CHAPTER IV

AREAS OF CHANGE

The System of Government

One significant result that followed the British occupation of Mizoram was the gradual weakening of the position and the powers of the chiefs. It appears that at the beginning there was lack of definite direction as to the future goal of administration. As a result, for the first ten years of the British occupation with every change of the Political Officer or the Superintendent, there had been a corresponding change of the policy towards the Mizos. In so far as the assumption of authority was concerned the British Government had two options before them. One was the abolition of the chieftainship, either outright or by gradual process of depriving the chiefs of their powers and the assumption of the administration directly. The other was the retention of the existing system and of making the chiefs an active instrument in running the administration. Events show that the choice fell on the latter course. But in actual practice, however, it was found that every successive Political Officer or the Superintendent had consistently interfered, often arbitrarily or without sufficient cause, into the affairs of the chiefs. Such interference had affected the administration run by the chiefs.
In northern Mizoram there was a strong opposition of the chiefs to the British. In order to cow down the chiefs, their villages were burnt down, they were incarcerated and some of them were deported and died in exile and some others lived for several years as fugitives. Thus almost every chief in northern Mizoram was punished in some way or the other for resisting them. Whenever there was any vacancy, the Government normally appointed the sons of the ex-chiefs and sometimes ex-servicemen as chiefs. The successive administrators were therefore, obliged to follow a policy of repression towards the northern chiefs. The sufferings of the northern chiefs were thus great due to the fact that considered themselves superior and as such they hardly bowed down to the British intruders.

In southern Mizoram, the effect was very small because of the fact that not many chiefs opposed the British. Therefore, the British found it easier to cultivate friendly terms with the chiefs. As a result, the coming of the British did not much disturb the general peace and normal life of the inhabitants. The people continued to live as before, and their villages were not destroyed unlike those in northern Mizoram.

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1AR; Lushai Policy. Letter No. 300 dated Aijal the 13th July 1897. From Major J. Shakespear to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam. Hereafter cited as Lushai Policy.
The most important and remarkable outcome of the British action was the creation of a large number of new chiefs. There were about 60 chiefs when the British took over the area, but after some 40 years the number was increased to more than 400 odd. Those who had failed earlier to get independent villages of their own took advantage of the confusing situation that prevailed in Mizo Hills after the campaigns of 1889 - 90 and 1891 - 92, by starting villages of their own and were given recognition as chiefs by the Government. New chiefs were, thus, created by the British themselves. Sometimes they removed one chief whom they did not like and appointed another in his place. Being superior in every aspect the British exercised an arbitrary rule over them by becoming the chief-makers. On the other hand, the increasing number of smaller villages and hamlets indirectly weakened the position of some reigning chiefs who were no more than the ordinary village headmen. In this way, many chiefs were reduced to the rank of headmen who were not recognised as chiefs.

The Government allowed the chiefs to continue their rule in accordance with the orders which they issued from time to time. A number of rights and privileges which had been enjoyed and exercised by the chiefs were allowed to retain unaltered. But certain powers had been exercised by the British Government over the chiefs thus affecting some of their

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2 A. G. McCall; *Lushai Chrysalis*, *op. cit.*, p. 245.
traditional rights and status. Some such radical changes brought about by Government may be mentioned.

Before the advent of the British the succession of the chieftainship did not devolve on the eldest but on the youngest son. But in view of the diverse opinions expressed on the issue of succession, the Government decided in favour of the eldest son as a rightful successor to the chieftainship if the eldest son had not already been accommodated in an independent village. Again it was laid down that any succession was subject to the approval of the Superintendent of the then Lushai Hills who was also authorised to regulate the succession. Sir Robert Reid, who was Governor of Assam, accepted the principle with a view to paving the way for an improvement in the calibre of the chiefs.

Previously, the chiefs were the absolute owners of the land under their jurisdictions. But now the Government reserved the right to take away any or whole of the land under his possession whenever required for the Governmental purpose. The land could also be taken away from the chiefs as a measure of punishment whenever they violated or in any way disobeyed the Government order.

3 *Rules Regulating the Succession of Sailo Chiefs And Clans; Section 1.*
4 N.E. Parry; *Monograph, op. cit.,* p. 4.
5 A. G. McCall; *Lushai Chrysalis, op. cit.,* p. 244.
Before the British occupation, the chiefs did not possess any sort of ramri lehkha or boundary paper. Now each chief was provided with ramri lehkha after properly demarcating the boundaries of his land.

Besides, some of the rights enjoyed by the chiefs earlier had now been arbitrarily extinguished so as to enable the Government to meet any situation that might circumstantially arise at anytime. Such rights, as listed by McCall, were:

(a) Right to order capital punishment.

(b) Right to seize food stores and property of villagers who wished to transfer their allegiance.

(c) Proprietary rights over lands as been mentioned above.

(d) Right to tax traders doing business within the chief's jurisdiction. Now, the Government reserved the right to open trade marts in the country.

(e) Right to freedom of action in relation to making their sons chiefs under their own jurisdiction.

(f) Right to help those bawls who were, by custom, not open to redemption.

(g) Right to freedom of action in relation to other kinds of bawls who used to constitute the means whereby the chiefs could cultivate and acquire the ability to sustain their villages in peace and in war.

(h) Right to attach the property of their villagers when they wished or deemed fit, with or without fault on the part of the villagers.

\[\text{6Ibid., p. 202.}\]
McCall held the view that the early and precipitate extinction of these rights only pulverized the chiefs before his subjects since the people had to be governed through the chiefs. By depriving the chiefs of their erstwhile freedom of action, the status of the chief was thus lowered. He was now made to appear an agent who solely depended on the marcy of the British.

Previously, the chiefs received a kind of tribute from the traders for protecting them. Browne, the first Political Officer, wrote to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, in 1890, proposing the discontinuance of the protecting money paid by the traders to the chiefs in the following words: "I explained to the chiefs that they used to receive siddha in return for protecting the traders, but now that we were here we would protect them for ourselves, and that we could not allow any one to levy rates of any kind upon any of our people as long as we were in the country".7 As a result of the takeover of trade, the yearly income of the chiefs had gone down and they were in an awkward position before the eyes of foreign traders.

Soon, the Government prescribed details of the functions and duties of the chiefs. In 1898, the specific duties of the chiefs had been laid down as follows8:

1. The chief was responsible for all that went on in his village. All orders, etc. affecting his village would

7Foreign Department External Part A, October 1890, Progs. No. 135.
8Animesh Ray; op. cit., p. 36
be sent through the Circle Interpreter.

2. The chief would adjudicate all civil disputes between people of his village. He would also dispose of all criminal cases except serious ones. His orders would not be interfered with unless he had acted in bad faith.

3. The chief was responsible for keeping records on the following matters: (a) all births and deaths (b) all movement of people into and out of the village (c) all changes in licensed guns.

Later in 1937, the Government modified some of the provisions and a fresh order concerning the powers and duties of chief was issued which runs as follows:

1. The chief was responsible for the control of his village in every way.

2. It was the personal duty of a chief to know his subjects intimately and to understand their difficulties, living conditions, and he should encourage them in all possible ways.

3. The chief was responsible to allot a cultivation to his villagers and he should ensure that all his villagers be able to support themselves for the whole year.

4. The chief would dispose of litigation in accordance with the District Rules for the disposal of Civil and Criminal justice.

\[9\text{A. G. McCall; District Cover, op. cit., pp. 24 - 28.}\]
5. The chief was responsible for supervising the work of his village khawchhiar (village writer).

6. The chief should control all matters which the khawchhiar was directed to manage on his behalf.

7. The chief should act in compliance with the orders communicated to him. He should keep a copy for ready reference when needed.

8. The chief should see that inter-village paths were properly maintained. It was his duty to maintain his ram (area). He should keep them properly clean throughout the year.

9. The chief must sign the House-Tax assessment register prepared by the Circle Interpreter.

10. It was the duty of chief and headman to report to the Headquarters all epidemics, crimes, violent death etc.

11. The chief should see that his khawchhiar maintained a list of all gun-holders in the village.

12. The chief should see that no foreigner stayed or halted at his village without proper pass from the Superintendent. If he found such person he should report the matter to the authority.

13. The chief should no longer levy dawvankaina. He was at liberty to stop the sales of foodstuffs from his village to another. But he should get the matter reported to the superintendent beforehand.

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10 Dawkankaia was a kind of gift or present usually given to a chief by his subject expecting favour from him. Sometimes it was also done to a chief by another chief for the same reason.
14. The chief must not raise subscriptions from his villagers to build corrugated iron roofed house. The villagers must, however, according to custom, build the chief's house. The chief, in return, should feed them.

15. Lastly, the chief and his villagers might decide to collect money for building things of public importance like bridges or schools. The funds collected must be kept by the chief or his khawchhiar. In collecting such funds the chief should do it on voluntary basis.

The above mentioned functions and duties remained effective till the chieftainship was abolished in 1955.

As a result of these steps taken by the Government, the duties of the chiefs greatly increased and at the same time the powers and positions considerably declined. Realising the situation, the chiefs, on their part, tried to arrest the decline and tried to strengthen their positions by organising conferences among themselves at different places. The first of its kind was held at Lunglei in southern Mizoram in 1938. Similar conferences were also held at several places in northern Mizoram. The main concern of the chiefs was to stand together and united for the good of themselves and their subjects. The Government soon felt that independent actions of the chiefs might create a different situation for them. Hence in 1939, L.L. Peters, the

\footnote{Animesh Ray; op. cit., p. 37.}
The apparent Superintendent initiated a "Chief's Council." The apparent purpose behind the formation of the Council was to devise ways to utilise the chiefs in more meaningful ways and to maintain unity among them to create understanding and a feeling of brotherhood.

In the meantime, the outbreak of the Second World War had enhanced the importance of the chiefs. In the first Council of the Chiefs convened by the Government, held at Aizawl in September, 1939, the chiefs reaffirmed their loyalty to the British.

Another important development was that the Government, finding the member of chiefs too large to meet frequently, proposed a representative type of council with the members elected circle-wise by the chiefs themselves from their own circle. The chiefs of each circle were required to choose three chiefs each (one circle contained 10 to 20 chiefs) in a secret ballot system. The chief securing the highest aggregate vote was named a spokesman of his fellow circle chiefs and he held the position for a period of 3 years. This body of chiefs was commonly known as a durbar (the chiefs' durbar). It was a consultative body in character.

The Superintendent usually acted as the President of a durbar.

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12 Rev. Liangkhaia; Mizo Chanchin, op. cit., p. 119.
13 A. G. McCall; Lushai Chrysalis, op. cit., p. 246.
The following list shows the number and names of chiefs first elected for the durbar in October, 1940.¹⁴

**Elected chiefs under Aizawl Circles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circle No.</th>
<th>Names of chiefs elected</th>
<th>Village</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Lalsailova Sailo</td>
<td>Kelsih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kamliana Sailo</td>
<td>Tachhip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Khawkunga Chenkual</td>
<td>Bukpui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ngurliana Sailo</td>
<td>Kolasib</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III(A)</td>
<td>Hrangtinaia Hmar</td>
<td>Vaitin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III(B)</td>
<td>Lalthangkhuma Sailo</td>
<td>Lallak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV(A)</td>
<td>Awksarala Sailo</td>
<td>Phullen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV(B)</td>
<td>Hrangchhuana Sailo</td>
<td>Khuangleng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lalzidinga Sailo</td>
<td>Ngopa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Thlahthiauva Hualngo</td>
<td>Khawdungsei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thanglianga Sailo</td>
<td>Tlangsam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Thangchuanga Sailo</td>
<td>Biate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Lalzuala Sailo</td>
<td>Baktawng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>Saihnuna Sailo</td>
<td>Mualcheng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>Ngurchhina Sailo</td>
<td>Thenzawl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Lalbuanga Sailo</td>
<td>Kanghmun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI</td>
<td>Lalluaia Sailo</td>
<td>Reiek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Officio</td>
<td>Neihhrima, Lushai Clerk</td>
<td>Aizawl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹⁴*Mizo Leh Vai Chanchin Bu; Bu 10na, October, 1940, pp. 146-147.*
Under Lunglei Circles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>XII</th>
<th>Laldula Sailo</th>
<th>Buarpui</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XIII</td>
<td>Thanzama Sailo</td>
<td>Thiltlang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV</td>
<td>Sena Sailo</td>
<td>Sekhum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XV</td>
<td>Khuahupa Pawi</td>
<td>Cheural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sailailova Fanai</td>
<td>Lungleng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVI</td>
<td>Aichhuma Fanai</td>
<td>Tawipui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVII</td>
<td>Chhumhmunga Lakher</td>
<td>Serkawr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVIII</td>
<td>Lianhnuna Palian</td>
<td>Tiante</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zawngling area: Rachia Lakher Chapui
Ex-officio - Hualhnuna Lushai Clerk Lunglei

Each chief was to sign a document in which he pledged to work in conformity with the durbar. The body would meet twice a year at a place centrally convenient for all the members and would sit normally for seven to ten days.

The main functions of the durbar were as follows:

1. To consider and discuss all administrative measures which involved any change in the Lushai Hills District Cover.

2. To discuss any matter causing difficulty and misunderstanding to the people.

3. To discuss any matter such as taxation, education, communications, medical service, etc.

4. To hear any who wish to express his grievance against the orders of the Superintendent.
5. To ensure that no administrative changes took place without the notice/knowledge of the durbar.

6. The matter discussed be recorded and a copy of which be submitted to the Governor of Assam for his information. In cases of difference of opinions between the durbar and the Superintendent the matter would be referred to the Governor for final decision.  

The first durbar was held at Thenzawl about 60 miles south of Aizawl on 14 October, 1941. The next two durbars were held at Aizawl for two consecutive years in April, 1942 and February, 1943 in which it pledged the Government of cooperation in war efforts.

The year 1946 is a remarkable event in the history of Mizoram in which the "commoners" were allowed to participate in the durbar, or the chiefs and the "commoners" were on the same platform. A. R. McDonald, the Superintendent, ordered a reorganization in the durbar by allowing the "commoners" to elect their representatives. By that time the tension between the chiefs and the "commoners" became acute. To redress their grievances, McDonald allowed the "commoners" to get involved in the Government machinery. The idea did not abate the tension, instead, the rift was deepened and widened.

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According to the new system, every circle was to be represented by two members - one from the chiefs and the other from the "commoners". Both sides were allowed to elect 20 members each as their representatives. The election for this body was held at 1st Assam Rifles Ground on 14 January, 1946. The following is the names of members elected:

### Aizawl Circle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circle No.</th>
<th>Chiefs Elected</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Elected Commoners</th>
<th>Village</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Lalsailova</td>
<td>Kelsih</td>
<td>P.S. Dahrawka</td>
<td>Dawrpui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Khawkunga</td>
<td>Bukpui</td>
<td>Kapthianga</td>
<td>Chaltlang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III(A)</td>
<td>Lamliira</td>
<td>Hmuizawl</td>
<td>Thangzika</td>
<td>Sawleng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III(B)</td>
<td>Lalindia</td>
<td>Khawruhlian</td>
<td>Kaikhama</td>
<td>Phuaibuang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV(A)</td>
<td>Awksarala</td>
<td>Phullen</td>
<td>Ranga</td>
<td>Saitual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV(B)</td>
<td>Lalzidinga</td>
<td>Ngopa</td>
<td>Vaitlaia</td>
<td>Khawdungsei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Vanhnuaiithanga</td>
<td>Kelkang</td>
<td>Manliana</td>
<td>Zotlang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Suakhnuna</td>
<td>Lungpho</td>
<td>Lalchhawnzova</td>
<td>Chalrang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Tlanglianchhuma</td>
<td>Hualtu</td>
<td>Liantudaia</td>
<td>Baktawng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>Sahhnuna</td>
<td>Mualcheng</td>
<td>Saitawna</td>
<td>Vanlaiphai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>Lalthawvenga</td>
<td>Sailam</td>
<td>Lalzuia</td>
<td>Sialsuk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Ngurzachhina</td>
<td>Khawrihnim</td>
<td>Lalbuiaia</td>
<td>Lungleng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI</td>
<td>Lalbuanga</td>
<td>Tukkalh</td>
<td>Pastor Zahlira</td>
<td>Tukkalh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16 Rev. Liangkhaia; Mizo Chanchin, op. cit., pp. 126 - 127.
Also Animesh Ray; op. cit., p. 39.

17 Ibid.
The first conference of the newly elected representative body was held on 18 January, 1946 at the office chamber of the Superintendent. Unfortunately, the meeting was the last for this body. Several subjects came up for discussion.

1. The conference deliberated upon fatang. After long discussion, it decided in favour of continuing it as per Parry's order of 1926.

2. It discussed the power of the chiefs to expel his villagers at any time. On this matter, the conference decided to form an Advisory Council composed of commoners in the village level to advise the chiefs. The election for the Council was held at each village on 6 February, 1946.**19** Henceforth the chief could no longer take an independent action in this regard. However, L. L. Peters, the Superintendent, dissolved the Council on 26 September, 1947 on the plea that it failed to serve its purpose.**20**

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**18** Chaltuakhuma; *op. cit.*, p. 25.

**19** Ibid., p. 22.

**20** Animesh Ray; *loc. cit.*, p. 23.
The abolition of the Advisory Council could not reduce the popular resentment against the chiefs. Rather it grew day by day without abatement. Corresponding to the changed situation, the position of the chief was also diminished. The widening of the rift between the chiefs and the commoners finally led to the birth of a political party called "The Lushai Commoners' Union" on 9 April, 1946. Against this, the chiefs also formed an organisation known as Lal Darbar meaning "chief's darbar" on 20 July, 1946 at Aizawl.  

The Lushai Commoners' Union was first convened at Aizawl on 24 September, 1946. The subjects taken up for discussion, among other things, were:

(a) Election of lalupa (elders) by the people.

(b) Opening of new village blacksmithy in addition to the existing ones and the payment of pomman (remuneration) according to an understanding reached between the owner and the users.

(c) Public use of tlangau (village crier).

(d) Abolition of ramhual (adviser to chief on matter of Jhuming).

(e) They also discussed the matter of cooly labour but as it appeared that it was too early to demand for its abolition so they resolved to demand the Government to increase the number of workers in the transport department.

21 Chaltuakhuma; op. cit., p. 23.
22 Ibid., p. 24.
23 Ibid., pp. 25 - 26.
After the Independence, the political development was favourable to the common people.

The Abolition of Bawi

As already discussed in Chapter IX, there were three kinds of bawi, viz. Impuichhung bawi, Chemsen bawi, and Tukluh bawi. When the British occupied the Mizo Hills they found the bawi system abhorrent and they freed any bawi who appealed for freedom on the strength of the provisions of the Slavery Abolition Act, 1833, by which Act, the British Government abolished slavery throughout the British Empire. But soon they realised the beneficial aspect of the Impuichhung bawi which protected the interest of the weaker section of the Mizo society. J. Shakespear too, argued that Impuichhung bawi was very sound and he considered it "in every way suited to the circumstances of the case."26

Even before the coming of the British, there existed the difference of opinion among the chiefs on the question whether bawiship was inheritable. Some of them found it an extremely harsh provision in the custom and wanted to modify it. The introduction of the British administration among the Mizos widened the rift among them, and, thus,

24 A. G. McCall; Lushai Chrysalis, op. cit., p. 122.
Also Animesh Ray; op. cit., p. 35.


26 J. Shakespear; The Lushei-Kuki Clans, Part I, op. cit., p. 47.

27 A. G. McCall; Lushai Chrysalis, op. cit., p. 125.
paved the way for the abolition of bawi system.

The missionaries did not interfere much into the affairs of the chiefs concerning the bawi. They believed that the system would disappear with the growing of public conscience. However, it was only after the Missionary Conference held at Aizawl in 1904 wherein some points inter alia the better treatment of bawi were raised, that the first missionary pleading for better treatment of bawi began. They appealed to the District administration.

As a follow up measure, J. Shakespeare, the Superintendent, despatched a letter to his Assistant containing the points the conference raised for comments and suggestions. In that despatch Shakespeare further expressed his own view on the bawi system thus: "The system of chiefs supporting orphans and subsequently receiving the price of the girls and certain payments from the boys seems to me sound . . . " By it, Shakespeare had sought the opinion of the Assistant Superintendent of Lunglei, so that he could take an unbiased decision to that effect. He clearly pointed out that he wanted to introduce modifications into the system without diminishing the chiefs' prestige.

28 Rev. J. Meirion Lloyd; op. cit., p. 62
29 AR; Letter No. 1104 G. dated Aijal the 7th January, 1905. From J. Shakespeare to Giles, the Sub-Divisional Officer, Lunglei.
30 Ibid.
The question of bawi became controversial when Dr. Peter Fraser, a missionary physician came to Mizoram in 1908. To Fraser, the bawi system as practised in Mizoram was no better than the slavery which had been abolished by the British Government in 1833. He strongly argued that the bawis were treated in the same nature with those of the slaves and it was hereditary.

This view of Fraser which he persisted contributed a challenge to the District authority particularly when he openly criticised the bawi system which his missionary colleagues and the administration had condoned for so many years. At the same time, the District authorities as well as the missionaries were aware of the danger involved in the interference in an indigenous social institution. They felt that the intervention would do more harm than good to the chiefs and that they did not want to alienate the chiefs from the administration either. These factors prevented the authorities from doing anything to abolish the bawi for they knew that the chiefs were instrumental in effectively running the administration in the hills. The authorities, therefore, adopted a policy of silence in regard to bawi.

But the problem did not long remain silent, the fissure was soon widened when Fraser personally collected evidences to prove that the bawis were ill-treated. In his endeavour Fraser found a faithful lieutenant in Khawvelthanga, the chief of Maubuang village. Both men struggled hard for the
complete liberation of the *bawis* in Mizoram. Ultimately H. W. G. Cole, the Superintendent, placed proposals before Fraser intimating that counter proposals would also be welcomed. In this reply Fraser insisted that all *bawis* should be freed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the name of King Edward. The majority of the chiefs, however, did not support the idea of Fraser and firmly defended that the *bawis* were not slaves in the true sense of the term.

The situation thus deteriorated and the matter was placed before the Assam Government which ensued a long process of discussion. For the time being the Government won the case and Khawvelthanga was also fined and his guns were seized. Fraser, who in the opinion of the Government exceeded the purpose of his being there, was also called on either to leave the Hills or sign an agreement which in short read as follow:

I hereby undertake that during my future residence in the Lushai Hills I will confine myself entirely to work of a medical missionary... that I will interfere in no way whatsoever in Lushai complaints or disputes. I further agree that all persons who may complain to me about secular matters will be at once referred to the Superintendent or his Assistant...

In the event of any injustice coming to my personal notice I further undertake to take no steps except in injustice with the Senior missionary, who will make any representation on the matter to Government.

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31 A. G. McCall; *Lushai Chrysalis*; op. cit., p. 127.

32 R. Vanlawma; *Ka Ram Lek Kei*, op. cit., pp. 43 - 44.
For as long as may be necessary I undertake to consult the Superintendent before making extended tours in areas which the Superintendent may consider politically inadvisable for the time being for me to visit, and I agree to accept his decision as final. In the event of any breach of this undertaking I agree to leave the Lushai Hills within one month.

Fraser flatly refused to sign the prepared document served to him, and the Government was compelled to order his withdrawal from the District. So his work was abruptly suspended and he was temporarily expelled from Mizoram. After his departure for home the matter had become a burning topic among the missionaries at Shillong.

After sometime he returned to Mizoram where he resumed his works and again raised the same old slogans and insisted upon the abolition of bawi and continued his tirade against the system even after he was requested by the authority to stop it. This resulted in his expulsion from the country.

But his departure did not bring the matter to a close. The subject was taken up in several quarters which ultimately brought it to a settlement on the following points.

1. The use of the word bawi be discontinued.

2. In the case of chemsen bawis and tukluh bawis any claim put forward be limited to specific amount of the consideration.

3. The maximum liability of a bawi on seeking freedom be accepted as Rs. 40 or 1 mithun for a whole family.

\(^{33}\) A. G. McCall; Lushai Chrysalis, op. cit., pp. 127 - 128.
4. Claims made by chiefs to bawis be same as in all other customary cases among the general public.

5. A bawi might leave his master at will.

6. Disputes over bawi be settled in line with the Mizoram custom as in the case of chawman (fooding charge).34

However, the bawi became a matter of great concern to both the Governments of Assam and India. Accordingly, the Government of Assam proposed a change for the future status of bawis as follows:

(1) A date should be fixed after which the bawi contract could not be entered into.

(2) That the Government would pay the customary ransom of Rs.40 if the bawi was freed.

(3) Government should recover ransoms from persons in whose behalf the same was paid.

(4) Persons so redeemed and released be at liberty to leave the chief's house or to remain there as they wished.

(5) Let the chiefs know that they would be liable to bring to the court when need arose.35

In a census of bawi undertaken by W.L. Scott, the then Superintendent in 1923 found the total number of both the indwelling and the outdwelling bawies 1426. On the basis of this figure, it was estimated that the initial expenditure incurred in redeeming all the bawies in the District would be at least Rs.65,000.36

34Ibid.

35Lalrinmawia; "Bawi Custom in Lushai Hills," paper submitted to the seminar on Socio-Political Development in Mizoram, held at Aizawl on the 28 & 29 October, 1982,pp. 5 - 6.

36Ibid.
As the financial involvement was rather high, the Assam Government then asked the Government of India to finance the prices of redemption.

In the meantime, S. N. Mackenzie, then Superintendent, strongly opposed the idea of redeeming *bawls* for several reasons. Firstly, that the useful system by which the poors were redeemed would rather increase and encourage beggary in the hills. Secondly, he also argued that even if they were redeemed they would go again to the chiefs' house.

In 1927, the Government of Assam replaced the word *bawl* by a new term *chhunte* or *awnpui* meaning "inmates of the house". The term *bawl* itself was no longer allowed to be used.

Fraser left Mizoram with a heavy heart after being defeated in his attempt but with a strong determination of filing the case against what had happened in Mizoram. He submitted a petition to his regents to discuss the question of *bawl* in the British Parliament. The parliament then discussed the problem and finally passed the matter in favour of the abolition of *bawls* in Mizoram. In this legislation Mary Winchester who had been a captive of Bengkhuia was very instrumental by pressing the Parliament to take effective measure to this effect. Thus the system came to an end in Mizoram in 1927. Fraser won the day and his faithful lieutenant Khawvelthanga was also given back his guns.

Ibid., p. 10.
The Abolition of Zawlbuk

As discussed in Chapter II, Zawlbuk had been the most important institution in shaping and moulding the Mizo society. With the coming of the British soon this institution began to decline and had a quick demise. This was due to several factors. Among other things, with decline of the powers of the chiefs the importance of Zawlbuk institution also waned because the chiefs had to exercise their powers only at the behest of the British. It was, therefore, certain that since the chiefs were made mere figureheads the discipline in Zawlbuk administration was apparently deteriorated. Though its existence was recognised but its place was seriously undermined by the people. There were, however, a few British who had given attention to this institution.

The introduction of Christianity to Mizoram acted as a real hindrance to the proper functioning of Zawlbuk. The practice of Christian virtues did not allow the Christian community to be infested with such worldly things. The importance of Zawlbuk was, therefore, inevitably decreased with the advent of the Christian morality.

One of the most important factors that paved the way for the extinction of Zawlbuk was the introduction of formal education among the Mizo. The parents would now prefer to send their children to formal schools because they realised that they would gain more in sending their children to
school. They could control their children better at home instead of at the Zawlbuk.\textsuperscript{38}

The abolition of the institution was also propagated by the people who took part in the First World War. When the war broke out, many Mizo young men were recruited to the war service. During the period, they experienced an altogether different life. On their return they brought home a changed social, political and material outlook. They now had a strong desire to change their indigenous ways of living. The idea soon spread among other sections of the Mizos because they came from different villages all over Mizoram. Thus the people were now convinced that the best way to improve their lot was to break away from their indigenous way of living.\textsuperscript{39} The result was that they began to abandon their old ways of living and adopted the modern or the western way of living. Hence, they started neglecting Zawlbuk institution resulting in its slow decay.

There was, however, a strong determination among certain sections of the Englishmen to make the institution permanent in Mizoram. The initiative was taken by the British residents. By 1926, when Parry assumed office as the Superintendent of the then Lushai Hills, the Zawlbuk was already abandoned. Deeply moved by the beneficient role it played in the Mizo society, he insisted that the Zawlbuk be maintained as a living institution. He did not even hesitate to issue a standing order to the chiefs to maintain it.

\textsuperscript{38}A. G. McCall; \textit{Lushai Chrysalis, op. cit.}, p. 211.

\textsuperscript{39}N. Chatterji; \textit{Zawlbuk as a Social Institution in the Mizo Society; op. cit.}, p. 30.
"I have noticed", he writes in one of his orders, "that in a few villages the Zawlbuk is no longer maintained. All chiefs are hereby informed that every Lushai Village must keep up a Zawlbuk. Circle Interpreters will report to me any villages that have no Zawlbuk."\(^{40}\)

Parry also ordered the villages which had already abandoned it to revive the institution. As an administrator, he wanted to see that all the villages without any exception built Zawlbuk as before. Those which did not have were directed to build new Zawlbukas. The order further reads:

Please order all Circle Interpreters to report villages which have no Zawlbukas. The following villages, I know, have no Zawlbuk and should be ordered to build one before the 31st March, 1926.

1. Paliana
2. Hrangchhuana
3. Lalzidinga \(^{41}\)

Almost at the same time a Christian Missionary in southern Mizoram made great efforts to revive the institution. He was Rev. F.J. Raper of the Baptist Mission at Serkawn, adjacent to Lunglei, who was also the District Commissioner for Boys Scouts in Mizoram. He wanted to mobilise the youths in order that they might contribute more for the good of the society. With this aim in view, he provided material assistance to Zawlbuk such as petromax, carrom etc. for indoor games. \(^{42}\)

\(^{40}\) AR; Order No. 116 D/26.1.1926.

\(^{41}\) AR; Order No. 118 D/2.2.1926.

\(^{42}\) N. Chatterji; Zawlbuk as a Social Institution in the Mizo Society, op. cit., p. 32.
It thus appears that on the part of some Englishman there was a strong and sincere desire to revive the institution. But in contrast to their efforts, the Zawlbuk concept was dying out in the mind of the Mizo people themselves. As a result, a tug-of-war ensued between the British authorities and the people who strongly favoured its abolition.

By the time when A.S. McCall succeeded Parry as Superintendent, in 1932, the majority of the Mizo people firmly felt that Zawlbuk was only a hindrance to their pursuit of progress. In order to evolve a definite and concrete policy by hearing public view in regard to Zawlbuk McCall convened a public meeting on 1 January, 1938 at Thakthing in Aizawl. The speakers spoke against the Zawlbuk and all favoured the idea of abandoning this institution. They argued that it was no longer a useful institution in view of the developing world. McCall was now fully convinced by the arguments so he decided to revoke Parry's order within 10 days time. Thus from this time onward Zawlbuk fell into complete disuse and relegated to insignificance and people began to abandon it, and in course of time it became an institution of the past.

The abolition of the Zawlbuk had great consequences in the Mizo society. The decision to abandon Zawlbuk forms a landmark in the history of the Mizos. The menfolk could now

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43 Zatluanga; Mizo Chanchin, op. cit., p. 84.
give more attention to their affairs at home. Earlier they did not pay much attention to the affairs at home as they spent more of their leisure at the Zawlbuk. The responsibility and the management of the household affairs were shouldered by the womenfolk. This decision to abandon Zawlbuk brought about much relief to the womenfolk. Earlier, the children did not receive sufficient care from their mothers who had little time to spare for them. Men now began to spend more time in their houses and this enabled them to give more attention to their family. The family responsibility was now shared jointly by men and women, and as a result many social obligations which stood on the way to progress were also removed gradually without much difficulty.

The abolition of Zawlbuk also brought the husband and the wife closer than before. The intimacy of the couple in turn sowed the seeds of better atmosphere and understanding in the family. The cordial atmosphere in the family circle was reverberated to the general public and finally created good and healthy society.
The Abolition of Head-hunting and Other Sacrifices

The Abolition of head-hunting: The British and other people of the plains commonly dubbed the Mizos as milula hnam meaning "head hunters" without being professional head-hunters. This age-old custom turned into abominable with the coming of the British. Although it was a dreadful practice conducted by the Mizos in the neighbouring British territory particularly Cachar and Chittagong, but no concerted attempt was made either by the administration or by the missionaries to abolish it as was done in the case of the Zawlbuk and the bawi. These two equally powerful forces were, however, indirectly and covertly responsible for the abolitions of head-hunting, and other social customs in the Mizo Society.

The Mizos had peripheral contacts with the English people while marauding for "heads" somewhere in the Cachar district and in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. In one such event, one English tea gardener named Winchester was murdered and his six year-old daughter, Mary Winchester was taken captive. The incident finally led to a Military expedition of 1871-72, the purpose of which among other things was to recover Mary from the hands of her captor, Bengkhuia,

45A. C. McCall; Lushai Chrysalis, op. cit., p. 38.
chief of Sailam village and to suppress head-hunting as well as to establish law and order in the land.\textsuperscript{46} The expedition was successful not only in getting Mary back but paved the way for future occupation of the tracts. In the expeditions, not only those who were involved directly had suffered, but other as well when the houses and granaries of the whole village were burnt or razed to the ground, and cattle or domestic animals were taken away. Whenever the offenders were captured they were severely punished after sending to exile or executed. Such punishment only acted as deterrent but could not totally stop it. In this way, physical force to suppress the practice was found very effective and instrumental in curbing the cruel and dreadful practice among the Mizos. They now learnt that killing of a person was punishable even by execution.

But it was the Christianity that played the most effective role in the gradual and final extinction of the custom in the Mizo society. The Christian Missionaries taught the people that killing of human beings was an act against God who was the creator of all living and non-living things in the world. The Christian teaching was concerned with a moral code which was the need of the hour. The missionaries were trying hard to make the people morally conscious for they knew that unless this was achieved, the practice would remain alive. They, therefore,

\textsuperscript{46}Rev. V.L. Zaithanga; \textit{op. cit.}, p. 10.
began to preach the Gospel which was the enemy of head-hunting. In this way the missionaries indirectly inculcated the idea to the people that head-hunting was a sin against God.

The rapid spread of Christianity as well as efforts of Government administration ultimately enabled the Mizos to abandon their century-old custom within less than half a century. The roles of these two bodies were thus highly appreciated.

**The Abandonment of sacrifices.** As has been mentioned in Chapter II, Mizo society was animistic and believed in a variety of gods and spirits. They, therefore, sacrificed in fulfilment of their religious obligations. With the introduction of education, but more particularly the spread of the Gospel due to the efforts of the missionaries, such practices slowly disappeared among them.

In affecting the abolition of such practices the Government or the Church did not take any concerted or direct action but only made them enlightened leaving the decision to be taken by the people themselves. There was, thus, no confrontation between the people and the missionaries or the Government on these matters. People soon realised that the sooner the links with their early
practices were snapped with the better for the whole lot in the society, and put full faith on the Christian tenets as their guiding principles in all their activities.

The Emergence of Voluntary Organization

The Mizo society may be described as a "free society" in the sense that there is no social prohibition among the Mizos. After some time of the abandonment of the Zawlbuk as an outdated institution, people began to feel much need of an institution which would serve many of their social needs under the changed situation. This led the missionaries and the local leaders to concentrate their minds on finding out a suitable organization. Ideas were contributed and suggestions were invited for establishing body in which all the Mizos could demonstrate and express themselves with the spirit of tlawmngaithna. This led to the founding of the "Young Lushai Association" (YLA) and later as "Young Mizo Association" (YMA) after the pattern of Young Welsh Association.47 The Association was sponsored and blessed by the Christian missionaries, and it was officially inaugurated on 15 June, 1935, with Rev. L. Evans, a Presbyterian Missionary as its first President.48

47 Hrangala; "Kum 1935" YMA Chanchinbu (Magazine), Vol. 9, September, 1982, p. 3.
48 Ibid.
responsibilities for the first ten years were shouldered by the foreign missionaries and their Mizo assistants.

The YMA had pledged three objectives to its members, viz: to make the leisure profitable, to seek progress for Mizoram and to uphold and honour the practice of Christian virtues. YMA was thus, the first organization in Mizoram established for two-fold purpose of keeping the youths engrossed in religious activities and of engaging itself in social services.

During the first few years following its formation, YMA did remarkable works for the society. It encouraged cleanliness and of helping their fellow men thus imbibiing mutual help and understanding. It taught its members how to keep utensils and their houses and the surroundings clean. Public sanitations were also stressed by making public lavatories and pit latrines. The idea soon spread even to the remote villages.

It also tried to inculcate the spirit of Mizo tlavangaihna in the society. YMA inspired its members with many instances of tlavangaihna and its lasting value in the life of a man, and also to give up the selfishness in their deeds. It also aimed at teaching the people to be useful citizens by contributing the most out of their own efforts. And it also encouraged the people to preserve the customs and practices of the Mizos which have relevance to their own time. With a view to promoting the art of public speaking, YMA organised "debate".
Efforts were made to popularise the Mizo tobacco by claiming that smoking Mizo tobacco was much cheaper than cigarettes. The effect of the drive was so significant that in 1936-37, no cigarettes and bidi except Mizo tobacco were available at Aizawl. Songs were composed to make the people admire the local produce. One such popular song runs thus:

Mizo vaihlo hi zuk ching la,
Tuiber mai, aw sangau, zurpui leh kauzing,
Sen a tlem a hrisel a, Zoram thil a ni bawk a,
Tui berah chuan Lengi zial tir ang che. 50

which means -

Cultivate the habit of smoking Mizo tobacco,
The sweetest being sangau, zurpui and kauzing brands;
It's economical, harmless, and besides it's Zoram origin.
But for the sweetest flavour, ask your fiance to roll it for you.

Another remarkable work done by the YMA was Chanchintha Dak, or Bawn zawn which means a good-will mission or Gospel mail. The idea was that during the Second World War many people were wounded, or killed in the Chin Hills of Burma. Such people and their families needed comfort and solace. On hearing the sufferings of those people, YMA was greatly moved and decided to do some good samaritan works for them at least to show that they sympathised with them. They, therefore, collected books, hymn books, text books of children

49Ibid., p. 4.
50The song was composed by a Mizo poet, Vankhama in 1935.
and old and new clothes etc. and were sent in boxes to Chin Hills. The first two boxes sent out from the present Mission Veng Church on 20 July, 1946 were blessed by the Church. These boxes were despatched to the Chin Hills via Champhai. After delivering over 300 boxes the Church stopped the project. Some people tried to detect political motive behind this project. According to R. Vanlawma the project had a political aim: that of creating the idea of "Greater Mizoram". By sending relief materials, the inhabitants of the Chin Hills in Burma were given to realise that they were brothers with the people in Mizoram.

But YMA was a purely non-political body and as such had nothing to do with politics. However, its activities sometimes engrossed its purviews by discussing the subjects that had connections with politics. Such type of overlapping was common during the first few years of its existence because YMA was the only common body that the Mizos had to deal with any problem in the society. An awkward situation occurred in 1945 when YMA organised a get-together to which McDonald, the Superintendent was also invited. The

52 Ibid.
53 R. Vanlawma; Ka Ram Leh Kei, op. cit., p. 82
54 Rev. Zairema; op. cit., p. 39
55 R. Vanlawma; Ka Ram Leh Kei, op. cit., p. 81.
speakers publicly told McDonald that the Mizos now wanted a democratic system in Mizoram. This infuriated him very much. A similar situation appeared in a General Conference held at Aizawl in March 1946. One of the items in the agenda was how to deal with the "forest" in Mizoram, by which term they meant the British. When the item was taken up the chairman, a missionary, left the seat in protest against what he termed as "beyond the purview of YMA." The chairmanship was resumed by Rev. Chhuahkhama and the item was later dropped on a plea that YMA was a non-political body. This political inclination inspired the birth of a political party which was started in 1946.

In spite of certain setbacks, the YMA, since its inception, has been able to maintain its neutrality as non-political body till the present day. For this reason it has been the most powerful and influential body in Mizoram. It opposes anything that can bring any harm to the good image of the society. It, therefore, introduces new programmes from time to time. In fact, YMA is now the backbone of the Mizo society.

56 Ibid., p. 84.
57 Chaltuahkhuma; op. cit., p. 23.
58 Ibid.
Since its occupation by the British all political activities were strictly forbidden in the Mizo Hills. In spite of this, attempt had been made in the third decade of the present century by some Mizos to have a sort of political organization. This too was suppressed. But the political consciousness which grew among the people following the changed situation in Mizoram was soon bound to find its expression. Several other factors which inspired them in this regard were hectic political activities in the neighbouring areas of Assam and Bengal, ill-feelings between the chiefs and the commoners, development activities adopted by the administration etc. The general situation in the district greatly changed particularly after the Second World War due to the fact that the Government had to seek the support of the chiefs in their war efforts. In order to win over the chiefs and the people the authorities had to change their policy. Consequently, political as well as other restrictions which had been imposed earlier were relaxed, and in 1946, just before Independence, the formation of political party was permitted by the Superintendent. Thus a new era dawned in the political history of the Mizos.

There had been an increasing political inclination of the people since 1935 when the non-political body, Young Mizo Association was founded. The new experiences gained through
the activities of YMA highly enlightened their ideas and
knowledge and as a result "the Lushais aspired for something
better." With the grant of permission to form political
party there had been a hectic activities for political
attainment among the people. Soon, however, the picture was
blurred by a sense of uncertainty when India attained
independence. In the meantime, however, certain other new
factors helped in the formation of political party. Among
these: the lenient policy adopted by the British Government
towards the Mizos due to the outbreak of the Second World
War; the strong feeling that India would soon achieve her
freedom from the British; that the Mizo people would soon be
freed from the arbitrary rule of the chiefs as well as the
obnoxious dues levied on them and that people would be
relieved from the monotonous cooly labour. All these
circumstances helped the people to enter into the political
arena.

A fomented group became very active in the formation
of a new party so as to cause embarrassment to the chiefs.
Their active pressure led to the birth of a political party,
on adhoc basis under the style the "Mizo Common People's Union".

59 V. Venkata Rao; A Century of Tribal Politics in North
East India, 1874-1974, S. Chand & Co. Ltd., Ram Nayar,
New Delhi, 1976, p. 160.

60 A. V. Pakunga; Mizoram Political Party-te Chanchin 1946 - 1978
(cyclostyled copy) Aizawl 1977, p. 5.

61 R. Vanlawma; Ka Ram Leh Kei, op. cit., pp. 87-89.
on 9 April, 1946. This they did with the permission of the authorities.

Different names had been suggested for the title of the new party because the majority of the members of the elite group could not agree with the title of ad-hoc party. The subject was taken up at a meeting convened for the purpose at Aizawl on 11 April, 1946. After a prolonged discussion, the meeting unanimously resolved to re-name the Mizo Common People's Union as Mizo Union.

Since the general feeling for the formation was widespread and intense, the new party quickly covered the whole Mizoram. In its initial stage, the party, preached the protection of the interests of the common people. It had two main targets - one, long term and the other short term. Its long term objective was the fulfilment of their political aspiration which might arise from time to time. Among its short-term programmes, it adopted a militant attitude towards the chiefs, for they had been considered as the source of all obstacles to progress in Mizoram and it considered the Superintendent as the protector of the chiefs and he was severely attacked. Consequently the relations between the chiefs and the Superintendent on the one hand and the Mizo Union leaders on the other deteriorated. Since its inception the party consistently struggled for the abolition of the chieftainship.
The tension between the chiefs and the Mizo Union gradually increased and the gap between them widened. There was a strong feeling that the powers exercised by the chiefs should be taken away and his position abolished for good. Under the circumstances, the party, in its first General Assembly, held from 24 to 26 September, 1946, decided to boycott the "District Conference" in which both the chiefs and the commoners jointly exercised the powers.

The Mizo Union party suffered from its own factionalism. Due to political fanaticism the Mizo Union party was now divided. One faction favoured entry into Indian Union while the other faction, who called themselves "Right Wing", strongly favoured secession from India and even before as undivided party, presented the case of the Mizos to the Government of India even to the extent of seceding after ten years. The tension ran high as the 15 August was drawing closer. The blood-bath was, however, wisely avoided by the wit of L.L. Peters who arranged the meeting of the two factions. The meeting, held on the 14 August was attended by 50 members of various segments of the Mizo society. The meeting resolved the following:

1. Resolved that owing to the unexpected acceleration of the date to ask the Government of Assam to inform Mizos in writing whether they would be allowed to make options of joining

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63 Memorandum prepared and submitted by the Mizo Union to the Government of India on 22.4.1947.
any other Dominions, i.e. Pakistan or Burma; they resolved further that if the Mizos were ever to enter into Indian Union, their main demands were:

2. (a) That the existing safeguards of their customary laws and land tenure etc. should be maintained.

(b) That the Chin Hills Regulation 1896 and Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation 1873 should be retained until such time as the Lushais themselves through their District Council or other parallel District authority declared that these can be abrogated.

3. That the Lushais will be allowed to opt out of the Indian Union, when they wish to do so subject to a minimum period of ten years. 64

The Meeting temporarily subsided the tense atmosphere which had gripped the minds of the opposing groups of the Mizo Union Party. The pacified mood also enabled them to give ear to the Bordoloi Sub-Committee 65 which was sent to Mizoram on 17 and 18 April, 1947. Thereafter the entry of Mizoram into Indian Union became an accomplished fact when the Bordoloi Committee paid a visit to Mizoram with a mission to clarify the future status of the Mizo people. 66

64 Proceedings of a meeting of the accredited leaders of Lushai Political Parties held at Aizawl on 14.8.1947.

65 The Constituent Assembly of India set up an Advisory Committee which, in turn, set up another three Advisory Sub-Committees to report and recommend on the constitutional needs of the tribal areas in India. The Sub-Committee on Assam Tribal and Excluded Areas is also popularly known as the "Bordoloi Sub-Committee" after Gopinath Bordoloi, Premier of Assam, who headed the Committee.

66 B. B. Goswami; op. cit., p. 133.
On the recommendations of the Bordoloi Sub-Committee Report, the Constituent Assembly recommended a status of District Council to Mizo Hills. But before the District Council became a workable body, in the interim period, the Government of Assam, after the recommendation of the Adviser to the Governor, formed an Advisory Council known as "Lushai Hills District Advisory Council" and its members were drawn as follows: 67

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commoners</td>
<td>20 seats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiefs</td>
<td>10 seats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town</td>
<td>3 seats 2 for Aizawl and another 1 from Lunglei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>2 seats 1 for Aizawl and another 1 for Lunglei</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of seats allotment was agreed upon between the Government of Assam represented by the Chief Minister of Assam and his party on one hand and the representatives of the political parties, the Superintendent and the representatives of the chiefs on the other hand on 10 November, 1947 at Shillong. But when elections were held on 23 March and 15 April, 1948 for the chiefs and the commoners respectively, the latter elected 25 members. 68 With this the total number came up to 38 instead of 35. The Council was the first popular Government elected by popular vote.

67 Chaltuahkhuma; op.cit., pp. 61 - 63.
68 Ibid., p. 65.
Changes in Social Customs

Marriage. At the same time, the old customs could not be done away with completely. This has resulted in the adoption of a hybrid custom of marriage among the Mizos. While they solemnized the marriage at the altar of the church by any competent church leader, they observed some ceremonies before and after in the old fashion. For instance the old good custom of distributing the man-tang meaning the "main price" for the benefit and safe-guard of the bride in future is still continued. In fact, the marriage custom that is now in force among the Mizos is mainly based on the custom compiled by N. E. Parry in 1926.⁶⁹

At present in Christian marriage the rites and solemnity of the marriage except the price and its distributions to other close relations are all performed within the framework of the Christian doctrines. The bride and the groom have a complete freedom to choose the kind of dress they like whereas in early Christian period most of the couples selected Mizo puan chei (a white woven cloth decorated with coloured stripes) on their wedding day. This stage was gone and a new development occurred. A period came into

⁶⁹N. E. Parry; Monograph, op. cit., pp. 21-42.
being when the couple dressed themselves exactly on the western model wearing gowns, veils and suits. This period is still prevalent among the Mizos. Now only those who are too poor to afford gowns normally use puan chei.

In olden days the bride was taken to the groom's house only after dark where she was often showered with dirt for which the service of lawichal was badly needed. This stage has now completely vanished. But since a recent time, bride is escorted to the groom's generally before dark, but there is no definite rule as such; it differs from village to village and from persons to persons. In short, all the unhealthy practices are now given up in the society and even alcoholic drink is also no longer served anywhere. Everything is organised only within the purview of the Church.

Custom relating to divorce is another significant area in which no major change or modification has occurred since N.E. Parry laid down the rules in 1926. The only practice changed now is that only those who want to ignore the custom can do it in line with Christian faith which forbids any kind of separation between wife and husband. Thus Christian teaching plays a unique role in this matter by acting as a mediator between the two angry people. A complete or permanent separation which is not advocated is,
therefore, now a case rarely found among the Mizo wives and husbands. Following the Christian principle they have clearly conceived the concept of what marriage means to Christians.

Death and burial. The treatment and disposal of dead bodies was another area where certain modifications were effected. After the British rule was imposed in the hills kuangur was stopped thereby prescribing a common treatment to the dead bodies of a chief and commoner in the society. They were all buried in a common burial ground known as thlanmual.

From time immemorial till the later part of the British administration, Mizos used bamboo stretchers to keep the dead body, but now they use only coffin made of planks. Also, with the coming of Christianity the burial rites all vanished among the Mizos.

As stated earlier, death is given different names according to its nature. Hence the names are mithi meaning natural death, sarthi meaning unnatural death, raicheh which means death on child-birth and hlamzuih means immature death. These various names are still recognised in the society but the only marked change is that in today's Mizo society hardly any death is treated as hlamzuih except the child who is less than a week old.
Superstitions. In pre-Christian society the Mizos were deeply influenced by their religious beliefs and this made them to believe in superstition. Due to this, therefore, they suffered from various social difficulties and problems in their day to day life. For instance, if two members of the same family take a journey in opposite directions on the same day, misfortunes would befall on either of the members. This conception is still alive among the Mizos.

In this matter to a certain extent even the influences of the Church as well as the British administration perhaps have a limit. The only visible impact upon the people is that they now do not interpret superstition seriously as they did in the past. However, it is peculiar to note that as individual cases each person is curious about it when it is bound to happen to a particular person or family. This shows that the teaching of Christianity has not uprooted all the indigenous beliefs and practices in the Mizo society. Therefore, complete annihilation or disappearance of these from the Mizo society is not in immediate sight. The trend rather is that the people, acquiring clearer concept about the superstitions, omens and misfortunes, begin to fear it. This further indicates that the Mizo view about nature is very individualistic.
Introductions of New Phenomena in the Society

Besides effecting the abolition of the Mizo customs in the society and modifying others both the British rule and the Christian missionaries contributed much.

Education. Along with the introduction of formal education, the Christian missionaries started a programme of mass education among the Mizos for the reason that Christianity requires the reading of the Bible, and thus education and Christianity go hand in hand. This led the Mizo society to stride towards progress and development and such type of education still occupies unique position among the Mizos. Illiteracy was the main target of attack of the Missionaries in the beginning for illiteracy meant to Christianity the stagnation of the spread of Gospel. By making the people able to read the Bible and other Christian literatures, the missionaries prepared them for education.

Medical facilities. The Mizos did not believe that they could be cured of sickness or disease by any means other than sacrifices performed by the puithiam. In fact, before the advent of the British they were more or less free from diseases of any kind in a sense that they

70 Vanchhunga; op. cit., p. 283.
were too ignorant to identify the particular disease. But in 1860 and 1861 after raiding the British territory at the Chittagong Hill Tracts, they took back small-pox and cholera to the hills. 71 As a result, many lost their lives and many more committed suicide for feeling shy that they suffered such uncommon disease and also lost hopes of recovery. They called the disease ramdang natna meaning "foreign sickness." 72 They, therefore, began to beseech the help of their god–kuavang by offering sacrifices.

Side by side with the preaching of Gospel the early Christian missionaries also practised medicines knowing that medical cure was as important as the spiritual healing. They, therefore, began to establish dispensaries not only at Aizawl and Lunglei but also at other remote villages.

The Government did not remain a mere spectator in extending modern medical facilities to the people. Hospitals and dispensaries had been established throughout the Mizo Hills, and made sincere efforts to improve sanitation in the villages through its workers. As a result of the joint efforts given by the Government and the missionaries, within a short period of time, only very few people still

71 T. H. Lewin; Wild Races, op. cit., p. 142.
72 Ibid.
believed that sacrifice was the only means to cure sickness. The notion is now completely vanished from the minds of the Mizos.

**Tea drinking.** Another new culture that has become common in the social life of the Mizos after the British occupation was tea drinking. Tea drinking was not unknown to them before the advent of the British and tea itself was perhaps a common name among them for the Mizo tradition has it that the people had suffered from a severe catastrophe locally known as *thingpui tam*, the famine, while they were living among the Shans who were well adapted to tea cultivation since long time back. But the people took tea less due perhaps to the wide use of *zu* which was considered a part of their social life, and that tea was not readily available in the Mizo hills.

There was no clue among the Mizos to prove that they took "tea" side by side with *zu* in their social functions or festivals. The pioneering missionaries had condoned *zu* drinking by the new converts on the pretext that it would do no harm to them.\(^7^3\) They, however, left the question of *zu* drinking to them to decide because they thought it wise to keep themselves aloof from such unfamiliar but thought provoking

\(^7^3\)David Kyles; *op. cit.*, p. 26.
decision as they were strangers in the Mizo hills in the early period. The early converts, convinced by their experience and moral conviction, came to unanimous decision that no Church member should be allowed to drink zu at all.\textsuperscript{74}

However, the young Church and the early Christian converts were less hesitant to condemn zu drinking by its members which soon became a common cause for expulsion of the members from the Church. This had given people the impetus to drink tea.\textsuperscript{75} Gradually, tea drinking was picked up by all the Christians and today it is a part of life among the Mizos.

\textbf{Festivals.} The advent of Christianity also brought about a complete change in some sections of the society. Fears and trauma of pre-Christian society were now virtually replaced by a new psychology. The native festivals were all substituted by Christian festivals. In place of their pre-Christian festivals the major Christian obligation known as the "Christmas" took a primary status. For the first time the Christmas was celebrated in its Christian fashion in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{74}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{75}A. G. McCall; \textit{Lushai Chrysalsis, op. cit.}, p. 209.
\end{itemize}
1899 at Aizawl by the students. Slowly and gradually the importance of the Mizo customary festivals like Mim Kut, Pawl kut, Chapchar kut and other social gatherings and amusements were abandoned and fallen in complete disuse; and even memories of such celebrations are forgotten. Christmas is now the most celebrated festival among the Mizos.

Other Christian festivals like "Easter Sunday" and "Good Friday" were not celebrated in the same way as they did Christmas perhaps because the pioneering missionaries and their followers did not regard them as important as they did Christmas. In spite of it, "Good Friday" was observed as "no working day" and spent the day singing at home. It is a fact that the day was not celebrated enthusiastically because it is commonly said that Good Friday ni a thlai chi lin chu a tha duh bik meaning "seeds sown on Good Friday yields more fruits." This shows that "Good Friday" and "Easter Sunday" were the hidden feasts among the Mizos until recent past. Among the Christian denominations only the Roman Catholic Church which came to Mizoram only in 1925 celebrated these "feasts" to the full.

76Darkunga; "Krismas Hmasa Ber - Mizoramah" Kristian Tlangau No. XLIV, December 1954, No. 519, p. 278.
77Ibid.
New pattern of living. Another new development was the adoption of the western way of living by the Mizos. By coming into contact with the British it was no wonder that the Mizos imitated the English way of living. The influence of the British rule was also considered very effective in this regard.

One of the effects of the British rule and Christianity upon the people was that they became less nomadic. Before the British occupation the Mizos led a nomadic way of living in that people migrated from one place to another for which there had been no difficulties at all. But through the influence of the British administration which sometimes restricted the movement of even a single family from one village to another together with the teaching of Christianity people abandoned the idea of constant shifting and became less nomadic in nature.

Dress. With the coming of money especially through the teachers and the Government employees working in the villages people began to get more money to spend. This was undoubtedly reflected in the change of their dress. Generally speaking, before the British period, a Mizo had only one kawr meaning "shirt" which he wore every day. A slight development was effected by getting one more kawr in addition to the existing one. The second one was commonly known as chawl ni kawr meaning "shirt worn only on Sunday". In the early period
it was possessed only by young men and women, not everybody could afford it. Gradually they discarded the homespun clothes and began to wear shirts, trousers, pants, etc. made of imported yarn. Dress was perhaps an area where fast change was witnessed among the people. However, due to economic backwardness sudden change could not take place especially during the British raj. But in today's society there is no hesitation on the part of the people to dress themselves on the model of the latest pattern or fashion. What is worn today in London, the Mizos will wear it tomorrow, or even on the same day.

House pattern. The House pattern was another new introduction. The Mizos were very particular in this regard. Earlier, everyone was not free to arrange or construct his house as he liked it, he should observe social obligations. Therefore, before the coming of the British only thangcnhuah celebrant was allowed or entitled to open windows and arrange shelves in his house. But all these restrictions were ignored and abandoned by the people after the British rule and the introduction of Christianity in the land. The process of modernization in keeping their houses on the western pattern could not, however, occur perhaps due to their economic conditions. Their economic life possibly did not indicate any favourable growth of the society.
**Food habit.** Though there was no remarkable change to food habit, yet there were new developments in this sphere too. The favourable trend was that people working in the Government offices and teachers in the villages began to alter their food habit. They started taking meals two times instead of three times a day as they did earlier. A few people mainly drawn from girls' schools knew about balanced diet. Truly speaking, change in this regard, during the period under the study, was very insignificant on account of the fact that people were too ignorant about food habit.

**Smoking.** There was a notable change in the way of smoking. The most common ones were smoking of *vaibel*, a pipe for men and *tuibur*, a pipe for women. They sometimes smoked tobacco rolled with dry leaves. But when papers were made available to them they replaced the dry leaves by papers. They also began to smoke cigarettes which they valued very much. Cigarette smoking thus substituted smoking with local tobacco for the time being. However, there was once again an attempt on the part of the YMA, to make the local tobacco regain its popularity among the Mizos. The attempt thus proved to be a success.

The Mizos also adopted the western music and dance. In modern society, the Mizos have a partiality for anything that is western.