CHAPTER - V

RESPONSE TO CHANGE

In a tribal society like that of the Mizos, it is sometimes difficult to make a clear cut division between social, political, religious and cultural spheres and to draw pictures of changes in different spheres. Divisions may overlap one over the other. For instance, the role of the British Government and the Christian missions as factors of social transformation often overlaps. Perry was of the view that as an instrument of change in the society, the latter was more active than the former.\(^1\) The reason was perhaps due to the fact that the British Government was only interested in changes that were imperative to its administrative needs.\(^2\) But it is true that the response of the people to change introduced by Christianity was favourable from the beginning.

In the following pages, an attempt is made to examine the response of the Mizos to the new situations that had developed during the British period. This response may be of two forms - one positive and the other negative.

\(^1\)N. E. Parry; The Lakhes, Firma KLM, Calcutta, Reprint, 1976, p. 19.

\(^2\)Nalini Natarajan; The Missionary Among the Khasis, Sterling Publishers, Private Ltd., New Delhi, 1977, p. 91.
By positive response we mean the response to accept changes, and by negative we mean their attempt to reject or to resist the changes.

In The Political Sphere

The annexation of Mizo Hills to their dominions was only a part of the extension of the British political sphere of influence. Apparently, the annexation of the erstwhile Lushai Hills looked like the vindication of the repeated raids committed by the Mizos into the territory occupied by the British. One of the officers thus wrote: "You forced us to occupy your hills, we had no wish to come up here but you would raid our villages, so we had to come..." The main object of British annexation of Mizo Hills was to provide protection to "areas in Cachar and Eastern Bengal from the Lushai and Lakher raids which were frequent and brought insecurity to the British dominions nearby." But in fact, the annexation was only a matter of time and a fulfilment of the forward policy of the British because, with the annexation of Upper Burma

---

3Major J. Shakespear openly justified their demands for the cooly labour. He told them that they should willingly render help to the British by supplying them coolies when they needed. He chided them that they came up here not for their own interests but because of their (Mizo) repeated undesirable actions. Foreign Department External Part A, November, 1899, Progs. No. 35.

after 1885, Mizoram was the only territory left unoccupied, so far, between India and Burma. Seizing on the pretext of creating disturbances in the British territories the British Government now extended its full control over it. As regards the treatment of the Mizos, the Government directed its expeditionary forces to follow a policy of appeasement towards them and "to establish friendly relations of permanent character with them. . ." When there was a proposal for disarming the Mizos and other tribes in Manipur Hill Tracts and to greatly reduce the powers of the chiefs, the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam replied by quoting Major Shakespear who had had more than ten years' experience as:

> We have now entirely gained the confidence not only of the chiefs, but of the people. I trust that I may be allowed to carry on the policy hitherto pursued in all hill districts under Assam. . .; so that the Lushais may cease to have any wish to be rid of our presence.

Shakespear firmly believed that the Government should not ignore and undermine the powers and the presence of the chiefs, and he, therefore, strongly favoured the retention of the chiefs for he felt that administration through them would be more effective. He was of the opinion that it was "wiser to maintain them and strengthen their hands. . .".

---


7. AR; Lushai Policy, loc. cit.
Such opinions based on practical experience led the British to follow a middle course in their dealings with the chiefs by allowing them to continue their rule within their respective areas. The administration of the hillis was thus placed in the hands of two authorities - the British Government and the chiefs.

No doubt the chiefs were retained, but the British rule had been established at the political sphere at the cost of the chiefs. The grievances of the chiefs centred round three subjects - taxation, forced labour, and fear of punishment. They became apprehensive that they would fall prey to the hands of the British who were much superior to them. So long they entertained the false idea that there could not be any more powerful ruler than themselves. This self-esteem was, too, another factor that made the chiefs to resist the British. They, therefore, formed "alliances" among themselves, and put up all sorts of obstacles in the way of consolidation of the British rule. But the chiefs were too weak to organise a strong and formidable resistance. The Mizo chiefs had had guns since 1810. With these inferior arms they fought the British and resisted them but due to limited supply of arms.

---

8 Collection of Some Interesting Correspondences of Mizoram 1890-1896; The Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, 1980, p. 4.

9 R. Vanlawma; Mizo Lalte, op. cit., p. 66.
their resistance was always feeble and could not have been very effective. But this hampered the smooth running of the administration, at least, in the early years of the occupation.

The question of "cooly labour" was one of the areas where there was often conflict between the British authorities and the chiefs. During the period of exploration and expeditions the British forces often demanded "cooly labours." Even after occupation this remained the cause of friction and conflict. A constant demand for labour by the British authority created animosity between the chiefs and their subjects and consequently affected the chiefs' relations with the British because the former could not always supply the required number of labour. The chiefs sometimes hesitated to enforce obedience to his subjects at the great displeasure of his people.\(^\text{10}\) The chiefs' failure to comply with the demands was perhaps due also to their desire to see the weakening of the chiefs' authority. This made the British to apply force in order to obtain labour. On the other hand, some of the British administrators themselves were against the continuance of the system. In 1895, W. B. Oldham, the then Chief Commissioner, Chittagong Hill Tracts, strongly protested against the remarks made by

\(^{10}\)AR: Lushai Policy, loc. cit.
Cotton, the Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam, on the obligation of supplying labour, when he wrote:

I would say that the system referred to is not accepted by the people, and is not consonant with their customs, and that, so far from being economical and easy to work, it has, in the last four years, been the sole cause of our troubles and additional expenditure, and is going to be so again.11

All forces of resistance were worn out, so much so that most of the villages along with the granaries were completely burnt down by the expeditionary forces. This was the common form of punishment inflicted by the British upon the local inhabitants. It was always found to be the most effective measure to subdue them. Every chief had suffered in some way for opposing the British authorities. A feeling of distrust developed thus between the British authorities and the people in general and the chiefs in particular.

In spite of all the obstacles put forth against the British, the chiefs had to yield. They had now been subdued and the British turned them into the most effective instruments in running their administrations. In the beginning the British Government had two options before them: the abolition of the institution of chiefship and the taking-over of the whole administration directly.

11AR; From W. B. Oldham to Cotton, the 24th July, Chittagong, 1895.
into their own hands; or allowing the local chiefs to rule in their respective areas. Of these two, the British Government opted for the latter choice. It was this choice that allowed the continuance of the chiefs. The retention of the chiefs was the guiding principle of their administration in Mizoram. The chiefs were turned into links between the Government and the ruled. They were employed as mentors in all correspondences concerning the people. It is surprising to see that after their submission to the British, they could be controlled with the minimum of force. The Government had only a small number of police force at Aizawl. A similar number of force was also stationed at Lunglei and at Demagiri. Even with this small force, the Government found no difficulty in administering the whole tract. Whenever there was any trouble requiring the intervention of the administration, the district officer himself went to the spot and settled the matter, and if necessary put down the trouble. It may appear puzzling how the British could rule the Mizos by using so little force. But behind all this, there were the chiefs who were loyal to the British.

Since the consolidation of the British rule over the hills, a cordial relationship and excellent cooperation developed between the Government and the chiefs. This was vividly revealed by Khamliana, chief of Lunglei in his
keynote address on behalf of the chiefs to Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee Celebration of her reign in 1897. He writes:

Now we hear that you have reigned 60 years. You are the greatest ruler in the world, we Lushais are not fit to be called men before you, yet you have been most kind to us. . . . We are more devoted to the work of Government than our own business. . . . Although when compared with you we are but ants, yet we will follow your orders as far as it lies in us.

The chiefs appeared as the representatives of the British Government in their own land, and they felt grateful and began to seek favours from their overlords.

The other area where there was good co-operation between the Government and the chiefs on one hand and their peoples on the other was during the two World Wars. The Mizo youth joined the wars in response to the requests extended by the British Government. They took part in the first World War commonly known to the Mizos as France ram kal which means "the youths were sent to France."

The Government recruited over 2100 young men called "Lushai Labour Corps". They went to France to work there. They left Aizawl in May 1917 and they returned after a year in June, 1918. In the beginning, when the chiefs

12 AR: An "Address" prepared by Khamliana, translated by J. Shakespear, was forwarded by the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam. Letter No. 252 dated Aijai the 22.6.1897.
selected the required number from their respective villages the general impression of the public was that the chiefs chose only whom they hated most. The belief among the common people was that those who were sent to France would never come back alive. But when all returned alive safely the previous notions vanished. On their return, they brought new ideas along with them and thus helped in introducing new ideas to the society.

The Mizos also took part in the second World War. The Government could induce the Mizo chiefs to declare war against the enemy - Japan. They did the same under the banner of "Union Jack" on 3 April, 1942. They promised to offer total resistance to any invader. From northern Mizoram alone more than 300 chiefs took part and when the war was really fought, over 3000 young men were recruited in the different regiments. They set up a Pasaltha Fawl meaning a "village protecting force". The Government supplied them with guns. They were solely responsible for the defence of the village.

The participation of Mizo youths and chiefs in the two world wars indicates that there was a cordial and mutual cooperation between the British Government and the Mizo chiefs as well as the people.
In The Social Sphere

The fast disappearance of some of the Mizos' customs and practices was due primarily to their adaptability to the changing situation. They found no difficulty in discarding the old values and practices and in adjusting themselves to the changing circumstances. In this regard, their moral code—tlawmngaihna—served as an ideal. In fact, because of this quality, the Mizos could well adjust themselves to any change that came into their way of life. Even in accepting Christianity, the ideal of tlawmngaihna was very much inherent. With the coming of Christianity, tlawmngaihna merged into the Christian teaching of self-sacrifice, and thus paved the way for response to other changes.

The people's response in any social sphere may be put into three types according to the nature of the change. In the first category the response of the people was subjectively favourable. As stated before, with the introduction of an alien culture among the Mizos, head-hunting practice soon vanished in the society without any application of coercion or even condemnation. It appears

---


that it was abandoned when their ignorance was unveiled by the acts of the Government and Christian principles. The response to change in this area was, therefore, remarkable because head-hunting, the most heinous act, had soon become a thing of the past. In the eye of law, it was a very serious crime not merely punishable but also a cognizable offence that might lead to death penalty. The British occupied the Mizo Hills apparently as a measure of punishment committed by the Mizos in former territory. Yet after their coming they found no such occasion to punish them on this account. On the part of the Christians, the practice of head-hunting was a capital sin which was strictly forbidden to all its followers. After being enlightened by these two elements the people responded positively and gave up the practice. A similar reaction is also seen with regard to the inter-tribal and inter-village feuds which were common among them before the coming of the British. The presence of the Government at the centre (in the district) played a unique role in handling any notorious acts because the Government could suppress any such event by sending its forces.

As has already been referred to, zu drinking was an age-old part of the Mizo life, but those who embraced Christianity did not face any serious problem in giving up the practice of zu drinking. Rather they could wholesome
accept it as a part of their Christian duty without demur.\textsuperscript{15} However, non-converts continued drinking zu as long as they remained unbelievers but without any resultant tension between the two sections. As Christianity spread, and more and more people embraced it, zu-drinking began to diminish and ultimately was abandoned by the Mizos. In this sphere, their attitude was a little critical which led the Church to strictly prohibit the drinking of intoxicants. However, they responded without grudge and stopped drinking.\textsuperscript{16} No law was required to be passed or enforced in this connection.

A favourable response is noticeable in the offering of sacrifices to spirits. After conversion to Christianity, sacrifices were abandoned because they now felt free from the bondage of evil spirits who, it was believed, often brought misfortune to the people in the form of pains, troubles and sometimes sickness. They had made sacrifices against their own conscience in order that they might not be harmed by evil spirits. Substitution was now found in Christianity. Therefore, in this sphere, response was favourable. It is well-known that Christianity and spirit-worship are different ideals. The old practices had no longer any place in the Mizo society.

\textsuperscript{15}David Kyles; \textit{op. cit.}, p. 26

\textsuperscript{16}N. E. Parry; \textit{The Lakhers, op. cit.}, p. 21
The same spirit worked in the abandoning of kut or feast, always an occasion for gaiety and merriment which they had practised from time immemorial. When Christianity set its foot on the soil and when people began to embrace it, kut itself was discarded by those who accepted it. But this did not mean that as soon as Christianity came to Mizoram such social practices immediately vanished, rather these were continued by those who did not embrace the faith.

In the second category, in some spheres, the change was gradual. Two of these were the bawi and the Lawibuk. These two institutions remained in spite of repeated pressures of the people to abolish them.

As mentioned earlier, the Government found no fault with Inpuichhung bawi, hence it was allowed to continue. The missionaries too saw no conflict with their Christian ideals in the bawi system of the Mizo society, and felt that the system would disappear along with the growth of public conscience. They were, therefore, very cautious in their attack of the bawi system. The attitudes of the people towards bawi remained the same even after the coming of the British and the missionaries. During the first two years of their occupation, the Government did not receive any complaint from the people for mal-treatment of the bawies.

by any chief; nor did the missionaries receive any complaint from any of their Christian converts or from any general public. When there was an attempt to do away with the system, there was no resistance neither was there any serious resistance from the part of the people. Dr. Fraser, who was behind the idea, found support of the system only from one chief. The general attitude of the people was a general indifference whether the bawiship was abolished or not. On the part of the converts their response was that the extinction of bawiship, even if it meant refuge for the poor and the needy, was that its abolition meant to them a victory to Christian principles - the principle being that liberty, being every man's right, it was a precept more fully recognised and therefore more readily absorbed. The bawis felt happy and secure with the system because they became bawi with their own consent.\footnote{Rev. Liangkhaia; \textit{Mizo Chanchin}; \textit{Op. cit.}, p. 108.} The chief did not force any of his subjects to be his bawi. The system was, however, attacked severely by Dr. Peter Fraser for he considered it as a system that was basically slavery. But he did not receive any encouragement nor support from the people and stood isolated in his view. The chiefs also did not pay any heed to it. Only Khawvelthanga, the chief
of Maubuang, was on his side. The chiefs opposed the attack because they held the view in line with the Government. So far as evidence is available, Dr. Fraser did not receive any enthusiastic support even from his own colleagues in Mizoram.

It was the Zawlbuk institution which had created some amount of tension in the society. It took about half a century for its abolition. But the Zawlbuk system faced severe attack by the people. With the growing influences of the Christian teaching and education which spread to remote areas the influence of Zawlbuk declined. The Government and the missionaries did not consider it derogatory to their ideals and hence did not make any attempt to do away with it. But the spread of education effected a confrontation with this old system because Zawlbuk was the primary centre of learning for all young men in the village. Thus Zawlbuk was considered a threat to education. Therefore, the attitude of the people towards it was serious. When Parry joined as Superintendent in 1926, he tried to revive Zawlbuk, but the institution itself was already almost discarded by the people, hence he failed to revive it. The people also developed the idea that Zawlbuk was only a hindrance to all sorts of progress. The Government's attempt to revive it and to make the institution permanent was resisted strongly by
the people because they wanted to give their children education in schools and considered Zawlbuk a block to imparting sound learning for their children, where otherwise they would be made to carry water and fetch wood, as young novices in the Zawlbuk, for the older to inmates. So the people were all in one accord for the abolition of Zawlbuk and it was due to their anti-Zawlbuk sentiments that the institution met its end at an early date.

The third category to change was the mixed response of the people. With the coming of Education and Christianity, the marriage custom could not retain its primitive form. Changes were effected to fit the marriage custom in such a way that it had become the hybrid form - a mixture of the indigenous and Christian customs. With the introduction of money, the bride's price (paid hitherto in kind) was paid in cash. There was no retaliatory resistance on the part of the people when such changes were introduced. The response was positive perhaps for two reasons that it was more convenient to pay the bride's price in cash and that the amount of the bride's price was lesser in cash than it previously was when it was paid in kind. The basic principle was that the marriage was solemnised in the Church by an authorised Church leader according to Christian customs and practices. Certain basic features of the
remnants of the traditional marriage does still exist such as the payment of the customary bride's prices and the negotiation conducted through palai (mediator). But this custom was observed only for the sake of formality without much of its true significance.

The defeat of the chiefs at the hands of the British placed them in an ignominious position. The British Government stood behind the chiefs in matters concerning administration. To this extent, the chiefs were allowed to maintain their own power and their day-to-day administration was not interfered with by the British authority. There were certain situations in which the supporters of the chiefs and the Christian converts came into confrontation. Since the coming of the Christianity the attitude of the people towards the chiefs stood at a different level because the majority of the people now owed greater allegiance to the Church than to the chiefs. In this respect, the indirect influences of the missionaries on the converts emboldened them to raise their voice against the chiefs. In this way, the chiefs were in no position to enforce the observance of old customs. The chiefs were from the very beginning, aware that they would soon be in an awkward position. This awareness encouraged them to adopt a

stringent course towards the Christians resulting in an open rapture. They had already entertained strong apprehensions that Christianity would pose a fatal force to them. The Christians were, therefore, open to criticism particularly after the first revival in 1906. Some of the chiefs even began to persecute their Christian subjects. The attitude of the people was clearly demonstrated when the demand for cooly labour was made by the British through the chiefs. The chiefs always failed to supply them the required number demanded. J. Shakespear, after conducting a survey to this end, was convinced to make the conclusion that: "much of the trouble we have in getting our demands for coolies complied with is due to the weakening of the authority of the rulers". There was, therefore, a strong tendency among the people to destabilize the chiefs.

The people became more critical of the existence of the chieftainship and the rift deepened when hectic political activities started in 1946. With the birth of the political party in Mizoram whose main objective was the ending of the chieftainship, the people openly attacked the chiefs and demanded their removal. The political history of Mizoram, after 1946 until the formation of the District Council in 1952, was the history of the struggle

20Lushai Policy, loc. cit.
between the chiefs on the one hand and their subjects on the other. And it was mainly because of the hostile attitude of the people that the chieftainship, a traditional institution in the Mizo society came to an end. The attempt at abolition was one of the areas where most severe tension developed. There were, however, some people who always supported the chiefs. So the social attitude of the people after the coming of the British and the missionaries was different from their attitude before. There was a strong tendency generally to fall in line with the western pattern of living.

In The Religious Sphere

Unlike other hill areas in the North-East India, Christianity entered Mizoram almost at the same time with the British rule. Christianity in Mizoram has no history prior to 1894. Though it came late, the response of the people to Christian teaching was rather very favourable but its spread was not without some amount of opposition.

The belief current among the Mizos was that the "white" men would come across the sea and spread a new religion as predicted by some local people known as zawlnej meaning "fore-teller" who had already prepared the ground for Christianity. When the missionaries came in 1894, people took the event as a fulfilment of the
prophecy, and they opened their hearts to accept whatever they taught.

The Missions first worked among the young people because they were less influenced by the traditional beliefs than the mature or the aged. J. M. Lloyd, who had long acquaintance with the people writes:

In the Lushai Hills it was nearly always the young who came first to Christ, it was the elders who formed the caucus of opposition. 21

In the early period of conversion some minor and amusing problems cropped up among the Christians due mainly to their lack of the knowledge. For instance, they came to know that there was a day of rest (sunday) curing a week, but those who lived in the remote villages did not know on which day that "day" fell. In fact, they did not even know when the week started. So, when they set apart a day for "sunday" sometimes, more than ten days would have already elapsed. 22 But the new converts were very faithful in observing "sunday", on which day they did not engage themselves in any manual labour not even drawing water from the spring or stream. With the zeal of new converts they abandoned all the social practices except those that were considered acceptable to Christian belief.

Being small in number and often ridiculed by others, the early Christians naturally formed compact groups and a feeling of oneness grew among them, and they lived as members of one family. Such unity and brotherhood among the early Christians greatly attracted many non-believers to come forward and embrace Christianity.

The so-called "Revivals" which later took an ecstatic forms accelerated the spread of Christianity. The first known "revival" among the Christians in Mizoram began at Chaltlang, now within the town of Aizawl. This was an outcome of the "movement" which started at Moirang in the Khasi Hills (Meghalaya) the previous year when the good news of the so-called "Great Revival" of the Churches of Wales in 1904 was conveyed to the Christians of the Khasi Hills by Rev. John Roberts in 1905.

Immediately, the news aroused the Churches in the Khasi Hills with expectations of bright future for its growth.\(^2^3\)

It is sometimes observed that the movement took place as a result of "missionary efforts to stimulate in India the type of revival that was then taking place in Wales."\(^2^4\)

On hearing the movement in Khasi Hills, the Mizos sent a group of some young people from Mizoram to attend the Khasi Assembly held at Moirang early in 1906. The team


\(^2^4\) Frederick S. Downs; *Christianity in North-East India*, ISPCK, Delhi, 1983, p. 123.
consisted of seven persons from northern Mizoram and three from southern Mizoram. It was these ten persons who, infused with the spirit carried back the "revival" to Mizoram. At Aizawl, the group held a prayer meeting and danced and sang. The new style of praying soon spread among Christians throughout Mizoram.

A few years later, the "Second Revival" in Mizoram began in 1913 at Champhai and Hmunhmeltha villages in the eastern part of Aizawl Sub-division and soon spread over to other places, including Aizawl where it took place at the present Government L. P. School at Sikulpuikawn. In the beginning the "movement" mainly involved young people who danced in front of the pulpit. The movement lasted for two years. The reintroduction of khuang (drum) which had been banned on account of its association with the old Mizo life featuring afresh in the "revivalists" movement in Mizoram was an added novelty.

The third "revival" occurred at three different places, namely, at Nisapui in Northern Mizoram and at Zotlang and Thingsai in southern Mizoram on the night of 26 July, 1919. This time the "revival" spread through the whole of Mizoram. This movement involved the use of the khuang not only while singing outside the Church but also in the Church service.

After the third "revival", there was a period of quietness, when the revivalists were in a melancholic mood. During this time they composed songs and sang. Since then, the custom of singing self-composed songs was very popular in the Church and elsewhere.

The fourth and the final stage of the "movement" resurged in 1935 in a village named Biate in the northeastern part of Mizoram. The main feature of this revival was the "shaking" and "trembling" phenomenon while dancing, and making hissing sounds. Those Christians who did not participate in the ecstatic movement were dubbed as Thlarauthianghlim duh lo, meaning "ones who reject the Holy Spirit". The "spirit" of the fourth movement is still very much alive among the Mizos today.

After these "revival movements" Christianity spread at a rapid speed among the Mizos.\(^26\) This spectacular growth of Christianity at the beginning of this century in Mizoram has been noted by Downs: "The area in which Christianity grew most rapidly at the beginning of the twentieth century was in Mizoram."\(^27\) During this period, the number of believers increased phenomenally. Before


1919 there were only 12495 faithfulls but within four years (1919-1923) in northern Mizoram alone, the member of Christians had risen to 19197. The growth of Christianity among the Mizos may be seen in the following statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Census</th>
<th>General Population</th>
<th>Christian Population</th>
<th>Percentage of Christians</th>
<th>Trend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>8,2434</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-6.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>91,204</td>
<td>2,461</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>+11.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>98,406</td>
<td>27,720</td>
<td>28.16</td>
<td>+28.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>124,404</td>
<td>59,123</td>
<td>47.52</td>
<td>+45.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>152,786</td>
<td>98,108</td>
<td>64.21</td>
<td>+63.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>196,202</td>
<td>157,575</td>
<td>80.31</td>
<td>+80.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By 1951, all the Mizos had embraced Christianity. Even in North East India, Mizoram had the highest percentage of Christian population. In 1950, 90 p.c. of the total population of Mizoram were Christians compared with Nagaland which had 45 p. c. and Meghalaya, taking United Khasi and Jaintia and Garo Hills together which had 44 p.c. in that same year. Downs further writes:


29 Source: Census Report of 1971. The percentage of Christians and trend are the author’s own calculation.

In the diagram, the trend-line is steeply sloping upward from left to right. This steeply upward sloping curve shows that there has been a rapid increase in the number of Christian population during the period taken into account.
Less than thirty years later the Church in North Mizoram alone was already larger than its sister Church in the Khasi and Jaintia area, even though the population of Mizoram is less than that of the Khasi and Jaintia districts of Meghalaya.  

With the increase of the number of converts, the Christians demanded more and more concession from the Government as well as from the chiefs. Since the Government needed cooperation from the missions for administering the Mizos, it adopted a policy of cordiality towards the missions by allowing concession to Christians which included among others the exemption of "cooly labour" to the privilege of being "Sunday School Teachers". Originally, such labour exemption was granted only to the evangelist teachers. When the non-evangelist Sunday School Teachers too demanded such exemption, the Government stopped kuliawl altogether in 1927.  

It was through the influence of the Church leaders, evangelists and school teachers that the chiefs who were mostly non-Christians began to lose control over their subjects every day. This development placed the chiefs and non-converts on one side. They, therefore began to create an emotionally surcharged atmosphere so as to pick on any possible clash with the native Christians on the

---

31 Frederick S. Downs; loc. cit.
32 AR; Superintendent's Standing Order No. 113D/29.7.1927.
slightest pretext. The chiefs wanted to punish the Christian subjects because the latter paid less respect and less obedience to their demands. This was the background of the infighting between the chiefs and their Christian subjects.

The young and growing Church had to face opposition from the chiefs as well as the non-converts. It was circulated among the chiefs that the activities of their Christian subjects was harmful to the stability of their rule and that it might lead to the end of their rule. The chiefs were non-converts and alone shared in the administrations, while most villagers who were Christians and were under the dominant influence of a Pastor and teachers had no voice at all.\textsuperscript{33} A struggle between the chiefs on one hand and the Christian missionaries and their followers on the other, ensued. The chiefs had now to take a defensive position from the possible inroads to their power from their Christian subjects.

This situation worsened when the revivalists' activities were intensified. But a redeeming feature for the chiefs was that there were some divisions and differences of opinions among the early Christians.

\textsuperscript{33}Sudhakar Bhat; \textit{The Challenge of the North East}, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1975, p. 63.
which at times, even put the mission authorities at a dilemma. There were occasions when the Government had to interfere to bring peace. Such an incident in which the Government intervened took place at Kelkang village and the movement was put to an end when the ring-leaders were intimidated and arrested.

To digress, the revivalists' movement when it took an extreme form not only encouraged dissention among the Christian themselves but also, led to a moral laxity among them which sometimes caused the good image of the Christian principles to be tarnished.

Under such circumstance, the chiefs were further encouraged to take extreme measures in dealing with their Christian subjects. The persecution inflicted upon the Christians by the chiefs was reprisal in nature. In fact, in the early years of the Church, individuals and families who embraced Christianity were sometimes expelled from their villages. Such was the treatment received by the Christians from the chiefs as well as his non-convert subjects. In such clashes, the native converts had no backing except the Church.

The setting up of separate Christian villages did not solve the problem. Such villages were faced with a number of difficulties. The Christians realized that the best way for the Church to grow was to remain among the
non-believers. The Christians and non-Christians began to live, as before, in one house or in the same village. Slowly this helped in the growth of the Christian community.

Persecution of the Christians was perhaps most severe at Khandaih ruled by chief Vanphunga. He ruled over 400 houses. It was here that the Mission first established a school, for the number of converts was large.\(^{34}\) As a result, persecution was also rigorous in this village. The chiefs, his upas and other non-Christian subjects took active part in beating the Christians and driving them out of their houses when it was dark and it was raining.\(^{35}\) Those who were driven out of their villages had their properties confiscated. Physical attack and destruction of the houses were the common features. Sometimes, they were dispersed while they were holding their service. In spite of this situation, the Christians continued to preach the message of the Gospel. To quote Rev. Zairema:

> These (new converts) went to other villages and preached their new-found religion. God made use of these persecutions to build up His Church and to spread His Gospel.\(^{36}\)

Another important factor that hindered the growth of the Christian Church was what they called *puma zai*

---

\(^{34}\)Rev. Liangkhaia; *Mizo Chanchin, op. cit.*, p. 135.

\(^{35}\)Rev. Zairema; *op. cit.*, p. 11.

\(^{36}\)Ibid.
popularly known as *tlanglam zai*, the origin of which is rather difficult to trace. The avowed purpose of *puma zai*, started by non-Christians, was to replace the Christian hymns which had been popular since the inception of Christianity in Mizoram. The song spread like wildfire to all parts of the hills and in some villages the chiefs celebrated (it) by making big feasts in which all the people in the villages participated and danced in group in the open air. The songs were mainly worded in praise of a great chief. J. M. Lloyd wrote:

One of the severest tests came in 1908, when there was a sudden resurgence of heathenism. An old Lushai tune was set to new words and became immediately popular. The words were generally in praise of a great village chief. It was reputed and believed by many, to have been a song sung by a jungle spirit. It spread like wild fire to all parts of the hills. Amazing manifestations of feeling accompanied the singing - almost as though the Revivals were being parodied. Great feasts were held during which the young men and girls danced in ecstasy. These demonstrations were made in every village. The cause of Christ seemed doomed in Lushai. . . . It is significant to note that this ribald spirit and the popularity of this song remained until the time of the famine in 1911.37

These songs being traditional in tune had an emotional appeal to older people and it remained the popular song mostly to a few non-Christians till 1946.

37J. Meirion Lloyd; op. cit., pp. 54-55.
Educational Sphere

Education did not face serious antagonism from the people from the beginning. Soon after their arrival at Aizawl in 1894, they started to teach "English alphabet" to people among whom were Suaks of Durtlang, Thangphunga of Chaltlang and Khamliana of Lungleng who were later on appointed as chiefs by the Government. With their voluntary assistance, the missionaries started translating parts of the Holy Bible viz. the Gospels of Luke, John and Acts, in a thatched house they used as Church and school. This was the beginning of education among the Mizos which had strengthened the hold of the Church over them. The role of education towards the cause of Christianity in Mizoram was tremendous.

In the early stage, the response to education was encouraging, but there was also some amount of indifference. Since the people were not aware of the significance and benefit of education, the attendance of pupils in the class was very poor. Kalijoy Kavyatirtha observes:

> The students who have their names in the school rolls could make much progress had they regularly attended the school for some time but they did not or on an average in 75 cases out of a 100 they could not attend the school for over a month continually.³⁸

³⁸ Kalijoy Kavyatirtha; loc. cit.
In the early days, teachers were also very liberal and allowed the students to smoke even while class was going on. Thus they enjoyed complete freedom. A strict code of behaviour was neither imposed by the teachers nor did the students know class behaviour. But the progress of education was rather encouraging when they came to know that it would be an inevitable part of their life. Again Kalijoy put on record in 1897:

The Lushais attending the school are now civilized to a certain extent. They do not now-a-days bring their vaibel (pipe) with them much less smoking the same in my presence which they used to do before.39

Slowly the students also learned how to respect their teachers.

The students who attended schools had no thought or idea of future prospects. Considering their background, it was rather difficult to anticipate any bright future for those who received education. They were not certain that they would get employment in the Government services. Most of them simply joined the school to escape from the cooly labour.40 Since forced labour had been the most hateful task, to escape from it a number of young people went to schools opened for them by the missionaries.

39Ibid.
40Rev. Zairema; op. cit., p. 22.
The sentiment against forced labour was fully exploited by the Government when it declared exemption from such physical services on the part of those who passed Class IV standard. The Government also gave instructions for the employment of educated youths. The Superintendent, by an Order in 1907, declared that the Government would employ those who had education. The Order runs thus:

As there are now a number of Lushai youths who have passed the Lower Primary Examination it is ordered that in future if in any village there is a Lower Primary passed candidates he shall be appointed as village writer in place of the man who has not passed the exam. No apprentice chupprassies will be appointed in future who have not passed the Lower Primary Standard. From the 1st January 1908, none will be appointed who have not passed Upper Primary.

In order to attract more and more boys to schools, the Government also issued free rations. Such initiatives taken by the Government contributed to creating favourable response from the Mizos. The number of literates as indicated below shows that the response of the common people to education was good.

---

41 Ibid.
42 AR; Order No. 2 of 1907-1908.
43 Source: The figures are all census figures taken from the respective Censuses. The percentage of literates and trend are the author's own calculation.
The figures in the first two censuses indicate that the response of the people to education was comparatively higher and encouraging than their response to Christianity during the same period. The main reason was perhaps that people were now conscious of the need of education.

Schools and students in 1948 were as below.44

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Nos. of Primary Schools</th>
<th>Nos. of Middle Schools</th>
<th>Nos. of High Schools</th>
<th>No. of Pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aizawl Sub-Div.</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunglei Sub-Div.</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aizawl Sub-Div.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunglei Sub-Div.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aizawl Sub-Div.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunglei Sub-Div.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44Source: District Hand Book (Mizo District, Assam) by B. Poonte; op. cit., p. 11.
Since the Trend line is sloping upward from left to right, there has been an increase in the number of literate persons. It also shows that the percentage rate of literacy has been rising from decade to decade or within the time period 1901-41. It opens hope for the future growth of literacy percentage even up to 100% literacy.
However, the education for girls received little encouragement but rather had opposition from men because girls were needed to help their mothers at home. Even those who attended schools sometimes had to carry their younger sisters to schools: "I may mention now that some of the girls cannot come unless they bring with them i.e. on their backs the latest family baby." As girls enjoyed a socially lower status than men, therefore, they received secondary considerations in all spheres.

As a result of the opposition to girls' education the gap between men and women gradually became wider. Earlier, although women were considered socially inferior, in actual practice there was not much difference. The general attitude was that it was useless to give education to girls. The notion at work was that since girls had to do all the work at home, there was no point in educating them. The Mizo proverb Hmeichhe finin tuikhur ra l a kai lo meaning "the wit of women does not extend beyond the point of the water-hole" rightly expresses such a view. The main ground against girls' education was that they were to look after household affairs at home while their mothers were away from home at jhuming.

45 In 1939 the Director of Public Instruction visited Mizoram. He wrote a detail report and the quotation is of his, E. Chapman and M. Clark; Mizo Miracle, Christian Literature Society, Madras, 1968, p. 61.
Another contention was that the social status of women should not be changed. It was contented that no one should marry an educated girl. So, the main problem faced by the two lady missionaries in the persons of Chapman and Clark in southern Mizoram, when they came out in 1919, was the opposition of opening of a girls' school. They were asked by the people to go back to England within 6 months' time. But taking this as a challenge, they proceeded with their mission and they finally and successfully established girls' education at Lunglei in southern Mizoram. It was with such difficulty they tried to convince men that they would gain the most benefit from educated girls. The rapid increase in the number of schools in villages had changed their earlier views on girls' education. Thus the fervour for education increased in every grown-up man and this paved the way for the rapid spread of education in Mizoram.

Whereas there was strong opposition to girls' education there was practically no whole-hearted opposition of the people to education. However, the aged people who did not understand the real significance of education raised some voice against education, particularly with regard to boys going to school. Their main argument, based on wrong

---

46 E. Chapman and M. Clark; op. cit., p. 5.
information was that the boys, after finishing their education could serve in no greater capacity than escorts over the cooly labours. They, therefore, felt that such type of education would be opposed.

Such opposition, however, could not regard the spread of education in Mizoram. The number of educated girls and boys increased apace. The increase in number had on the one hand given the educated men and women an impetus for reading books, magazines, weeklies, etc. The Government in 1907 published a book called the English Premier meant for the beginners and it was the first of its kind. And in 1911 a monthly newspaper entitled, the Mizo Leh Vai Chanchin Bu was published in Mizo language with 870 copies in circulation. In this monthly magazine, the Government orders, communiques, etc. were generally published mainly for the general public. World news, local, short stories, health, and other subjects were always highlighted for the benefit of the people. These publications were followed by Christian monthly called the Christian Tlangau.

---

47 Vanchhunga; op. cit., p. 284.