CHAPTER II

THE STRUCTURE OF PRE-BRITISH MIZO SOCIETY

In the study of the structure of the Mizo society, a discussion will be made on every aspect of their social systems and patterns. The Mizo society, like most tribal societies, is segmentary. In the ancient days, different clans followed different systems, i.e. different clans had their own dialects, their own sacrificial rites, their own puithiam (priest) and their own chiefs. At that stage inter-clan feuds had been a common feature among them. Such a state of affairs continued for a long time and for want of any strengthened institution for the proper cultivation of reason the Mizos in the pre-British society lived in constant fear and insecurity. Nag writes: "The philosophy of the pre-Christian Mizo society was to live on the earth only to eat in a state of pessimism under the strong influence of animal and vegetative needs."¹ Social life and social performances of the early Mizos were all restricted and bounded by such fear arising out of their animistic belief.

¹Chitta Ranjan Nag; Impact of Christianity on the life of the Mizos, (Unpublished Thesis), Gauhati University, 1974, p. 175.
It was only the beginning of the 18th century that the Sailo clan ultimately emerged as the ruling clan over all others. As a result other clans adopted the practices and customs of the Sailos thus bringing the different clans under uniform customs, etc. Today, therefore, a study of the Mizo society is basically a study of the Sailo clan.

PART I

The Family Structure

Type of Mizo family: Family, perhaps, is the oldest institution in human history. As such, family occupies an important and prominent place in the history of the Mizos. In the past, the father exercised arbitrary powers in the family. On the death of a father, the power devolved usually to appropriate person who, like the father, exercised the same nature of power. The children belonged to the father, the mother had no share. Even right to inheritance was reserved for paternal descent. The lineage was also traced through the line of a male descendant.

The main duty of the father, apart from his being the head of the family was to acquire the required
"jhuming tool"² so as to enable production. At meal time the head of the family normally gave instructions to the other members, what they should do and should not do.³ Meal time was thus, an important occasion for the Mizos where manners and etiquette were imparted from the head of the family.

A wife never called her husband by his name. She addressed him without name. But when a son or a daughter was born she addressed him as the father of the child. The peculiar mark of relation between husband and wife was such that they should not show each other smiling face in public, all the time they should be serious.⁴

Several factors, however, helped in raising the position of a wife. This happened as the husband was often away for some time in search of food or hunting. The wife in addition to her duty of caring children had to manage the household affairs too. This engendered the rise of a wife's authority in the family.

⁴Ibid.
Marriage. Marriage among the Mizos was a civil contract, soluble at the will of both parties concerned. The system or form of marriage right from its inception was "marriage by purchase". The price originally varies from clan to clan. However, if both the two families mutually agreed, the price may not be required to pay at all.\(^5\) The price was determined in terms of sial (mithun) which was of three kinds - (i) sepu ngal kal (grown up mithun), (ii) tla\(\overset{\text{a}}{sial}\) (young mithun) and (iii) puisawm sial (a newly born mithun). For instance, price of a Sailo girl was ten sial, of a Ralte khelte, ten tla\(\overset{\text{a}}{sial}\).\(^7\) In early period, the settlement of price was crucial because though prices were determined in terms of sial, they were usually paid in certain articles or goods which were considered as equivalent to sial. It sometimes prevented the marriage. Long time ago, when Lianchhiari of Chuauhang clan was about to marry a commoner, Chawngfianga, a Hnamte clan, her father, a chief knowing the pecuniary position of Chawngfianga, understandably agreed that he would accept a broken axe as an


\(^7\)Informant: Hangpawla, 82, Interviewed on 21.7.1983.
The bride's price, called manpui (main marriage price), normally should not exceed Rs.100. But in case of a bride with the thum (bridal goods) the amount was increased by Rs.20. The price, however, was not retained by the father alone, but was shared among the relatives, viz. father or brother, paternal uncle or cousin, maternal grandfather and by elder sister etc.

Besides manpui, two other prices, one thian man paid to the bride's maid and the other was paid to lawichal, the leader of the bride's party; but they have come into vogue only in recent period. They do not constitute a part of the bridal prices but are paid as extra.

It was customary on the part of the bride to bring along with her a pawnpui (a woven rough blanket made of raw cotton) and a thul (a container made of bamboo for keeping clothes).

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8Vanchhunga, loc.cit.

9Thum or bridal goods: According to custom, thum should not be less than thival or bead with three strings, or (2) Old thifen (bead) one string and real thival with one string, or (3) An amber bead worth not less than Rs.20, or (4) Cash not less than Rs. 20. (vide Mizo Customary Law, Ibid., p. 6)
Theoretically, a man could marry any woman except his mother, sister, daughter and aunt. But marriage did not take place between the first cousins partly because the parents preferred marriage outside the family. The marriage was neither endogamy nor exogamy. This means there was no strict confinement to either custom. But among the Sailo Chiefs there was a tendency to endogamy and the marriage between the first cousins was common because they liked to consolidate their position as a ruling family.

The two formal engagements called *khawnthiang* and *dawnpuan phah* had to be performed in case of marriage between persons belonging to different villages. If a girl's parents allowed a boy to perform *khawnthiang khawn* with their daughter, the boy must marry her. In *dawnpuan phah* practice, a *puandum* (a striped woven cloth with black background) was spread over the main bed by the girl's mother, usually at a day time, and the couple-to-be were made to lie side by side formally. In case the boy failed to marry her after the rite was performed, the boy must pay a fine of *sengal kal* for breach of promise.

The Mizos were very careful in selecting partners. If the would-be couple belonged to the same village, normally

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10AR; J. Shakespear; "Marriage" Census Note No. 2, Aizawl, Memo No. 531G 1900 p. 1. Hereafter cited as J. Shakespear; "Marriage".

11*Mizo Hnam Dan* (Customary Law) Published by the District Council (Amended upto 1960), 1957, p. 11.
the period of observation was extended to 3 years and this was the period of watch and observation and understanding. If no serious lapses occurred in either of them the marriage was solemnised.

Marriage was normally arranged. In selecting partners parents exercised great care and solemnity and looked into the family history as far as they could trace. As marriage was by "purchase" the boy's parents engaged two friends called palai to settle the price. The palai would urge the poverty of the groom's whereas the bride's parents demanded the highest sum. Ultimately a settlement was reached at and the date of the marriage was fixed.

After the ceremony, toward the evening, or sometimes at night, the girl was escorted to her husband's house. On arrival she was welcomed by offering a cup of zu (rice beer). Sometimes, fowls, if brought by the bride were killed after performing rites by the priest. This was called remar (fowl agreement). After spending the night, the bride returned home early the next morning. On that day the father of the girl killed a female pig. The occasion was commonly known as laui. The next day, the bride was again escorted to the bridegroom's house and stayed there for good.

Monogamy was the prevailing system among the Mizos, but the chiefs kept concubines. According to McCall, polygamy

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was practised by the Mizos, but the practice declined due to too much quarrels among the wives.\(^\text{13}\) The truth is that monogamy was the common form of marriage among the Mizos but there were exceptional cases where polygamy was practised.

A husband could divorce his wife for some reasons. There were certain recognised reasons for divorce could be claimed. The common ones being adultery, impotence, imperforated vagina, madness, etc. To divorce his wife the husband simply declared *ka ma a che*, meaning "I divorce you," but his relatives had nothing to do with divorce.\(^\text{14}\)

According to Mizo custom a man is never said to commit adultery; it was only women who committed adultery which is called *uire*. *Uire* committed during the life time of the husband is considered the most serious offence and usually ended in divorce. But if she had sexual intercourse with a man after the death of her husband and after performing the so-called *inkaihchhuah* rite, it was not considered *uire*. After *inkaihchhuah* ceremony she was free to remarry any person. After the death of her husband a widow had to perform *mithi chaw psek* which means putting aside a portion


\(^{14}\)N. E. Parry; *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies*, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, Reprint, 1976, p. 45. Hereafter the work is cited as N. E. Parry; *Monograph*. 
of the rice she ate at each meal for her husband for three lunar months.\textsuperscript{15} The wife, however, as a sign of mourning she should not comb her head for 3 lunar months. At the end of this mourning period she should perform a ceremony known as thlahual. At the end of this period, the widow's parents performed \textit{inkaihchhuah} ceremony to absolve her from the marriage bond and after this she would return to her parent's house. But if she desired she could go back to her dead husband's house. The choice was left to her.

\textbf{Children.} Children played important part in the social life of the Mizos. During the pregnancy period two sacrifices were performed. The one performed in the early stage was called \textit{chhim}. The second, called \textit{hrichhi} and \textit{nuhri}\textsuperscript{16} were performed just after child birth.

In this patriarchal society, man received more importance. As such, on the birth of a male child, the upa (elder) blessed him as \textit{mipa huaisen saikap tur} meaning a valiant, an elephant killer. But a female child was greeted as \textit{se man tur} which means she would cost a \textit{sial}.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{17}Pastor Challiana; \textit{Pi Pu Nun}, Trio Book House, Aizawl, 1978, Reprint, p. 2.
\end{flushright}
At child birth several ceremonies were performed. In the ceremony performed two days after birth, the parents, served zu to their friends and relatives. But the sacrifice performed after 3 days was known as arte hring ban in which a small living chicken and seven small packets of rice and some vegetables were suspended on the roof-edge.

The second ceremony called bawrh keu was performed within seven days of the birth of the child. In this ceremony a creeper called vawmhrui was coiled and the child passed through it three times at night in total darkness. No fire should be lit again until the next morning.16

According to the convenience of the family, the child was named during one of the two feasts and was to be named by the pu which means the nearest male relative on the mother's side.

If a child died within a year of its birth, it was called hlamzuih and the dead body was put inside an earthen pot and was buried beneath the house by close relatives.19 If a child died in hlamzuih, an egg was buried along with it so as to lead the child on the way of Pialral where the child was believed to go after death.

18J. Shakespear; "Marriage" *op.cit.*, p. 5.

Position of men. Men always occupied a high and respected position not only in the family but also in the social life as a whole. They were solely responsible for their family affairs. All hard work like clearing the jungles for jhum, hunting, fishing etc., were done by men. In their spare time married and old men used to stay at Zawlbuk (bachelors' dormitory) and bachelors were engaged in courting girls, and sometimes they also accompanied to the jungle to collect firewoods.

Position of women. Women's position both in the family as well as in the social life was subordinate and wretched. No doubt, a wife was fully engaged with the household duties, but her status was insignificant and she possessed nothing except those that were due to her in case of divorce. So her place in the society was full of plight.

Regarding the family institution of the Mizos the whole management of the household affairs belonged to the women.\textsuperscript{20} They had to do everything at home except to build a house and to repair tools for jhuming, etc. In certain cases women also helped their husband in cutting jhum etc.

\textsuperscript{20} John Rawlings; "On the Manners, Religion and Laws of the Cu'ci's, or Mountaineers of Tipra", \textit{Asiatic Researches}, Vol. the second, Cosmo Publication, New Delhi, Reprint, 1979, p. 144.
From her childhood the position of a female was quite different. As soon as she was capable of helping her mother she helped her in carrying water, and such other domestic work. After attaining puberty, she had to entertain inleng (suitors) till late at night. It was the duty of a woman to get everything ready before sunrise. It was her duty to fill up every bamboo container with water and to husk rice by pounding. It is no surprise to learn that a husband sitting near the fire and seeing the pot boil over would call in the wife to look after the cooking even while she was busy pounding rice outside.

The whole day, along with men, they spent their time at jhum in weeding the grass. There also she had to cook, collect vegetables and greens etc., to take home for the family. She had to carry home foods for pigs while men went with empty bags.

The whole night she had to entertain inleng, if she was a nula (young unmarried girl of marriageable age) while spinning, mending the clothes of the family members, sometimes even of their lawmpa. Till late night she had to spin. She found no time to take rest. She took rest only while she was sleeping for about 3 to 4 hours at night.

There are many phrases and idioms in vogue in society indicating that women were not given the same status with men.

The traditional attitude towards women is clearly reflected

Lawmpa: Young men and young women would form pairs or groups in helping one another working in the jhum. Such a work-partner, if a man, is called lawmpa, and if a woman is called lawmnu.
in the sayings as given below:

(a) Hmeichhe finin tuikhur ral a kai lo which means that women's wit does not cross the waterpoint.

(b) Hmeichhia leh palchhia chu thlak theih an ni, which means that wife and old fence can be changed at any time.

(c) Hmeichhia leh chakai in sakhua an nei lo, meaning that women and crabs do not have religion.

(d) Chakai sa, sa ni suh, hmeichhe thu, thu ni suh, meaning as crabs meat is not counted as meat so also women's word is not counted as word.

(e) Nupui vau loh leh vau sam loh chu an pawng tual tual, meaning that unthreatened wife and unthreatened creepers of the field are both unbearable.

The theory is that women were purchased with a price, and they belonged to men. So degrading was her position that we may not find in the whole world a place where women were treated worse than the Mizo did. Chatterji, however, claims that the treatment meted out to women was no worse than that found in some more advanced societies.²²

Succession and inheritance. In ancient days, virile men seized power and held it until they were overpowered by stronger ones. Even the sons quarrelled among themselves over succession. In course of time

²²N. Chatterji; Status of Women in the Earlier Mizo Society, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, 1975, p. 2.
the chieftainship became hereditary and it became a rule that the eldest son should succeed his father, subject, however, to physical and mental fitness. In case the eldest son was found unfit, the succession devolved upon the next son and so on. Only the rightful sons in order of seniority of age should succeed; but in the absence of sons the succession would even go to the sons of concubines. Even if a son of concubine was not available, the sawn (illegitimate son) could also claim the heirship. But in such case, McCall says that the "rule will operate as against claims by the deceased's younger brother."\(^2^\) The British Government, with a view to improving the calibre of the chiefs, recognised the eldest son as the heir to the chieftainship.\(^2^\) In case of non-availability of sons, the succession might also go to the brothers of the deceased chief.

In regard to inheritance, the fundamental rule is that sons alone had a right to inherit the property. The youngest son would inherit the father's property according to custom.\(^2^\) In general rule neither daughters nor wives could inherit the property. It was the duty of a father upon his death bed, to set the house in order to avoid confusion amongst the would-be

\(^2^\) John Macrare; *op.cit.*, p. 185.

\(^2^\) Rules Regulating the Succession of Sailo Chiefs and Clans, 1936, para. 4. Hereafter cited as Rules.

\(^2^\) A.G. McCall; *Lushai Chrysalis, op. cit.*, p. 244.

\(^2^\) Rules, loc. cit., section 2.
-claimants. If a father had several sons, the fatlum or the youngest son, had a rightful claim for patrimony. But in actual practice, a father divided his property equally amongst his sons. The youngest son was treated as legitimate heir because he was to look after his parents in their old age and had to live with them.\textsuperscript{27} Like the succession, the hmeifa and sawn also could have shares in the inheritance subject to the absence of rightful heirs. It was the right of the father to disinherit any son.\textsuperscript{28} He could dispose of his property even during his lifetime and whatever the decision he made, that was final.

The chance of inheritance for daughter or widow was bleak for this happened only when none was available in the male line.

\textbf{Death and funeral rites.} The Mizos believed that every living and non living object had a soul or spirit and that when a man died, his soul left him and proceeded to, according to their belief, either Mithikhua\textsuperscript{29}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{27}N. E. Parry; \textit{Monograph, op. cit.}, p. 83.

\textsuperscript{28}A. C. McCall; \textit{Lushai Chrysalis, loc. cit.}

\textsuperscript{29}\textbf{Mithikhua}: It was one of the abodes where the souls of common people were believed to stay or rest. Life was worse here than that of life on earth.
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or Pialral. Natural death was called awmlai. In case of the death of infants below one year, called hlamzuin, no formal rite was performed.

A sudden and unnatural death was called sarthi. In case of death by falling from a tree, a dog was sacrificed near the tree in order that the dead man's spirit might be accompanied to Mithikhua after being doomed to spend three years watching the flowers of that tree. A day of such sacrifice was a public holiday.

The death of a woman while giving birth was called raicheh. In raicheh, the inhabitants of the entire village stayed at home for it was believed that the spirit of the woman walked around along the road carrying her loom. In case she found any house opened, she would enter it with the consequence, according to the Mizo belief, that one of the occupants of the house would die.

All the tribes treated the corpse in the same way. The corpse was washed, the hair was dressed carefully and the body, attached to a bamboo frame, was placed in a sitting position. They then adorned the dead with fine remnant of

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30 Pialral: It was an abode where the souls of thangchhuah persons were believed to rest. Here they lived a free life, they no longer worked nor they suffered from any hardship.


necklaces, bangles etc., in case of a woman. If it was a man, guns, spears, dao and his other belonging were put beside him. The corpse was laid on the khumpui (main bed) against the wall. They prepared funeral feast by killing pigs, goats, etc., and food and drinks were also offered to the dead. The rites lasted will the evening of the next day. It was believed that the spirit of the pigs killed would accompany the spirit of the deceased.

The corpse of the common man was carried on a bier and was buried in the evening of the next day; before burial the nearest male relative made a short farewell speech wishing him a happy journey and asking him to prepare things for those who had to follow him soon.

In those early days they did not maintain graveyards as we do today and when a man died he was buried near his house.

When a bachelor or a spinster died, a special grave was prepared as a show of favour and respect to him or her by making the grave deeper and by using stonemasonry at the bottom of the grave.

In case of the death of a member of the ruling family the dead body was put in a wooden coffin and decomposed by using fire on a hearth specially prepared for the purpose.

\[32\] J. Shakespear; "Marriage", op. cit., p. 7.

\[34\] There is no evidence to show that a corpse was ever cremated. Embalming too was unknown to the Mizos.
opposite to the existing fire-place. The method is called **kuangur**. The process sometimes lasted for more than three months during which period, normally, the members of the family never went out of the house. A bamboo tube was fixed to the coffin and it ran down through the floor of the house and the other end of the tube was fixed to the ground to lead the decomposed portion away. When all the flesh was dried up, they collected the bones and kept them in a basket, and when they collected too large, they put them in an earthen pot and buried them together.

When a man died, the family members had to mourn for a certain period. The first day was the burial day. The second day was called **thlanngahni**, a day for mourning the burial on which close relatives and friends gathered to mourn the dead. It was believed that the spirit left the dead body on the third day which was called **thawhlehni**. From this day they began to observe **thlaichhiah**, a rite which lasted for three months. During this period, food was kept apart in a small basket for the deceased at the place where bamboo tubes for water were kept, usually at the lower side of the entrance. If the deceased was married, the rite was performed by his wife, and if unmarried, it was performed by his father or brother or

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**Informant:** Hrangkunga, age 81, as on 12.10.1982,
any relative. After this period, the widow was free from any marital restrictions imposed upon her by the custom.

The Political Institution

The Mizo chieftainship was an integral part of the Mizo political life. The chieftainship was, in the beginning, an evolution but in course of time it became hereditary. The right to succession was reserved only to those sons who were potent and gifted with capacity to rule. The large majority of the chiefs belonged to the Sailo lineage of Thangur clan of the Lusei tribe. Only a smaller number of chiefs belonged to other tribes such as Fanai, Pawi, Paihte and Hualngo who were subordinate to the Sailos. But in the southern parts of the erstwhile Lushai Hills there were some independent Pawi and Lakher chiefs. After the British occupation the administration occasionally appointed Government employees as chiefs in place of those chiefs who were deposed. Such chiefs were commonly known as *hnamchawm lal*, meaning "chief belonging to commoners". The Government was, however, very selective in appointing "commoners" as chiefs. It was generally done in recognition of the meritorious services rendered by them to the Government.

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36 N. E. Parry; *Monograph, op. cit.*, p. 76.
37 T. H. Lewin; *Progressive Colloquial Exercises, op. cit.*, p. 79.
38 J. Shakespear; *Lusei-Kuki Clans, Part I*, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, Reprint, 1975, pp. 2-5.
Genesis of chieftainship. Tradition says that when the Lusei tribes were living at Seipui, now in Burma, they fought wars with the Paihte clan. In one of such wars the Mizos captured one Chhuahlawma, son of Galna, son of Sihsinga who belonged to the Paihte clan. Chhuahlawma was adopted and got married and had a son named Zahmuaka. He married Lawileri and they had seven sons viz. Zadenga, Paliana, Thangluaha, Thangura, Rivunga and Rokhuma, the seventh died in infancy. From these six sons of Zahmuaka different Mizo tribes originated.

In early days, a chief or a leader did not enjoy aristocratic privileges due to the fact that his main business was to lead raids on other clans. It is no wonder, therefore, in order to protect themselves from plunder and raids, the weaker families requested the leaders of the big families to protect and lead them.  

It is for such a reason, on the death of Chhanpiala of the Hnamte clan, who was the chief of Khawrua and Tlangkhua villages, the villagers approached the Lusei clans at Seipui to send someone as their chief. But none accepted their request. They then approached the big family of Zahmuaka and his sons. Zahmuaka was at first reluctant but upon the insistence of Lawileri, his wife, he accepted the chieftainship.

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and he went over with his sons to Khawrua and Tlangkhua villages where his six sons also became chiefs in six different villages before they migrated to the present land.

Thangura had two sons - Chawnglula and Thangmanga. Thangmanga begot Sailova, the progenitor of the present day Sailos. By their prowess in war and wisdom in governing, descendants of the Sailo gradually established their rule firmly from one end of the hills to the other, and their authority was even recognised by the other clans. As such, they ruled practically the entire Lushai Hills till the advent of the British.

The Position of chief. In ancient days each village was independent and ruled by its own chief, who, in theory was a despot within his own jurisdiction. His words were law in his own territory. All that was in the village belonged to him. He could call upon his subjects to furnish him with anything that he needed. All disputes and cases were to be decided by him. In short he was supreme in his own village.

But in real practice, the chief was a benevolent ruler. He treated his subjects like his own children and in return they too looked upon him as their saviour in time of their

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40 Rev. Liangkhaia; Mizo Chanchin, op. cit., p. 36.
difficulties. The position is aptly described by Lewin as follows:

The village system among the Kukies is best described as a series of petty states, each under a Dictator or President. . . . I may mention that in 1866, when on a visit to the village of one of the leading Chiefs among the Lushai, I was standing talking with him in the path that ran through the village. While we were thus standing a drunken Lhoosai came stumbling along, and finding us somewhat in the way, he seized the Chief by the neck and shoved him off the path, asking why he stopped the road. On my asking the chief for an explanation of such disrespect being permitted, he replied, "on the war-path or in the council I am Chief, and my words are obeyed; behaviour like that would be punished by death. Here, in the village, the drunkard is my fellow and equal". In like manner any present given to the Chief are common property. His people walked off with them, saying, "He is a big man, and will get lots more given to him. Who will give to us if he does not? . . ." The Lal directs in war; he is the last in the advance, and the rearmost in retreat.

The chief enjoyed power to impose even death reality within his jurisdiction. But he had to exercise this power with consideration for he could not afford to give offence since the men of one chief could transfer their allegiance to another at will. Therefore, he had to be very careful in exercising his powers. Such type of Government Lewin calls "democracy tempered by despotism." The position of the chief among his subjects was debatable because he was to a certain extent dependent on the allegiance of his subjects.

42Idem; The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers Therein, Bengal Printing Company, Calcutta, 1869, p. 100.
43Idem; Progressive Colloquial Exercises, op. cit., p. 7.
The chief's land and law of inheritance. The land in which the chief ruled belonged to him but with indefinite (natural) boundaries. With the increase of their number, particularly with the eldest sons being allowed to set up new villages with a certain number of followers the tracts of land held by them had diminished. Whenever the eldest son set up a new village he was not required to pay any kind of tributes to the father chief, but was expected to help him in times of difficulties. The youngest son had the right to inheritance to the father's property as well as village when the latter died.

Power and administration. Although theoretically the chief enjoyed absolute power, he could not assume absolution in his administration because the greatness of the chief was measured by the number of his followers, and the people who followed him were perfectly free to select their leaders. It was, therefore, natural that the people flocked under the fittest.

The chief was assisted by his upas who formed his council of advisers. The council presided over by the chief administered the day to day life and activities of the people. The upas were appointed by the chief from among those representing, so far as applicable, different
tribes or clans. The chief was, however, free to choose any one whom he favoured. He had also the right to dismiss any of his upas at any moment without assigning any reason thereof. Nevertheless, the chief could hardly ignore the consensus expressed in the council. The council could discuss any matter that came to their disposal. It tried both civil and criminal cases. In case any member of the council including the chief had any connection with the impending case, he should not participate in the deliberation, nor would he interfere with the findings or decisions. The council was the only court and there was no other court of appeal.

The council collected fee for hearing the case, imposed fine upon the guilty party. This fine known as salam, was in the form of a female pig. This was the minimum fine inflicted upon the losing party. The maximum fine would be a female mithun attended by a salam. The most severe or worst penalty was ram. The case referred to the man found guilty of disloyalty to the chief. In such case, all the property including his own house could be seized.

Trial of civil as well as criminal cases was strictly held in camera. However, cases concerning "love affairs" could be heard in public and that anybody who so desired was allowed to be present.

44 N. Chatterji; The Mizo Chief and His Administration, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, 1975, p. 3.
45 N. E. Parry; Monograph, op. cit., p. 2.
Besides upas, there were other village functionaries who were all under the direct control of the chief. They were, tlangau, thirndeng, ramhual, puithiam, zalen and khawchhiar.

Dues payable to the chief. Every chief was entitled to receive a number of dues from his subjects such as sachmiah, chichhiah and khuaichhiah.

The chief did not maintain a standing police force or armed force. Every grown up man and Zawlbuk dweller was considered a soldier and the chief himself acted as Supreme Commander. These people were all the time ready to meet any eventuality in the village.

Just before the advent of the British there was an uprising against the chiefs in the whole territory except in the north-eastern part of the area. This rebellion was called lalsawi.\(^46\) It spread like a wildfire and as a result many a chief was deposed. But the common people could not stand unitedly for long and the chiefs soon reasserted their powers without much difficulty. Never again after this the people revolted against their chiefs.

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Social Institutions

According to Vaux:

Institutions are the various forms in which the social life of a people finds expression. . . the institutions themselves exist. . . for the sake of the society. Again, the institutions of a society will vary with time and place. . . .47

Most of the social customs we find today among the Mizos are survivals of the social institutions in the ancient Mizo society.

The Zawlbuk. Zawlbuk, which means "bachelor's house or dormitory" was the nerve-centre of the Mizo society and it shaped the Mizo youths into responsible adult members of the society.48 It may be noted that Zawlbuk fostered and nurtured a pure and uncorrupted life and its contributions for the good of the society was creditably immense. N. E. Parry accredited the importance of Zawlbuk in the Mizo society in the following words: "I ascribe much of the indiscipline among the Lakhers to the fact that they have no bachelor's house or equivalent to the Lushei Zawlbuk."49

48 N. Chatterji; Zawlbuk as a Social Institution in the Mizo Society, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, 1975, p. 3.
49 N. E. Parry; The Lakher, Firma KLM, Calcutta, 1976, Reprint, p. 28.
The origin of Zawlbuk, though not definitely known may be traced back to China where such "Long Houses" or "Communal Houses" were found.\(^50\) Loeb and Broek thought that the "long house" was brought down to Yunnan and to other places in the South-East Asia by the patrilineal Tibeto-Burman peoples and others.\(^51\) Such bachelor's house was also found amongst the tribes in the south China.\(^52\) It was to be found among the Nagas who called it morung.\(^53\) Obviously the Mizos brought it down from China long ago.

Zawlbuk was placed under the charge of a leader called valupa who was chosen from amongst the bachelors. It was customary for every inmate to obey him. In serious as well as ordinary matters he was assisted by his lieutenants. In matters concerning the whole group or the locality, they discussed together and took unanimous decision by majority voice.

Zawlbuk, besides its inmates, had one junior group composed of young boys known as thingnawifawm who supplied Zawlbuk with fire-wood and water every day and night.


\(^{51}\) Ibid., p. 418.

\(^{52}\) Robert F. Spencer and S. A. Barret; "Note on a Bachelor House in the South China Area", American Anthropologist, Vol. 50, 1948, p. 472.

In short, Zawlbuk was a very powerful institution which exercised the greatest sway in establishing social norms and customs among the Mizo people.

As a social institution, Zawlbuk had a three-fold functions. It served as a sleeping place and recreational centre for unmarried as well as young married men. It imparted training and taught discipline to young boys and even the rude people in the village were disciplined and put under control. It also served as an inn for a man from another village.

The Bawi. Bawiship was one of the oldest institutions of the Mizo society which appears to have existed from time immemorial. A person who surrendered himself to a Mizo chief for any reason was commonly called a bawi. Lewin aptly expresses his views, "boi (bawi) is the term in their (Mizo) dialect which betokens of persons who had lost the right of individual freedom of action, but in all other respects the word 'slave' would be inapplicable."^54

B. C. Allen also informing the Secretary to the Government of Bengal writes "that in the regularly administered districts of Province there are no practices

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or customs which have the slightest tinge of slavery apart from the boi (bawi) custom. . ."^55

There were three different categories of bawi i.e. Inpuichhung bawi Chemsen bawi and Tuklun bawi. Those who took refuge in the chief's house due to poverty were called Inpuichhung bawi. Widows, orphans and others who could not afford their own livelihood made the bulk of this group. A person could also become a bawi by compassion. For instance, if a man was too poor to offer sacrifice he might seek the help of the chief, this would make him a bawi. Such bawis were sometimes absorbed by the chief into his family by performing a ceremony called saphun. In such case the bawi would lose his former clannish identification and would be considered a member of the chief's clan.

Such bawis were treated as members of the chief's household. They did whatever was needful and in return the chief provided them with all their need. They were allowed to acquire even private property.

The chief sometimes procured a wife for his bawi, and the couple would serve him at least for a period of three years after which period the couple could leave the chief

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^55AR; Letter No. 6866-67 No. 4902 P. Shillong, the 15th August, 1916. From B. C. Allen, Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal.

^56Saphun means (sa=religion, phun=to adopt) adopting the religious custom of other people.
for a separate house. The period of three years would be extended to six years if the bawi married a female bawi who would then be known as Inhrang bawi. Though they lived independent of the chief they continued to be bawi in name and their youngest son would inherit the bawiship. The other sons would be free. The general nature of the relationship between the chief and his inpuichhung bawi was like that of a father with his son.

When a man, after committing a crime, took refuge in the chief's house by touching the chief's sut (a post inside the house supporting the ridge pole) to escape revenge, he was called Chemsen bawi. No harm could be done to him by anyone for the crime since such bawi could live independently and purchase freedom. But he remained bawi during his lifetime. The bride price of the daughter of the Chemsen bawi went to the chief.

In war or feud, when a person, after deserting his own party, joined the victorious side and promised that he and his descendants would obey the chief, such person was called Tukluh bawi. They lived in a separate house. He could, however, buy his redemption by payment of a mithun to the chief.

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57 A. G. McCall; Lushai Chrysalis, op. cit., p. 123.
58 Ibid., p. 122.
The chief's house had thus become a "paradise" for vagabonds as well as offenders. The British administrators did not fully understand the system before they advanced into the erstwhile Lushai Hills. Because of its peculiar nature most English writers failed to understand it, and merely referred to it as slavery. Bawiship has wrongly been called slavery by other writers also. Lewin aptly remarks thus: "The condition of these so-called slave was very little different indeed from that of free people."  

**The sal.** Sal is a Mizo term for slavery. Vaux defines slaves as "a man who is bought and sold, who is property of a master, who makes use of him as he likes." Such type of people were found in the early Mizo society. In those early periods, inter-tribal feuds and inter-clan feuds were common occurrence. As a result, many people were made captive. Such people were commonly known as sal. Like bawi they could buy their freedom only by paying usually a big ransom. The only marked difference between sal and bawi was that...
every household could keep sal whereas bawls were found only with the chiefs. Thus while slavery was common in the neighbouring state of Tripura where children were sold and exported to different parts of the country the same was very rare among the Mizo. 63

The Village Life

In the pre-Christian Mizo Society, life in a village was simple. As they rarely lived in one spot for more than 5 and 6 years their social life was also much migratory in nature.

The search for more productive land forced them to shift from one place to another. This necessitated the construction of a new village at a new site. But the selection of a new site was not easy, for it must have fulfilled certain criteria as its inaccessibility, 64 its impregnability against enemy attack combined with a good perennial source of water supply. 65 Finally it must have to be selected by the elders which they did by sleeping one night at the proposed site taking with them a cock. If the cock

64 John Macrare; op. cit., p. 186.
did not crow before dawn, the site would be considered not suitable. On abandoning the old village, the old hearth was doused with water so that none of the misfortunes and curse of the abandoned village should follow them.

**Village Planning.** Notwithstanding the absence of modern engineering technique, the village was, however, planned in an orderly design. They built the houses in two rows facing each other. The chief's house was constructed in the centre of the village and the Zawibuk near the chief's. No person was allowed to build a house above the chief's house. The part of the village where the chief resided was called mualyeng.

**Type of House.** Due to their migratory nature, their houses were not built strong and durable. Bamboos and thatches were usually used for building a house, and each house was raised on bamboo piles 4 to 5 feet from the ground. Houses did not have windows or ventilations except the main entrance.

**Village Officials.** All the village functionaries were under the direct authority of the chief. The "Officials" who helped the chief in discharging his duties were the upas, the tlangau, the thirdeng, the puitiam and his
assistant the tlahpawi, the ramhual, the zalen and the khawchhiar. The last one was introduced by the British.

As stated earlier, except upas all of them had nothing to do with the law court but took part in all the other activities of the chief. They were also exempted from fathang tax (paddy tax) and other dues payable to the chief. Since ramhual was the person to first select the best jhuming site, he produced more, and therefore had to pay more fathang to the chief.

The khawchhiar, a British creation, was a "village writer" who prepared letters and reports for the chiefs, kept the village statistics, registered the number of houses in the village and kept a list of guns possessed by the villagers. He was excluded from rendering physical labour and from paying house tax to the chief.

Tlawmngaihna. One of the most valued objectives of the Mizos was the possession of tlawmngaihna. The word has no exact equivalent in English. The spirit of chivalry is perhaps the single word that has the nearest meaning. It means to be unselfish, zealous, courteous, considerate,

66 N. E. Parry; Monograph, op. cit., p. 6.
courageous, industrious, kind, generous, persevering - in short, it means all good qualities of life.

The following example may be illustrative of tlawmngaihna. When a group of people went hunting for a week, there inevitably was a moral competition among the young men, that one should do more than the other; one should take less food than the other and should try to get everything ready before the others got up. In the second place, when they met the animal one who possessed tlawmngaihna should ask his friends to shoot first. Moral code, which concerned man only was called mipa tlawmngaihna.

Tlawmngaihna among the girls was mainly measured by the way they received and welcomed their inleng (suitors). They had to chat till very late at night and get up before dawn to get pounding of rice and other domestic works ready before sunrise. By the time the sun arose they should have gone to jhum. Under such fatiguing conditions, it was not always possible to show smiling face to all the people. But one who did it was called to have possessed tlawmngaihna.

Those who possessed much moral discipline did not go unrewarded. Valupas always noticed and watched the movements of each and every young man. Then they earmarked one or two whom they thought were the most tlawmngai in a village. Such young persons were rewarded by organising a separate function
in which rice beer was offered in a cup called tlawnmeai no, usually made of the biggest horn. As a mark of honour and felicitation he was offered the first drink, followed by the chief and the rest. That No was the highest "Award" in ancient days. Some writers have even compared such honour to that of the Victoria Cross.  

Like Zawlbuk, tlawnngaihna code of life is deeply rooted in the Mizo society, knitted different walks of life together in a society without discrimination or prejudice. Parry aptly remarks; "Tlawmngaihna therefore deserves every encouragement, as if it were allowed to fall into desuetude, it would be most detrimental to the whole of the tribe."  

Hunting. One of the most striking features of the early Mizo village life was hunting. They were fond of hunting and never missed an occasion. They did hunting for two purposes. In the first place, they did for religious purpose, i.e. to be a ram lama thangchhuah, one must kill certain animals. In the second place, the required meat. They were very fond of hunting elephant for which they moved for many miles camping for days and months. Elephant's meat was a special delicacy.  

67 Pastor Challiana; op. cit., p. 12.  
68 N. E. Parry; Monograph, op. cit. p. 21.
Besides hunting, trapping was another means by which animals were killed. This job was not a hard task, everybody could do it. There were different kinds of traps meant for different animals and birds. Traps for almost all the animals were similar and traps for birds living on the ground and trees were given different names. Rats, bears, monkeys were caught with different traps. Some of the common traps were: sahdal, thangthleng, beai, kawlper, vawmtlak, zawngtlak, fal, thangchepe, chehrep, mangkhawng, kar, etc.

Warfare. Before the penetration of the British into the hill tracts every village, except those that owe allegiance to a bigger chief, was an independent state. Even when feuds arose between two villages thereby leading to the culmination in war, the whole community was not always involved. Both the parties selected one to fight on their behalf. They selected the place where they would fight. They then dug a grave and a beam was put across the grave. This war is known as leilawn mal zawha indo. The two fighters met on the centre of the bridge and the one who first fell down into the grave below was the loser, and the one who knocked down his opponent was the winner.

The outcome of this single combat was taken to as final. So the whole village did not have to join in the war.

Another system which was common amongst the Lusei clans was called *vawklu vuakthlak indo* in which one warring party aimed at the skulls of the pigs usually displayed in the courtyard of the enemy. They tried to throw them down. It was the duty and responsibility of the opposing group to defend them insistently with any instrument and weapon they had with them. If the enemy could bring them down, that means, they won the war. Such fair custom in time of war was practised among the Mizos in the early times.

**Chhiah.** Every household in the village had to pay several kinds of dues to the chief, of which the main was fathang, or tribute paid in rice, but its amount or quantity was not fixed. Normally they paid according to the demands of the chief. But in due course it was fixed at 6 tins (one tin roughly contains 12 kilos) of unwinowed paddy. Later on, it was reduced to 3 tins etc. Other forms of eaxes included were *sachhiah* or the liability to give the left foreleg of an animal killed, *chikhurchhiah* or tax on salt, *khuaichhiah*, or tax on honey. Besides, they had to pay *thirdekchhiah*, or three ribs of animals they shot to the village blacksmith for he had little time to go for hunting. The people of

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70 AR; Order No. 142 D/16.11.1926.
the village were obliged to construct the house of the chief; it was called thachhiah or labour tax. This practice was prevalent only among the northern chiefs but among the southern chiefs it was not done before the 1871-72 expedition.\(^1\)

**Dress and ornaments.** In early period when the Mizos were in a less advanced stage, they did not know how to manufacture cloth. Weaving and use of cloth for dress was a later development. Before they wore clothes made of cotton men wore what they called hnawkhal, a coarse materials made from the bark of trees.\(^2\) Earlier women's garment was also made of the same material and was called siapsuap. Later, hnawkhal was replaced by a cloth made of cotton called puanhlap (ordinary cloth). After this cloth, "dawlrem kawr" was added. It was named after a little chirping insect called "dawlrem". This was an improvement upon the existing attire. Later, women's workaday dress consisted of hmaram pawnfen (petticoat) which was coloured in various designs. The most popular designs which they use till today are: the kawkpuizikzial and the lenbuangthuam. It was, in the past, fastened with a cord belt known as kawngchilh, a spiral brass.

\(^{1}\) R. Vanlawma; Mizo Lalte, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

Not only women but men also wore saingho (ivory) as benabeh (earring). The common ornaments they mostly used were saingho and thihna (amber necklace). As both men and women kept their hair long, they also used thimkual (hairpins) and dawhkilh (hair stick) respectively. They were made of bamboos. Distinguished persons who had performed thangchhuah ceremonies wore a head dress called vakira, decorated with parrots' feathers and porcupine quills inserted into a bamboo ring. This head-dress was worn only on important occasions like khuangchawi.

**Dances.** By nature, the Mizos love social bustles. The spirit and dance is still actively and distinctly alive among the people. To the outsiders, therefore, the Mizos are dubbed as "singing tribe".\(^{73}\) They sing more after becoming Christians.\(^{74}\) From early period, singing, dancing and zu drinking were often ingrediently blended, forming a common feature of life. On one occasion the people were amazingly surprised when they saw a little boy singing hymns on the verandah of the first missionaries' hut without the pot of zu and asked "where is the beer-pot?"\(^{75}\) In former days dances

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\(^{73}\) J. D. Baveja; *op. cit.* p. 44.

\(^{74}\) David Kyles; *op. cit.*, p. 34.

\(^{75}\) Chhangte Lalhminga; *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram*, 1976, (unpublished thesis) p. 54.
were performed only on certain festive occasions and it was one of the principal amusements in the village.

Among the most popular dances cheraw commonly known as "bamboo dance" was performed in honour of one who died an untimely death, with a view to speeding up the departed soul on its way to Mithikhua or Pialral. In this, girls with the help of men participated. Originally the dance was performed by men. Khuallam was an important feature of Chai. The origin is not known but it was connected with a series of ceremonies like khuangchawi, kut, thangchhuah etc., performed with colourful cloths, gongs and drums. Solaiam, another dance, originally performed by the Lakthers but now adopted by the Mizos and the Pawis, was associated with hunting, in which, men and women danced in a big circle to the accompaniment of beating of drum and gong. Another cultural dance was chheih lam, commonly known as zu hwum lam for it was usually performed by the zu drinking adults only. It had no particular occasion, it was held at any time.

Sakei lu lam (tiger dance) was a dance performed occasionally in which a cloth was placed on the ground to represent a goat or a pig. A youth of the village played the role of a tiger, stalked the prey and jumped over the imaginary goat.

76C. A. Soppit; *op. cit.*, p. 21.
Musical instruments. The Mizos had different kinds of musical instruments that they had played in early days. Of these instruments "gongs" occupied a very significant place in the Mizo society. There are different sizes. The largest gong was called darkhuang and the medium was known as darmang. A set of small gongs was popularly used for instrumental songs. Equally important gong was khuang (drum). Besides these, indigenous instruments like Mizo tingtang, phenglawng, rawchhem, bengbung, lemlawi, and tuium dar are found among the Mizos.

Games and sports. The games the early Mizos used to play in the village indicate that the people were sports living and competitive minded people. Women were not given equal chance in matters of games and sports but girls of course used to play with their opposite sex.

One of the common games played among the Mizos was inbuan (wrestling). Occasionally it was done in the Jawibuk as a matter of routine exercise. Here young men trained themselves by seeing and sometimes by participating among their elders. Visitors to a village were challenged by the local young men and fair competition was fought till one of them stood up unchallenged by the others.
Next to *inbuan*, *ritchawi* (weight lifting) was another important and popular game. Every village had its own *chawilung* (stone used for weight lifting). Young men competed among themselves either in the morning or in the evening time. Every village had one or two of such stone.

The Mizo children had many games. The favourite game for boys was *inkawi hnawk* or *inhnawk* meaning a "bean game". The girls played *inkawi bah* or *inbah* with beans. There were three kinds of these games, namely *bahpui*, *bahte* and *insalman*. Hide-and-seek was a common game among Mizo children. Besides these games, *in-ulen*, *inkawl vawr*, *inbuh vawr*, *inval lungthlak* etc., are common games among the Mizo boys and girls. Boys also played a *kaibhu*, a spinning top.

**The Economic Life**

In early period, jhuming constituted the main basis of the economy of the Mizos, and it still remains so for them. The system of paddy cultivation was very primitive and had been practised since the prehistoric time. The system was the method and technique of food-production of the Mizos. It appears that hunting and trapping did not

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78 *NEICFSSR*; *Shifting Cultivation in North-East India*, Shillong, 1976, p. 3.
affect their economy much but raids and inter-feuds disturbed the general life of the people which sometimes required guarding of people working in the jhum. Yet the people were content with their economic life because they had limited wants. This means that they managed themselves with the kind of foods they produced from the jhum.

Till the advent of the British the entire population was agriculturists. The staple food of the people was rice and everybody earned his livelihood by cultivating paddy. Tradition says that paddy was grown or cultivated only when they came to a settlement at Lentlang (Len Range) or the present Chin Hills of Burma. Until they came down here, maize, millet and arum-bulb were the main food of the Mizos. Besides paddy, maize, millet, yarns, arum-bulb, sweet potatoes etc. were also grown. Therefore, buying and selling did not count much with them. Instead the system of "give and take" was the reign of the day. Tribute payable to the chief was also paid in terms of rice.

Cotton was grown in small quantity and grown in the jhums along with other local groups. As civilization advanced, they also knew how to use cotton better and from which they made improvements upon their existing garments like sipsuap and hnawkhah. They also dyed their cloths from a species of dwarf indigo grown in the villages.

79V. L. Siama; op. cit., p. 17.
Tobacco is said to be indigenously grown for home consumptions. As they were heavy smoker, in early period the Mizos rolled their tobacco with dry leaves. Men and women smoked equally and habitually and smoked vaibel and tuibur respectively. With the coming of paper they changed from pipes to paper rolled cigarettes.

Hunting and fishing or trapping played an important role in the economic life of the early Mizos. They were fond of fresh meat and trapped every kind of animal. Fishing was done with what they called ngawi, made of bamboo barricade in running water. They also caught fish by poisoning the stream with the fruit of a tree called ru. Other poison used were the root called rulei, and the bark of a certain tree. This is still a common practice among the people.

One of the most important features of the economic life of the Mizo people was hnatlang or free services rendered by the people to the villages when need arose. The nature of work depended upon the need of the day. According to the demand of works at least one from each house came forward for the hnatlang. Every family other than widows and disabled persons who really deserved exemption from the service not represented in the work was to be run (fined) as demanded by the participants. In this way the needy were helped. In Mizo hills paid labour was unknown.
Before money transaction took place the system of business transaction was a barter-system. Exchange of things was done in terms of kinds. Sial (mithun) occupied a key role in the social as well as in the economic life of the early Mizo people. They kept them for trading and for festival purposes. Among them the value of property was judged in terms of sial. Before the advent of the British even the price of a bride was determined in terms of sial, and when money made its appearance in Mizoram in the second half of the 18th century, the value of one full grown sial was made equivalent to Rs. 40. As stated earlier, the price of a Sailo bride was ten sials.

Salt was obtained from the spring by evaporation. It was much valued in the economic life of the people. As salt was dear in earlier time, they took it only on certain occasions.

In former days drinking of zu, a Mizo rice beer was very common. It was part and parcel of all ceremonies and not a single ceremony was performed without zu. In the older days several kinds of zu were prepared and consumed by the Mizos. Nevertheless young men and women hardly drank zu on all occasions except on certain events like chai and other feast days. Moreover, it was considered unseemly for young men and especially women to drink in the presence of their superiors or elders except during festivities.
Scarcity of food was a common occurrence among the Mizos of early periods because of repeated raids and untimely frequent sitting out for hunting. Besides such occasional and isolated famine, a severe famine called mautam occurred regularly after some fifty years. The first known mautam occurred in 1861, and in 1880 there was another famine which they called thingtam. Just before these famines the bamboos flowered and the flowers, when eaten by rats, made them fertile causing rapid increase of the number of rats. The rats then attacked the paddy causing complete damages to them, leaving the people without any food to eat. When such famine occurred people had no choice but to dig wild yams and roots in the jungles. The scarcity was accompanied by diseases leaving thousands of people dead. The British Government rendered relief by supplying their bags of rice. When mautam broke out in 1911 the Government distributed relief to the amount of Rs. 5,85,000. But such meagre relief works did not save the people from hunger.

For measuring large quantities of rice they used chhipzawn, which is a heap of unhusked paddy with the cone at level with the top of a man's head. For measuring they used to say hlam which is the length tip of the left hand to the tip of the right hand. Distance was measured in terms

80 V. L. Siama; op. cit., pp. 63-64.
of a day's walk. They also measured rice in the number of loads. The chhipzawn is normally about 120 loads. Measurement of weights are scanty, the common one is called char which means a weight an outstretched arm can lift. It was applied only on fair competition among the competitors.

Since the introduction of money into Mizoram and contact with the people outside, the economic conditions of the people began to change. Trade marts were established with permissions from the concerned chiefs. Thus the bazars at Tipaimukh on the Barak (tuiruang), at Sonai on the Sonai river (tuirial) and at Changsil on the Dhaleswar (tlawng) river were established. The people thus began to barter local rubber to the plain areas in exchange for rice and other items through these trade marts or bazars. The advent of the British had thus disturbed the economic independence of the people through impositions of tributes and imposed labours.

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Religious Beliefs

The Mizo word for religion is sakhua. The social life of the pre-Christian society was chiefly dominated by their religious beliefs. Due to our limited knowledge and lack of written records and other evidences, except oral tradition, it is impossible to give correct account of the origin of their early religion. The beginning of their religion is veiled in obscurity. As such, in order to trace the beginning and development of their religion, we have to rely only on traditions, folk songs etc.

According to one tradition, during their habitation in the Run or Manipur river valley, the Mizos were in a helpless conditions when sorrows, sufferings and miseries reigned upon them. Their anxiety knew no bounds. They then needed comforts and solace at such period. They, therefore, began to seek ways and means to attain these state of affairs. That was the beginning of their religion. They did not know how to start also. But at last they reasoned that their forefathers should have worshipped and on the strength of that belief they started with a simple beginning.

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83 V. L. Siams; op. cit., pp. 10-11.
saying, pi biakin lo chhang ang che, pu biak in lo chhang and che which means "Answer me, whom our mothers worship, answer me, whom our fathers worship". So with these simple incantations the early Mizo religion came into existence.

The religion was a gradual development by making new additions to the existing chants. The forms of worship and incantations were enriched and improved from time to time thereby causing slight difference in practice from one village to another. The evidence to this effect is that the names of places they recited in their incantations are all located at what is now in the Chin Hills of Burma, and names of some ranges like the "Lurh", the "Tan" in the present habitat are also mentioned in some of their chants. However, in spite of a strong belief that the early Mizo religion was as old as the people themselves we are sadly ignorant of their ancient religion beyond the period of settlement in the Chin Hills.

The views thus expressed do not give us a correct account of the beginning of the Mizo religion but it only indicates that their religion was that old and the people were religious in nature. The salient features of their religion are given below:

84 Ibid., p. 11.
85 Mizo Sakhua; op. cit., p. 5.
The concept of God. The early Mizos believed in one "Supreme Being" whom they gave the name of Pathian who created the Universe. They believed that he lived somewhere above and as such called him Chung Pathian, meaning "God of above". He was omnipotent and omnipresent as well. He was a good God, never doing any harm to human beings. Therefore, they conceived the idea that they need not offer sacrifices to him. When they were blessed with good fortunes they said Pathian a tha meaning "God is good" and when they were in a state of fear they uttered, Pathian in zah a ngai ang cau which means "God will have mercy upon us". But when misfortunes frequented them they said Pathian a thin a ur meaning "God is angry with us."86 If a couple enjoyeo a happy married life, they said, Pathian samsuih meaning "God appointed partners". In short, their idea about God was not unlike that of the Christians today. The only difference is that in those early days they did not have a clear conception of God's personality as the Christians have today.

They also believed in the existence of subordinate good spirit who caused no harm to them, and offered sacrifices not to propitiate them but to invoke abundant

86 Pastor Challiana; op. cit., pp. 29-30.
blessings from them. They believed that the good spirits either lived in heaven or below the earth. These good spirits were identified and given different names in their relations with human beings. They assigned each with different functions to perform towards men. Accordingly each spirit did its duties faithfully to man. These good spirits were regarded as benevolent and they were under the direct control of Pathian. They also believed that each person was given a good spirit as a watch or protector. They did not believe that these spirits could be seen with naked eyes but only when they were in a state of trance. Only lasi could be seen either when awaken or in a trance. As they did not know where these spirits lived except God, they started worshipping trees or mountains etc.

The early Mizos also believed in the existence of evil spirits which were commonly known as ramhuai. Just as the good spirits, ramhuai were identified and were given different names. They thought that evil spirits were the source of all illnesses and misfortunes. Therefore they worshipped thinking that the blood of the animal killed would satisfy and appease these evil spirits.87

As they were terribly afraid of these evil spirits and as they did not know where they lived, utmost care was therefore taken to avoid causing anger of these spirits. Hence they began to worship big trees, stones, mountains and water where, they believed, the spirits dwelt. What they most feared was that they would displease them unknowingly and unintentionally. They also believed that these evil spirits also had human form but were invisible. Their presence among men could be known only through the persons they possessed, or from some haunting sounds or dreams. They also believed that these evil spirits could take any form they liked, sometimes they appeared as tiger, fire, wind etc. They might have any form, in the same way they had a concrete idea that the spirits could not be killed or harmed.

The general belief was that though these different evil spirits were very powerful in matters of causing harms to human beings, they were all inferior to God. They also believed that each person was assigned a spirit not as a protector but to possess him. He should therefore keep this spirit happy all the time, otherwise misfortunes and sufferings would befall on him any time.

Their religious belief was connected with taboos and superstitions. They were very superstitious minded not only in religion but also in their general life. This belief to
a great extent destined their religious rites. In normal life they believed that, for instance, if a woman committed adultery and did not confess it, she would be killed by a tiger. They also swore that the two members of a family should not go out of the village the same day either for a journey or hunting in opposite directions.

The concept of life after death. The early Mizos believed that there were two final abodes for the dead - Mithikhua and Pialral. These two places were not far from each other. According to the general belief, Mithikhua was a resting place for ordinary and common people who could not fulfil certain sacrifices to be performed during their life time on earth. It was thought much inferior to and smaller than that found on earth. The general belief was that everything there was only an imitation of what they possessed in life on earth. Life there was supposed to be full of misery and anxiety. They still felt pains and hurts, desired for something better and they worked, ate, slept, etc. Such a life was depicted clearly in the story of Tlingi and Ngama, the details of which is narrated in the same chapter under Kut. From that folktale we see the real picture of life in Mithikhua. They regarded that Mithikhua had two levels - one higher and the other lower.
They believed the souls of men who committed crimes or offence, or those who led anti-social life, would go to lower level, where they suffered. The higher level of Mithikhua was supposed to be the place where the spirits of people who led normal life on earth and person who could not enjoy sexual life due to impotency and others who could not perform thangchhuah were to live. They had no more chance to escape from this place to any other place, they were condemned to stay here eternally.

Another final resting place was Pialral which had also two levels - lower and higher. Lower Pialral was supposed to have located in a place opposite to Mithikhua. Here life did not attain complete bliss as it did in higher Pialral, undoubtedly life was far better than in Mithikhua. Their conception was that those could avoid Pawla's pellets were supposed to live here. Here also they had to live normal life as they did on earth.

The most pleasant place for a deadman's soul was called higher Pialral. Here there was no need to work. The soul could enjoy anything as it did on earth and obtained food and drink without any labour. Everything was provided here. The soul lived a completely free life, it no longer suffered from hardships and pains. In this abode only thangchhuah persons and their families would go with all their glories. They located Pialral to be situated beyond lower Pialral. They
believed that even in Pialral, though they did not work, they ate, drank, slept but no longer desired for something, eternal happiness smiled upon them.

The Mizos believed that on the death of a man his soul left him from the top of his head. It followed the tungchaw (bed post) and crossed it over to khanchhuk (crossed beam) and followed the liang (a wallplate) and left the house at the end of liang and went up to rihdil. From there it returned and stayed back around the house for three lunar months in the form of spirit. During which period the mithi thlaichhiah was performed. At the end of the period, the soul left this world for good either to Mithikhua or Pialral.

In its journey, the soul had to pass through different stages. After rihdil, it reached a very lovely and beautiful place called hringlangtlang from where it looked back to the village and this world, and because of its longing for human life it began weeping. Hence it went forward with heavy heart but became happy again when it reached the place where the most beautiful flowers of different species blossomed. One of the flowers was hawilopar which means "flower of no turning back". No sooner had it plucked that flower and worn it, than the soul completely

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89 Rihdil: It is a lake, now in Burma, and believed to be passed by departed souls on their way to Mithikhua.
forgot all about the world, and at the same time by drinking the water of the stream called lunglohtui meaning "lonesome no more water", it strengthened itself and with renewed vigour the soul started its journey for the final abode. Now they were filled with a desire to reach the Mithikhua or Pialral soon. Mysteriously they then forgot all about human beings.

There was a place called zingvawnzawl at which the roads leading to the Mithikhua met. Here was a certain man called Pawla and wife Sainui. The man shot his pellets at every spirit as it passed by, except those who had died of hlamzuinh, thangchhuah couples and men and women who had sexual intercourse during their life time. Pawla could easily identify such men and women by examining them. So the song runs like this:

\begin{quote}
Di neilo Pawla'n a sai an ti,  
Fam mah ila min sai bil tawn hlei lawng e,  
Ka nemrang puan tial ka di zawnna  
\end{quote}

which means,

\begin{quote}
Him who has not loved is shot by Pawla, so they say;  
I'd never be shot by him though now I die,  
My checkered Puan had I shared with my love.  
\end{quote}

It is said that those whom Pawla shot at would develop an abscess which would last three years.

\footnote{K. L. Chhuanvawra; "Rihdil-Pialral" Thu leh hla, Academy of Letters, Aizawl, Vol. 6, 1981, pp. 24-25.}
\footnote{Pastor Challiana, op. cit., p. 41.}
Not very far from Pawla's place was situated Mithikhua and nearby was Pialral, the final resting place of the good souls. The thangchhuah entered Pialral with all his wealth and glory including all his animals who followed him, if he was inlama thangchhuah, and if he was ramlama thangchhuah, he rode on the back of a stag with a cobra coiled around its horns and a hawk flying over them, followed by the other animals which he killed while living on earth. They thus reached Pialral.

The different means and stages to reach Pialral. Only a thangchhuah either inlama thangchhuah or ramlama thangchhuah could go to Pialral. For a poor and unhealthy man it was an impossible task to perform either of them.

To be an inlama thangchhuah, one must have enough wealth to perform a series of feasts and ceremonies commonly known as khuangchawi. He must also possess enough domestic animals required for the feasts.

The first ceremony was sakung performed by a man for his son who was going to have a separate house with a family. It was performed by killing the biggest male pig, (vawkpa sutnghak). Next was chawng which required the killing of three pigs - two males and one female, a large quantity of zu was also served. It lasted for four days during which period the youths were fed with drinks known
as sumdeng zu. Only after performance of chawng, a man was entitled to put a beam on his verandah and a shelf at the end of the bed. This was to be followed by sedawi chhun. In this performance, the sacrificer should possess a large quantity of zu, at least 40 pots, kill one mithun, a boar and two small pigs. The head of the mithun was to be placed upon seluphan, a forked pole of chestnut tree for at least three months. On the occasion, the puithiam recited incantation, and when it was over, the sacrificer would pierce the mithun and then entered the house straight. This sacrifice entitled the sacrificer to make shelf over the khumai, the sleeping place. It lasted for a day.

Next came zankhuang. In this, a mithun, a boar, and a small pig were killed and zu was also served. After this the sacrificer was entitled to open a window about six inches square and he could wear a cloth striped lengthwise. 

Mithirawplam was a feast performed with dance in honour of the spirit of the ancestors. The preparation for this ceremony was identical with that of chawng and sedawi chhun. To observe the occasion, young men and women cut trees and exposed them in the sun well in advance. This was called sathingzar. Men and women, involved in the community works, were fed with one he-goat and a sow. The sacrificer should prepare at least 70 pots of zu. When the

\[\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 46.\]
preparations were complete, they erected idols made of cotton representing all the dead in the family including one thlahpa who was supposed to be an ancestor of all human beings. On the third day called ruapui ni, i.e. feast day, they killed animals, and sacrifices were performed. Dance took place in the evening and the idols were also taken out in the public with a stretcher specially prepared for the occasion. The stretcher was lifted up and down three times and withdrawn again. With this, the official ceremony came to an end. The fourth day was the day for clearing the house and its surroundings.

The couple who performed the ceremony was entitled to wear a puantial (a striped cloth), vakul chang (a headdress, made of long tail feathers of bhimaraj) and he could open windows in the house and could make bahzar (a back verandah). 94 It was one of the most expensive ceremonies in inlama thanchhuah.

Khuangchawi. This was the greatest of all sacrifices and the final stage in the ceremonies, generally held during the autumn months. The preparations were exactly the same with the

other feasts. The only apparent difference is the number of animal sacrificed. Here they killed more animals.

The first thing the sacrificer should do with was that he should get prior permission to hold the feast from the chief who was the sole owner of the ground where dance was held during the feast. He did this by preparing a dinner for the chief and his upas by killing sow. This is called mualleiman. The sacrificer should kill at least 3 grown up male mithuns, 2 boars and 2 young pigs. He should also kill a female mithun for children.

The third day was the most colourful day. In the evening the couple who held the feast were taken out as they did in mithirawplam. If they had a daughter, she must be included insistently. The couple threw cotton, hens, brass pots, clothes, money and sometimes they also included guns and gongs. People scrambled for these gifts.

The most outstanding and colourful feature of the feast was khuallam performed usually by a part of the sacrificer's brother-in-law who was, if any, in another village. It was a dance organised by men outside the village.

After the inlama thangchhuah was over, the sacrificer was known as thangchhuahpa. He was dubbed as zawhzawzo meaning "one who had completed everything". Pialral was

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95 N. E. Parry; Monograph, op. cit., p. 106.
now virtually his abode when he died. He was now entitled -

(a) to open windows as wide as he pleased,
(b) to build his house with verandah or vanlung, and
(c) to wear a specially designed cloth in red and black stripes called thangchhuah puan.

Ramlama thangchhuah. Another means of attaining the bliss of Pialral was to perform ramlama thangchhuah and it was so-called because hunting was invariably involved. In order to hold this ceremony one must be brave, valiant and must be a good hunter. He must be sound in body for he had to spend most of his time in the jungles chasing game.

To be a ramlama thangchhuah, one must kill at least a bear, a barking deer, a wild mithun (sele), a stag and a wild boar. He should also kill a hawk (muvanlai) and a viper (rulngan). If a man killed all these animals he qualified himself for the thangchhuah. He was thus equoted in status with the inlama thangchhuah only in matters of attaining the joy of Pialral. Now the man who performed this thangchhuah had a passport to go direct to Pialral. He could enjoy life there eternally. He would enter it with all the animals he killed leading them across the courtyard of Pawla who would not dare to shoot at him.
Ramlama thangchhuah had some points of difference from inlama thangchhuah. They are:

(a) Ramlama thangchhuah need not follow the custom of buying the ground from the chief.
(b) He could neither open window in the house nor could he make shelves in the house.
(c) It did not entitle the person to wear the thangchhuah puan.  

Their similarity was that both of them were honoured in the public by giving them seats next to the chief on festive occasions and that both would enter Pialral.

Zaudawh. This feast did not account for much importance in the religious ceremonies performed with a view to attaining Pialral. It was more or less, a show of greatness and wealth of a man. A man who had performed khuangchawi ceremonies three times in a life time was called zaudawh.

Thangchhuah ceremonies had the following objectives—
(a) To achieve the eternal bliss of Pialral,
(b) To avoid the pellets of Pawla and
(c) To earn respect in life time.

So the strife to attain a happy life in the next world was the central idea of their religious belief. This belief directed their life on earth.

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96 Zatluanga; "Ram Chhuah thu – Tharsahawl", Mizo Ziarang, op. cit., p. 41.
Inthawina (Sacrifice)

Inthawina is a Mizo word for sacrifice. Mizos believed that there were two different types of thlarau (spirits) good and evil. The good thlarau was called Pathian and they believed that he was the creator. The evil spirit was ramhuai to whom sacrifices were offered to propitiate him. Accordingly Mizos offered sacrifices to these two thlarau separately. They are known as Pathian hnena inthawina and ramhuai hnena inthawina. The performances were done by two classes of priests (Puithiam) one, known as bawlpu and the other as sadawt and his assistant tlahpawi. The functions of the two were clearly laid down; the former was concerned with those of the ramhuai hnena inthawina and the latter was with those of Pathian hnena inthawina and any other religious performances. Without them no sacrifice was performed. There were different forms of sacrifices which may be briefly described below. For detail please see "Religious Belief" in the same chapter.

In vawkte a inthawi, a young pig (vawkte) was offered. Before killing the animal, the puithiam poured water over it from a bamboo container (haite) and recited:

"Pathianin, chunga Pathianin, vana Pathianin, Van dum kara, van rang kara Pathianin Ka zeltluang hi lo chhang ang che."97
meaning - "God who is in heaven, hear and accept my offering."

97Pastor Challiana; op. cit., p. 31.
A portion of the meat was set apart for the spirit in a basket outside the house. However, only male persons could take the meat.

In another sacrifice, called hnuait, a young pig was killed. They worshipped lasi in hnuait sacrifice. Two piglets were killed, cooked and eaten at the fire-place specially prepared for that sacrifice. In the following day no member of the house should leave the house and during sacrifice communication with strangers was forbidden. As a signal, a branch of tree bearing thick leaves was placed outside the house.

In hnuainui, another sacrifice, a full grown female pig was killed, and worshipped spirits whom, they believed, inhabited the lower region of the earth. They believed that the earth is composed of ten different strata, hence they addressed those living in the tenth layers as thuah hrat.98

In intumphit sacrifice, the spirits of their ancient abodes were worshipped. They killed a male pig, and before doing so sedawt recited incantations by which he recalled their ancient abodes such as Sepui, Mulen, Muchhip etc.99

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98Ibid., p. 32.
99Mizo Sakhua; op. cit. p. 54.
Vansen was another sacrifice in which a cockerel was killed by the puithiam at the water storage place and by putting up temporary hearth, there they cooked and ate it. Chung was performed to appease the spirit who had power over the sun and the rain, by sacrificing a piglet. They besought blessing in lasi so that they might shoot and kill wild animals.

These sacrifices were thus performed not to propitiate the spirits alone but also to fulfil their religious obligations beseeching for abundant blessings from the gods and spirits.

As briefly mentioned earlier, the Mizos also offered sacrifices to ramhuai or bad spirits, to appease them for they thought that all sicknesses and misfortunes were caused by ramhuai. Sacrifices connected with ramhuai may be briefly mentioned as below.

Mizos believed that each person had an appointed spirit who looked after him. When displeased it caused sickness or other ailments, sometimes, physical injury, and hence it must be propitiated. And according to the animal sacrifices, the function was named. When a fowl was killed, it was called ar khal, but it was called kel khal when a goat was sacrificed.

Whenever a khal was performed, the members of the family should not communicate with any stranger for three days, or visit the smithy nor should they take any sour lemon.
When people suffered from severe colds bulthluk was performed by killing a chicken and made ten models of mithun with clay. This was done in the outskirt of the village.

When bulthluk was found ineffective another sacrifice called daibawl was performed. In this they killed a cock and a hen for tuihuai or bad spirit living in the water and ramhuai respectively. The sacrifice was performed at the outskirt of the village and touching of sacrificial implements was forbidden.

Khua leh chawm was sacrificed when a child was attacked by convulsion by killing a piglet, a black hen and a red cock. The participants were 7 in number. Besides these, there were other sacrifices viz. uihring, khuavanghring and arte nring ban. All these were also connected with sickness.

Kut

Kut is a Mizo word for festival or feast and applied to all indigenous festivals performed with definite purpose at regular intervals in a year. The Mizos loved social

100 Hrangthiauva and Lalchungnunga; Mizo Chanchin, Lalrinliana and Sons, Aizawl, 1978, p. 41.
101 W. W. Carter; op. cit., p. 23.
102 Ibid., p. 24.
intercourse and bustles, and accordingly kut was a common feature of their social life.

Some people hold the view that kut originated from Thlanrawkpa, a famous legendary originator of feast. But its exact origin was lost in oblivion. It appears that kut had been observed while the Mizos were in Burma, more specifically while they lived between the run (Manipur) river and the tiau river. 103 People eagerly looked forward to kut because all sections of people whether rich or poor, enjoyed themselves on such occasions forgetting all their anxieties and worries. There were three kinds of kut - mim kut, pawl kut, and chapchar kut.

Mim Kut was the oldest of the three and derived its name from a plant called mim the grain of which is eaten. Since this feast was held in honour of the dead; it was also known as thitin, 104 meaning "departure of the dead spirit". According to Mizo belief, the spirit of the dead frequented its home for 3 lunar months immediately after death.

Tradition connects the origin of mim kut to a couple named Ngama and Tlingi who fell in love and got married. But soon after Tlingi, the wife, died. On the death of his beloved wife, Ngama wept and wept, and one day while weeping

103 hrangthiavu and Lalchungnunga; op. cit., p. 68.
104 ibid.
he felt into a state of trance and said to have visited the Mithikhua and met his beloved wife Tlingi but found her famished. When asked about the reason Tlingi replied that she could not procure enough food to eat, and asked Ngama to go back and collect maizes, cucumbers, vegetables etc., from the jhum and make offerings to her so that she might get things to eat to her satisfaction. Ngama did everything accordingly. After sometime, in autumn month, Ngama was again in a state of trance. This time he saw Tlingi very stout and lovely. When he asked her the reason Tlingi told him that she became fat because of the offerings he made for her. Ngama, after recovering, told his friends all what he had experienced. It is stated that from that time onwards offerings to the dead became a common practice.

In this kut, fresh vegetables, maizes, bread prepared from sticky rice etc., were offered to the dead. It was meant for both men and children. Special bread were prepared for their children.¹⁰⁵ It was also known as tamma kut meaning "feast of weeping."¹⁰⁶ It may be compared to the modern Christian feast of "all souls' day". Normally it lasted for three days. On this occasion zu was served and songs were sung. From the third day the articles that were

¹⁰⁵K. Zawla, op. cit., p. 66.
¹⁰⁶Pastor Challiana; op. cit., p. 5.
Two explanations are found as to the origin of pawl kut. Pawl means "straw", hence pawl kut means kut held soon after the harvest and thus may be called a sort of harvest festival or thanksgiving. Some say that it originated with the catching of zu pawl (rats) found in the heap of straw, long ago when the Mizos were living in Burma. Others connect it to the famine which visited the Mizos when they were in the Kabaw Valley. According to them, the famine continued for three consecutive years. On the fourth year they were relieved of the disaster by the blessing of what they called Khawzim Pathian. One day a chief suggested to his upas that they should prepare a public feast in which all the people might enjoy meal to their heart's content. This was agreed upon and a public feast was arranged by killing fowls, pigs and goats. From this event there came into existence the pawl kut.

Although it was meant for children, men and women also joined them. Children were dressed up in all their fine articles and gathered together at the memorial platform at the outskirt of a village where they enjoyed what they called chhawnghnawt. On this day, even the poorest in the village should also eat meat, and egg was a compulsory

107 Chhawnghnawt: It was a feast. On pawl kut and chapchar kut occasions children and young people held feasts in the village square or near the memorial platforms. The feast was eaten merrily. Children and young men and women stuffed meat and rice into one another's mouths amidst merriment.
Children prepared zulawm (rice beer) but they did not drink, they gave it to the elders in exchange for something. This kut lasted for one day.

Chanchar kut, another festival which had a similar origin as that of pawl kut, was mainly for adults and was held immediately after the clearing of the jungle for the jhum was over. To celebrate this occasion, the Mizos went for hunting and the chief and his upas prepared zu to last the feast. Every family was supposed to have prepared zu to cover the whole feast which usually lasted for about a week.

On the first day, first of all, the Lusei clans killed pigs, fowls and offered zu and the next day this was done by the Halte, followed by other clans. In the evening of the third day a chhawngmaht was performed. In the evening of the fourth day, known as zupui ni, which was a day of drinking zu, all gathered together and started dancing known as chai. On this occasion, girls dressed in their best and took out their puan which they reserved for such occasions. Young men also did the same thing. It was the happiest occasion in their social life. No squables in the family was permitted. No couple should quarrel. It was a common belief that anyone going into the jungles on these days would be devoured by a tiger. All should observe public holiday.

Chai: Chai is the name of a dance performed on the occasion of Chapchar kut. It was held on the fourth day of the kut.
Head-hunting Practices

Head hunting was a tribal way of life, and the practice is said to be found sporadically all over the world in one form or the other. It was being carried out at least for three reasons. First, it had been carried out not for the head's sake but for the sanctity of the head as the seat of the soul. Secondly, it had been done as an act of cannibalism with an intention to consume the body or part of the body in order to transfer to the eater the soul matter of the eaten and finally, the practice was associated with agriculture with an intention to imbue the soil with productivity. 109

It is an undisputed fact that the Mizos also practised head-hunting and they were, therefore, known to outsiders as milula hnam meaning "head hunters" or "head-hunting people". They did not, however, carry it out as a mere sport to threaten the peaceful life of other people. The main purpose of head-hunting among the Mizos was associated with sacrifice. As pointed out earlier, the kind of person who was most admired among the Mizos was mithat sakap which means "slayer of both men and animals". Hence head-hunting and hunting were a part of life which involved killing of human beings and animals. Therefore, the Mizos

desired heads to supply themselves with servitors in another world either in Mithikhua or Pialral. Any head, even that of an embryo, would serve the purpose.\textsuperscript{110} The object of their inroads upon the plains was not plundered but to kill and carry away the heads of as many human beings as they could collect. These heads were thus used in ceremonies performed at the funeral of their chiefs and it always happened after the death of their chief.\textsuperscript{111} He also carried away heads to prove that he was a warrior and he deserved it for exhibition as trophies either in the sahlan or in the Zawlbuk.\textsuperscript{112}

In earlier period, it was not a custom among the Mizos to carry the heads of the women off. But it became a constant practice in due course and it was a great advantage for the enemy to kill a woman who happened to be pregnant, for it was considered as taking two heads at a time.\textsuperscript{113} Thus he acquired honour and celebrity amongst his tribe as the killer of two enemies at a time.

After slaughtering the enemy, they took food and they also thrust a part of food into the mouth of the killed saying, "eat, quench thy thirst; and satisfy thy appetite;
as thou hast been slain by my hand, so may thy kinsmen be slain by my kinsmen.\textsuperscript{114} Usually, according to distance, they had two such meals. They also sent forerunner to their families at home. When a head of the enemy was brought home even children were given dao or any weapon to hit it with. This was considered tantamount to killing his enemy, and a feast to this connection was prepared as an act of recognition and appreciation by their parents. Vanchhunga proudly remarks that he too had a chance to hit the "heads" when he was a small boy.\textsuperscript{115} Thus head-hunting practice had been a part of life among the Mizos that was to be carried out by a daring man during his life time.

No doubt Mizos were head-hunters, nevertheless they were not professional hunters. McCall was convinced that Mizos were not traditionally enthusiastic head-hunters as the Nagas had been in earlier times.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p. 143
\textsuperscript{115} Vanchhunga; op. cit., p. 219
\textsuperscript{116} A. G. McCall; Lushai Chrysalis, op. cit., p. 38.