-Cum-Seminar, Imphal: North-East India Zeliangrong Festival-Cum-Seminar Publication, 1995. p.95-96

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After Chaga festival (Chaga Ngai), when the cleared forest for cultivation is dried, a date for setting fire to it will take place by taking sign from an egg. The priest throws an egg and sees whether the furthest broken shell piece turns open or closed. If it turns open upward, it is taken as a good sign and burning takes place or else they have to wait for another suitable day. A priest along with some young men representing different morung will go to the jhum site and perform a rite known as ‘choksoimei’ by sprinkling the blood of a sacrificial animal which is a dog. This is associated with the belief to ensure well growth of the crops without any disease or damage and for plentiful harvest. On this day, village genna (abstention from work and staying in the village) is observed by the whole villagers.

Laophunsuat festival is observed just before the sowing of crops’ seeds. There is a particular ceremony known as ‘Nappunpih Raanghmei’, where the priests invoke the god to grant prosperity to the village and also to dispel insects, pests, etc. The priests along with the elders of the village assisted by a young bachelor, who is a virgin without blemish, make a dummy patch of land with fencing around it. The crops to be sown in their fields are sown as a demonstration. After doing this, they offer sacrifices to the god by killing fowls. This is an annual ceremony done for the whole village. Then the villagers start sowing seeds. In some villages of the Zeliangrongs, it is associated with festivals. Baanrau Raohmei is another religious act of sanctification. The priest cuts a small tree; chop off the twigs and erect it outside the village gate. The priest then pronounces a prayer and cuts the neck of a chick and sacrifices it to god. Everyone who will be working in the field will have to touch the blood of the chick with their right hands and dibble or touch the ground with small sticks representing the dibbling sticks or hoes and then hang them on the small erected post (baanrau tiang) in pile. This signifies that all misdeeds or mistakes committed with their hands are forgiven with the touching of the chick’s blood and thereby the seeds of crops sown by their hand would grow successfully. It is also believed that all the unwanted things in the village will be carried away by that ‘baanrau tiang’.

\[\text{Ibid., p.97}\]
Village *genna* is being observed the whole day. Here we find that divine forgiveness of human misdeed is brought about by the shedding of blood. We also find that crops grow better when the hands of man are cleansed from past wrongs. Another important religious act of abstention called *banglu neih genna* is observed by the whole villagers just before the sowing in the on the month of March. During this *genna*, young members of the male dormitories go from door to door and distribute seeds like paddy, cotton, sesame and feathers of fowl signifying the declaration of sowing. We find in Zeliangrong traditional practices, the whole community do things at the same time strictly following the lunar calendar along with consideration of signs and omens collected.

In *Phuton Ngai (hoe festival)*, two priests perform the rite of throwing away the hoe used for sowing. This rite is followed by *genna* after which no one is supposed to sow anything again. This *genna* is followed by festival. *Gudui Ngai (Ginger juice festival)* marks the completion of sowing of seeds. In this festival everyone drinks the ginger juice which is a kind of soup made of chicken and ginger or mushroom with ginger. This is done to ensure good health and also to ward off starvation and scarcity. Taking good food to ensure good is acceptable but here also we see elements of superstition in which starvation and scarcity will be ward off by taking certain food and drinks. In the weeding season more rituals are performed. On the arrival of the weeding season, members of morung go to the granary etc. and catch rats. A priest accompanied by members of morung go beyond the village and after crossing any big river set the rats free with some chanting by the priest. This signifies that all the unwanted elements are carried away by the rats so that no damage will be done to the crops or by other wild animals. Village *genna* known as *apuak npat neih (releasing rat genna)* is observed on this day. This is again followed by *katiu neih* (*genna* of 'katiu' a kind of pest that causes damage to rice plant): Two young virgin girls without any blemish, led by a priest go out of the village and drop some pests inside the bamboo tubes and crush them with pestle. The people believe that by doing so the pests will not infest the crops and cause damage. Virginity or chastity of both young
boys and girls are regarded as fit for performing certain religious rites and rituals.

*Khaam Ngai* festival is celebrated at the start of the harvesting of the crop. The village paths or roads and paths leading to the paddy fields are all cleared by inmates of the dormitories. Another important feature of this festival is making of bamboo cups called 'Joubung rienmei' (making rice beer cups) and presenting to the children born that year. Membership of particular dormitory is awarded formally this time even though the initial recruitment has been done at the time of the birth of the child. Stringed instruments (*Inroh*) and drums can be used in this festival for two days only.

We find that almost all the festivals are marked with association of some important events, occasions, offering sacrifices, oblations, prayer, performances of rites, rituals and taking of omens. They are not simply celebrated for entertainment and recreation but with important events and deep meanings. Each and every activity is preceded by religious act.

Besides the above regular festivals, during the off season, the Zeliangrong organize various festivals occasionally, depending on the year’s plentiful harvest. The important festivals of them are *Merimei, Matuimei, Malaanmei* and *Banruhmei.*

In such festivals particularly *Merimei* and *Matuimei*, young people both boys and girls make a lot of fun like smearing of colour or mud on one another, playing tug of war, singing and dancing, feasting, hills climbing competition and praising each party with their songs between the boys’ and girls’ group. Young people put their best dancing dresses and display their dances to the villagers. *Merimei* festival lasts for three to four days and *Matuimei* for about a week.

*Pukpha Ngai* is a festival of thanks-giving to the god of grains for the harvest. During this festival people kill pigs and mithuns and enjoy a grant

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200 Norbert Disinang Kamei (ed.), *From the Shadows to Light*, Imphal: North-East India Zeliangrong Festival-Cum-Seminar Publication, 1995. p.96-100
feast. Some sheaves of paddy are brought home and the grains are
distributed to each and every household of the village. A rite known as ‘nap
chanmei’ is performed by an old woman of every family. She holds the grains
mixed with pieces of liver of mithun or pig and chants some prayers to the
god of the grain for prosperity and rich harvest and then places them on the
hearth.

Malaanmei (a time period of eating, resting and health show):

Another unique and important social institution of the Zeliangrong
people is the Malaanmei meant for the inmates of the Morung (bachelor’s
dormitory). The parents of the participants supply good food and drinks to
their son or sons in the dormitory and the participants eat, drink, relax and
sleep doing nothing in the morung. The period of Malaanmei vary from three
days to six months or even more.

The parents of the participants supply good cooked food to the
participants in which the participants only eat, drink, relax and sleep. This is to
keep the young men healthy and to re-enforce energy to the young men after a yearlong tiresome work. On the closing day of this event, the
participants will give a health show in which any two persons who put on the
heaviest weight will be pronounced the winners. Malaanmei is a kind of health
competition and this is a typical practice of the Zeliangrong Naga (other Naga
tribes do not have this practice), showing their strong urge for good health
and long life. This practice also pictures a wonderful way of blessing their
young ones with good health by the parents and the village community. R.R.
Shimray also commented saying: “This is typical of the Rongmei, Liangmei and Zemei Nagas. In these communities, there exists a strong urge for good health and long life which every one of us wishes for but only a few get. Here, at this particular spot of the earth called Tamenglong, West District of Manipur, many people live up to 100 years of age and more. The reason is

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simple. In addition to the unpolluted air and the freshness of the environment-the mountain vastness, they had a wonderful way of blessing their young ones with good health.\textsuperscript{203} This \textit{Malaanmei} is the best opportunity and privilege for the young people to undergo such rules so that they relax and rest from all busy schedules of toil and tiredness of life from work in the year. It provides enjoyment, peace, recreation and serenity in one’s life which help them grow healthy-physically fit and spiritually sound.\textsuperscript{204}

So far many people are speaking only about the positive aspect of \textit{Malaanmei} but we can have a critical analysis and find out the negative points too. This kind of status show creates a platform for people who want to show off their riches. It is obvious that a distinction between the poor and the rich children is made public. It may encourage self-indulgence as well when one is encouraged to simply eat, drink and sleep doing nothing creative especially for longer times like three to six months. We also find a gender bias again here when only sons are made to rest and refresh leaving aside the daughters of the same parents. Olden day’s people think that fatness or putting of heavy weight is a sign of good health but with the present day’s scientific knowledge, we may say they are at higher health risk.

From the above discussion it is very clear that there is hardly any important activity taken up by the Zelianrong tribe without attaching the importance of religious rites and rituals excepting for the health show (\textit{malaanmei}). We find that almost every act is intertwined with religion.

\textbf{SONG, DANCE AND MUSIC}

Song, dance and music are an important aspect of Zelianrong tradition. Dance is always accompanied by song. The songs vary according to festival, work, war, and sacrifice etc. and for all the occasions to be sung individually or in groups. Ramkhun Pamei pointed out the inseparability of dance and music with religion and said; "Music and dance are associated with

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\textsuperscript{204} Ramkhun Pamei, \textit{The Zelianrong Nagas: A Study of Tribal Christianity}, New Delhi: Uppal Publication House, 1986. p.33
\end{flushright}
religion according to the cycle of natural agricultural life\textsuperscript{205}. They sing song for almost every occasion while working; sowing seed, weeding, pounding rice, harvesting, and while celebrating festivals and while worshiping expressing religious ritualistic songs on different religious occasions and ceremonies, dancing, courting expressing romantic songs, expressing poetic communication and so on. They even challenge others through songs. They use songs to praise God and man and sometimes to express one’s opinion towards others. The Zeliangrong villages are full of the sound of music because almost every one sings wherever they are. Songs are inseparable part of their lives. They have great song composers and at the same time many believed that the people learnt many songs from the gods too who used to teach them.

The Zeliangrong believed that their ancestors learnt the art of dance and even learnt songs from the gods and all creatures which attended the Joulumei ceremony of Amang. They also claimed that they learnt the art of dance mostly from the gods, animals, birds, and insects. There are three important forms of dance:

4. The ritual dances: The dances performed in Taraangkai, Banruh and Matui are ritual dances. The following is based on the Banruh dance forms:

A. Huai Laam: Male dance characterize by shouting ho ho as invocation to the Supreme God. This dance is an intricate dance performed by both married and unmarried males invoking God by shouting different refrains of Ho-hoing. There should be no stoppage of Ho-Hoing. Huai laam has the following form:

i. Gan laam
ii. Kaiku laam
iii. Bang Phen laam (sword/dao dance)
iv. Ponsa laam (Whirl wind dance)

Huai is a part of the dance, work and religious worship.

\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., p.25
B. **Joumon kasukmei**: Girls dance carrying wine/rice beer bowls. It is a female dance performed in *Banruh* ritual in which the rice beer will be poured out while dancing rhythmically. It is accompanied by *Jou Lian Thanmei Laam*, a sort of solo dance.

C. **Group ritual dances**: These dances are accompanied by the ritual dances under the supervision of the song master. The dances are performed throughout the night. Both male and female dancers participate.

- *Jeisung laam*
- *Kaibon sangmei*
- *Kaibon duimei*
- *Banjai*
- *Rih Lu*
- *Mui Lu*
- *Khongphung*

D. **Guaipi Thenglam**: Dance of cutting the mithun head.

5. **The festival dances**: The dances performed during the *Gaanh Ngai* are the festival dances. These are also known as *Chapa laam*. The festival dances cover the dances performed on special occasions, like *khangbon kadimei* (farewell dance to *khangbon*), *Thei kadimei* (farewell dance in honour of the dead), *Tuna kadimei* (farewell dance to a bride), *Tamcham laam*, etc. *Nanu laam* is more of a fertility dance and not a festival dance.

6. **Dances imitating nature and wild life**: Man observes and learns different aesthetic forms of movement from the birds, animals and insects too. The following are particular form of dance man imitated from natural animals’ movement:

   a. **Go Laam** (Crab dance)
   b. **Khoiguina Laam** (Bee mating dance)
   c. **Akit Laam** (Cricket dance)
   d. **Raengdai Laam** (Dance of the Hornbill)
   e. **Guaichei Bang Laam** (Dance of movement of the horns of bull)
f. *Apang Laam* (Huluk/Monkey dance of plucking fruits)
g. *Tarieng Laam* (Spinning dance and others)

Here we can somehow make a distinction between ritual dances which were taken with all seriousness so as not to make a mistake while dancing as such dances are performed in front of the divine god and normal dances which are just dances for social gathering, expressing their aesthetic sense, entertainment or to give good physical exercise and the like. We also observed that olden days' people's mind are wide open to the nature and their surroundings both explicable and the inexplicable.

**FEASTS OF MERIT**

In Zeliangrong culture, it is the religious as well as social duty of the richest man of the village to carry out this job. The Feast of Merit is celebrated for nine days. Food and drinks like meat and rice beer are supplied by the host to all the guests. There are two kinds of Feasts of Merit. They are-*Banruhmei* and *Kai sumei*. These feasts of merit cannot be carried out if one is not rich enough to feed the whole villagers. If a man could carry out both the Feasts of Merit during his life time, he is supposed to have accomplished his life's task perfectly. It is believed that in the land of the dead (land of the departed souls) he will live happily forever for he has accomplished his life's work perfectly.

*Banruhmei* are of two types: *Banruhmei* and *Banruh makiumei*. The wealthy man bear all the expenses while the villagers carry out the actual work along with the priests, the architecture/designer engineer *Singkhongmei* and the whole villagers in making the house in one form or the other with all strictness. Many rituals are also involved in this. Right from the choosing of house materials till the completion of the construction of house as they celebrate, several rites, rituals to be performed by the priest, the people, the host and his wife were all involved. Even ritual dance is being performed at this time with all fear and carefulness.

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This is not to be understood from eschatological aspect alone but it is a duty of the individuals towards the society. The philosophy behind this is that Zeliangrong people do not believe in capitalism, hoarding or saving riches for future while there are many who are in need of food. It is also a way of levelling the much richer people to the level of common people so that there is not much economic disparity in the society in the name of religion and social duty. Besides, all the positive aspects it is not free from negative effect as well. The problem is that one who has accumulated so much of wealth through his hard earned labour or sweat is not given the chance to save it for future use in times of need or for the future generation.

**Construction of Individual House (Kaisu kadamel)**

It is customary that a person who builds a new house receives every assistance he needs from his fellow villagers who are never paid for their labour but are entertained with rice beer and sometimes with food. We can see that it is the duty of everyone in the village to look after one another that not a single one in the village is homeless. In that way even if people have important work of their own, they have to post-pond and perform the duty towards the needy in the society.

Their culture is directed much towards social duty than individual wellbeing of oneself.

**Joint Family (Inkouh kal)**

Joint family system has both merit and demerit. It promotes love, help oneness and cooperation and a strong bond of love in the members staying under the same roof but it may not inspire the people to work much harder than they would do for themselves. Some may take much trouble of working day and night while some may enjoy the labour of others not realizing their responsibility.
Position of Women

Zeliangrong women enjoy more power and privileges than the women of many other communities yet it is not the same as men's. Though there may be slight differences from village to village yet majority of the people do not give immovable ancestral properties as inheritance to woman except for unmarried daughters or one who comes home after her husband's death or divorce. In few cases only daughters are given immovable properties if the parents are generous enough. Woman plays an important role in the family. She is a bread earner and a hard worker. Though the husband is the head of the family, the wife's suggestions and proposal are taken.

In critical situation, the advice of women is sought. In public event also they can take part if they desire so. They can be witnesses in any conflict or dispute. Women can be Priestess as well.

When warriors of the village plan an attack and they start their activities, and if a woman, knowing the situation or by her dream or by premonition or by concrete information, stops the warrior by shaking her skirt (Pheisuai kakhupmei), the warrior should stop there207.

Woman’s marriage is considered serious and taken to be very important. A saying exist in this culture that a good woman who knows how to live a good married life properly solves a war between her clan and another clan or her village and another village but on the contrary, a shrewd, rude irresponsible woman brings war.

No women representatives are there in the Village administrative Council (Pei). The execution of freedom fighter Jadonnang in 1931208 by the British rule could not suppressed the Zeliangrong revolt. But a time came when woman, as for example, like Rani Gaidinliu (a young girl of 17 years of age only) took the challenge and organized large number of soldiers and

208 Gangmumei Kamei, *Tamenglong A Brief History,* Imphal: Published by Dr. M. Homeswor Singh, 2000 p.26
fought against the Mighty British Empire which ultimately led her to life imprisonment in 1932 because of her very high potentials of revolt against the British rule in the North-East of India particularly in the Naga Hills of Assam, Nagaland and Manipur. This Uprising was one of the only two earliest recorded tribal uprisings against the British rule in India. When women initiate things, men do gave tremendous co-operation. When she started a religious cult called the "Heraka" religion many did joined her and still now many are following that religion in Assam, Nagaland and Manipur.

**Costumes dress and ornaments:**

The Zeliangrong used lots of locally herbal dyed colourful dresses with much extra woven design in the two types of cotton; white and brown they get from their land. The male folk normally dye the yarn. It is a taboo for women to dye the black colour. They do use lots of ornaments too made of metal, beads, sea-shells, germ stones, orchids' bark, goat's hair, feathers, bright coloured insects' wings and even cotton. Some British writers were gravely mistaken in calling the Nagas as the "Naked Nagas". They have different dresses meant for different age groups or status of the individuals in terms of being a little girl, grown-up unmarried girl, newly married woman, woman who have three or four children already and for older grandmother. The male do have different dresses for different status. It is incorrect to say they were "Naked Nagas" instead there is no other culture as rich as this in terms of unique detail exhibition of status by the dress that one wears. The dresses they wear for dances are extremely colourful and attractive too.

**Theft**

T.C. Hudson observed that among the kabuis (Zeliangrong) we find in McCulloch a different principle of differentiating between degrees of culpability, which is interesting as testifying to the educative value of matrimony in man's life. "Theft, if the thief should happen to be a married man, is punished severely, but a young unmarried man might with impunity

209 Gangmumel Kamei, *Tamenglong A Brief History*, Imphal: Published by Dr. M. Homeswor Singh, 2000 p.27
steal grain not yet housed, whilst theft from a granary would subject him to the severest punishment".\textsuperscript{210}

The treatment given to the thieves are not equalled but it depends on the status of life say, to the married man and a young unmarried man. But here we can understand from one angle that married man being the head of the family ought to be more reliable and responsible and should live a life of integrity but when that expectation is broken, he is being given a more severe punishment. But in another form of just critical analysis, it is a form of inequality before the eyes of the customary law.

**Murder**

Among the Kabuis a heavy fine is levied from the culprit.\textsuperscript{211} In the Naga society, when a man kills another for the purpose of robbery, or in any way except in fair fight, may, by the old Naga law be put to death by the relatives of the deceased, but by no other person\textsuperscript{212}.

Thought the case of deliberate murder is extremely rare among the Zeliangrong yet this kind of law focuses on the leniency of the moral law that one should be given back what one deserves. If it is an act of forgiveness by the society or individuals, then it is absolutely fine otherwise from pure moral point of view letting the criminal go free is not fair.

**Practice of black magic/witchcraft**

It is not the practice of the Zeliangrong people but if anybody learnt black magic from other communities and is found to be practicing they are banished or expelled from the village which is the severest of any kind of punishment being levied upon the wrong doer in the traditional society of the Zeliangrong people.

Therefore, from all the above critical analysis it is found that their culture and religion though had been a way of life and had contributed so much for the proper functioning of social, political and religious life yet, their culture and religion is found to have so many ambiguity and irregularities as

\textsuperscript{211} Ibid, 1974 P.106
well. The types of morality they are following are sometimes confusing. One cannot vividly make out whether they are prescribing absolutism in which right is right everywhere and for all time to come or situational ethics looking into the situation and changing one’s stand at times for the seemingly better results. At times, though seen reasonable yet it happen to be inconsistent in pressing towards the end. One prominent example is that chastity of both young man and young girls were thought highly off and regarded and therefore for certain rituals when choosing site for agricultural side for the whole village, young bachelors who were virgin were chosen and even in many occasion they choose only young girls who were virgin for carrying out certain religious duties. As chastity was prized high that the bride prize for the Zeliangrong girl is highest for the virgin, cheaper for the earlier married ones but when the girl after marriage is found to be barren, the husband can remarry another wife not looking into the emotion of the first wife. Then the question arises whether chastity and faithfulness is more important or fertility is more important in marriage.

It is also found that if the citizen or member of the community or society does not respect and keep the rules, laws, practices and tradition then the whole system will collapse. This is what has been opined by the structural functionalists like Talcott Parsons, Malinowski, Alfred Radcliffe Brown, Max Weber, Durkheim and likeminded thinkers. It has more to do with the sense of civic, etiquette, tradition, morality, and responsibility toward one another and respect for the people and the law and so many of their cultural practices cannot be coerced. Structural-functionalism emphasizes the central role that agreement (consensus) between members of a society on morals plays in maintaining social order. This moral consensus creates equilibrium, the normal state of society. If few members disrespect it then the whole society will be in a chaotic state. Their culture and religion greatly depend on how the people who follow it. Many of their religious practices are quite reasonable but some are based on superstitions. It will be appropriate to say that some of their beliefs or religious and cultural practices sometimes were propounded by few people so as to guide people and do things on time and not truly sanctioned by god or religious priests or prophet but were the collective build
up system and practices. As for instance like, soon after the priests throw away the hoe (phu) or implements signifying tools for planting or sowing no is supposed to sow anything again or else they believe they will get hurt or wounded while working. This is purely a superstition and human make-up obligation so that people will do things on time like sowing in the field. In modern time, people are now planting and sowing different varieties of plants by supplying the essentials for the plant so that people get to eat fresh things the year round in season and in out of season. Their culture and religion are closely intertwined and even many normal activities could not proceed without religious initiation.