CHAPTER VI

FOLK-CULTURE

LANGUAGE:

The Mara language is spoken by all the Maras who live in the Mara District of South Mizoram and its adjoining hill tracts of Indo-Myanmar borderland covering large hill areas of the erstwhile Haka Sub-Division and Northern Arakan Hill Tracts of Myanmar. The early Maras had no script, but had their songs, folk-tales, traditions, etc., which had been handed down orally from generation to generation since the time immemorial. There is a story among them which says that very long ago Khazopa gave the Maras a separate language written on skin. Nara, the great sorcerer, threw all of his possessions including the art of writing into deep stream before he drowned himself, and the Maras lost all knowledge of the art of writing.1

The Mara language has been classified by George Grierson2 as a member of the central Chin sub-group of the Kuki group of the Assam-Burma branch of the Tibeto-Burman family. The central Chin sub-groups are Mara, Lai, Lusei

1 S. N. Barkataki: Tribal Folk-tales of Assam, 1970, p. 75.
or Dulien, Zahao, Tashon, Yokwa, etc. Parry, however, suggests that Mara is a dialect of Lai. Similar view is also held by another writer. Parry’s statement is thus not acceptable for the following grounds. First, Lai is one of the central Chin sub-group languages spoken by the Hakas, the Thlatlas, etc. who identify themselves as Lai (a word which means "central" or "middle"). However, the terms "Central" and "Lai" are not interchangeable. While the term "Lai" denotes particular central Chin tribes, it can not be used for all the central Chin sub-groups. Second, Mara is one of the classified languages of the central Chin sub-groups. R.A. Miller says that Mara is closely associated with Khami. For this reason, Lorrain could easily prepare Khami or Matu Dictionary. Thirdly, Mara is very different from other central Chin sub-group languages in accent, phraseology, grammatical composition, etc. R.A. Miller has, therefore, classified it as one of the Kuki sections of Tibeto-Burman family. This view is shared by other

5 B.K. Barua: 'Publishers Note' in Grammar, p. i.
8 Newsletter, 1930, p. 2.
9 Roy Adrew Miller: op.cit., p. 444.
writers.\textsuperscript{10} It is, however, certain that Mara is one of the distinct tribal languages of the North-East India.

The first record of Mara language was made by Tickell who in 1852 drew up a short vocabulary.\textsuperscript{11} Latham also drew up the same in 1859 which was the Heima variation of the Mara language.\textsuperscript{12} It is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Heima</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td>che-pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woman</td>
<td>che-noung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>village</td>
<td>kù</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hill</td>
<td>klo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forest</td>
<td>roley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stream</td>
<td>peva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one</td>
<td>mé - kha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two</td>
<td>mé - ny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>three</td>
<td>mé - thao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>four</td>
<td>mé - pullee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>five</td>
<td>mé - pâ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>six</td>
<td>mé - churru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seven</td>
<td>mé - sharree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eight</td>
<td>mé - charia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{10} Michael C. Shapiro and Harold F. Schiffman: \textit{op.cit.}, p. 112.

\textsuperscript{11} S.R. Tickell: \textit{op.cit.}, p. 207.

\textsuperscript{12} R.G. Latham: \textit{op.cit.}, p. 157.
Lewin also drew up the Heima variation of the Mara language in 1869. Other writers also drew up the same since the last part of the 19th century. The Mara language was reduced into writing in the early part of 1908 by Lorrain who introduced Saving’s alphabet of Roman character with slight modification.

Each Mara group has its own local dialect. These dialectical variations are, however, only accent and phraseology which differ from group to group. The more prominent dialects are Hlaipao, used by the Heimas, Lialais and Zyhnos; Sizo, the dialect of the Sizos and their sub-groups such as Chapi, Ngiaphia, Saby, Ratu, Tisi, Taikua, etc.; Tlosai, the dialect of the Tlosais; Hawthai, the dialect of the Hawthais; Iana, the dialect of the Ianas; and Lachei, the dialect of the Lacheis.

The Hlaipao is closely akin to the dialect spoken by the Hnaro, Fawta, Leika, etc. of the Lautu area of the Thlatla Township. Among the Hlaipaos, there are two local

13 *Dwellers*, p. 147.
14 *Newsletter*, 1957, p. 4.
15 Tlosai is the only dialect reduced into writing, and is widely used in writing and reading as common language within the Mara Autonomous District of South Mizoram.
variations such as Zyhno and Heima, which are little different from each other in accent. The Tlosai is more or less similar to the Hawthai excepting accent and some archaic words. These two dialects are again little different from the Sizó in accent and some archaic words. The Iana mostly spoken by the Ianas is closely akin to the Zophei of the Thlatla Township. The following list of words compares the Mara dialects each other and with Lautu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Sizó</th>
<th>Tlosai</th>
<th>Hlaipao</th>
<th>Siata</th>
<th>Lautu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Fakhae</td>
<td>Sakha</td>
<td>Pyukha</td>
<td>Sangkhe</td>
<td>Sakha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Fanei</td>
<td>Sano</td>
<td>Pyunai</td>
<td>Sanghning</td>
<td>Sanghni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Fatho</td>
<td>Satho</td>
<td>Pyutho</td>
<td>Sangthung</td>
<td>Sangthu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Fapali</td>
<td>Sapali</td>
<td>pyupali</td>
<td>Sangpali</td>
<td>Sangpali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Fapangaw</td>
<td>Sapengaw</td>
<td>Pyupa</td>
<td>Sangpangaw</td>
<td>Sappangaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Facharu</td>
<td>Sacharu</td>
<td>Pyucharu</td>
<td>Sangru</td>
<td>Sangtaru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Fasari</td>
<td>Sasari</td>
<td>Pyusari</td>
<td>Sangsari</td>
<td>Sasari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>Facharie</td>
<td>Sacharie</td>
<td>Pyucharia</td>
<td>Sangre</td>
<td>Sacharia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Fachaki</td>
<td>Sachaki</td>
<td>Pyuchakue</td>
<td>Sangkua</td>
<td>Sachaki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>Fahry</td>
<td>Sahraw</td>
<td>Pyuhra</td>
<td>Sanghraw</td>
<td>Sahraw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ear</td>
<td>Nykhao</td>
<td>Nakhao</td>
<td>Nakhu</td>
<td>Nawh</td>
<td>Nachakao</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16 The Sizós commonly use particle "fa", "faw", "fi", etc. and "R", is pronounced with crude accent. In numeral, the Tlosais use prefix particle "sa" and the Hawthais use "mia". The Heimas also use prefix particle "ma" in numeral while Zyhno use "pyu".

17 The Siata is closely akin to the Lautu in numeral and accent. The particle "ng" is very common in Siata dialect.
The Mara language is conflexional and poor in synonyms. There are certain words, very difficult to reproduce. There is no word or syllable consonant ending. Diphthongs are very common. The language is very different from the Mizo. The following words show the difference between the Tlōsai (Mara) and the Mizo dialects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Tlōsai</th>
<th>Mizo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>house</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>village</td>
<td>Khi</td>
<td>khua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hill</td>
<td>tla</td>
<td>tlang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>river</td>
<td>chava</td>
<td>lui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fish</td>
<td>nga</td>
<td>sangha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tortoise</td>
<td>seilako</td>
<td>satel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jhum</td>
<td>lyu</td>
<td>lo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rice</td>
<td>sa</td>
<td>buh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOLK-SONGS:

The Maras were ardent lovers of songs and dances, and they regarded themselves as a singing people. Songs were sung at all social gatherings like drinking parties, feasts, ceremonies, etc. No event was, however, complete without songs and dances which were in their blood. Songs indeed constituted the richest heritage of the Mara folk-literature.
Some local scholars have attempted to trace the origin of the present Mara folk-song. According to them the earliest song dates back to the 16th century A.D. when the Maras were living in the south Haka Sub-division of the Chin Hills. Many names of villages, hills, rivers, etc. recited in their folk-songs are now located in the Chin Hills of Myanmar. The exact origin of the Mara folk-song was, however, veiled in oblivion. The songs were learnt by oral practice and transmitted in this fashion from generation to generation for centuries.

As mentioned above, one of the richest aspects of the Mara folklore is the folk-songs with their qualities of high lyricism, exquisite composition and expression of human feelings. The Mara folk-song provides a wonderful variety with expression of joy and happiness, pain and sorrow, courage and valour. The songs are simple and charming, full of emotion and deep feelings. The themes are of different gists such as nature, love, joy, pain, war, sorrow, etc. The songs are composed of old versions in form of prose with archaic and phrasal words. The verses are generally short consisting of few stanzas with two to four sentences. Personifications and metaphors are prominently displayed in their songs. There are a few folk-songs which may be taken as having the character of ballads in their narration of events - historical, legendry or imaginary.

18 C. Haoko: op.cit., p. 11.
In folk-songs, verse and music go together. The folk-poetry is merely a vehicle for the folk-tune. The simple catching folk-tunes conveying the feelings and sentiments of their ancestors, their lives and thought, their activities and achievement, their moral and discipline are of great value. Songs, music and dance are, however, a composite which is the dominant characteristic of their culture. The folk-songs are slightly different in tunes and themes or topics, and are sung in different languages, the Hlaipao, Tlōsai, Sizö and other dialects being very different from each other.

The folk-songs may be broadly divided into nine classes according to their themes or topics and tunes: the Ankhypahla, the Athihla, the Azaohla, the Opichhohla or the Beihla, the Pakhupihla, the Pazitahla, the Sah-Jahla, the Sa-Jahla and the Chakeilu-Jahla. Local elders and scholars do not, however, accept the classification of the Mara folk-songs made by Parry for the following grounds. First, Parry has classified the Mara folk-songs into three classes: The everyday songs, The Hladyu and the Pakhupihla. This classification excluded many other songs which are mentioned above. Secondly, the everyday songs, according to Parry, includes the Tlōsaihla, the Zyhnahla, the Chapihla

and the *Awkhypahla*. It is, however, ascertained that the *Awkhypahla* was the only everyday songs, and each Mara group did not have its own local folk-song. Finally, the *Hidayu*, sung by intonation, was of the Haka Chin origin, and could not, therefore, be classed the Mara folk-song.  

**The *Awkhypahla***:

The *Awkhypahla* which means "cock's song" was the most popular everyday song sung at beer-parties, feasts and wakes. It was sung by both individual and duet or group with regular intonation in each stanza. Intonation was made by an individual either man or woman in consecutive order, accompanied by the beating of drum and mithun's horns. The *Awkhypahla* covered various themes or topics and one could compose several verses from time to time but there was no individual authorship.

The *Awkhypahla* were sung in different tunes which slightly differed from village to village. The more prominent tunes are the *Aola* or *Aohlei*, the *Chady-ao*, the *Chaichahly-ao* the *Chalapa-ao*, the *Chhatho-ao*, the *Hawta-ao*, the *Heima-ao*, the *Hnaro-ao*, the *Kahnaí-ao*, the *Ngipaphia-ao*, the *Potia-ao*, the *Rari-ao*, the *Ratu-ao*, the *Sachheir ao*, the *Saby-ao*, the *Sokalypa-ao*, the *Tipi-ao*, the *Tlósai-ao*, the

20 Informant: H.T. Phili.

21 Informant: F.C. Teihra.
the Tyma-ao, the Vaipa-ao, the Zaulaipan-ao, the Zipai-ao, etc. These tunes were more or less similar, but each tune had its own verse and gist. Each tune was mostly known by satirical nature or by the name of person or village or tribe. The most attractive and loving tune was the Hnaro-ao. The following verse bears witness to this view:

Ao to zydua a vaw pih na,
Hnaro-ao na a maih di chai,
Razando Ko taina a daih.

(Many tunes are being composed,
The Hnaro-ao is the loveliest tune,
It even reaches Queen Victoria.)

Local elders say that the Hnaro-ao, one of the tunes of the Awkhypahla was learnt from the Hnaros of the Laut sub-area. Parry, however, makes wrong interpretation saying that the Awkhypahla itself was started in Hnaro. It is held that for centuries the Maras sang the Awkhypahla which was handed down from the time immemorial. Local elders say that the Awkhypahla was accumulated and originated from

22 Laicho: Mara, p. 31. Also Information: T. David and K. Pheito.
23 MHB, p. 43.
24 The Maras call Queen Victoria "Razando" meaning "the mother of the British Company".
25 Informant: S. Thabau.
the Ada, the oldest tune of the Mara folk-song. The exact origin of the Ada was, however, veiled in obscurity.

**The Athihla:**

The Athihla or Lausapa which means "the dead's song" was sung at the Riha and Athipatyukhei ceremonies. It was a lamentation song sung by group in honour of the dead. The verses and tune were different from the Awkhypahla. One of the verses goes as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ahy sapa nashly tama,} \\
\text{Ropi ti kaw thai e,} \\
\text{Ti pan\d{\text{o}} za chhi chi e.}
\end{align*}
\]

(Whose son is he, \\
That fetches the dead men's water \\
That brings about illness?)

**The Azahla:**

The Azahla was also sung at the Riha and Viabaw ceremonies. It was also sung at beer-parties and feasts.

---

27 Informant: S. Thabau.
28 Pachi Hlychho: *op.cit.*, p. 133.
29 Informant: T. David.
30 Pachi Hlychho: *op.cit.*, p. 137.
Its tune was more less similar with the \textit{Aola}.\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Azaohla} comprised of the different ballads with narrations of different tragical events which took place in historical times. The more prominent ballads were the \textit{Haoma-Vangia hla}, the \textit{Hlaofa hla}, the \textit{Maita hla}, the \textit{Hlichhy-Hly-a hla}, etc.

Local elders say that the \textit{Azaohla}\textsuperscript{32} was the oldest Mara folk-song which was accumulated and originated from the \textit{Haoma-Vangia hla}, the ballad which contained narration of the pang of separation of married couple, Haoma and his wife, Vangia. According to the story, Haoma on his mad jale lost his wife to Topa Beihra, chief of the Longao Aza of the Haka sub-area. When the latter enquired about Vangia, the former replied that she was his sister. Topa Beihra intended to marry Vangia, and persuaded Haoma who ultimately surrendered his wife on the condition that he would get huge amount of bride price. When Vangia was taken away, Haoma realised his fault, and his passion for her made him sad. Haoma, then, composed many verses. That was the beginning of the \textit{Azaohla}.\textsuperscript{33} The following is one of the verses of the \textit{Azaohla}.

\begin{verbatim}
Vangia sikri cine saapa cha
angia chylaopa am,
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{31} Informant : T. David.
\textsuperscript{32} The \textit{Azaohla} is originally known as \textit{Haoma-Vangia-hla}.
\textsuperscript{33} Informant : T. David. Also Pachi Hlychho : op. cit., p. 138.
Batla lia kaw baih aw sala
zafaw a mo chata. 34

(How beautiful the chylaopo is, being specially woven by Vangia
Let me keep it hanging over on the bamboo beam for people to see it.)

The Hlaofa hla was another component of the Azaohla. The story says that Hlaofa had connection with his mother due to his drunkeness, and he was terribly ashamed of his misbehaviour. He ultimately drowned himself in the Kolodyne river. He composed several verses in the Athikhi and sent few verses to his relations of this world through the Khazohneipa. 35 One of the verses goes as follows: 36

Sieta na chadai mawsala peitari pakua reina,
Nöpi na chadai mawsala bōthā chhaw ta reina.

(If my sister pursues me, I will return her a pumtek neckace.
If my mother pursues me, I will cut her into three parts.)

The Haita hla was also classified as the Azaohla. It originated from awful murder. The story held by local elders

34 Laicho: Hara, p. 46.
35 Pachi Hlychho: op.cit., p. 147.
says that Pheitlao, the husband of Malta was brutally killed by Malta's relations who belonged to the Bohia and Thlyutha clans. Malta then composed several verses. One of the verses runs as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
Ei khi ti aw, Himali ti aw, \\
Ti chhie cha ba te la, \\
Bohia samzy, Thlyutha samzy, \\
Cha a khôlo na se. \\
\end{align*}
\]

(Oh! Himali water, my village water, 
You become loathsome water, 
Let Bohia and Thlyutha people 
Drink it and get harm.)

The *Hlichhy-Hly-a hla* was the most explicit love song of the Azaohla. This song, according to local elders, originated from the love-affair between Hlichhy and Hly-a who composed many verses. Their love-relationship was full of love-sickness, passion and romanticism, ending with tragedy, separation and death. The *Hlichhy-Hly-a hla* was prominently sung at beer-parties. The following is one of

37 Pachi Hlychho (*op.cit.*, pp. 144-147.) mentions the name Hmochao for Pheitlao. My Informants say that Pheitlao is the correct name in the plot of the story.

38 Informant: T. David.

39 Informant: H.T. Phili.

40 Laicho: *Mara*, pp. 39-44.
the most popular verses. 41

Hlichhy, na patu kha la Hly-a va ne,
Nochhi kiamie Hlohlo myunô no e.
(Hlichhy! do not hold on me, I am not Hly-a,
I am Hlohlo's in-law of the East.)

The Opichhôhla:

The Opichhôhla also known as Beihla42 was closely familiar with the Pakhupihla in verse but little different in tune and theme. It was generally sung at the Khutla festival and other ceremonies connected with the newly constructed big house having large front verandah called tlaillai and newly constructed wooden fence, laupi or pepham.43

The Pakhupihla:

The Pakhupihla also known as Pakhupi ödôhla was the most prominent calendric folk-song. It was sung at the Khutla festival and also occasionally sang at the opichha feast. The young men and girls visited each man's house one

41 Pachi Hlychho: op. cit., p. 152.
42 Informant: T. David.
43 Ibid.,
after another and sang the Pakhupi oddhla. One of the verses runs as follows:

Azindó vaw y, keikao chhi na hy la,
Siahsi saina o cha za dōh cha khia pi.
(Oh, the host, you open us the door,
We the young men and girls encircle your house.)

The Pazitahla:

The Pazitahla which was also commonly known as "Hmiakhupatihla" among the Zyhnos of the Hlapao group was the calendric song. It was generally sung at the Pazitahla festival which took place after harvesting maize when the red sorrel, hmiakhu started flowering. The singers visited each rich man's house and sang the Pazitahla which was also known as Pazita-oddhla. One of the verses is given below:

Keimo aikachhua lia a zamo pakia,
A hno chicharapa a za sai e.
(She gazes herself at close to our door
She shows us her pawky breast.)

44 Informant : T. David.
46 Informant : F.C. Teihra.
47 Laicho : Mara, p. 37.
The Pazitahla was generally followed by many other songs like the Ampivynôhla, the Faitlishla, the Fakichiepahla, the Lielauchhepahla, the Thairipupa, the Vao-ietloiola, the Vakhleithla-nôhla and the Zawchhauhla.\textsuperscript{48}

The Sa-iahla:

The song was sung by individual or group at the Salu-ia ceremony which was performed by a hunter over the head of each animal killed in the game or trap. The another hunting song Hlathla was also sung at this ceremony.\textsuperscript{49} The verse goes as follows:

\begin{align*}
A \text{ paly to hry nata,} \\
Khisô to hry nata, \\
Eipaw khithlao liata, \\
A somyly chai e. \\
(I \text{ explore every field,} \\
I \text{ explore every hill,} \\
The abode of the good Khasô is the best place for the game.)
\end{align*}

The Chakeilu-iahla:

This song was sung at the Chakeilu-ia ceremony.

\textsuperscript{48} Informant : H.T. Phili.

\textsuperscript{49} Pachi Hlychho : op.cit. p.115.
performed over the head of tiger killed in the game or trap. The hunter and his male guests put women’s clothes and smoked woman’s water pipe. They danced round the tiger’s head, and pushed their spindles into the tiger’s nostrils in each round. While dancing they sang the verse which runs as follows.

\[
\text{Ahyma hmitlai sôh ta cha dy e,}
\]
\[
\text{Lyura machhobunô na hmitlai ta cha dy e.}
\]
(Who stabs you to death with a spindle,

The owl stabs you to death with a spindle.)

The Sah-iahla:

The Sah-iahla was sung only at the Sah-ia ceremony which was performed after harvesting rice. It was, as a rule, performed by any one who yielded good amount of rice amounting to above two hundred fifty bais or basket. Local elders says that this ceremony was introduced by the Hawthais who held large fertile areas of the Chhiera country. They could perform the Sah-ia ceremony and sang the Sah-iahla from time to time. One of the verses is noted below:

\[
\text{50 Pachi Hlychho : op.cit., p. 34.}
\]
\[
\text{51 Informant : T. David.}
\]
\[
\text{52 Pachi Hlychho : op.cit., p. 167.}
\]
Ei Khi chheipa ei tha eina hia khiala,
Vaiśī byhna a sy hae ta ma aw.
(If my neighbouring villages enquire about me,
You tell them that he has good amount of rice.)

FOLK-DANCES:

The Maras were ardent lovers of dances, and dancing was a universal practice. No event was complete without heathen dances which predominated over their folk life. Both sexes were good dancers as well as singers. Dancing took place at feasts, ceremonies, festivals, beer-parties, etc. Many dances were associated with festivals and other important events while others with religious beliefs and practices which closely related to every day of life. Most of them are group dances, and there are also few solo dances.

The Sawlakia:

The Sawlakia which means "the dance of the spirits of the slain"53 was a war-like dance performed at the Ia-ceremony which was performed over the heads of the slain killed in war. The warriors and their friends danced the Sawlakia round and round the heads to please the spirits of the slain for total subjugation and transfer the

53 N.E. Parry: op.cit., p. 214.
soul-substance of the slain to the slayer.54

The dance was mild and enjoyable accompanied with regular beats of gongs, i.e. dawkho and viadan. It was simple being performed by about twenty young fellows marching round in a circle. Lewin describes it as a "a stage triumphal march".55 The dance was usually led by a warrior riapan who had taken a head, wearing a typical regalia, a plume called rabó in his hair. He held, by his right hand, a ceremonial dao vaina, the other fellows bore different weapons which were clanked together as the dancers moved. Spearman calls it "a wild sort of war-dance with dhas and shields".56

Local elders say that the Sawlakia dance was performed first by the Sizòs in honour of their first appointed leader Mahli when he held the post of the chieftainship and occupied his house opí in the early part of the 17th century A.D. Thereafter, the dance became more popular among the Sizo sub-groups.57 It was originally danced at the la and Opichho ceremonies.

Both local elders and scholars believe that the

54 B.C. Gohain: op.cit., p. 75.
55 Wild Race, p. 164.
57 Informant: K. Pheito.
Saulakia was originated from the head-hunting practice which was enthusiastically followed by the early Maras. Regarding the origin of the Saulakia, there is a story which says that the Saulakia was, by simple imitation, learnt by a female slave from the tiger-men, Haoki who performed a sort of dance at the Teisaiby.

The Saulakia was a most primitive Mara folk dance, handed down from generation to generation since the time immemorial. The Saulakia was originally simple, but was gradually developed by making improvement in its significance from time to time. Later, it was improved and enriched by the development of Burman civilization which brought about civilized goods like gong, sword, ceremonial dao, etc. These made the dance more enjoyable and beautiful.

The Dawla:

The Dawla was danced in a squatting position. It was performed at the Ja ceremony before or after the Saulakia. It was also danced at the Pazita festival and the Opichho ceremonies. The origin of the Dawla is, however, veiled in obscurity.

58 Pachi Hlychho: op. cit., p. 4.
59 Haoki (Haila or Syuki) is, according Lorrain (Grammar, p. 308), a satyr or wild man of the wood who eats human flesh.
60 Informant: K. Pheto.
interruption. The man moved round forwards, followed by two
dwomen by his right and left sides in close proximity. Each
trio danced round three times and at the end of each round
all stamped with their feet on the ground.

The Pazitala:

It was generally performed at the Pazita festival and
the Athila. Three dancers as in the Athila, took active
part, and were surrounded by young men and girls who stood
in a ring with a girl between each young men holding their
arms each other. In case of the Athila, young men and
girls did not join the Pazitala.

The Pazitala was, when performed at the Pazita feast,
followed by the Zawchhau-la and other solo dances like the
Saitlei-la, the Awpivyno-la the Tharipupa-la, the Saitlei-la
the Pierapupa-la, the Pazutiaeta-la, the Varietlo-la, etc.

The Zawchhaula:

As mentioned earlier, the Zawchhaula was performed at
the final round of the Athila and also at the Pazita
festival. The Zawchhaula was, if performed at the Pazita

 Informant : T. David.

 Pachi Hlychho : op. cit., p. 27.

 Informant : F.C. Teihra.
feast, only one man danced being incircled by young men and girls who sat in a ring and sang the *Zawchhauhla* conducted by one drummer.\(^\text{67}\) They all sung the *Zawchhauhla* while dancing the *Zawchhauhla*.

**The Azaola:**

The dance was performed at beer-parties, the *Pazita* festival, etc. Three dancers as in the *Pazitala* danced the *Azaola*, and they were encircled by young men and girls who stood in a ring holding each other over their shoulders and sang the *Azaohla* accompanied by the beating of drum.\(^\text{68}\)

**The Pakhupila:**

The *Pakhupila* which literally means "the knee dance" was performed at the *Khutla* festival and also at the *LøpheiPARAI* ceremony being held before the *Jhums* were burnt.\(^\text{69}\) It was *ana* to performed at any other seasons. The dance was performed by young men and girls standing in a ring in male female order, girls between men who put their arms round the girls' shoulders and made simple movement. They danced *Pakhupila* and also sang the *Pakhupihla*, and the

\(^\text{67}\) Informant: K. Pheito. Also Pachi Hlychho: *op.cit.*, p. 27.


\(^\text{69}\) N.E. Parry: *op.cit.*, p. 415.
man who stood in the centre of the ring beat a drum.  

The Beila:

The Beila was the most prominent folk-dance performed at the Opichhō ceremony and also at the festivals like the Pazita and the Pakhupi. The dancers divided themselves into two groups: the dynd, consisting married men and women and the laitlia unmarried men and women. Each group lined up facing each other, each dancer put his or her arms round his or her friends’ shoulders. Each group moved forwards with few steps, uttering shouts of joy and then moved back. After completing three rounds, each group moved out in a ring, forming inner and outer encirclements, and after several rounds each group moved back in a ring to their respective position. This movement was repeated again and again as much as they liked.

The Aukhypala:

The most enjoyable folkdance was the Aukhypala which was performed at beer-parties, feasts, ceremonies, etc.

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70 N.E. Parry: op.cit., p. 430.
71 Informant: T. David.
72 Informant: K. Pheito.
73 Pachi Hlychho: op.cit., p. 33.
Young men and girls sat up in a ring holding each other over their shoulders, and sang the Awkhypahlā being conducted by one drummer and the other who beat the mithun's horns. In the middle of the encirclement, one man or more danced like a flying eagle. It was, however, ana for women to dance the Awkhypala.  

The Rakhatla:

The folk-dance was performed in honour of the dead when a chief or rich person died Pithi and a mithun was killed for the Riha ceremony. It was also repeated at the Lopolparai ceremony. Young men and girls took active part in it. Two logs were laid out on the ground in opposite, a space about seven feet wide was left between the two logs. Five persons sat by the side of one log, and other five persons by the side of other log. Each person held bamboos by his two hands, the other end of bamboos being held by his friend sitting by the side of other log. Bamboos were stuck against the logs twice and then raised up and stuck twice against each other. The dancers skipped in and out between the bamboos, and avoid getting caught between the bamboo clappers.

74 Pachi Hlychho : op.cit., p. 33.
75 Laicho : Mara, p. 33.
76 N.E. Parry : op.cit., p. 415.
The Rakhatla was originally a Haka Chin dance being performed in honour of the deceased woman and only women took part in it. It was known among them as Rawkartlak. Later, it was known as "Cheurakan" or "Cheuralkan" since 1905.

Besides, there are more other folk-dances such as the Mathyupala, a solo dance performed after the Athila; the Chakeiluia-la: the Sah-iala, performed only at the Sah-ia ceremony; the Awta Pheichhua, etc.

FALK-TALES:

The Mara word for folk-tale is Phopa which refers all kinds of narratives, traditional and non-traditional, fiction and non-fiction. The simple cultural experience and their rich traditions of living in the lap of nature find collective expression in their folk-tales. Folk-tale is the oral literature and is perpetuated by oral traditions. According to Bascom, folk-tales are prose narrative which are regarded as fiction. Unlike myths and legends, folk-tales can be regarded as timeless and

78 W.R. Head: Handbook on the Haka Chin Customs, 1917, p. 27.
80 Mylai Hlychho: op.cit., p. 274.
placeless and may be set in any time and any place. The Mara folk-tales usually recount the adventures of animals and human characters, and can be categorised in many ways such as tales on supernatural beliefs, animal tales, trickster tales, jokes and humorous tales, cumulative tales, romantic tales, etc. Most of the stories are characterised by a very broad form of humour.

The folk-tales of the Maras are mainly based on myths and legends, full of marvellous and fantastic adventures. Most of them are adventurous, pathetic, sentimental and humorous. There is a strong emphasis on human qualities like strength, cleverness, wit, wisdom, trickery, endurance and patience. Most of them are about animals which are moved by the same feelings and impulses as human beings, and testify to the simple nature of the people. The animals act as human beings, and their world is analogous to this human world. The structure of the plot is directly or indirectly relate to or connected with human beings. Some of them contain supernatural elements while others are full of jokes and humours. The Mara folk-tale clearly grows in the same way as their folk-dances by addition of stories about current events of general interest. Few stories are mentioned below.

82 N.E. Parry: op.cit., p.542.

The Story of Chadua: 84

One day Chadua saw a mithun being killed and eaten by a tiger. He mistook the tiger for a brown dog, severely beat it with a stick and the tiger ran away. Chadua returned home and told all about the incident to his wife. His wife then scolded and warned him to be careful of any brown dog in future as it was a tiger. She further warned him to be very careful about any thing brown. After a few days of this incident, and in the absence of his wife, Chadua saw a brown skirt of his wife hanging in the corner of the hut. Remembering the caution of his wife about any thing brown, he suddenly took up his weapons, attacked his wife's brown skirt till it was turned into shreds.

On the other day, Chadua visited a village known as Chaopokhi. The villagers were all abnormal having no anus and never having passed excretion. Chadua then openly passed his stool in the the village street, and people came and observed him with great surprise. They asked him how he could pass his stool. Chadua told them that his anus was made by his parents by making hole at the buttock with the help of a hot piece of iron as soon as he was born. The villagers requested Chadua to perform this operation to their children. Chadua did it and put all the operated

84 Chadua is the most popular figure of foolishness and cleverness in jokes and humourous tales. The story is very lengthy and divided into many sections.
The Story of the Man and the Monkey:

Once a man went to riverside to catch some crabs but in spite of all his efforts, he managed to get a very few crabs. As he had been sitting there for nearly the whole day, he became so tired and exhausted that he fell into a deep sleep. A group of monkeys happened to pass by the sleeping man, and they were rather sorry for him when they saw the result of his meagre catch after all his long and strenuous endeavours. They then searched for and caught a plenty of crabs which they stealthily filled into his basket without disturbing him. As the man still continued on sleeping soundly without making any motion, the kind-hearted monkeys came to the conclusion that he was dead, and they decided to carry up towards his home. Though the path led through some rocky hills and precipices, the helpful monkeys safely carried and placed him gently on the ground at the outskirts of village. When the man at last woke up from his sound sleep, he was indeed filled with pleasure and gratitude towards the monkeys.
The news of such fortunate and fantastic experience was the main topic of the village for days on end, so much so that another man decided to try his luck and attempt the same thing too. He also proceeded to the riverside, and after catching a few crabs feigned to fall asleep. A group of monkey happened to pass by a man apparently sleeping with a few crabs inside the basket lying beside him, and they caught a huge number of crabs and filled up his basket. As he kept on with his feigned sleep all the more, the monkeys thought that he was too dead. They thereupon carried him up as they had done before, with intention of reaching him to his village. When they were carrying him over a dangerous and slippery part near a precipice, the man became extremely nervous and so far forget his feigned sleep that he called out, "Oh! oh! do be very careful". The astounded monkeys were so frightened on hearing the deadman loudly speak out that they dropped their burden and scampered off in terror as fast as they could. The unfortunate man crashed down on the sharp rocks below precipice and was instantly killed.

The Tortoise and the Monkeys:

Once, long ago, a tortoise went to a strange village to buy some salt. On its return it saw many monkeys up in a big tree eating the fruit. It asked them to throw some down to it, which they did. Having eaten it, it called out, "Throw me down some more," but the monkeys refused to throw down
any more, and said, "Climb up the tree and fetch some more if you want it". Seilakopa said, "I cannot climb tree". So the monkeys said, "If you like, we will carry you up." and when the tortoise agreed, they carried it up and put it in a forked branch. But when they had eaten as much fruit as they wanted, the monkeys left the tree without helping the tortoise to get down and also carried off all its salt. It dared not jump, and being afraid that it would die, it began to weep bitterly. Tears streamed from its eyes and its nose began to run so fast that a small stream was formed near the foot of the tree. After sometime, a barking deer came by, and drinking from the stream, said, "How very nice the water from this stream is". The tortoise from up the tree immediately called out, "This is not a stream at all, it is my tear." He told the deer why he was weeping, and the deer said, "jump down on to my back". The tortoise replied, "Your back is only four fingers in width, I am afraid to jump." Presently a sambhur stag came by, and also exclaimed at the excellent quality of the water. The tortoise again said, "It is not a stream, but my tears," and told the sambhur why was weeping. The sambhur said, "Jump down on to my back", but the tortoise replied, "Your back is only two hands wide across; I am afraid to jump". However, soon an elephant passed by. It also drank the water and said, "What a very nice spring this is". "It is not a spring", said the tortoise, "It is my tears" and told the elephant why he was weeping. On learning what had happened, the elephant said,
"My back is as broad as a sieve. Jump on me, it will be quite safe". So the tortoise jumped and landed sidewise on the elephant's spine, which at once broke, so that the elephant died. The tortoise ate as much as he could of the elephant's meat and then went near the monkeys' village to defecate. A little later the monkeys came out to go to their fields, and thinking the dung was meat, ate it all up. The tortoise then said, "A little while ago you left me in a tree, and now you have eaten my dung". The monkeys were very angry on hearing this and ate some food and then all went and defecated near the house of the tortoise, after which they all hid themselves in a basket. The tortoise came out, and finding the dung, searched for the monkeys, and found them all hiding in the basket. So after tying them up in the basket, it threw them over a precipice, so that they all died except one female monkey, who was pregnant and who was able to catch hold of a creeper hanging over the precipice. This monkey had many young ones and it is said that all monkeys are descendants of this survivor.

The Story of the Pala Tipo (Lake):

Formerly, the Pala Tipo was a village with three hundred houses. In the middle of the village, there was a huge stone cave in which a large python paripi dwelt, and

85 It is also known as Sawhmotla, situated east of Ngiaphia village.
every night seized one of the village children and swallowed it. The villagers were in despair at the depredations committed by the snake, so they made a strong hook, tied it on to a rope, impaled a dog on the hook and threw it to the snake which swallowed the dog. The villagers then tried to pull out the snake, but with all their efforts they could not do so, and the only succeeded in pulling out enough of the snake to give five times round the rope at the mouth of the hole. Then, as they could not pull out any more of the snake, they cut off the part they had pulled out and the snake's tail and the rest of its body fell back into the deep cave with a fearful noise. From that night water began pouring out from the snake's hole and covered the hole village and formed the lake. The story goes that there is still a village below the lake, and once upon a time a Sahib came with many soldiers and dropped his sword into that lake. The Sahib sent a soldier to dive into it for his sword, and the soldier dived and stayed under the lake for three days. When he came up he said that he had found a large village below the lake, that the inhabitants had feasted him and had become very drunk and so he was late. The soldiers believed his story and fired their cannon and rifles into the lake. At once a hurricane arose, great hailstorms fell and half of the soldiers who had been firing at the lake were killed. On their way to the lake the soldiers had bamboo sticks, which they planted in the earth on the hill Maultila. The sticks planted by the soldiers who had been killed were left standing and to this day the
bamboos on the Maulitla grow with joints and leaf-buds upside down.

**The Story of Thlyuhra:**

Once upon a time there was a giant whose name was Thlyuhra, and people regarded him as the biggest man in the world. He was so big that no women could weave a loincloth for him. Once, his mother made one for him in her belt loom which ran between the hills Kahrietla and Sawhmotla, and spent one whole year to complete the task. Unable to feed her son, Thlyuhra, who required about 400 bais or tins of rice for his usually daily meal, his mother gave him liberty to roam about wherever he liked.

Hence, Thlyuhra left his house, and went on a long journey. He took with him a big gong and reached one village. Before he entered the village, he struck the gong with his fist and the sound was heard by the villagers who regarded it as a sign of challenge. Running towards him, they openly challenged him to fight or to wrestle. Thlyuhra accepted both. The villagers chose the biggest and strongest man among them Lotapai to have a fight with Thlyuhra. The fight was on the condition that whoseever lost would serve the winner. Thlyuhra won the fight.

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86 The distance between these two hills may be about twenty kilometres. The Sawhmotla is now in Myanmar.
One day, Thlyuhra and Lotapai started on a new adventure. On the way they saw a bee-hive $lōkakhei$ which Thlyuhra offered to Lotapai as he felt that it was too small for him. When they saw bigger $lōkakhei$, Thlyuhra took it. After this, they became very thirsty and went down to the Ka-ao river which Thlyuhra offered to Lotapai for it was too small for him. Lotapai drank the whole streams up, and then Thlyuhra drank all the water of the Kolodyne river. When the water became dry, the surrounding villagers rushed to collect the fish which were exposed on the open ground.

While people were busy in collecting the fish, Thlyuhra announced that he wanted to urinate and asked them to step aside, lest they be swept away by his urine. They all stepped aside except a widow, who did not believe that this would be really happened. Thlyuhra urinated and filled the valley and the water carried away the unbelieving widow.

On the other day, Thlyuhra visited another village, and had a fight with Liapazapa, a man with the bickest and longest hands who ever lived on earth, and defeated him. With Liapazapa, they reached another village owned by Awchopypa a man who had a comb-like protuberance in his head like a cook. Awchopypa could never be killed unless his flesh-comb was cut off. The fight between him and Thlyuhra lasted for two days until at last Thlyuhra defeated and put inside a cage which was placed in open so that he would die of sun-stroke. One day the village children were playing.
syhly beans87 when the syhly happened to roll towards Thlyuhra, he took them and did not like to give them back to the children unless he was given a knife. So, the children exchanged their syhly for a knife and Thlyuhra cut open the cage and came out. He had again a fight with Awchopypa. He fought Awchopypa and this time killed him by cutting off his flesh-comb. After many years of further adventures, he went home and met his mother again.

FESTIVALS:

"Cha-ypi"88 is a Mara word for festival and applied to all indigenous festivals performed with definite purpose at regular interval in a year. The early Maras loved social intercourse and bustles and accordingly the Cha-ypi was a common feature of their social life.

Local elders89 hold the view that the Cha-ypi was originated from Katlo, a famous legendary figure of feast. It appears that Cha-ypi had been observed by the Maras while they were in the Chin Hills of Burma, more specifically while they were in the south Haka Sub-Division. People looked forward eagerly to the Cha-ypi because all sections of

87 The seed of a large creeper bean (Entada scandes) is known as syhly.
88 Harapa, p. 56.
89 Informant: K. Pheito.
the people whether poor or rich, enjoyed themselves on such occasions forgetting all their anxieties and miseries. There were four kinds of the Cha-ypi.

The Khutla:

The Khutla, also commonly known as Pakhupi-tla, was the most prominent festival indulged in by the early Maras every year. The festival was a public marry-making as well as a sort of harvest thanksgiving celebrated with great pomp and show. When the jhums had all been cut, the villagers observed this festival which generally took place in the last part of the Pami (March) when a chiachi tree (Erythrina arborescens) developed its blossom flower.

On the occasion of the Khutla, a joint feast contributed by the villagers was held. The house of some rich man was selected for the feast and each house contributed a pot of rice-beer. Animals were killed for the feast and the villagers enjoyed drinking and feasting. Young men and girls danced around the Pakhupila in the village street and sang the Pakhupiha. They visited the houses of rich men in the village, one after another. This

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90 Harapa, p. 56.
91 Pachi Hlychho: op. cit., p. 21.
92 N.E. Parry: op. cit., p. 430.
was known as *pakhupi-odd*. Each house provided them with drink and also killed a pig for the feast. The young men and girls remained at one house till they had consumed all the beer and meat prepared for the feast. They enjoyed drinking, dancing and singing. The *Khutla* festival lasted for several days depending on the number of men prepared to provide free drink and feast. It normally covered six or seven days.

**The Pazita:**

The *Pazita* was a festival of thanksgiving, and was observed every year after harvesting maize. It generally took place in the month of September. On this occasion, each house killed a fowl, *aw* for the family food. This festival was, also, therefore, commonly known as *Amrao* meaning "singeing of fowl". The villagers enjoyed drinking and feasting. Young men and girls danced the *Pazitala* and other several dances, and also sung the *Pazitahla* and other folk-songs. They performed the *Pazita-odd* visiting the houses of rich men who harvested good amount of maize. They moved from one to another. The *Pazita-odd* was very similar to the *Pakhupi-odd*. The *Pazita* festival lasted for several days till young men and girls had consumed all the beer and meat prepared for the feast by some rich men in the

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93 Pachi Hlychho *op.cit.*, p. 21.
94 Marapa, p. 58.
95 Ibid., p. 62.
The Ladawdai:

The Ladawdai also popularly known as Laliachhia, was another prominent festival observed in the month of September. On his occasion, the villagers first cleared out the road about half mile starting from the outskirts of the village. When this was finished, they marched up and down beating gongs and drums. After a bit they marched into the village, and went to the house of man who was previously selected to perform the sacrifice. The road was, however, made for the spirits of the dead to come along with the procession. The villagers visited the graves of all people who died within the last three years, and placed several food on the graves for the spirits of the dead to consume. There was no singing or dancing except drinking. The Ladawdai was an annual festival observed in honour of the dead. It was a ceremony of remembrance of and thanksgiving to the dead, and had certain religious significance apart from the social. Parry describes it as "relic of ancestor worship". The Ladawdai festival normally lasted for two or three days.

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96 Informant: S. Thabau.

97 Mylai Hlychho: op.cit., p. 143.

98 N.E. Parry: op.cit., p. 446.
The Khohnakia:

The Khohnakia was also observed in every year after harvesting rice. It took place in the month of December. On the fixed day, villagers erected a fence outside the village. In evening, the *tlylaba* performed the Ezaw sacrifice killing a fowl which was eaten by him and his companion. On the next day, the hunters went for the game. This was followed by the *chhypa* or *ao*. The day after this, the main Khohnakia took place. On this occasion, the villagers divided themselves into several groups in clan-wise. Each group selected one spot outside village fence and killed a pig. Some meat was cooked and eaten. The rest of the raw meat was divided equally among them. It was ana for a woman to attend the feast. It was a festival of thanksgiving to the different *khas*.

The Pazusata:

The Pazusata was the annual feast performed after harvesting paddy, marking the end of the agricultural year. It was the harvest thanksgiving and public merry-making indulged in by the Maras. The chief part was played by children. The festival started with the Sikisa


100 N.E. Parry: *op.cit.*, p. 443.

ceremony, each house sacrificed a fowl to ensure health and prosperity. In the evening men gathered at the tlylia ground and enjoyed drinking rice-beer. On the next day, a joint feast was prepared, each house contributed dried meat i.e. the flesh of barking deer or porcupine. Some elders brought cooked rice to the tlylia for the feast. The boys also partook the feast at the tlylia ground and after finishing the feast they moved round in the village street making merriment. A fire was made in the middle of the village, and boys sang the Pazasata song and danced round the fire. The feast lasted for two or three days depending on the amount of rice and dried meat they could collect from each house.102

102 N.E. Parry: *op.cit.*, p.441