INTRODUCTION

Missionaries of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) from London came to Southern Mizoram in 1903. Within eighty-two days of their arrival, the missionaries established a mission school, which formed the basis of their ministry and mission activities. Along with formal education, the mission was engaged in religious instruction and social action among the people. In the course of time, this resulted in a radical change in the social, religious, political, economic and educational life of the Mizo. The Mizo left their traditional beliefs to follow Christianity. This eventually, led to the establishment of the Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM). Mizoram at present has the second highest percentage in literacy and Christian population among the twenty-eight states of India.

Following the example of the BMS, the BCM is engaged in an educational ministry among the Mizo, the non-Mizo (Chakma and the Bru) in Mizoram and among the marginalized people groups. Today, the BCM has fifty-five schools under

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1 Mizoram is a land of hills situated in the North-East corner of India, bounded on the north by Assam and Manipur, on the east and south by Myanmar, and on the west by Bangladesh and Tripura. It became the twenty-third state of the Indian Union in 1987. The area is 20,987 sq. km. According to the 2001 Census, the population is 891,058. The distribution according to religion is: Christians - 85.73%; Buddhists - 8.3%; Hindus - 5.05%; Muslims 0.66% and others 0.27%. *Manorama Year Book, 2003.*


3 *Mizo*—Even though a demand of English may require “S” for plural, Mizo people and Mizo leaders prefer that they be called “Mizo” even in plural. Therefore, “Mizo” is used to describe Mizo even when it is in the plural.

4 The BCM is the second largest denomination in Mizoram. It is one of the most dynamic, vibrant and well-organized Churches in India. Thanzauva, the present General Secretary affirms that 66% of human resources and about 75% of financial resources of the Church are being used for education.


6 The Chakmas are the scheduled tribes living in Tripura, Mizoram, Assam, Meghalaya and West Bengal. They live in the southwestern part along the river Karnafuli in Mizoram.

7 The Brus belong to the Tibeto-Burman family. They live in Mizoram, Tripura and Assam. They are referred to as Tuikuk in Mizoram.
its supervision among the non-Mizo and Mizo with more than 20 million rupees earmarked in its annual budget. This research is a historical study of the educational ministry of the BMS and the BCM.

I. STATEMENT OF THE PURPOSE

The purpose for my research is to historically investigate the educational ministry of the Baptist church of Mizoram with a view to arriving at concrete suggestions for improvement. This study will attempt a historical and contemporary investigation into the educational ministry of the BCM. In the process the investigation of the Baptist Missionary Society [BMS] would be required as the background study. This is crucial to understand how the BMS has endeavored as pioneer in educational ministry in Mizoram. The ultimate focus is to study the effectiveness of this ministry in the light of the findings so that applicable recommendations to maximize the strength and eliminate the weakness of the BCM educational ministry might be suggested for the future of the BCM.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To ascertain the key founding principles governing the educational ministry of the BMS and BCM.

2. To identify and compare the educational methods and strategies of the BMS and BCM.

3. To evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the educational ministry of the BCM in order to propose constructive suggestions.

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III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the factors that have contributed to the educational ministries of the BMS and the BCM? What determines the educational strategies of the mission?

2. How did the early educational practices compare with later strategies?

3. What are the potential applications of research findings for the future educational ministry of BCM?

IV. ELABORATION OF RATIONALE

Participating in God’s mission has been the privilege of the Church down the centuries. Historically, most Christian mission societies in India used education as one of the means of achieving their goals. Similarly, the school system, in Mizoram has been a long time accepted form of education as a justifiable method of carrying on missionary enterprise since the initiation of the ministry under the BMS. In the same tradition, the BCM were also engaged in education. The mission and ministry of Jesus were to bring people to life in all its fullness (Jhn.10:10). The Biblical root of Christian mission is the well-known “Great Commission” in Mt 28:16-20 which is basically a reality for the BCM also. The BCM mission statement relates directly to this Biblical mandate.

Therefore, involving in missions is not an option but it is an imperative. Basically, three Biblical foundations that have influenced the BCM educational ministry were 1) the creation mandate, here the Biblical basis stands that God calls humans to take care of his world; 2) to fulfill this, the great commandment, where

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5Gen. 1:28, 2: 15. In the creation mandate God gives human the directive to develop the potential of the “creation.” Mt. 22: 37-39; Ja. 2:14-17, in the Great Commandment, God enjoins his people to love Him and neighbors in order to “serve God and people.” In the Great Commission, Mt. 28: 20, Christ gave God’s people the responsibility to function as ambassadors of God’s salvation in order to make disciples of all nations. In short, education is an arm of the church, preparing people and leaders to represent Jesus Christ in whatever they go and do.
God call includes showing loving action towards people around and 3) the great commission, which holds that making disciples involves teaching others what Christ has commanded to teach. The understanding of educational ministry of the BCM was governed by the Biblical mandate. This is the challenge for the BCM to make disciples and be witness of the Gospel, and this task encompasses the total person, as well as sacred and secular. The growth and maturation of the complete human is educative task that can best be undertaken by the Christians who believe that God created all human beings in His image and likeness.\textsuperscript{10} It is this ministry of enhancing this characteristic in humans that makes education an effective strategy and a worthy service that gives glory to God.

The BCM aims at practicing the implications of these functions so that it can be more effective ambassador of God’s reconciliation in Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{11} This implies that educational ministry of the church is an arm of the church as it seeks to prepare people wherever it penetrates. The task of proclaiming the Gospel became a part of their identity as a church. BCM saw the educational ministry as its calling. The Educational ministry in this context means the activities and structures of God’s people (the BCM), which critically reflect the life of Christian faith and intentionally attempting to bring change through secular and spiritual education when necessary to the faithful formation of Christ like persons and communities. In this attempt, the aspect of educational institutions is the focal point.

The BCM has placed a great deal of faith in education to materialize the Biblical truth as a light on its paths of educational ministry. The school education system acted as an agent that minister to develop the hearts and minds of children. It

\textsuperscript{10} Gen. 1: 27.
\textsuperscript{11} 2Cor. 5: 16-21.
acts as an answer for ignorance and prejudice and as a solution to many social problems. Moreover, school education is viewed as a provider of opportunities for social mobility to a large extent.

There was no formal school education in Mizoram before the coming of the Baptist missionaries. First, the Mizo language was not a written language. Second, the education that prevailed then was both primitive and informal. The traditional educational institutions were mainly the *Family* where children, especially girls, received education from their parents, and *Zawlbuak* (young men’s dormitory), where young boys were trained to cope with the needs of the time. It is in this context that the BMS became involved in an educational ministry among the Mizo. The BCM has continued to engage in this educational ministry for the past fifty years. Education continues to be a key enterprise for the future of the mission. In the opinion of several leaders of the BCM, considering the historical endeavors and involvement in the past, it is now time to re-assess the educational ministry of the BCM. This research is concerned with evaluating the achievement of the BMS and BCM in the light of their educational objectives and goals. The researcher’s involvement in the educational ministry of the BCM for the past twenty years has made the research all the more meaningful.

During the time of the British Raj, and before any Christian witness came to Mizoram, very little attention was paid by the British Government to the education of the Mizo. As part of the colonial enterprise of the British rule, education was geared exclusively to the non-Mizo children of the Government workers. This historical situation changed when the BMS missionaries arrived due to their missionary endeavor and educational activities. There were numerous Mizo clans, each with their respective dialects. All of these existent dialects were in their oral forms. The most
popular was the Duhlian. The missionaries transcribed this language into a written form using the Roman script. This became the lingua franca of the Mizo as well as the medium of instruction in the schools. In the light of these pioneering efforts, it could be acceded that the missionaries were instrumental in the introduction of modern education among the Mizo.

Education seemed to be historically a very important means of evangelization and social transformation in Mizo society. The Mizo were animistic in their worldview. In their agricultural practice they were primitive and used jhumming (Shifting Cultivation) as a means of subsistence farming. Community festivals and social gatherings were associated with excessive drinking of Zu (Rice beer). In this socio-cultural background, the missionaries endeavored to introduce educational programs in the latter part of the 19th century. The social and spiritual life of the people underwent a radical transformation due to these educational activities of the missionaries. The Mizo began to depart from their pre-Christian practices and beliefs that were contrary to the Christian worldview. The administration and management of the school educational system of the whole of Mizoram was in the hands of the Mission from 1904. The British Indian Government granted this permission and the missionaries enjoyed this privilege for about fifty years.

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13Jhumming is the system of shifting cultivation practiced by most of the Mizo. The process involves selecting a plot of land by each family for a year, the process of slashing the jungle by January and then burning the brushwood by March when it is dried. Then there is a clearing of the remaining land, preparation for sowing and seedling, weeding and harvesting, Threshing and transporting by human labor is required.
The period from 1950 to 1970 was marked by transition. The control of the BMS was handed over to the BCM\textsuperscript{15} (Foreign Mission body to the national administration of the Church). At this time, majority of the schools were handed over to the Government as well.\textsuperscript{16} Consequently, the involvement of the BCM in education for the Mizo was greatly reduced. The BCM however, continued its educational enterprise among the marginalized people in Mizoram. Furthermore, the educational programs have been expanded eventually to the Mizo.

The BCM celebrated the centenary of the arrival of the BMS in Lunglei, Mizoram on the eighth of March in 2003. A renewed commitment and obligation to continue the historic legacy of the predecessors in educational ministry was resolved.\textsuperscript{17} The amount of time, human and financial resources that have been invested in the educational ministry of the BCM, makes this research all the more necessary. The researcher was prompted to investigate how far the original goals have been achieved.

The need to commission a historical research study on the success and failure of the educational ministry was felt strongly by the BCM. It is in line with this concern that the researcher has been advised by several leaders of the BCM to undertake this research.\textsuperscript{18} The outcome of this research is for the purpose of planning and enhancing the future of the BCM educational ministries. Therefore, personally and as representing the interests of an organization as the BCM, a strong motive exists for this historical research.

\textsuperscript{15}V. Lalzawnga, \textit{Zoram Baptist Chanchin Pawimawh Lawrkhawm} (Serkawn: Literature Committee, 1990), 52. 25\textsuperscript{th} October 1958 was the time when the final integration of the Mission and the native church took place.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 52.

\textsuperscript{17}This was emphatically emphasized during the Assembly of the BCM on March, 2003.

\textsuperscript{18}Several leaders including the then General Secretary of the BCM in 2002 during pilot study for the research in the month of August 20, 2002 shared these ideas.
In the process of this study, the researcher’s intention is to focus on the aims and objectives of the educational ministry of the BCM; and the relationship between the policy of the BMS and the Governmental policies. The intention is also to historically survey the success and failures of the BCM educational ministry to maximize the strength and eliminate the weakness of the BCM educational ministry with a view to arriving at concrete suggestions for improvement.

V. SCOPE AND LIMITATION

The broad scope of the research covers the period from the introduction of formal education by the BMS in 1903 until the present. By 1904, the BMS was in control of all formal educational services till the Government took away this privilege from the mission in 1952. This research is focused on the BCM educational ministry among the Mizo and the neighboring marginalized communities. The specific concern is the BCM’s educational ministry from the 1950s during which significant events took place. First, the education system in the entire Mizoram passed into the hands of the Government in Mizoram leading to the growth of educational institutions significantly. Second, the year 1958 marked a big transition for the native leadership took control of the BCM, which eventually resulted in giving more emphasis on educational ministry within and outside Mizoram. This is not a general study of the theory of church education; rather it is a historical study of the Baptist Church’s educational ministry in the Northeast in particular. As an insider with an emic perspective, the researcher has taken into serious consideration the perspectives of non-Mizo historians. Although the Roman Catholic Church is substantially and

effectively involved in education in Mizoram, including its contribution beyond the scope of this study.

VI. SURVEY OF LITERATURE

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research work has been undertaken to evaluate the educational ministry of the Baptist Church of Mizoram. The review of literature in educational research was regarded as preparatory to gathering of data and served to acquaint the researcher with the topic under study. A large number of books were reviewed. Some significant books are annotated in this survey.

Historical writings concerning Christianity in Mizoram are dated as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, when the missionaries came to Mizoram. Christianity and education being closely linked, the missionaries wrote a number of books dealing with the understanding of education, both in Mizoram and in Christianity. They wrote biographical accounts of their personal experiences and their knowledge of the Mizo. These resources provide a wealth of information and insight for the present study. Several Mizo and non-Mizo people wrote books and have provided other literature from different perspectives. These historical narratives helped the researcher understand the context, and identify relevant applications.

To lay the historical foundation for this study, the following three categories of books are reviewed: first, literature on education in Mizoram with particular reference to the Church. Second, literature related to the history and culture of the Mizo people. Third, literature concerning methods, policies, practices of Christian and secular education, from a historical perspective.
A. Literature on Education in Mizoram

Lalhmuaka and T. Chawma\textsuperscript{20} pertinently point out that British military expansionism in the Lushai Hills paved the way for the missionaries from the West. While describing the introduction of formal education in Mizoram, they made a comparative study of the progress of education under the mission schools in the North with that in the South of Mizoram in terms of quality and quantity. It is significant that the authors took great effort to analyze the methods of teaching and the syllabi of education.

The issue of Bawi (slavery) which prevailed in the society is discussed with due credit given to the contribution of missionaries towards its abolition. The relationship between the natives and the missionaries is studied with regard to whether the mission made a genuine attempt to introduce higher education for the Mizo. A study of the biography of one of the missionary educational specialists deserves special mention. This book, though not academically documented, gives a lot of insight and provides helpful information.

Hluna\textsuperscript{21} writes a comprehensive history of the progress of education in Mizoram from 1894 to 1947. His work is historical research where he traces the beginning of the introduction of Christianity to Mizoram. He describes in detail the beginning of the modern school and its gradual development in the whole state, Mizoram. The author attributes the high literacy level among the Mizo to the direct consequences of the introduction of Christianity into the land. This book reflects the cause and effect relationship of Christian education.


Portraying the Mizo society in the pre-British period, the study examines the entire extent of the progress of education, right from the beginning till the independence of India. Based mainly on official documents preserved in various national archives in India and abroad, the book unreservedly provides useful documents for study. I would like to focus my study on the areas that the author did not dwell on sufficiently. What was lacking was the educational work of the missionaries dealing with the people of the southern part of Mizoram in particular detail. However, the author's emphasis on the progress of government High schools, the opening of colleges, and theological seminaries and universities are helpful.

Rokhuma\textsuperscript{22} records the introduction of education in different areas, particularly in the Southern part of Mizoram. In fact, this is one of the most detailed and well-documented sources about missionary education. The author has good access to the original documents and hence provides pertinent information. He also makes an effort to bring out significant events that took place prior to the coming of the missionaries. The author affirms the Church as an instrument for social change, particularly in encouraging female education. This collection of important documents adds strength to this research.

Rongenga\textsuperscript{23} presents key ideas about education and makes extensive use of educational theory. The author gives a favorable evaluation about the existing system of education in Mizoram, giving insightful and thought-provoking information about the prevailing system.

\textsuperscript{22}K. L. Rokhuma, 	extit{Mizoram Zirna Mission leh Kohhran Rawngbowlna} (Aizawl: The Communication Department of BCM, 1988).
\textsuperscript{23}F. Rongenga, 	extit{Mizoram Leh Zirna Chanchin Tlangpui} [Mizoram and Its Outline of Educational History] (Aizawl: Rongenga, 1997).
The author describes the implementation of the British rule and the status quo during the British rule in Mizoram at the time when Christian missionaries arrived. With their arrival, schools were established, which resulted in an all-round development of young people and societal change. A significant contribution was the education of girls and the establishment of a teachers' training program. The author attempts to investigate the reason for the gradual decline of education in Mizoram and why the schools became sub-standard compared to the early mission era.

Lalhmuaka draws together a good collection of records about the growth and progress of education in Mizoram. His writings are noted for revealing the way the first missionary educators trained selected students whom he called “seven disciples.” These students later became teachers as well as leaders of the church and were influential people in the society. Lalhmuaka describes the examination system and types of questions in early school, and also gives information about school maintenance and inspection.

Lalbiakliana gives a picture of a pre-literary society and describes how the Mizo counted times and seasons. He studies the relationship between the two Missions in north and south Mizoram and how they developed their educational work. The author points out that the standard of education in terms of academics, discipline, and moral values has deteriorated since the Government has taken over certain schools.

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Lianzawna provides a historical narrative and critically evaluates education in Mizoram during a period of 100 years. He analyses the need for the improvement of education in Mizoram, which is the reason for educated unemployment in the state and the current state of educational activities in Mizoram. He affirms that the system of school education produced good results before 1976 when people were generally honest and faithful. His claim is supported by statistical reports of results in different schools, and argues that the present learning-teaching system in Mizoram is not adequate.

Chapman and Clark were missionaries who contributed significantly toward the education of Mizo women in South Mizoram. The book mainly describes the transformation of the Mizo community, with special reference to women, and reveals how the many taboos and superstitious beliefs in Mizo society have changed considerably. The book is not written for the purpose of studying the history of the church in Mizoram, rather it is a personal narrative dealing with the work of which the authors had direct and personal experience. The book has values and insights to offer for the understanding of the status of women and what changes have been brought about.

Hminga's work is the outcome of historical and missiological research on the churches in Mizoram. It examines the introduction of Christianity to Mizoram, particularly how the Baptist Church of Mizoram came into being and how it progressed and organized itself. This is one of the most comprehensive treatments of
Christianity written from the perspective of the growth of the church. His book is rich and comprehensive and is indispensable for the history of Christianity in Mizoram.

Hrangkhuma29 made an in-depth study on cultural change in Mizoram and factors that have contributed to this change. He affirms the value of missiological training in realizing a fruitful and successful ministry for people involved in Christian missions. He further examines the strength and weaknesses of the Churches in Mizoram and brings out possible solutions for the prevalent problems. There are potential applications for the educational enterprise.

Lal Dena,30 studies Christian missions in the Northeast, in particular in Mizoram and the state of Manipur from the colonial perspective. He analyzes the modes of interaction, both positive and negative, between Christian missions and colonialism in the context of what happened in Africa and Asia in the nineteenth century. He highlights the causes of constraints and implications of mission-Government collaboration. This book provides an account of the motivating forces that resulted in the missionary movement and its impact on these tribal societies.

B. Literature on the History and Culture of Mizoram

One of the most reliable and recently written histories of Mizoram, by Lalthangliana,31 is an important source for the background knowledge of this study.

McCall32 has an exhaustive coverage of the Mizo culture, history, and the establishment of British colonial rule in Mizoram. Having been in charge of the


31B. Lalthangliana, India, Burma and Bangladesh — A. Mizo Chanchin [History and Culture of Mizo in India, Burma and Bangladesh] (Aizawl: Remkungi, 2001).
Lushai Hills (Mizoram) as a British officer for many years, he is acquainted with the culture of the people. His book contains interesting accounts of the folklore and folk tales of the Mizo, depicting various aspects of their worldview. This book provides us with useful information about the socio-cultural and religious life of the people.

Lalrimawia\textsuperscript{33} describes critically, the administrative development and the impact of Christianity on Mizo culture in the then Lushai Hills (Mizoram) from 1890-1947. The emergence of a Mizo elite and growing unrest in the land have introduced new elements into Mizo politics and administration. The coming of the English missionaries, the conversion of the Mizo to Christianity, the transcription of their language to writing using the Roman alphabet and the establishment of the Church as a major influence in societal change, is all studied in this volume.

Chitta Ranjan Nag\textsuperscript{34} studies the Mizo's social life and traces the transition that took place owing to the introduction of Christianity and modern systems of communication. The author attributes the British annexation of Mizoram with opening an inaccessible and backward region to the modern world and its influences. A network of roads and small garrison towns grew up. Village life, ruled by traditional chiefs, was replaced by a democratic system of government. The development of schools, hospitals, industries and the like has transformed the Mizo way of life. The author opines that the missionaries who contributed to education have ignored the importance of a science education among the Mizo and that this needs to be investigated further.

\textsuperscript{32}Mc Call, \textit{Lushai Chrysalis} (New Delhi: Firma KLM Private on behalf of Tribal Research Institute, Reprint, 1977).
\textsuperscript{33}Lalrimawia, \textit{Mizoram: History and Cultural Identity} (Guwahati: Spectrum Publication, 1995).
Mangkhosat’s doctoral study on the Impact of Christianity on Zo Culture shifts a conventional paradigm in studying the way in which traditional Zo culture shaped Mizo Christianity. The author makes an in-depth study of the traditional Zo culture and assumed that the interaction between the missionaries and the traditional culture of the Mizo people involved change on both sides. The author demonstrates the interrelatedness of the political, social and aesthetic aspects that combine to create the integrating ethical code Tlawmngaihna (self-sacrifice). Kipgen makes a valuable contributions to an in depth understanding of the Mizo culture.

Zawla has written with the purpose of promoting Mizo culture and intellectual pursuits of the Mizo. Many writers rely on the detailed information given in this book.

There are several important books and notes on Mizo culture by the Mizo themselves. Among the more important ones are: Zatluanga, Mizo Chanchin (The Mizo Culture), 1966; C. Lianthanga, Hmanlai Mizo Nun (Mizo Traditional Culture), 1998; Dokhum, J., Zokhaw Nun (Village Culture), 1998; Mizo Ziarang (Mizo culture) edited by The Academy of Letters (1975); Lalbiaknema C., ZawlBuk TiTi (ZawlBuk Dialogue), 2000; and others. Most of these are descriptive in nature; yet they form valuable sources of knowledge and provided useful information for the study. By and large, all of these works have significance for this study.

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35Mangkhosat Kipgen, Christianity and Mizo Culture (Jorhat: Mizo Theological Conference, 1996).
36Mangkhosat preferred to use the word “Zo” for Mizo and it is more inclusive.
37To practice self-sacrifice, self-denial etc as J.H. Lorrain put it in Dictionary of the Lushai Language. The word has a wide implication and this aspect is dealt in more detail in the next chapter.
C. Literature on Policies, and Practices of Christian and Secular Education

Saiaithanga\textsuperscript{39} presents the advent of Christianity in Mizoram and the development and progress of the Church. The work gives extensive coverage of traditional Mizo beliefs and practices, and the establishment of different denominations in Mizoram. The impact of Christianity on Mizo society as portrayed brings insightful ideas and relevant information.

Carter,\textsuperscript{40} who worked for many years in Mizoram, prepared this book to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Christianity in South Mizoram. Enriched by some first generation pastors, his accounts of the early conditions of Mizo society is valuable for an in-depth study of the early Christians and how they participated in providing education and spreading Christian faith among the native people.

Samuel,\textsuperscript{41} being an educator, critically analyzes the educational policy of India during the past two hundred and fifty years. He deals with the root cause of the emergence of differing policies in different stages of Indian history. The author expounds the aims and objectives of education and provides general information on the same. The study of this book gives insightful knowledge for the present study.

Smart\textsuperscript{42} is concerned with the theological foundation of the Church’s educational program. He asserts that today, the foundational principle of Christian Education remains largely unrecognized. The Church school movement stands in a closer, happier relationship with secular education. This has resulted in the reduction

\textsuperscript{39}Saiaithanga, \textit{Mizo Kohhran Chanchin} [The History of the Church in Mizoram] (Aizawl: Regional Theological Literature Committee, 1969).

\textsuperscript{40}H. W. Carter, \textit{Chhim Bial Kohhran Chanchin} [The History of the Church in the South] (Serkawn: Zochhawni Pa, 1945).

\textsuperscript{41}A. Raj Samuel, \textit{India’s Educational Policy} (New Delhi: Select Books Publishers and Distributors, 1984).

of Christ centered teaching. This bears great similarity to many aspects of the Mizoram educational system. The author redefines the whole goal of Christian education. His treatment includes an investigation of the Bible in the curriculum, growth of persons, Christian homes and the Church’s responsibility in public education. This book is a bold, revitalizing critique that helps one develop a new blueprint for implementing an improved educational system from a Christian perspective.

Tyler\(^43\) provides a rationale for viewing, analyzing and interpreting the curriculum and instructional program of an educational institution. He outlines one way of viewing an instructional program as a functioning instrument of education. Naik\(^44\) narrates the main educational developments in India in the modern period beginning in 1765. The book gives a full and comprehensive view of different stages in the modern educational history of India. The authors explain the *raison d’etre* of education and how the present educational system has gradually come about.

Ingleby\(^45\) investigates the way English Protestant missionaries in India in the 19th and early 20th centuries used education as a missionary method, and their reasons for doing so. The background is the relationship of the missionary movement to British educational policy in India, the cultural impact of the British on India and the missionaries’ interaction with their home constituency, in terms of both national and ecclesiastical politics. The author gives an in-depth study on the method and aims of missionary education and also covers a wide range of educational processes from


\(^{44}\)J. P. Naik and Nurullah Syed, *A Student’s History of Education in India* (1800-1973), (Delhi: S.G. Wasani for the McMillan Company of India, 1974).

primary to college education. This book throws much light and gives a clearer perspective to the educational ministry of the BCM in the Mizoram context.

Prasad 46 traces the evolution of party politics in Mizoram and highlights the ethnological and cultural background and administrative set up of the Mizo, the growth of early politics resulting in the formation of the District Council for the Mizo and the Regional Council for major tribes like Lai, Mara and Chakma. This book provides useful suggestions to the policy planners who are concerned with resolving the dilemmas and challenges in the context of Mizoram and facilitating national integration.

These three categories of research literature together provided an adequate database to begin this research. As the research progresses, supplementing data are added.

VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study is a historical research and a descriptive research for the educational ministry of the BCM, which implies the need to study the mission history of the Church in Mizoram. However, apart from historical approach, it was also felt that a combination of field research would yield the needed results. Hence, field research methodology was also employed in this study.

Historical research has been defined as the systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusions


47The researcher views descriptive research as one, which “involves collecting data in order to test hypothesis or answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. A descriptive study determines and reports the way things are...[while] descriptive data are typically collected through a questionnaire survey, an interview, or observation.” See L.R. Gay, Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application (London: Merrill Publishing, 1976), 10-11. Emphasis added in italics.
about past events. It is an act of reconstruction undertaken in a spirit of critical enquiry designed to achieve a faithful representation of a previous age. The historical study of an educational idea or institution helped the researcher understand how the present educational system has come about.

This kind of understanding in turn, helps establish a sound basis for further progress. The study is a historical investigation into the educational ministry of the BCM with special reference to the BMS as a historical background to this study. The researcher's purpose here is to ascertain the founding principles that governed the early missionary educational practices, their methods and strategies. The general principles of historical criticism and historiography, such as historical precedence, Diachronic methodology, period studies, historical case study and synchronic method were applied in interpreting the historical data.

The study focuses on the BMS and its methods and principles, for the understanding of the BCM, not as a comparative study but as a descriptive study. The facts were presented as different historians stated them authentically. In such cases, the data had to be analyzed critically for interpretations. The traditional society of the Mizo was investigated and studied. Several Mizo historians have written and thoroughly studied this aspect.

A. Methods of Research

By methods, the researcher means the range of approaches used in historical or educational research, to gather data to be used as a basis for inference and

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interpretation, explanation and prediction. The study focuses mainly on the educational ministry of the BCM among the non-Mizo and Mizo in Mizoram. For this purpose, the data needed for the study were collected from various documents and sources. The BMS represented the earlier period and the BCM represents the contemporary period.

The BCM schools under study exist in different locations and contexts. The educational ministry of the present study consists of all the schools under the BCM, such as the vernacular primary, middle, high school, higher secondary school and the English medium schools. The majority of the primary and middle schools are in the vernacular. High school and higher secondary schools are mostly in the English medium. There are some primary and middle schools that have a stream in English as well as in the vernacular. In particular, the recent introduction of English medium schools of the BCM and the network of schools under the BCM among the non-Mizo are in focus. For the primary sources, reports of the BMS, personal manuscripts, records and church souvenirs were valuable for obtaining significant data. Efforts were made to acquire data from original sources and to use writers who were personally involved in this ministry. I myself have ministered in the BCM ministry for about twenty years, as a missionary educator. My personal experience and involvement have contributed to data collection and analysis.

B. Sources of Data

Historical research depends upon two kinds of data: primary and secondary sources and the collection of pertinent data involved both these sources. Manuscripts, documents, letters, files, biographies, official publications, newspapers, films,

\[49\] Ibid., 41.
logbooks, official minutes and records are available at the archives and office of the BCM. Therefore, archival materials and libraries of the BCM, District Library Lunglei, and Mizoram State Library were consulted. The researcher also made use of all the necessary primary sources, such as unpublished materials and articles. Letters of correspondence in the offices of the Director of School Education, District Education Offices (Aizawl, Lunglei, and others.) and other official records maintained in the Archives of the Government were consulted. Souvenirs of both religious and secular articles formed an important source of information.

The researcher also made use of previous research, journals and magazines of the church namely *Missionary Tlangau* (Missionary Herald, a monthly missionary magazine published by the BCM mission department), *Kohhran Beng* (Church Organ, a monthly magazine of the BCM) and other journals, periodicals, records, and newspapers that are related to the study. The other sources included are the Statistical Handbooks published by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Census Reports and other Government publications. Secondary sources were collected from several libraries, SAIACS, United Theological College, and the library of the University of Mysore. Most of the significant records and sources are available in English and Mizo. Analyzing and interpreting relevant documents, official minutes, mission reports, government census reports in the State in addition to the field research data, and reviewing of the secondary literature, constitute this research project. The researcher's bi-lingual proficiency adds to the accuracy and richness of the resources studied as well as the validity of the analysis of the data.
C. Field Research Methodology

A questionnaire protocol on the basis of the research questions was developed to obtain current relevant information. The primary purpose was to ascertain the perceptions of the leaders of the church regarding the BMS in general and contemporary educational ministry of the BCM and to gain insights into how these leaders have perceived future ministry in particular. In-depth ethnographic field research was organized with key selected leaders of the church, well-informed persons outside of the Church and prominent leaders in the society. These people constituted a leadership category. A structured questionnaire with closed ended as well as open-ended questions was administered. James Spradley's Participant Observation method of Ethnographic Interview was the main guide. For the sake of a good response and anonymity, the names of the people questioned are kept confidential. Having developed a questionnaire, actual research was conducted after pre-testing. Every question was coded on the questionnaire form to facilitate easy tabulation.

D. Development of Questionnaire

Types of questions developed were conducted with a view to yield research dimensions; structural questions that yielded taxonomy for analysis and contrast questions for components and themes. The questions were first field-tested among a few selected individuals in order to identify utility and relevance. Real life situations and historical relevance were in focus. In consultation with the research guide, at least twenty persons were interviewed with the use of open-ended qualitative questions. This was done as a preliminary exercise at the initial stage of the research work in order to better understand the kind of questions to prepare. Most of the interviews
were conducted in Mizo. A transcribed questionnaire into Mizo and a copy of the translation certified for validity is attached in the appendix A.

The researcher limits the analysis to the research questions with its implications from the questionnaire, such as questions, A-1, A-2; B-1, B-2; C-1, C-2; D-1, D-2, and E-1-4. The first research question is in relation to the educational goal of the BMS according to the perception of the executive and lay leadership groups. The intent of the research question was to enquire regarding the goal of the educational ministry of the BMS according to historical importance. The second section of the first research question concerns the problems of the Mizo in the early period of the BMS educational ministry.

Secondly, the research question seeks an answer for reasons of involvement of the BCM in educational ministry and to what extent the BCM was educationally indebted to its constituency. The third research question is concerned with the early methods and practices of the BMS and the areas, which the BMS pioneered in educational ministry. Fourthly, the research question concerns the present educational strategies and other relevant strategies from the perspectives of both of the leadership groups of the BCM. Fifthly, the research question is concerned with the future projection of the educational ministry of the BCM.

The analysis was based upon the perspective of these research concerns, historiography of the history of Christianity in Mizoram, field research findings and personal experience. Other related findings and analysis were looked at in the process of research. The data gathered, after initial readings were processed under significant domains. Each domain has taxonomy of its own. In doing this kind of analysis a search was made for cultural symbols, which were included in larger categories by virtue of some similarity.
All efforts were made to gather substantial historical depth and context. The findings are reported authentically. Having been involved in education as a missionary teacher, the researcher’s personal experiences contributed to data analysis and interpretation.

VIII. ASSUMPTIONS

The Baptist Church of Mizoram perceives educational ministry as an essential service. The education provided by the mission is assumed to have a largely positive effect on the Mizo people. Therefore, this study assumes that education is the chief agency in bringing about change among the Mizo and related groups. This study further assumes that the educational practice of the BCM within and outside Mizoram needs to be improved. There are certain areas where the educational values of the BMS predecessors need to be recaptured. Some of these values may be interpreted in the present and future context. A major assumption is that the church will continue to expand its educational ministry.

IX. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

With the introduction of Christianity in Mizoram, education under the mission played a very important role. In fact, for over fifty years, the British India government placed education under the care of the BMS. This study, being the first to critically investigate the Educational Ministry of the BCM in Mizoram, has the potential to influence policy-making and strategic planning. This adds incentive to the researcher. Substantial recommendations for the future educational ministry of the BCM are part of the results. Broad applications for general public school education in Mizoram are not beyond the reach of this research.
This study learns from history and recovers educational values for future application. An education centered upon ethics and values is the most current concern in education today in the context of Mizoram finding meaningful expression through this research. The BCM is committed to carry on and expand its educational ministry. By this policy new fields are being opened for educational enterprise. Therefore, an in-depth reassessment of the educational activities of the Church has historical heritage. Thus, this study is significant, as it will broaden the horizon of the educational ministry of the BCM.

Finally, this research is relevant for the researcher since it widens and sharpens her knowledge of the BCM ministry in context. This provides her with a unique opportunity to undertake an in-depth study of the educational ministry of the BCM and make use of the insights gained through the study to teach and train others for effective future ministry.

CHAPTER ONE
BACKGROUND STUDIES FOR THE EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH OF MIZORAM: MIZORAM BEFORE THE BMS MISSIONARIES

1. THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

This chapter is meant to place the traditional educational system of the Mizo within its socio-religious, political and educational situation, to serve as an essential backdrop for the study of the educational ministry of the BCM. Therefore, an attempt is made here to give a bird’s eye-view of what has contributed to the educational ministry of the BCM in the 1950s.
A. The People and The land

"Mizo" is a collective name for the people inhabiting Mizoram. They speak one language, are of the same origin and share a common way of life. According to Thanga, the Mizo may be broadly divided into five major tribes and several sub-tribes. The major tribes are Lusei, Ralte, Hmar, Paite and Pawi. The sub-tribes are Chawngthu, Chawhte, Ngente, Khiawhling, Khiahntse, Pautu, Rawite, Renthle, Tlau, Vangchhia and Zawngte. A number of Mizo historians agree with this classification.

Thus, Mizo is a generic term for several major tribes and sub-tribes who live in the entire perimeter of the present Mizoram. Their culture, traditions, dialects are similar and are commonly designated by the term "Mizo" today.

One of the Mizo historians, Lalthangliana, asserts that when the first census was taken in 1901, there was none who called himself or, herself a “Mizo.” By the census of 1961 however, there were over two hundred thousand Mizo. This implies that the use of Mizo is a fairly recent phenomenon. These people groups were commonly referred to as “Lushais,” and the inhabited land, “Lushai land.” Warren Hastings, the then- Governor of British India, in his letter dated 10th April 1777

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1. L. B. Thanga, The Mizos: A Study in Racial Personality (Gauhati [sic]: United Publishers, 1978), 5-7. The sub-tribes are: The ethnology, status and culture of the Mizo have been thoroughly studied and well documented by several writers.

2. Several Mizo writers, Vanchhunga, Zatluanga and Liangkhaia have also traced that there are eleven sub-tribes. These eleven sub-tribes namely, Chawngthu, Chawhte, Ngente, Khawlhring, Khiahntse, Pautu, Rawite, Renthle, Tlau, Vangchhia and Zawngte are known under a common name of Awzia. See also P. Fitzgerald, China-A Short Cultural History (London: The Crest Press, 1950), 15. The Pawi and Mara with their different sub-clans are concentrated in the south and the southeastern parts of Mizoram bordering Myanmar. The Mara and some Pawi however, maintains a somewhat different dialect.

3. B. Lalthangliana, “Mizo,” in The International Seminar organized on Studies on the Minority Nationalities of Northeast India: The Mizo (Aizawl: Directorate of Higher and Technical Education Govt. of Mizoram, 1992), 7. In 1901, the total population was 78,478 of which Hmar-10411; Lushai-36, 332; Mizo-nil; Paithe-2, 870; Pawih-15, 038; Ralte-13, 827. The total population by 1961 was 220,766, three times bigger, in which Hmar-3118; Lushai-nil; Mizo-213, 061; Paithe-nil; Pawih-4, 587; Ralte-nil.

4. The name “Lushai” was an Anglicized form of “Lusei”, the most powerful and prominent Mizo tribe against whose chiefs the British expeditions were focused. The land belonging to them was called, ‘Lushai Hills’
referred to them as "Kookie men." In fact, the Bengalis in the neighboring hills referred to them as "Kukis." For a long time, different peoples and regions have known them by different names but mainly by three well-documented nomenclatures such as Kookie/Kuki/ Chin and Lushai. Accordingly, subsequent writers have often used the varying nomenclatures synonymously. The Mizo, while occupying Mizoram territory, are also scattered in parts of Manipur, Cachar, Tripura, and Myanmar.

Etymologically, the word, “Mizo” derives from two words, the first, “Mi” which means man or person, and “Zo” meaning high-lying country or a cold place. Hence, most appropriately a Mizo is a “people of the hill region” or “high-lander.” Generally the Mizo call themselves “Tlang mi te,” which means “people of the hills.” All the Lushai–Kuki clans resemble each other very closely in appearance and the Mongoloid type of countenance prevails.

The Mizo belong to a Mongoloid stock or a mixture of Sakas (Scythians) and Huns. They have a reputation for belonging to a race of freedom-loving people who have fought for their freedom right from their early days in Central Asia and China.

Gordon Bowles also summarized that, “Mizos belong to the Mongoloid race because

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6 T. H. Lewin, *Hill Tracts of the Chittagong and the Dwellers there in* (Calcutta: Bengali Press, 1896), 98. It is generally believed that “Kuki” is a term used by the Bengalis to designate all hill people who cultivated their land by jhuming and who were unable to speak Bengali.
7 This meaning however is debatable and is being contested on the ground that all other hill people of North East India also live in highland and not necessarily called as such. Thangliana claims that by prefixing Mi meaning “people” the term “Mizo” came into vogue.
8 John Shakespeare, *The Lushai-Kuki Clans*, Part-I (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1975), 1-2. The Mizo are characterized by short to medium stature, black hair, short legs, long arms, broad face, cheek bones high, eyes small, nose short and flat.
they are said to have fulfilled all the morphological characteristics of the Mongoloid,\(^{10}\)

Traditionally, Mizo claim Chhinlung or Sinlung to be their original home. \(^{11}\) This is said to be located in the Szechwan Province of China. There are several songs and legends in Mizo that have been handed down from generation to generation and these oral traditions have strongly supported this historical assumption. The theory that the Mizo had originally come from Central China has been historically proved among Mizo historians and the educated in particular. \(^{12}\) The Mizo came from the East via Myanmar where they settled for a period of three hundred years. From then they scattered in bands and overflowed into Mizoram some two hundred years ago.\(^{13}\)

They migrated to this present habitat in wave after wave. From southwestern China through the corridor of northwestern Myanmar via the Upper Irrawady valley, they eventually formed a composite cultural group called ‘Mizo’ and made their own contributions to the cultural mosaic of India. The people of the plains in Burma or India did not know them as Mizo even as late as the 16\(^{th}\) century. \(^{14}\) The migration of

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\(^{10}\) G.T. Bowls, *The People of Asia* (London: Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1977), 12. To quote T. H. Lewis, the late Deputy Commissioner of the Hill Tracts of Chittagong who described having Mongoloid origin, “The general physique of the hill tribes is strongly Mongolian. They are, as a rule, short in stature...their faces are broad; the nose flat, with eyes narrow, and...High cheek-bones and no beard,” in his book, *Wild Races of South-Eastern India* (London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1870), 41-42.

\(^{11}\) Liangkhaia, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl: Mizo Academy of Letters, 1976), 1. The origin of the Mizo tribe had been a baffling solution. In the absence of a written history we cannot trace the origin of Mizo very far with accuracy at all. The folk tales and songs did throw some light. One popular mythology of Mizo tells that the Mizo came out of a cave called *chhinlung* (similar tales of South East Asian nations). The last tribe to come out of this cave was the Ralte when the lid was closed.


\(^{14}\) Ibid. 86.
the Mizo from the Chin Hills to the Lushai Hills took place between 1700 and 1780.\(^{15}\) They only have a recorded history from the last decade of the 19\(^{th}\) century. Lalvunga asserts that the Mizo have been in existence as a tribe and they are a separate ethnic people trying to maintain their regional identity within the Union of India.\(^{16}\)

The Mizo dialect belongs to the *Sino-Tibetan Burman* language group\(^{17}\) dissimilar to the Aryan Sanskrit language. They speak the *Tibeto-Burman* language.\(^{18}\) The various clans of Mizo have their respective dialects, among which is the Lusei dialect. Among the dialects of the Lusei, the *Duhlien Tawng* was the most popular and continued to be the ‘lingua franca’ of the Mizo. Lalvunga claims that the separate identity that the Mizo’s prize highly is the *Duhlien* language (*Tibeto-Burman* in origin) that the Mizo speak. They have a racial affinity with Mongoloid stock and live in a distinctive way as a separate regional entity and yet remain loyal to the Republic whose free citizenship they accept.\(^{19}\)

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\(^{15}\)Ibid. 94. Mizo Historians generally believed that the Mizo had started their migration to the present habitat during 1706-1730 due to hostilities with stronger and better-equipped tribes like Pawi. There were different views and ideas about the period in which the Mizo came into the present habitat. Some historians opined that they came from China via Myanmar before the close of the 15\(^{th}\) century (Siama 1953, Zawla 1964), while others think that they came at the close of the 18\(^{th}\) century and at the beginning of the 19\(^{th}\) century (Choudhury, 1992; Thanga 1992.


\(^{19}\)Lalvunga, “The Heritage We Received,” 29.
With the introduction of a written script into the Mizo language, the destiny of the Mizo turned in a new direction. The Mizo people gradually developed a very high literacy rate and improved effective ways of dealing with their day-to-day problems. The traditional Mizo society has progressed especially in the field of education. The increase in the literacy rate is quite impressive. From a low of 0.92% in 1901, the figure has come up to 88.49% (90.7% male and 86.7% female) making it the second-most literate State in India. The growth of literacy in Mizoram today can be seen from the following chart.

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Mizoram (literally land of the Mizo), the present habitat is situated in the extreme eastern corner of India, approximately 21.58 degrees north to 24.35 degrees north, latitude and 92.15 degree east to 93.29 degree east, longitude. The Cachar District of Assam borders Mizoram on the north, and the State of Manipur on the east, the Chin Hills (Myanmar) on the south and Bangladesh and the state of Tripura on the west. The length of the state, stretching from north to south is 277 Km; while the width, from east to west is 121 Km. and the land has an area of 21,081 sq. km.\(^{22}\)

According to Census 1991, the total population of Mizoram is 6,89,756 with the

\(^{22}\text{Mizoram (Aizawl: Directorate of Information and Public Relations, 2004), 7. It is believed by some writers that the Mizo entered the present habitat at three different times, the third group coming in the beginning of the 18th century by driving out the old settlers. However, according to Vanchhunga, six batches of groups had passed through the present Mizoram and the last group being that of the Sailo clans. Vanchhunga, }\text{Lusei Leh A Vela Hnam Dangte (Aizawl: Zoram Printing Press, 1955), 13.}\)
literacy rate being 82.3% (second highest in India) and the population in 2001 is 8,91,058.23

Topographically, Mizoram is, by and large, hilly and rugged with deep gorges and narrow valleys. The rivers on the hill ranges flow from north to south, and the height of the mountains varies from 700 meters to 2,300 meters.24 Being a land of forests thickly wooded hills and plenty of rivers, there is a vast variety of floral and fauna species.25

The tropic of Cancer runs through Mizoram about 50 km. south of Aizawl. Climatically, Mizoram has humid tropical, sub-tropical and sub-temperate climates, characterized by short winters and long summers with heavy rainfall. The maximum average temperature in the summer is 30 degrees centigrade, while in the winter the maximum average is around 11 degrees centigrade.26

The social, economic and political condition of the land was semi-primitive.27 There was no communication with the outside world. Travelers, traders and raiders followed the edge of mountain ranges, rivers or streams and the like. There were neither hospitals and schools nor any evidence of industrial development. It was what one would call a primitive society.

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26 *Statistical Handbook of Mizoram* (Aizawl: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2002), 15. Mizoram falls under the tropical monsoon belt; hence tropical varieties of crops are grown. The principal crop is rice, and crops are maize, soyabean, ginger, mustard, sesame and potatoes etc. There are also plans to grow plantation crops like rubber, coffee, tea, and mulberry trees for sericulture. K. M. Mathew et al., *Manorama Year Book 2003* (Kottayam: Malayala Manorama Press, 2003), 682.
27 The period prior to the occupation of the British and the introduction of Christianity.
B. Characteristics of the Mizo Society

The socio-religious conditions prior to the arrival of the missionaries in Mizoram have been described and depicted in various ways by different history writers. Inter-tribal and inter-clan feuds had been common characteristics of Mizo society. Hminga mentioned that a Calcutta newspaper had depicted the Lushais as 'irreclaimable savages,' whereas Lorrain characterized them as semi-nomadic.

Not only did the Mizo indulge in inter-village warfare, the Mizo chiefs were in the habit of going on headhunting expeditions against neighboring plain tribes on various occasions during which they took booty and sal (captives). Moreover, hunting was a common practice for every Mizo who aspired to reach a higher status in the socio-religious life of the community. The religious implication was that a successful hunter could perform a ceremony called Ram lama thangchhuah, which would elevate his social status as well as earn him a peaceful entry into the Mithi Khua (Dead man's abode). This was the aspiration of every Mizo man.

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29 Hminga, The Life and Witness of the Church, 42.
31 The non-Mizo people living in the Cachar districts. The Mizo referred to them as Vai.
32 Sal is a Mizo term for slavery. There are many evidences where the Mizo took a good number of Bengali captives on many occasions during their hunting expeditions.
33 Thangchhuah is the title given to a man who has distinguished himself by killing a certain number of different animals in the chase or by giving a certain number of public feasts. A person who had performed such a ceremony is regarded by the Mizo to have possessed a passport to Pialral (similar to Paradise). Therefore Ram lama thangchhuah had fulfilled the condition required of him by killing certain animals like bear, barking deer, a wild mithun, a stag and a wild boar and other varieties of birds and animals. This is a coveted title for any Mizo and one who accomplishes the requirement marked his distinctive position.
The presence of the “Bawi”^34 (slavery) system was another striking feature of the society. Sangkima affirmed Bawi-ship as one of the oldest institutions of the Mizo society; it seemed to have existed from time immemorial. Therefore, it is undeniable that the Mizo practiced headhunting and outsiders knew them as Milula Hnam^35 (head hunters or head hunting people). Thus the Mizo society in the pre-Christian period was characterized by frequent episodes of raids; attacking, plundering and taking captives. Such a state of affairs continued for a long time and villagers were often in danger of being attacked by other tribes within their villages as well.

The Mizo culture was what some anthropologists would call a “primitive culture” and their economic subsistence depended on cultivation carried on according to the nomadic system of tillage, on temporary clearings in the jungles. The main activities seemed to be hunting and warfare.^36 Scarcity of food was a common occurrence among the Mizo in the early period because of repeated raids and frequent hunting. The search for more productive land forced the Mizo to shift from one place to another. Lorrain stated that the Mizo were nomadic in their habit and villagers rarely stayed more than three years on the same site.^37 However, the selection of a new site for human habitation required fulfillment of certain criteria.^38

^34There were different categories of Bawi such as Inpuichhung bawi for those who took refuge in the chief’s house due to poverty. Widows and orphans made up this group. Chemsen bawi were those who after committing a crime took refuge in the chief’s house by touching a post inside the house of the chief that support the ridgepole to escape revenge and such person became a bonded slave for the protection he received. Tuklut bawi referred to persons, who after deserting his own party in war or feud, joining the victorious side and promised allegiance that he and his descendants would obey the chief faithfully. Besides this Bawi system, there is also a Sal (captive) who were made captives as a result of inter-tribal feuds and inter-clan feuds that were common in the early traditional period. The only marked difference between Bawi and Sal was that every household could keep Sal and Bawi were found only with the chiefs.

^35Sangkima, Mizos, 39.
^38The location for site depended on its impregnability against enemy attack combined with a good perennial source of water supply, as well as a healthy environment. In the process, the elders of
The Mizo society had a patriarchal clan system. The head of the family exercised effective and real control over the other members of the family. The society was a close-knit one and attached importance to kinship, social relations and peaceful coexistence within the village. Usually the Mizo male had to earn a living by farming or by engaging in heavy manual labor away from his home. In addition, he had to meet the social obligations of working without remuneration on various village developmental projects. The people lived simply and their necessities were not numerous. Confidence and trust cemented unity among the people while honesty and hospitality were espoused virtues. A unique value system that encapsulates the whole moral code of the Mizo was "Tlawmngaihna." This Mizo moral code continues to find expression in the present Mizo way of life.

The caste system that exists in Indian society was not found in the Mizo society. However, there was the presence of a form of class distinction, the seeds of which was sown by the chiefs. There are many folk-tales and folk songs that sung about the harsh difference of life existed between the "Hnamchawm" (Commoner's class) and "Mitha Fa." (The Chief's class) with regard to social life and relationships. In the strict observance of this system, the Mitha Fa enjoyed maximum privileges, while the Hnamchawm were deprived of recognition and permission to intermarry.

The place of women in a patriarchal system is often low and this was a common phenomenon even in Mizo society. There are many sayings in Mizo that

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39 The term means, "Service above self." It stands for selfless work for the welfare of the community, chivalry, endurance, modesty, a refusal to surrender to life's adversities, but, conversely to surpass others in a healthy competition for social service. Mizoram (Aizawl: Directorate and Information and Public Relation, 2002), 14-15.

40 Lalvunga, "The Heritage We Received," 31.
have reflected the attitudes of men to women. Hnuni emphasized that women were the workforce in the Mizo family and yet recognition and due regard were not given to them for their hard labor. Hluna went on to say that women in Mizo society received very bad treatment; that a woman possessed nothing though she did most of the work in the household as well as in the fields. A cursory scan of the quotation from John Shakespeare, the first Superintendent of Lushai Hills may provide us with an overall perspective of the condition as well as the contribution of Mizo women.

The Women folk fetch the wood and water, cook the food and do the greatest part of the weeding and harvesting; they also make the clothing for the whole household from cotton grown in the jhums which they themselves gather, clean, spin and weave into strong cloth. A Lushai woman has to rise early, fill her basket with empty bamboo tubes and trudge off before daylight down to the spring, which is generally some way down the hill (this is how the women used to fetch water from the water point). Having conveyed her basketful to the house, she has to set to work cleaning the rice for the day. The necessary amount of unhusked rice has been dried the previous day on the shelf over the hearth, and this she now proceeds to pound in a mortar in the front verandah, and winnow on an oval bamboo till it is clean enough for use, the breakfast of rice has then to be cooked and by the time it is ready, her husband is awake. After the meal the real work of the day begins.

Despite the many responsibilities the Mizo women assumed, they had no right to make decisions concerning either the family, or their social and religious life. Men folk felt humiliated if their wives disobeyed them. Moreover, Mizo women were

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41 R. Lianhnuni, “Legal Protection for the Poor in Ancient Israel: And its Significance for Mizo Society” (Ph. D. Diss., South Asia Theological Research Institute, 1995), 336.
42 Shakespeare, The Lushai- Kuki Clans, part 1, 16.
deprived of the right to inheritance or ownership either in their parent’s home or after
their marriage. They did not have rights over their own children and their own
earnings. One of the popular sayings was, “Women and an old fence can be
replaced,” which implies that just as the old fence of a garden can be easily replaced
by a new one, so also a man is completely free to replace his wife if the latter fails to
serve her purpose.

Though Mizo women played a very active role in the economic life of the
Mizo society, they seldom found a place in political and administrative positions.
Therefore, the position of women in Mizo society was paradoxical. At some points
they were free to express themselves and at other times they were severely restricted.

Drink, according to the pioneer missionaries, was one of the curses of Mizo
society, for the “Mizo do not know what moderation is, where Zu (rice-beer) is
concerned”. The low standard of morality that existed among the unmarried of the
non-Christian community and divorce that was extremely frequent and easy were
attributed to excessive drinking. Drinking local beer was a common practice of the
Mizo in their community, at victory celebrations, at ordinary social gatherings and at
other ceremonies and annual festivals. Rowland reported that he was struck by the
way the Lushais were addicted to drink, “everything is made the occasion for
drinking—the return from a journey, a death, a marriage, a piece of work completed
etc.” Though the Mizo drank Zu in their day-to-day lives, they also drank heavily on
special occasions and community festivals. There was no contra-

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43Lianhnuni, “Legal Protection for the Poor in Ancient Israel,” 337.
44Lorrain et al., “South Lushai” in The BMS Printed Report for 1905, 17. Zu is a common and
local name given to beer or any fermented liquor. It played an important role in early Mizo society and
without Zu, no ceremonial or religious function could be performed.
Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram 1894-1957, comp. K. Thanzauva (Aizawl:
Synod Literature and Publication Board, 1997), 7.
prohibition on drinking Zu. On the contrary, drinking Zu played an important role in almost all religious sacrifices and ceremonies.

One Mizo custom involved killing motherless babies. Lorrain reported that the Mizo were in the habit of killing or burying alive the offspring of mothers dying soon after giving them birth. Chapman and Clark, the lady pioneer missionaries in the south Mizoram, also confirmed that many women died in childbirth. The custom was to bury the baby alive with the dead mother. When the British Government forbade the practice, the condition was still worse for the babies because of superstition and fear. The Mizo believed that the mother’s spirit would haunt whoever tried to keep the baby from her, and that the spirit, which had killed the mother, would be angry with anyone trying to keep the baby alive. Consequently, the baby died a much more tragic lingering and painful death of starvation and neglect.

C. Religious Beliefs and Practices

Folk songs and traditions depict the religious beliefs and practices of the Mizo. According to most writers, the religion of the early Mizo people was animism. McCall reported that before the occupation of Mizoram by the British, the people were wholly animists. The Mizo believed that life was controlled by and subjected to a number of evil spirits Huai (demons), which could only be appeased by sacrifice. They believed that these various spirits inhabited hollows of big trees, mountains, streams, caves, cliffs etc. These spirits were responsible for the illnesses, death, droughts, storms, bad crops or accidents that befell them. Therefore, the Mizo

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viewed that these numerous unseen spirits, commonly called Ramhuai (evil spirits), were the cause of their miseries, diseases and death. To avert such sufferings one had to sacrifice animals. The need to drive away the evil spirits or to propitiate them was the order of the day.  

To propitiate them, they performed religious rites usually consisting of the offering of an animal’s blood. They assumed that the blood of the animal killed would satisfy the evil spirits and would appease them. Hence they offered various sacrifices in accordance with the prescriptions of the Puithiam (Priest). Mizo life was dominated by fear, focused upon the danger of fear in causing the displeasure of the evil spirits intentionally or unintentionally and superstitions persisted. The Mizo believed that these evil spirits had human form but were invisible. Thus the Mizo recognized the presence of numerous spirits and they offered sacrifices to these spirits mainly in search of healing for their sickness and out of fear.

The priest’s role in religious practice was very important. There were several songs chanted for sacrificial rites in the traditional religious practice. Such sacrifices were intended to contribute to the welfare of the people, their agricultural crops as well as their personal health. The Puithiam (Priest) was the functionary for all sacrificial purposes; thereby he occupied an important position in Mizo society.

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50Ibid., 19.
52Sangkima, Mizos, 53.
53C. Laitanga, Zu In Mizo Society: Past and Present (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1983), 31. Parry 1928 and Zawla (1964) have given a detailed account of the rituals and sacrifices.
54They believed that these spirits could take any form such as a tiger, fire, or wind and that they could possess persons. Mizo have many folk tales associated with this belief. The Mizo had a vivid belief that the spirits watched them everywhere and the Mizo could not harm or kill them. Thus their religious belief was connected with taboos and superstitions. They offered sacrifices to these spirits, they were not to be regarded as the worshippers of the demons in a strict sense, and they only offered such sacrifices to obtain a cure from their illnesses and misfortunes.
There were two types of priests: Bawlpu (a priest) and a Sadawt (a separate priest) whose functions were different. The Bawlpu was associated with the sacrifice to propitiate the evil spirit who was believed to have caused the sickness. He was to perform a sacrifice on behalf of the sick. The Sadawt was to invoke a blessing for agricultural purposes. The song used to invoke for blessing was, "Kumin hian kan thlawhna tluaŋ rawh se, Lenlai ram tuan phei lai khai zang rawh se," which means "Let our agricultural pursuits be successful and fruitful this year. Let the lifting of the feet towards the cultivable lands be delightful with ease."

The chief had his own Sadawt, who was officially designated to perform the religious functions of the community as a whole. Thus the practice of sacrifices in every Mizo village for the "malevolent" and "benevolent" spirits was common. The priest alone had the power to perform sacrifices and he had a strong influence over the people because of his profession and his skill in invoking the spirits. In this religious aspect the priest was more powerful than the chief was. The traditional Mizo society thus had a means of religious education concerning their traditional beliefs and practices through religious songs chanted by the priests.

As the people were illiterate, the art of priesthood and learning priestly functions were to be acquired by the process of memorization. As per Mizo religious practice, only a male could be priest, and the profession was not hereditary. Normally, succession depended to a great extent on the priest’s favor as to which individual he should impart the art of performing sacrifices and chanting. Lalramhluna asserted that the succession was open to those who were willing to take up the task. The priest was

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the functionary to pass on such religious education so that the candidate might acquire knowledge required for the task.\textsuperscript{58} Therefore learning took place in various forms including through the institution of the Priests, in the traditional period.

The priest alone knew the secret of identifying the malevolent spirits that were causing misfortune such as, sickness or disasters. This knowledge was handed down from generation to generation orally. The priest passed on the method of identifying which spirit was causing ill luck, which was causing sickness and what form of sacrifices would appease these evil spirits. The priest’s role and responsibilities necessitated a strong traditional education. This in depth preparation served to keep the profession of priesthood and the religious beliefs of the people alive for a long time. However, this traditional education in the religious realm was the monopoly of the priest and this was available only to the hands of a few who were interested in it and at the same time were favored by the priest.

To the Mizo, the word for religion is “Sakhua.” The social life of the traditional society was chiefly dominated by their religious beliefs.\textsuperscript{59} According to the primitive Mizo there were “Sa” and “Khua,” the combination of the two was known

\textsuperscript{58}B. Lalramhluna, “An Examination of the Relevance of Pedagogy of Adult Sunday School in the Baptist Church of Mizoram” (M. Th. Thesis, United Theological College, Bangalore, 2003),56.

\textsuperscript{59}Sangkima, Mizos, 51. According to tradition, the Mizo developed this sakhua during their habitation in the Run where the Mizo were in helpless condition. They needed solace, comforts and freedom from their sorrows, miseries and sufferings. The search for this was the beginning of their sakhua. Without any particular direction to begin with, they resorted to what their forefathers might have worshiped and on the basis of that belief they started simple incantation, \textit{Pi Biakin lo chang ang che, Pu Biakan lo chhang ang che.} (May the one whom our mother ancestors worship respond to our invocation, and may the one whom our father ancestors worship respond to our invocation. The Mizo historian also supported this simple beginning of the early Mizo religion. See also V.L. Siama, Mizo History (Aizawl: Lalrinliana & Sons, 1978), 10-11. Of course the religion was a gradual development by making new additions to the existing chants. The forms of worship and incantations were enriched and improved from time to time thereby causing slight difference from one village to another. See also Pastor Challiana, Pipu Nun (Aizawl: Trio Book House, 1978), 29-30.
as "Sakhua," which formed their chief religion. The Mizo also demonstrated that they had the concept of God and included the belief in the existence of "Pathian" (One Supreme Being), who was supposed to be the Creator and watcher of everything. They regarded him to be a benevolent being who had, however, little concern with humans. They believed that Pathian lived somewhere above and as such they called him "Chunga Pathian" (God above us). They did not make sacrifices to obtain his favor.

Apart from Chunga Pathian, they believed in the presence of many other good spirits, such as "Pu Vana;" (Grandpa of heaven) "Khua Nu," (Mother Nature), "Van Chung Nula," (Maiden of heaven), "Khuavang," "Lasi" and "Vanhrika" (Particular names of good spirits). These spirits were believed to exist somewhere above in heavenly places. They were regarded as harmless to human beings and as such they offered no sacrifice to them but were invoked for abundant blessings from them. Lewis observed that sacrifices were made only twice in a year to the good spirits before and after harvest. The Mizo had certain beliefs about the existence of the soul. They also believed that there is life after death. The general accepted theory was the presence of Mithi Khua (Dead people's village) and Pialral (Paradise meant for

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60 Laitanga, Zu in Mizo Society, 31. Sa worshiped with pigs and Khua with Mithun (bison). All the pigs and Mithuns killed on the day of Sechhun and Khuangchawi (the name of a public feast given by chiefs and well -to-do Lushais) were for the sacrifices to the Sa and khua respectively. See also K. Zawla, Mizo Pipute Leh An Thlahte Chanchin (Aizawl: H.A. Press, 1965), 334. See also Seletthanga, PiPu Lenlai (Aizawl: Lianchhungi Book Store, 1978), 99.

61 Shakespeare, The Lushai- Kuki Clams, part I, 68. The word Khuanu was often used to mean a synonym with Pathian particularly in song and poetry. The Lasi seemed to be only concerned with wild animals, over which they were believed to have complete control.

the distinguished persons) somewhere beyond the world. This belief was instrumental in molding the cultural norms and values of the Mizo.63

As basically Mizo are agriculturists, all their activities centered round shifting cultivation and their festivals are associated with such operations. The Mizo used to observe festivals, such as Chapchar Kut (spring festival) Mimkut (Festival held in honor of the dead), and Pawlkut (Harvest festival). They have many folk dances such as Cheraw (Bamboo dance), Khuallam, Chheihlam, Chailam, Rallu Lam, Solakia, Sarlamkai, Parlam, Sakelulam and Tlanglam.64

Thus, the Mizo society was permeated with a crude animistic belief, and countless superstitions. The Mizo attached much importance to superstitions about unusual occurrences and a fear of unseen evil spirits played a dominant role in their day-to-day lives. There were however some Hindus, Buddhists or those of other religions who lived in Mizoram, particularly in Chhimihtuipui District where the Chakmas and Brus65 are found.

D. The Institution of Chieftainship

The Mizo administered their internal affairs under the customary practice of chieftainship, which formed an integral part of the Mizo political life. A large majority of the chiefs belonged to the lineage of Thangur, a Sailo clan of the Lusei

63Pialral was meant for the Thangchhuah Nu and Pa only where as Mithi Khua was for the spirit of the ordinary people where they would continue to work hard. Life at Pialral would be full of bliss.

64H. Lalrarnghinglova, Ethno-Medical Plants of Mizoram (Dehradun- Bishen Singh Mahendra Pal Singh, 2003), 13. See also Vergheese and Thanzawna. The word Kut is the Mizo word for festivals. The Mizo dances are connected with public feast and festivals. Chapchar Kut is retained till today. Originally it was celebrated on completion of the most arduous work of jhum cultivation. Other cultural dances are connected with public celebration.

65A. C. Ray, States of Our Union: Mizoram (Calcutta: Pearl Publisher, 1982), 4. These two tribes, the Chakma and the Brus, came from the Chittagong Hill Tracts now in Bangladesh, and Tripura State. They speak different dialects having no affinity with the Mizo. They live in the South-west and the Western belts of Mizoram.
tribe that monopolized the chieftainship at the time of the occupation of Mizoram by the British government. Only a small number of chiefs belonged to other tribes such as Fanai, Pawi, Paihte and Hualngo, who were next to the Sailo. The Sailo chiefs formed the upper clan among the Mizo. Though the Sailo chiefs commanded more respect than others, all the chiefs enjoyed the same powers, functions and privileges.

Every village was a sovereign independent unit having a sort of an autocratic Lal (chief). Theoretically, everything that was in the village belonged to the Chief and he enjoyed absolute power. Ray, quoting from Lewin, the first Britisher to know the Mizo intimately; he saw the “village system among the Lushais” as a number of petty states, “each under a dictator or president.”

The aim of all chiefs was to exercise dominion over sufficient land to accommodate his eldest and successive sons, the youngest son falling heir to his father’s stronghold. The chief administered the village with a Council of Upate (elders) who were appointed by the respective chiefs, without considering the consent or opinion of the people. Based on the unwritten traditional practice, the chief carried out judicial matters and the administration of justice with his elders. That tradition was often altered according to the contemporary social need. Hence,

The chief was the recognized head of the village, and his word was law to the inhabitants. He settled all disputes that might arise and was supposed to lead them against their foes and be the general dispenser of Justice.

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66Shakespeare, Lushaii-Kuki Clans, Part 1, 2-5.
67Sangkima, Mizo, 34.
70McCall, Lushai Chrysallis, 97.
71Ibid. 17.
The Mizo chief acted as the father of his subjects, looking after their welfare. With the help of the “Upate” he attended to all matters concerning the village. The chief presided over the meetings of the Council, which were generally held in the chief’s house. Whenever there was a difference of opinion expressed by Council members, it was the chief whose decision was final. He had to be capable of solving their difficulties and improving the standard of living of his people. Thus, the chief’s domicile served as the judgment hall for the welfare of his village. It was here that many important issues were decided, concerning the welfare of the people, such as planning the strategy for waging war and the settlement of disputes. The chief discussed land distribution for cultivation and peace talks with his elders. The final decision of the chief, with the action to be taken, was then announced to the villagers through the Tlangau (Village Herald).

The chiefs and his elders’ main functions were to defend their village, to select land for cultivation and to maintain law and order. The chief was also supported in his function by other village officials such as, Zalen (a free man); Ramhual (the principal man of a village); Tlangau (Village Herald); Thirdeng (Blacksmith); Puithiam (Priest); Sadawt (Priest for the chief); Khawchhiar (Census officer). There was a complete concentration of power in the hands of each village chief and his council of elders. They controlled and regulated all aspects of village life in accordance with the customs.

The chief’s responsibility included receiving and protecting fugitives who sought refuge in his house. At the same time, he had the power to banish any subject from his village and confiscate all his or, her property. The chief enjoyed the power to

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impose even the death penalty on a person within his jurisdiction. On the other hand, if a man was not happy with his chief, there was nothing to prevent his moving to the village of another chief who was strong and benevolent.

Therefore, the chief had to exercise his power with consideration. He could not afford to give offence since the people had a right to transfer their allegiance to another at will. When any chief became unpopular due to cruelty, the chief’s general influence dwindled because his people were able to desert and join other chiefs. This put a check on the wanton tendencies of the chiefs. Thus, in a seemingly reciprocal manner, the happiness of the villagers depended on the chief while, inversely, the strength of the chief also depended on the allegiance of the subjects. Every family in the village was obligated to pay “Chhiah” (tax) to the chief such as “fathang,” “sachhiah,” “chichhiah” and “khuaichhiah.”

The chief usually built his village on hilltops for health and security reasons. For many generations, the Mizo lived in their primitive way indulging in head-hunting raids, village feuds and warfare. Possible reasons have been suggested for the frequent raids against other tribes. Hluna, a Mizo historian writes:

Every man, as soon as he could understand, became fired with the ambition to obtain human skulls to display as marks of heroism before his courageous comrades, or for the decoration of his own tomb after his death.

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73 The fathang was a tribute paid in rice according to the demand of the chief. Sachhiah was a portion of an animal killed in the hunt usually the left foreleg. Chichhiah was a tax on salt and Khuaichhiah was a tax on honey.

74 Hluna, Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram (Aizawl: Mizo History Association, 1985). The prestige and position of the chiefs were measured on the basis of number of the successful raids they had made. Mizo were accustomed to using guns then, and the gun and gunpowder became a passion with the chiefs, as they knew that the neighboring plains people had these. The Mizo were said to have indulged in raids to obtain certain articles like bell-metal plates, bangles and other materials, which they considered valuable, these were available in the plains. The Mizo needed to raid the neighboring plains for captives to do all the jhuming and household work. After the advent of British rule in Cachar, there was the gradual extension of tea gardens by the English tea planters at the foothill forests, which the Mizo considered as their hunting territory. They were annoyed and took it as an encroachment on their land. Demand for salt and other foodstuffs were some of the reasons for frequent raids committed by the Mizo against the neighboring plains.
Another possible reason for desiring to have human skulls could be the traditional belief that every chief must have some servants or slaves in “Mithi Khua” (Dead man’s village) where they were supposed to go after death. Therefore, they would need the skulls of humans to be kept around the corpse of the chief so that the souls could accompany the soul of the chief in the next world. Hence Mizo chiefs were engaged in raids in the neighboring areas. These were some of the motivating forces for the Mizo to engage in raiding and plundering the neighboring tribes beyond their land.

While retaining the characteristic features of the traditional customs and culture, Mizo society was moving ahead with changes in several aspects of their lives under the leadership of traditional chiefs. In addition to general supervision and administration, the chief was responsible for fostering the spirit of Tlawmngaihna. To some extent, village education was fostered in the chief’s house. This system involved learning in terms of imparting practical training in different branches of war techniques, trapping skills, planning strategies of the chief for hunting or for war. The qualities required of a chief were that he must have intimate knowledge of the village and his subjects, and have an understanding of their lives, hopes and aspirations. The chieftainship system, in addition to providing an opportunity for learning practical skills, promoted the perpetuation and transmission of Mizo culture.

The institution of the chief fostered the art of music making. Sometimes, the chief’s house was used to celebrate victories and to give recognition to heroes of valor

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76 Is the core of the Mizo’s code of ethics, which is an almost untranslatable term for a compelling moral force. It enjoins everybody to be kind, hospitable and helpful to others. In war or peace or in dealing with individual or groups this spirit of *Tlawmngaihna* guides Mizo thought and action in P.K. Bandyopadhyay, *The Mizo Leadership* (Delhi: B.R. Publication, 2004), 52.
in various domains. This was a good incentive for youth aspiring to accomplish great things for the society. Thus, the function of the Chief and his elders included encouragement, consultation and information dissemination in the Mizo traditional society.

II. TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Studies have shown that ‘education’ cannot be limited to formally institutionalized structures because even before the introduction of a formal system of education, every society developed a relevant and unique way of passing knowledge from one generation to the next. Though education was formally introduced in Mizoram in 1894, the values and skills of the Mizo community were nurtured and sustained through forms of traditional education that were very much part of their social life.

Traditionally, though there was no formal system of education as there is today in Mizoram, people were taught according to the needs and expectations of the society. Traditional education was primarily concerned with imparting basic skills to every person for their self-sustenance and for equipping them to be responsible and useful community members.

The kind of education that was provided included handicrafts, etiquette, singing, folk dance, defense, customs, the art of warfare, and hunting. Each of these pursuits contributed to the Mizo acculturation process. These were taught through family, through the traditional institution called the ‘Zawlbuluk’ (Bachelor’s dormitory) through folklore and folktales and other proverbs and sayings. The informal curriculum of the Zawlbuluk included civic duties, community ethics, defense, culture,
The traditional avenues through which education prepared each individual to become useful, socially integrated members of their community. Instruction was directed to meet the need of the time. It was a very practical educational process, which molded and equipped the Mizo for the role he, or she, was to assume. These traditional institutions that met the educational needs of the Mizo society in the past are as follows.

**A. Family: The Traditional Mizo Education Center**

The family is the smallest and most intimate group of society. It is where man's craving for unity and love are satisfied. Man has always belonged to a society of one kind or another; it may be a tribe, a family, a state or any other group in which human lives. The family is the first social group for a child. Socialization of the child begins at home and continues as he, or she, participates in the form of education that the society provides. In any society, the family fulfills several functions; procreative, economic, social and educational. The procreative function provides for the continuation of any society. The economic function includes the responsibility for providing food, clothing and shelter to the members of the family while the social function includes socialization of the children and preparation for facing hard realities of society and social life.\(^\text{77}\)

\(^{77}\text{H.R. Mukhi, Indian Social Systems (Delhi: Surjeet Book Depot, 1999), 280. The basic social unit of Mizo society was the family. The family occupies an important and prominent place in the history of the Mizo. It was constituted through the institution of marriage. Marriage is usually endogamous. Normally the marriage system of the Mizo is based on mutual agreement between the families of the boy and the girl. The youngest son is entitled to the right of inheritance.}\)
The Mizo families were organized into household units whose social structure was patriarchal and generally semi-nuclear in character.\(^7\) It consisted of father, mother and children. Sometimes it also included children of relatives whose parents were dead or even adopted children, grand-children and grand-parents. The father was the head and final authority of the family. The children belonged to the father and the mother had no share or right in the inheritance that was reserved solely for the male child. Parents and grandparents were highly respected. A Mizo writer, Siama, admitted that a wife never called her husband by his name in any form of address, formal or informal. Only, after a child was born would she address him\(^7\) by adding the suffix *pa* (father) to the name of their child, for instance, *Zova pa* or *Zovi pa* (Zova's father or Zovi's father).

A child is a born imitator and very early he, or she, begins to emulate what he, or she, sees in others. He/she learns to have a sense of belonging and togetherness. What the children hear and see in the family largely influences much of their character, habits and actions. Since the child sees more of father and mother during the first few years of life, his parents will affect him more than anyone else. The responsibility in the training of a child lies at home. Being in a family involves mutual affection and blood ties. The chords that tie the family together are mainly emotional and not intellectual. The place where a Mizo child begins his education is in his/her home.

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\(^7\) The institution appeared as the first and accepted educational center of the Mizo. Marriage among the Mizo was exacted as a civil contract that was soluble at the will of both parties concerned. The system or form of marriage right from its inception was "marriage by purchase." In selecting a partner, the Mizo were very careful. The parents exercised great care and solemnity, looking into the family history as far as they could trace. Monogamy was the common form of marriage and that of polygamy was an exception.

\(^7\) Siama, *Mizo History*, 30.
In the Mizo family a child was taught how to behave and what behavior to expect from others so that he could adjust to people and groups outside the family. Thus the family is an educational unit as well as a socio-cultural unit. It is the traditional school for the Mizo, where the next generation was made familiar with the culture and values of the people group. Hence, the family constituted an important learning center.

B. Home: The Traditional Center for Cultural Transmission

In a very general manner, home is a structure of four walls and a roof, with people living within these four walls who interact with each other with love and care. Home is the place where customs, traditions and values are transmitted from one generation to the next. Education is the process of learning throughout the life cycle. Learning is a part of human life. When does this learning take place in an individual’s life? Psychologists tell us that a child’s learning process begins even before birth.

Here, the child is fed, clothed and sheltered by parents. The attitude of the child towards society will be greatly influenced by what he learns within the family. The transmission of habits and attitudes from parents to children takes place. The family, more than any other group exerts a far-reaching influence on the attitude of the child. The home environment is an important factor in the development and character of a child.

To children, the home is their world. As is common in non-literate societies, Mizo children too, had to receive their primary education at home. It was the place where the child spent his, or her, early childhood and thus, where his, or her, character began to develop. Home is the place where the children get their first lessons in society. The norms and cultural traditions of a society are learned in the family.
setting. It is the first school where children begin their learning and training for life. Moreover, the home is a ‘seat of learning’ for social skills.

Vimala Paulus rightly says that home is the only agency in which precepts and examples can go hand in hand through the years. There is enough time and the experiences are intimate enough to mould inner attitudes and habits. There is a great responsibility upon parents, for it is in the home that the child begins his, or her, first period of learning. Home plays an important role for the child’s growth. Everything in the environment teaches him new things and ways of adjustment to life.

In Mizo culture parents were the first to teach social obligations to their children. They also imparted instruction on ethical norms, customs, traditions, cooking, and handicrafts. Thus a home may be regarded as one of the most permanent institutions of Mizo culture. The family is the major agent for transmitting culture to young children. The family introduces the child to the world of values, which enables him to embrace a wider worldview. Value education begins at home. Children learn by observation and imitation and when they see and experience certain types of behavior, they imitate those actions and learn through repetition. Values are developed at home while interacting with others in the family. Moral values, like honesty, integrity and humility were emphasized in Mizo family life.

Aesthetic values like sensitivity to artistic qualities and ethical values, such as punctuality, thriftiness, discipline and respect were also taught in some measure. Family members became models for children and their habits and customs were reflected in the child’s character. The home environment was such that mother, father

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and other children ate together and worked together. The values and standards that those children learned and embraced originated in the environment of the home.

Thus, parents played the role model at home and outside. Children continuously assimilated the pattern of behavior from those around them. As Vimala Paulus says, “A child’s character becomes almost a direct reproduction of the way his parents treat him.”\footnote{Ibid., 29.} The home or the family became an important institution for educating and training children to become responsible in the Mizo society. The home was the school for practical living and the most fundamental institution. Some writers have referred to it as the nursery of every generation, “the college of life” and “the training ground of the child.”\footnote{Morris Inch, “The Home as an Educational Agency” in An Introduction to Evangelical Christian Education, ed. J. Edward Hakes (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 406.} The character traits and values a child adopts get multiplied subsequently in the society.

Life and education were very closely related. Children learned each day by observing their parents as they carried out their responsibilities. By learning cooperation, they learned how to conduct themselves before they were asked to shoulder responsibilities. The status of the home reflected the socio-cultural ethos of the Mizo society. Value inculcation permeated all sectors of society and parental behavior was directed towards influencing their children.

C. Educational Functions of the Parents among the Mizo

Verbal instructions regarding conduct and etiquette were elements of Mizo parental training. The attitude of a child towards others was greatly influenced by what he, or she, saw and heard from his, or her, parents. Parents tried to meet the child’s basic psychological needs for love, care, affection and respect. This concern made the
family ties stronger and helped develop the personality of the child. The method of teaching by the mother and father was different according to their gender. It was the parents' responsibility that knowledge and skills were taught and demonstrated in practice. In the early years, the guiding and molding hands of parents were the source of a child's knowledge, and his skill development.

Children got their identification from their parents or often from their grandparents. Children learned habits, manners and cultural values while living with their parents, and later in life, in living in association with others in their community. The function of the parents also includes protection, affection, and teaching skills for cooperative living and providing for the physical necessities of life. In the absence of formal education parents were responsible for teaching the traditions and customs of the society to their children. By the time the child reached adulthood, she, or he, would be already prepared to face life's realities and responsibilities.

The father's role in traditional education was to provide physical and emotional security and to be responsible for the welfare of the family members. The father was the primary socializing agent for children and was responsible to represent the family outside the home. Every member of his family was expected to respect him and pay him homage. The children, even after they were married and settled in separate homes, had to give their parents the hind portion of every animal they killed as a sign of their loyalty and respect.

The process of education was personal, spontaneous, concrete and practical. The child did not have much choice and the father was the supreme authority in family life. This family structure was an effective means for the father to pass on his
instructions and decisions to his children. The qualities of self-esteem, self-confidence, self-restraint and self-respect were the personality traits that the father-teacher tried to inculcate in his children. This he did, not only verbally, but also through living out these qualities in his personal life.

Being the master, patriarch, teacher and the source of information, the father disciplined, inspired and directed the children. His philosophy of education and training focused on the formation of character, the development of personality and the inculcation of civic responsibility and the social mores of their times. There was no question of disobedience. Thus, the father was of key importance in the economic and religious life and in meeting the physical needs of the family.

He was the nodal point and facilitated the inculcation of moral and social values. He also affirmed the dignity of labor. The values he upheld included obedience, respect for elders, caring for one another, and the spirit of selfless service, reliability, trustworthiness, promptness and concern for the welfare of the society in general. Mizo societal values were not embraced overnight but the father imparted them by example and by regularly giving duties and responsibilities to the children in the home. Obedience and respect for elders were regarded as very important. The main values and training imparted were based on things most admired such as

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bravery, diligence and modesty as seen in living examples and in the stories of brave men.

The father was also responsible for teaching his family the art and spirit of hospitality and of being charitable to guests and to the needy. The art of hunting, trapping and vocationalized training in certain professions was the responsibility of the father to pass on to the children. Male children learned skills from their father like cane-works of different types required for various purposes in their day-to-day life, mat-making, handling of daos and other implements for agriculture, carving and hunting. It was expected that the male child achieve proficiency in workmanship, manual labor and making fences. He also had to learn to assume social responsibilities expected of him in the society.

The father would tell the family members what was to be done and how to behave as good members of the society. There was no fixed time or place for learning. However, meal times provided opportune moments when all the members of the family met and dined together. Normally, the mealtime in the morning, fehreh san hun (approximately 8 a.m.), was a learning period for the children, during which the father gave advice and also assigned work to the members of the family for the day. Thus, mealtime became an important learning session for Mizo traditional education. Mizo children received instruction, which commenced and ended during the mealtime.

So according to the Mizo, this session was recognized as Hmelchhiat lai (meal time was an odd time for visitation), and it was considered untimely for other members in the society to visit families at such times. Family education was primarily the education of the children through oral repetition by the father. The regularity and
availability of the teacher-father during mealtime made a big difference for the children. Hminga affirms that,

At mealtime when the whole family would sit in a circle on the floor, eating food from a large common wooden plate, the father would give assignments of work to the family members and would speak words of advice or caution to his children.\(^4\)

Implicitly, the words of the father were essential for the stability of the family and for the normal and ethical upbringing of the children. Each father had his unique method by which he governed the family. The father planned his own strategy, as he deemed best for his children. He was concerned with what could really make his children useful citizens in their adult life and how they could be of help to others for the greater cause of the society.

A Mizo mother played an important role in the maintenance of the Mizo family. Most of the domestic chores came under her supervision and responsibility. It was the woman's responsibility to make a home harmonious for everybody. She had to look after the welfare of the entire family. Mothers were expected to obey, respect, and revere their husbands. The traditional mode of earning their livelihood was by cultivation. Women shared with their men-folk in all work, including cultivation. This was their major work apart from domestic duties. They were comparatively hard-working and self-sacrificing in family matters.

The mother's role in the traditional educational system was to train her daughters to be good wives and become adept in weeding and harvesting. She had to

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play the role of a caregiver and instructor to each of her children. She had to demonstrate this fact by way of examples through hard work and her lifestyle.

Apart from cooking, she looked after the domestic animals as well as making clothes for all the members of the family. These tasks filled each day till late evening. In the off-season, after the crops had been harvested, the women were engaged in cloth making from raw materials produced locally. Cotton weaving was a common practice among Mizo women. McCall, in his remarks about the weaving work of Mizo women, said, “The weaving is excellent, and is done on complicated indigenous handlooms, home grown cotton being used. The whole process requires patience and time.”

Hence, from the age of six or seven, a mother had to teach her daughter to collect firewood for the family, to carry drinking water and to look after the younger brothers or sisters. Girls started to learn the art of weaving, beginning on a miniature loom, known as “themlem.” With practice, the girl learned cotton- weaving, which was carried on extensively by the women folk. In fact, weaving formed a part of the woman’s ordinary household duties. In addition to these skills, a mother had to train her daughter so that, as soon as she attained puberty, she would be capable of joining others in sowing, weeding and harvesting. Another teaching session for a mother was at bedtime when mothers told stories to their children. Through listening to these tables, children took on new learning experiences. Basic information about Mizo culture and customs was communicated to children in this manner. Education in the home school played a very significant role in molding Mizo children.

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85 Lalrimawia, Mizoram: History and Cultural Identity, 1.
86 Mc Call, The Lushai Chrysallis, 182.
In order to have a clearer perspective of a woman’s responsibilities in traditional Mizo society, it is needful to briefly outline the traditional status and role of a Mizo woman. Though women played a vital role in the family, their place in the society in reality was inferior to that of men. Most often, a husband helping his wife was construed as unmanly and hence he was not motivated to help her or relieve her of her heavy work.

There were several Mizo sayings to support the idea that women were inferior. For instance, “A Women’s word is no word just as a crab’s meat is no meat,” which means a women’s word should not be taken seriously. “Women and crabs have no religion,” suggests that a woman simply follows the religion of her husband or her father and can have no religion of her own. They had a notion that women should be beaten or threatened in order to correct and discipline them. This was reflected in their saying, “A wife, a dog, and a walnut tree, the more you beat them the better they are, but the unbeaten wife and non-clearance grass of fields are both unbearable.”

To sum up the status of women as quoted by one of the first lady missionary teachers, Miss Chapman “A woman had no rights at all. Body, mind and spirit, she belonged from her birth to her father, her brother, and her husband. A woman’s men folk could do and treat her as they liked. They considered a man who did not beat his wife, to be a coward. Women possessed nothing—not even the few clothes she wore.”

The condition of women in the past was miserable and pitiable. They were required to work throughout the day and were always busy with household work. They found no

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88Marjorie Sykes, Mizo Miracle, 13.
time for leisure. They were given no opportunity to express their opinion or vent their difficulties and grievances.

Considering the status of a woman in Mizo society, it is important to realize the amount of effort that a mother had to make for her girl child. A girl's future was dependent on the skill of a mother. The mother's responsibility was to train her daughter in the art of domestic chores and skills which contributed to the earning of a livelihood right from her childhood. Keeping in view the responsibilities of a mother towards her children, it was imperative that she plans, prepares and organizes for her daughter's early skill-training so that she could become productive early in life. Although traditional family education was not degree oriented, the family became a center for successful women and men in different spheres of life, those areas where unique particular skill sets were required.

The principal goal of traditional education was to produce men of valor and to bring up a girl child in a manner to provide her with social recognition and ensure that she find a good husband. The parents transmitted this knowledge orally and practically. Thus, the respective roles of the father and the mother were lived out in the home and specialized in conveying diligence, truthfulness and skills acquisition for the welfare of the village. Mizo children were encouraged to develop a strong character and this aspect of training was the sole responsibility of the father. The educational activities at home were designed to have a social value. The flow of information and education not only related to the immediate domain of the home or even of the larger issues e.g. Mizo society; it also communicated the Mizo's worldview. The early practice of discipline by the father enabled the growing child in later years to accept rules and regulations and to internalize them. This paid dividends in the society.
However, what was lacking in the traditional education was that the parents seldom encouraged their children to think independently and critically. Children did not question their parents or elders. They were encouraged to listen and obey without questioning.

D. Contents of Mizo Traditional Educational Systems

The Mizo were very precise and careful in teaching their children how they should address their siblings and others. From childhood, children were taught that they should not speak to anyone disrespectfully but were taught how to properly address them. Parents taught children that certain individuals were their uncles, or aunts, and that they should respectfully address them according to their status or relationship, e.g. "Ka Ni" (My aunt), "Ka Pu" (uncle, or sir), 'Ka Pi' (Madam). Thus, children were taught and expected to respect and honor parents, elders as well as those who were superior to them. They looked upon parents with great respect. Sons and daughters, even after they had grown up and established their own homes, would consider it disrespectful to call their parents by their names.89

Concerning table etiquette in the past the Mizo did not have a refined manner of each person eating from a separate plate. They developed their table manners in their own traditional way. They shared the food from a large wooden plate. They sat in a circle around the large plate on the floor. All the members of the family, including guests if any, ate from the common dish with bare hands. The traditional dictum observed was, “Until the eldest of the family begins to start taking the food, no other members would begin to eat.” This was a good custom to develop self-control and the

habit of doing things in a respectful manner. The children grew up to show respect to elders not only at home but also in the community. Showing respect for elders was the pride of the Mizo. To the Mizo, the age of a person was important and elders were respected.

Although education in terms of classroom teaching was unknown, desirable standard of behavior for home and in the larger society were imparted through example. The Mizo loved to practice virtue and they tried to follow their society’s moral code and live according to the expected social norms. Virtue was important to them and they emphasized practicing it in order that the society lived harmoniously. They highly valued moral virtue and respected their forefathers. They tried to avoid what the older generation disliked, respecting their opinions and feelings saying, "our forefathers have rejected this and that."

In order that one might lead a wholesome life and play a significant role as a member of the society, the Mizo people had a number of philosophical sayings for educating the people. One of the objectives of education was to inculcate sound moral behavior. This was inculcated through several maxims. These proverbs were handed down from one generation to another and that process continues even today. The factors that bound the Mizo together helping them to live in harmony with each other were the teachings of these precepts and wise sayings. These proverbs helped them to live a disciplined life and develop character traits consonant with the virtues that accorded with their social norms. On the contrary, if one failed to follow such principles, he, or she, could be looked down upon by the society. Such principles provided ethical and moral teachings for harmonious social relationships. They were the guidelines for the development of a civic pride and responsibility.
Some of the proverbs were, "Lampui Changkhatah mi an be chhe ngai lo" which implies that one should behave politely even to a stranger in any chance encounter. This is very similar to the teaching of the Bible, which says, "do not forget to entertain strangers (Heb.13: 2). Very close to this teaching is "Tawngkam thain sial a man," which may be interpreted as speaking kind words or politely reaps a huge prize worth a Mithun.

With the purpose of teaching good behavior, they often say, "Anchhe lawh hi mahni chungah a tla thin," which implies that a person must guard against anger saying, "Do not curse, for your curse will fall on you." The Mizo’s concern for the welfare of mothers and children is learned from their precept, "Nunau ti thlabar zawnga tual chhunga che mi chu a chi thlah tam hmain thah tlak ani," meaning that anybody who ever harmed mothers and children must be eliminated before they reproduce. Another common saying was, "Lungpui pawh lungtein a kamki loh chuan a awm thei lo," meaning that everyone was equally important in one’s respective place regardless of one’s personal disposition and abilities.

These sayings have useful applications with dynamic implications for the Mizo, social life. The people were directed to channel their thoughts and deeds in accordance with these teachings. Hence, generally people were faithful, fair and kind to one another within their own village. The most prized values of the Mizo were

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91 Ibid. , 374. See also K. Zawla, Mizo Pi pute leh an Thlahte Chanchin (Aizawl: Gosen Press, 1989), 123.
92 A Mithun is a domesticated Gayal often prized by the Mizo and a person having one or more is counted wealthy.
94 Zawla, Mizo Pi Pute leh an Thlahte Chanchin, 124.
95 Malsawma, Sociology of the Mizos (Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 2002), 211. See also Lianthanga, Hmanlai Mizo Nun, 374 and Zawla, Pi Pute leh an Thlahte Chanchin, 123.
bravery and *Tlawmngaihna*. The spirit of selfless service to benefit others was emphasized. Certain guidelines were articulated as application of this spirit of social responsibility:

(a) As concerns this value; “One should not construct a home or make a fence obstructing the main pathway. No one can survive the curses of the passers by.”\(^{96}\)

(b) With reference to the encroachment of a boundary and public agricultural land, the principle was, “*Ri te hriatloha ramri zauh chu thihna ani,*” \(^{97}\) which implies that “it is a taboo to move a fence or boundary tract without the owner’s knowledge. It leads to death.”

(c) As for a prohibition relating to hygiene and consideration for others, they had a strict saying, “*Kawngthlangah zung la, kawngchhakah e rawh, tichuan vantlang thinrim i pumpelh dawn nia.*” \(^{98}\) Literally, this saying constitutes an injunction to urinate on the lower edge of the road and to defecate on the upper ridge of the road in order to circumvent the ire of the people in the vicinity. In practical terms, the injunction is to avoid making one’s actions an annoying liability for the others.

(d) In connection with inter-personal relationships, a common principle is “*Sem sem, dam, dam, Ei bil, thi, thi.*” \(^{99}\) This implies that generosity brings prosperity in life and miserliness brings misfortune. One should be able to share his or her abundance and not withhold it for oneself.

(e) With regard to kindness to animals and creation, the principle goes, “*Rannung pawi sawi lo sawi sak leh an chunga nun rawn hi vanduaina thlentu leh* 

\(^{96}\)M. Lalmanzuala, *Zoram Kalsiam-2* (Khatla: Sapthlengliana, 1999), 82. See also Zawla, 124.


\(^{98}\)Ibid. 375.

\(^{99}\)Lalmanzuala, *Zoram Kalsiam-2*, 82. See also Lianthanga, 373 and Zawla, 123.
"thihna rapthlak thentu ani," 100 "It is not right to mistreat harmless creatures and animals. If one indulges in such ill treatment, he will incur miserable suffering and a terrible death."

(f) From an ethical perspective, stealing was condemned and regarded as a grave offence against the society, hence it was bluntly stated, "It is forbidden to steal." 101 It was understood that if someone stole something, he, or she, was calling for an untimely death. For example, stealing a hoe or a spade would lead to the use of the same spade or hoe to dig the grave of the one who stole it. Similarly, to steal an axe would result in using the same axe to make a casket for burying the thief. This implies also that the thief would not live long. Parallel to this, the act of stealing clothes would result in the use of the same clothes to drape the dead body of the one who stole them. These maxims effectively taught that stealing is a serious crime and it brings death. The fact that people did not lock their house, a piece of wood being sufficient to bar the door, attests to the rarity of theft and the effectiveness of these maxims as agents of social control.

(g) In emphasizing the importance of personal character, the Mizo aphorism was, "Nun chhiat leh suahsual a sim theih a, hmelchhiat a sim that theih loh," 102 which means, "Bad habits and misconduct can be rectified, but an ugly face cannot be changed."

(h) In the same manner, the Mizo emphasized doing good deeds. To teach this truth, they said, "Thing pawh a Kung a that leh a rah a tha a, a kung a that loh leh a

100 Luaia, Mizo Nun Phung, 22. See also Zawla, 124 and Lianthanga, 363.
101 Malsawma, Sociology of the Mizos, 211. See also Lianthanga, 376 and Zawla, 124.
102 Lianthanga, Hmanlai Mizo Nun, 376. See also Malsawma, 210.
rah a tha lo, meaning, "If the tree is good, its fruit is good; if the tree is bad, its fruit is bad."

(i) On crimes and murder, they have a saying pertaining to the consequences of committing murder, "It is forbidden to murder, it has serious repercussions generation after generation."

(j) As to the problem of adultery, the teaching was "It is a taboo to commit adultery; a tiger will kill the adulterers."

(k) A common proverb regarding the teaching of morality says, "A young man who has illicit relationships with many girls will not prosper in matters relating to children and may even become sterile."

Similarly there are several aphorisms that act as guiding principles of Mizo life and philosophy. The following are some of the familiar ones: "Sial rangin Sial rang a hring" implies that ‘as is the mother, or father, so is the daughter, or son. Parallel to this proverb was "Sakawlin Sakawi a hring," which means that a brave father has a brave son. Interestingly in the negative sense, a common saying was, "Nu siar Nu siar" and this implies that a daughter is as hopeless as her mother. There is also a traditional saying that "Sunhlu Kungah theidang a rah ngai lo," meaning that parents will have offspring similar to themselves for better or for worse, just as the gooseberry tree does not bear any other fruit than the gooseberry itself.

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104 Lianthanga, 363.
105 Ibid., 376.
106 Luaia, Mizo Nunphung, 23.
107 Lianthanga, Hmanlai Mizo Nun, 374.
108 Ibid and it implies the same meaning.
109 Oral information passes on from the older generation.
110 Zawla, Mizo Pi Pute leh an Thlahte Chanchin, 123-127.
Parents have a maxim for their children, "Those who do not care for their parents will not prosper." And with the purpose of teaching the importance of controlling the tongue, "A person with a careless tongue will not live long." was the proverb. In teaching humility and guarding against pride, "Mahni infak leh sakhi ngalah engmah a bet lo," meaning, just as there is no flesh on the leg of a stag, there is no worth in self-praise." was the common lesson. "Lal ngailo lal a na," is the prevailing principle for those put in positions of authority meaning, a chief who has never exercised power lacks wisdom to properly exercise the use of authority. This idea complements the saying, "persons who have never ruled, will rule oppressively."

Several Mizo teachings and principles in the form of proverbs have been thus kept alive. They have provided guidance and motivation in charting the course of day-to-day activities of the Mizo. These sayings are still regarded as important even today.

III. ZAWLBUK (BACHELOR'S DORMITORY): THE MIZO TRADITIONAL EDUCATION CENTER

One of the traditional centers of learning for the Mizo is the institution of "Zawlbuk" (dormitory for men folk). The community-based "Zawlbuk" was popular as a social institution in Mizo society. The Mizo devised a system of education capable of equipping citizens to guard and develop their own villages.

Zawlbuk is a common feature of all Mizo traditional villages and is also a conspicuous common feature of most of the tribal people in the Northeast. Zawlbuk

111 Lianthanga, 375. See also Lalmanzuala, 82 and Luaia, 23.
112 Luaia, Mizo Nunphung, 22.
113 Malsawma, Sociology of the Mizos, 211. See also Lianthanga, 374.
114 Ibid., 210. See also Lianthanga, 372.
115 Rongenga, Mizoram leh Zirna Chanchin Tlangpui, 9.
occupied a central position in the organization and administration of the Mizo village. In the absence of formal education, the Zawlbuk functioned as the most potent institutionalized mechanism of social control. It was usually situated in the center of the village near the Chief’s house. The Mizo village was usually encircled by a fence, which was strengthened by bamboo staves to prevent easy entry at night.

All young men of the village were supposed to sleep at the Zawlbuk. This was the place where they were trained to develop courage and learn tactics for protecting the villages from attacks by wild animals and invasions of enemy tribes. Here they learned etiquette, history, culture, martial arts and war techniques, as well as developing athletic skills. Thus, a study of the Zawlbuk is relevant and necessary to have a clear understanding of the Mizo traditional educational system.

A. Meaning, Origin and Purpose of the Zawlbuk

Etymologically, the name “Zawl” means “flat ground” and “buk” means “thatched house” or “a temporary house” literally. In effect, it means “young man’s dormitory”. Zawlbuk, as a blend of the two words, literally means ‘house on a flat ground’ with specific implications for a dormitory or bachelors’ house. “Zawlbuk”, according to K. Thanzauva, is a big hall built separately for young men to sleep together and keep a vigil at night against enemies. All unmarried men slept in the “Zawlbuk” and were thus gathered in one place and ready at a moment’s call in case of danger or emergency. It had the potential to shape and mold Mizo youth, to protect them from being marginalized and to prepare them to reach the status of socially responsible men of the society.

116Malsawma, Sociology of the Mizos, 55.
The "Zawlbuk" system existed in almost all the tribal societies in India through it might have been more applicable to the context of the tribal societies of Northeast India. Women or girls were not allowed to visit the "Zawlbuk". Education in the traditional period was aimed directly at preparing a man to suit the need of the society. The activities were conducted within the "Zawlbuk" in general. It served as an important center for informal education.

Some writers are of the opinion that the institution of Zawlbuk existed in the late 18th century before the Mizo entered present Mizoram. Lalbiakthanga affirmed that Zawlbuk was introduced to Mizo society only after they entered into the present Mizoram. Thanzauva opines that the establishment of the institution of Zawlbuk was in fact a social necessity for the ancient tribal people who lived in a village system and often faced inter-tribal or village war.

The original purpose of the construction of the Zawlbuk was for security and defense. Apart from headhunting and inter-village feuds, village life was often endangered by the constant attacks of wild animals upon their domestic animals and the human population in the traditional period. To insure the security and peace of the village, they were compelled to organize such an institution as Zawlbuk to immediately respond to the urgent call of the chief and anyone in desperate circumstances. Every village had a separate common house for young men to meet the emergency needs of the village community. Malsawma asserts that Zawlbuk was necessary to keep intact the social system of sleeping together, sitting together, chatting together and working together without any feeling of discrimination. Then later in practice, Zawlbuk turned

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119 Thanzauva, Towards a Tribal Theology, 99.
120 Malsawma, Sociology of The Mizos, 55.
121 Thanzauva, Towards a Tribal Theology: The Mizo Perspective, 99.
122 Ibid., 100.
out to be more institutionalized for the socio-political education of the Mizo society. The institution of Zawlbuk seems to have existed at first in Khawnglung village at the time of the North-South war in Mizoram around 1860 AD.\textsuperscript{123} Henceforth, the practice of Zawlbuk continued in every Mizo village until the church and school system took its place.

### B. Administration and Functions of Zawlbuk

All the traditional Mizo villages enjoyed a sovereign independent status, ruled by its “Lal” (Chief) who was assisted by a cabinet of “Upa,” (an elderly persons), appointed by the chief himself. The chief selected the elders on the basis of certain qualities or skills; they possessed e.g. being industrious, being good organizers, being courageous and being professional hunters. Kipgen also affirms that the chief’s acceptance of such an elder was based on qualities such as industriousness, efficiency, courage and success as a hunter.\textsuperscript{124}

The chief and others recognized elders as ‘Val Upa’ (a middle-aged elder) of the Zawlbuk. Their status was likened to the superintendent of a modern public school with his attendant responsibilities.

To sustain the coherence and solidarity of the Zawlbuk administration, the sagacity and far-sightedness of the chief on one hand, and the practical sense of the Val-Upate on the other hand, enabled the Zawlbuk to function systematically, smoothly and effectively. The chief exercised his authority through his Val Upa. The Val Upa was responsible for the orderly conduct of the inmates. His instruction in all matters was to be taken seriously and obeyed. The Zawlbuk would not permit any interference of parents as regards discipline of the youth.

\textsuperscript{123}Malsawma, Sociology of The Mizos, 55.
\textsuperscript{124}Kipgen, Christianity and Mizo Culture, 61.
According to Thanzauva, Zawlbu had a regular system of self-Government. Strict rules were enforced for the effective and smooth functioning of the institution and those rules were as follows.\textsuperscript{125}

1. No girl was allowed to enter into the Zawlbu.
2. No drinking of rice beer or drunkenness was allowed.
3. No interference of outsiders was tolerated.
4. Theft of any article, big or small was regarded as very disgraceful and the punishment of such a crime was a fine of Rs. 40/-, which a man in the traditional period could earn in 100 days or more.
5. No person was allowed to throw a stone at the Zawlbu except the chief of the village for certain reasons.
6. All the juniors should respect and obey their elders.
7. All inmates should be always ready for war and any emergency.

The inmates were divided into two groups, the Tlangval (young men) and the Thingnawi fawm (the boys). The unmarried men slept in Zawlbu, and even the married men slept in the Zawlbu until they had one or two children. All the boys, prior to reaching puberty, had to come to Zawlbu from their respective homes to work. They had to take turns doing the daily chores for which the Zawlbu was responsible till they reached the age of puberty when they stopped sleeping in their parent's house and joined the young men in the Zawlbu.

The transfer of a member from the boys to the adult group was based on the acceptance of the Val Upa. Even though he enjoyed having the authority to make these decisions, he could not override long established tradition. A boy who aspired to be promoted to the adult group was the object of bizarre testing. When a boy grew up and had reached the age of puberty, the young men examined him. The boy had to pull out one hair from his pubic area and if the hair was long enough to go around the stem of a

\textsuperscript{125}Thanzauva, ed. Towards a Tribal Theology, 103-104.
Mizo bamboo-smoking pipe, the boy was henceforth classed as a *Tlangval*\(^{126}\) (a young bachelor). Normally, if an adolescent failed this test he did not qualify as a *Tlangval*.

On reaching the status of *Tlangval*, he was exempted from collecting firewood for the *Zawlbuk*. However, if the hair was too short to go around the pipe stem, the boy had to continue the work of collecting firewood for the *Zawlbuk*.\(^{127}\) The selection of inmates on this basis ensured that the child was mature enough to enter into *Zawlbuk* administration. *Zawlbuk* provided for the psychological needs of the boy in relation to his peers. Every boy anticipated passing through this rite of passage from *Thingnawifawm stage* to mature adulthood where they were allowed to participate in the activities of society through the *Zawlbuk* institution.

Primarily, the *Zawlbuk* served as a dormitory, where even married men slept. The younger men were assigned harder work such as digging graves, and carrying the sick from the *Jhum*, the work place, or even out of the jungle. They responded to *Val upa*'s orders to work wherever the need arose. The boys were given compulsory assignments of collecting firewood, storing water for the *Zawlbuk*, or responding to calls for assistance from the public. They were responsible for the supply of firewood for the *Zawlbuk*. They also did jobs, going on errands and carrying out all the orders that might be given to them by their elders. They were assigned to carry out these responsibilities till they could hope to aspire to a monitor ship.

The "*Val Upa*" organized the inmates to take up definite responsibilities in looking after the welfare of the villagers and in exercising an all round vigilance concerning their needs. He appointed a number of monitors who were known as "*Thingnawi fawm hotu"*. Normally monitors were four in number who were entrusted

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\(^{126}\)Oral Information from the aged resourceful persons and is commonly accepted.  
\(^{127}\)Ibid., 57.
with the task of watching over the four quarters of the village layout. Monitors had to see that the boys collected sufficient firewood everyday for the Zawlbuk. Any failure to supply the daily quota of firewood would result in severe punishment for the lax and lazy. The rules were strictly enforced and any interference by the parents was not tolerated.

These monitors were appointed (1) to maintain discipline in the Zawlbuk with regards to (2) control of the boys’ activities and (3) to meet the need of the villager’s welfare work. During the night, the monitors would patrol the village roads and give a signal if an emergency arose. The monitors enjoyed a good deal of power over the boys; they did not have to do any of the ordinary Zawlbuk work. They had the freedom to decide how to fulfill their responsibility.\(^\text{128}\)

In fact, the family and the society formed a symbiotic whole and functioned in complete reciprocity through the Zawlbuk. In case of family interference on Zawlbuk discipline of a child, the Zawlbuk administration would not allow parents to meddle in their business. Parents who acted with indiscretion were subject to revengeful reaction by the inmates of the Zawlbuk, e.g. receiving a personal beating or having one’s house shaken. Parental interference in Zawlbuk discipline was deemed disgraceful for any family.

\section*{C. Zawlbuk: The Main Source of Mizo Traditional Education\(^\text{129}\)}

Mizo society appeared to have flourished through this self-sufficient traditional educational system. Besides providing adequate education for the basic actual needs of

\begin{itemize}
  \item The Zawlbuk was a highly respected institution. We can see that apart from simply being a dormitory, its influence on Mizo society was important and comprehensive. The functions of Zawlbuk had the potential to shape and mold the Mizo youth from being 'marginal' to reaching the status of socially responsible men in the society. The Zawlbuk institution supplemented the inadequacies of family education.
\end{itemize}
the society, Zawlbuk education succeeded eminently in striking a healthy and harmonious balance between the inherent psychological drives of youth, on the one hand, and the projected social demands on them by the elders on the other. The Zawlbuk served as a center for traditional education where all Mizo young men were taught from an early age their responsibility of protecting the village from their enemies.

Zawlbuk was like a military training center where all the young men were given excellent training so that they might be ready when called upon in the event of an emergency. It was an educational institution in which young men learned the techniques of war, fighting, wrestling, games, singing, oration, handicrafts, tradition, religious philosophy, moral and sex education, from their seniors.

Zawlbuk served as a center for planning hunting trips either for war or against wild animals. A strict discipline was maintained in the institution. The Zawlbuk system of education served the needs of the society well. The boys and young men learned obedience, cooperation, generosity, kindness, and respect for others, patriotism, and other moral virtues from the Zawlbuk institution. Besides being a military training center, Zawlbuk also equipped young men in the art of fighting against wild animals that often attacked people in the villages. In doing so, the young men developed confidence, and a sense of responsibility and dependability. Thus, Zawlbuk became the learning center for Mizo youth where they demonstrated the acts of courage in protecting others and participated in healthy competitions. They also received social recognition in doing good works, as team members and as individuals.

Zawlbuk education inculcated self-control and self-discipline. The younger boys were constantly under the surveillance and control of the older inmates. The inmates had to be always alert and active in their duties so as to enjoy the approval of
the elders. No one could escape the notice of the Zawlbuk authority. Zawlbuk
education also practiced giving rewards to deserving youth and this was a good
incentive for young aspirants. The institution was responsible for infusing young men
with a sense of social unity and a feeling of responsibility for the community as a
whole.

Kipgen, asserts that Zawlbuk also served as the information center for the
village. Both young and old gathered there every evening to share with one another the
news of the day, what had been seen and heard, the activities that merited either
appreciation or criticism, and any other matters of interest. Information pertaining to
the affairs of the village was given and received as well as news received from other
villages brought in by travelers. These travelers, if they were men, usually boarded at
the Zawlbuk. 130

Malsawma classed the Zawlbuk as a center of recreation, a kind of retreat
where men could spend some time by themselves away from the normal daily task
coming together and listening to each other's tales and experiences. Some of the expert
hunters or heroes would recount past glories, failures, dreams and ideals. Interesting
learning experiences often took place through interactive verbal communication. The
older men who were no longer able to indulge in work and outdoor activities, spent
most of their waking hours at the Zawlbuk around the fire, talking, recounting heroic
deeds and planning raids till late in the night when the young men came home to
sleep. 131 The young boys thereby had an opportunity to listen to the experiences of the
elders, which inspired and motivated them.

130 Kipgen, Christianity and Mizo Culture, 62.
131 Malsawma. Sociology of the MIZOS, 62.
In short, Zawlbuk was an educational institution where young men learned the techniques of war, sport, handicrafts, sex education, manners, traditions, customs, etiquette, religion and all the essential things for living in the village. The role that Zawlbuk played in giving Mizo traditional education especially to young men cannot be over emphasized. Kipgen rightly said, “Zawlbuk served as the educational, cultural and communal center for all the Mizo villages.”

Chatterjee’s definition of Zawlbuk gives a picture of what Zawlbuk stands for as a place of traditional education,

The Zawlbuk was indeed a superb institution of the Mizo society, which succeeded in building up their unique style of life. While it prevented crude conformity and anomic laissez-faire on the one hand, it implanted in them a deep love of freedom and a real respect for their community-based social organization on the other.

Chatterji rightly commented that Zawlbuk served as the “nerve center of Mizo society and it shaped Mizo youths into responsible adult members of the society.”

D. Tlawnmgaibna: The Code and Curriculum of Zawlbuk Education

According to Khuanga, Tlawnmgaibna is a life philosophy, cardinal virtue and practice of the Mizo people. He affirmed that Tlawnmgaibna has no equivalent word in English and, further explained that it basically means selfless service, rendered to needy people without the expectation of a reward. The principle of Tlawnmgaibna binds the village community together and turns the rough hilly terrain into a paradise for the dwellers. Kipgen, without any reservation, affirms that the most important outcome of Zawlbuk training with a lasting effect was the development and perfection

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132 Kipgen Christianity and Mizo Culture, 61.
133 N. Chatterjee, Zawlbuk as a Social Institution (Aizawl: Tribal Research Centre, 1975), 9.
Ibid. 3.
of Tlawmngaihna. Lorrain, the pioneer missionary among the Mizo, in his monumental Dictionary of the Lushai (Mizo) Language gave the meaning of Tlawmngaihna as follows:

1. To be self-sacrificing, unselfish, self-denying, persevering, stoical, stout, hearted, brave, plucky, firm, independent.
2. To persevere, to endure patiently, to make light of personal injuries, to dislike making a fuss about anything.
3. To put one's own inclinations on one side and do a thing which one would rather not do, with the object either of keeping up ones prestige, etc. or of helping or pleasing another, or of not disappointing another, etc.
4. To do whatever the occasion demands no matter how distasteful or inconvenient it may be to one's self or to one's own inclinations.
5. To refuse to give in, give way, or be conquered.
6. To dislike to refuse a request; to do a thing because one does not like to refuse, or because one wishes to please others.
7. To act bravely or show a brave front.

Malsawma opines that anyone who is Tlawmngai (The adjectival form) should sacrifice himself or herself for the cause of others. According to him, Tlawmngaihna really represents the Mizo's code of morals and characters. A person who possesses Tlawmngaihna must be courteous, considerate, unselfish, courageous, and industrious; he must always be ready to help others even at considerable inconvenience to himself, or herself, and must try to surpass others in this respect. Putting it contextually, Kipgen summarized in the following words, saying:

A person who possesses Tlawmngaihna must be obedient and respectful to the elders; courteous in dealing with the weak and the lowly; generous and hospitable to the poor, the needy and the strangers; self-denying and self-sacrificing at the opportune moments in favor of others; ready to help those in distress; compassionate to a companion who falls sick while on a journey or becomes victim of a wild beast in the hunt by never abandoning him to his fate; heroic and resolute at war and in hunting; stoical in suffering, and in facing hardship under trying circumstances; and persevering in any worthwhile undertaking however hard and daunting that might prove to be.

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136Kipgen, Christianity and Mizo Culture, 64.
138Malsawma, Sociology of the Mizos (Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 2002), 64.
139Kipgen, Christianity and Mizo Culture, 65.
Christian love and service sum up the core of the spirit of *tlawmngaihna* and this ethical value was the aspiration of every boy and girl in the traditional society. *Tlawmngaihna* spirit is declining today, and time and again the need to cultivate this virtue is being brought to the attention of the Mizo whenever and wherever it is possible. Kipgen further explains that,

A *Tlawmngai* person will do whatever the occasion demands no matter how distasteful or inconvenient that might be to one self or to ones own inclinations; vie with others in excelling in sports or any other corporate labor; and try to surpass others in hospitality and in doing his ordinary daily task independently and efficiently.\(^{140}\)

Parry, the Superintendent of the then Lushai Hills from 1924 to 1928, wrote and published books on both the Lakher (Maras) and Lushei (Mizo) clans. He was surprised to find a very strong contrast between the undisciplined character and lack of control in the Mara villages compared with the Lusheis. “A young Lakher when ordered to do something by an elder,” wrote Parry, “will argue, where a Lushai will obey at once.”\(^{141}\) He ascribed this difference to the existence of the *Zawlbuk* among the Lushai where *Tlawmngaihna* was the hallmark of the Mizo, and the absence of any such institution among the Maras. Carter, a BMS missionary among the Mizo, pointed out three of the most significant uses of the *Zawlbuk*, as (1) a place where the boys were educated (2) a place where the bachelors were educated and disciplined, and (3) a place where the elders traded information.\(^{142}\) The traditional education that *Zawlbuk* gave to the Mizo strongly influenced their lives and Mizo society as a whole.

It was *Zawlbuk*, which molded, shaped and disciplined the life of the Mizo boys and young men. *Zawlbuk* trained them and educated them to become responsible,

\(^{140}\)Ibid., 65.


\(^{142}\)Hrangkhuma, “Mizoram Transformational Change”, 59.
helpful citizens of their time. The existence of “Zawlbuk” cannot be ignored when talking about the mizo traditional education. It exerted a very strong influence upon the village and Mizo way of life. The Mizo code of ethics, which moved around Tlawmngaihna, was taught and demonstrated at the Zawlbuk. Thus, Zawlbuk helped to produce the desirable quality of Tlawmngaihna without which the autonomous village could not survive and this institution served to foster a social cohesion and strong village loyalty. Parry rightly remarked, Tlawmngaihna deserves every encouragement, and if it were allowed to fall into desuetude (sic), it would be most detrimental to the whole of the tribe.\(^{143}\)

However, the benefit of Zawlbuk in terms of education for women is not fitting in that only young men were allowed as inmates. Lalrinawmi commented that obviously the ethos of the Zawlbuk leaned heavily towards the side of defense and warfare. It therefore fostered a community spirit which was male centered and patriarchal.\(^{144}\) Girls were deprived of entry into the Zawlbuk and were denied its educational benefits. In this regard, the Zawlbuk was educationally inadequate. Moreover, the Zawlbuk system was attacked by some of the enlightened Christians that

\(^{143}\)N.E. Parry, A Monograph on Lushai Customs And Ceremonies (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1976), 21. The practice of wrestling at the “Zawlbuk” had its educational significance for it helped a boy’s physical development. Wrestling was held at “Zawlbuk” every night. This wrestling was also done as a trial of strength among the youths and was a healthy practice to keep the young people fit. A significant contribution lies in the fact that the youth were educated in the virtue of sportsmanship. Healthy competition was engaged in and contributed to the development of a sportsman-like spirit. The youth learned how to be both victorious and also to accept defeat honorably without having any bad feelings against his opponent. The Zawlbuk provided the Mizo an opportunity to organize them to protect the village when the need arose. It also served as a useful and convenient recreational house in Mizo villages. The part that the Zawlbuk played in sustaining and preserving the Mizo culture is noteworthy. Strom rightly asserts that the Zawlbuk experience challenged young men to excel in every task so that they could gain the respect of the community as a whole. It likewise functioned as a stimulus to strive to maintain the prescribed ethical code. Strom, Wind through the Bamboo, 26-27.

\(^{144}\)Lalrinawmi Ralte, “Contribution to the Eco-Feminist Debate in Theology from a Tribal Women’s Perspective.” (Ph.D. Diss., United Theological College, 2005), 123.
the tone of discipline at Zawlbuk at times was not psychologically sound. They argued that the leaders maintained discipline and control only by fear of punishment.

Yet, in the absence of a formal education, there was nothing comparable to the Zawlbuk. It was the only means through which a Mizo boy could aspire to receive and prepare himself for the demands of a responsible citizen. The missionaries who came to teach Christianity found the Zawlbuk an ideal place to teach the people songs and basic Christian principles. The Zawlbuk then became a center for learning the Christian faith. However, whatever educational role the Zawlbuk may have had, its influence gradually diminished with the introduction of Christian schools. The progress of Christianity weakened the hold and control of the Zawlbuk organizations on the whole and the Church and schools emerged as an important center of learning.

The introduction of Christianity through the opening of schools in villages, contributed to a loss of Zawlbuk influence. The opening of schools entailed some practical problems, e.g. when boys and girls were encouraged to participate together in the modern educational system. The establishment of churches in almost every village diminished the hold of Zawlbuk as well.\textsuperscript{145} Tlawmngaihna was really a very good moral code enforced solely by public opinion. Unfortunately with the growth of enlightenment, there is a tendency to neglect it. Formally, there was a great

\textsuperscript{145} Traditional places of learning, other than that of Zawlbuk as the main source of Mizo traditional learning were, Lalin (the chief’s house), Thirdein in (the blacksmith’s house), Tuikhur (the village water point) and Ramhnuai (the forest). The Mizo women did not have a fixed structure of community life like the men had in the Zawlbuk institution. However, the village “well-watering hole” served as an important place where women folk shared their views, burdens, and happiness, exchanging comments about their daily ordeals. This had substantiated a place where traditional learning took place particularly for women. Lalinawmi terms the forest as “the place of healing for women” acting as a work place and forum of discussion for them. Similarly, the Thirdein’s house and the Chief’s houses where the men-folk often met, served an important purpose and forum for discussions and exchange of views and news. The ordinary livelihood of a Mizo depended on the forest firewood for domestic tasks cooking and heating. The women folk frequented the forest for the collection of firewood in groups. This offered an ideal place for counseling between a mother and a newly married daughter, for deepening inter-personal relationships and for exchange of news and ideas.
competition among the young men as to who possessed most *Tlawmngaihna*. This rivalry has decreased a great deal. At present far more *Tlawmngaihna* is found in remote villages than in the urban centers which pride themselves on being enlightened and progressive.

Finally, with the introduction of a new form of a government under the British in India, there was a consequent reduction of inter-tribal warfare. Traditionally, apart from the family and the *Zawlbuk* institutions, the Mizo had ways of acquiring knowledge and information through their oral traditions, passed on from generation to generation. The importance of an oral tradition cannot be underestimated. Let us examine its role and implications for Mizo traditional education.

IV. EDUCATION THROUGH ORAL TRADITIONS AND FOLKWAYS

Traditionally, the Mizo society was an oral community. A written script was not developed until the missionaries introduced one. However, this absence of a written script did not mean that the Mizo did not have literary inclinations. Their ideas found expression in the art of telling stories. In fact, the Mizo have a rich heritage of “folk-tales” and “folk songs,” all regarded as “oral traditions.” Khaund and Khaund confirmed that, “Folktales are undoubtedly the oldest form of literature and originated at a time when writing was unknown. They form the major part of folk literature.”

The different versions or compositions of Mizo folksongs and tales were handed down to successive generations orally. They served as sources of information and were a means of shaping and molding the Mizo mind and psyche in some way. Most of these oral traditions originated with real life situations, experiences and imaginings of the

Mizo during the period between 1700 and 1890. Oral tradition was their only medium of expression. Hence, the predominant mode of composition, transmission and learning was oral.

A. Oral Traditions and their Educational Implications

Oral traditions formed an important system of education. From such traditions, the younger generation could come to know the imaginings of the older generation, their visions, their life-styles and moral code. Chittaranjan opines that in the indigenous Mizo society there existed no other genuine institution that could promote the right development of human reason. Therefore, folklore was the only institution contributing to their reason and intellect. However, it was able to reveal their power of intellect only in a crude form. Despite its limitations, folktales often depicted the thought patterns, their imaginings and hopes. A close look at the folk-tales also revealed the beauty, diligence and innocence of Mizo womenfolk. One of the salient features of the Mizo folktale is the great potential and strength of Mizo men. The Mizo valued bravery and strength greatly and many folktales depicted this. The experiences, successes and failures in life reflected through these oral traditions have influenced, shaped, molded, and educationally encouraged the Mizo way of life. Laltluangliana rightly says,

147B. Lalthangliana, Mizo Chanchin (Aizawl: Remkungi, 2001), 317.
148Ibid., 320.
150Laltluangliana Khiangte, ed., Mizo Songs and Folk Tales (New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 2002), xi-xiii. Folk tales of Tualvungin and Zawlpala, Rimenhawihi, Tuanpuii, Chawngvungi; Ngaiteii Thailungi were the popular folk-tales concerning women. The terminal ‘i’ signifies a girl’s name.
151Ibid. The folk-tales of Mualzavata (literal meaning is the one who clears a hundred hills because of his physical strength; Pangpuielhtfiaka, (the name suggests that he could break a huge tree); and heroes like Chawnbura, Phawlawngzamnigira, Sampaumanga and Saizahawla (the terminal ‘a’ signifies man’s name) were popular for their heroic adventures and bravery.
Folktales reflect the totality of the Mizo attitude towards life, his family, happiness and sorrow, his love and fear of the unknown or unseen, his yearnings for riches, comfort, fame and kingdoms; his aspirations and dreams, his religious beliefs and practices, his concepts of spirit world or life after death and above all, the traditional value that he cherishes.\footnote{Laldena, \textit{Hmar Folktales} (Delhi: Scholar Publishing House, 1995), ix.}

Folkways of a legend type serve to mold the minds and character of youth. There are a variety of Mizo folktales, full of interesting accounts of men and women’s narratives.\footnote{The Folk-tale of Chawnbura, a great hero is one example. From his story it is believed that Mizo heroes did not like to be killed by their enemy’s weapons but prefer to be finished with their own.} Among them, \textit{Chhurbura}, is the most interesting character in Mizo folklore, and is considered the real hero of these tales. In addition to the humor in the stories, principles of self-reliance and confidence are also present.\footnote{Mccall, \textit{Lushai Chrysallis}, 77.} This episode emphasizes the moral value of one’s determination to tackle every problem with firmness, perseverance and tactfulness.

The vast variety of Mizo folk tales opens up a world of interesting events, introducing us to people who possess remarkable giftedness in various domains. They likewise present pathetic accounts of women’s lives and touching stories of love and compassion demonstrated by both men and women. Jokes were part of their tales that served the purposes of entertainment and giving meaningful lessons for daily life. Jokes and humorous tales were told to entertain people, to lighten their load in hard times and to help those suffering to cope with life.

Patriotic stories were recounted to develop a spirit of patriotism, chivalry and valor especially among “men,” for warfare in particular, and for hunting in general. Tales of patriotism were also employed to challenge and inspire young men to imitate the heroes of the past. Women learned lessons related to industriousness, loyalty and civic responsibility. Men’s heroic deeds and certain women’s laudable behavior
assumed educational importance. The belief of the people, their legends, and their songs are the source of nearly all-modern Mizo literature.

Several folk-stories reflected characteristics of the traditional society. These stories influenced the conduct of individuals to varying degrees. There were many other folktales that imparted religious and moral values, and Mizo socio-political history. Although the teaching was not formal, the tales themselves revealed the real values and ideas to the next generation. The object of these tales according to McCall was to clarify the real feelings and hearts of the people rather than to give a scientific or anthropological disclosure of the techniques of Mizo expression.

The folklore of the Mizo, apart from mythological legends, has reference to a certain period of its history. It reflects the social and political condition of those times as well as throwing vivid light on the socio-religious and political life of the Mizo. Young and old alike enjoyed these folk tales. Poets drew their themes and inspiration from local history or popular folklore. In the course of time, the beliefs of the people, their legends and their songs became the earliest form of their literature. In the realm of creative literature, it is said that the Mizo folktales are the father of literature.

B. Types of Folktales

Mizoram has a rich depository of folk tales. Most of these are fantasies woven around objects and events in the natural world. There are stories of nymphs, wild bears, boars and other animals that behaved like human beings. Some of them were

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155 Examples such as “Chhura and the Chengkek Fruit”
156 Mc Call, Lushai Chrysalis, 76.
159 Ibid., 4.
concerned with the origin and creation of the world and some of them related to hills and rivers. Different writers have classified these folk tales into different categories. Laltluangliana divided the folktales of Mizoram into different sections according to their nature. The following are such divisions,

a) Interesting Mizo folk stories,
b) The accounts of men-folk,
c) The women of heroic deeds,
d) Stories of men and women on love and compassion
e) Animals, which characterize human.\textsuperscript{160}

Kipgen has categorized Mizo folktales into three types: 1) Legends 2) Jokes and 3) Patriotism,\textsuperscript{161} The three types may overlap in some cases. Suffice it to say that these minor groupings do not distort the original theme of the tales. They convey meaningful lessons in several ways because the stories contain rich ethical teachings and they impart moral values.

The chief repositories were grandparents, parents, village elders and chiefs. By nature, the Mizo were fond of telling and listening to stories. Children were particularly fond of hearing stories of ancient heroes and they developed a passion, not only for listening but also for telling stories of ancient heroes. The folk stories were told and retold for the pleasure of knowing the stories themselves and also for providing useful lessons for life. Through repetition, elders and parents became experts in stimulating the interest of the children in listening to the tales. Thereby a branch of knowledge was being imparted to the children.

Lewin, one of the earliest British officers in Mizoram recorded how he came to know the Mizo popular folk story called \textit{Chemtatrawta}. He notes that, during the narration, a circle of children who listened with great delight surrounded them. Even

\textsuperscript{160}Laltluangliana, \textit{Folk Tales of Mizoram}, 9-13
\textsuperscript{161}Kipgen, \textit{Christianity and Mizo Culture}, 83-87.
though they had often heard the tale before, the story seemed to have not lost its flavor by age or repetitions. The children listened attentively to the quaint and thrilling legends and ballads. Mizo folktales have been told and retold by several people and their versions vary sometimes without distorting the main story. In fact, many writings in Mizo literature stemmed from these oral traditions. They have influenced the stories and themes of today’s literature, and have influenced the society considerably. They have been handed down through the years by way of story telling, by proverbial sayings and by poetic expressions.

Some of the folktales’ content relate to contemporary situations thereby contributing historical material to cultural learning. The stories helped to reveal the true picture of people’s feelings, their pain, their imagination and their ideals. They had social value as well, in that they gave moral teaching, contributing to a society of harmony and love. The tales and songs reflected religious and social values, their own political history, and their concern for the care and preservation of the natural world.

C. Folk Songs and their Early Educational Value

The character of traditional Mizo culture is reflected not only in its social institutions and folk-tales, but also in its folk songs. Folk songs of various styles for different situations became a valuable means of education for the younger generation of Mizo. The influence of folksongs has been recognized in the realm of traditional education. The composers drew their themes from real life situations, from their imagination; from their experiences and from their original ideas. There were varieties

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163 The first known composer of folk songs was Hmuaki. She composed varieties of songs for all occasions. Tradition said that she was buried alive lest she finished composing all songs and others would be left with no possibility of composing any new song.
in musical styles, melodies and purposes for composing them. The Mizo are well known as a singing community with a well-developed musical tradition.

The origin of folksongs differed according to different writers. All that can be said is that different folksongs originated and developed at different times and places. The themes of these songs were varied and can be categorized according to the situations, such as love songs, ballads, humorous songs, lamentations, festival songs, and war songs. Some of these songs seemed to be meaningless to many as they contained language that was no longer used. So the folk songs varied in content and form according to time period and locations.

K. Zawla, one of the earliest Mizo writers, suggested that the first song ever composed was a calling song, from one person to another from a distance in couplet style. It is simply to say “Heta tangin kha kha a lange, Khata tangin hei hi alange” and the English meaning say “From here to that place is visible; From there to this side is visible.” There is a record of another early song, which was equally simple, which goes like, “Khawmhma Pal a er an ti, A er leh lo an ti” and it simply means,

They say Khawmhma fencing bends,
No it is not bend, says the other,
Let it bent, as it likes, comes the reply

The song was sung in rows where the participants would bend their body backward in unison while singing the first line and similarly bend forward at the second line. They did it for their own amusement and entertainment. In fact the song has no significant meaning as such. From these very simple songs developed several folk songs that began the history of Mizo folk songs.

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165 Ibid.
These songs reflected many facets of their lives: a deep attachment to the land and the people, various circumstances of their immigration, peace, war, defeat, victory, prosperity, hardship, and other practical situations. Often the Mizo composed songs of heroic deeds to inspire the people to act as noble warriors and to be brave hunters. In the traditional society, in addition to their agricultural occupation, they were accustomed to hunting wild animals either for food or for pleasure.

The life of the Mizo is depicted in many folk songs ranges from the humble joys of farming to great deeds on battlefields or success in hunting activities; of these quite a number are related to agriculture. They were chanted together by the men and women while being engaged in agricultural work. Several other songs were sung for various occasions with accompaniment of Khuang (drums), small and large drums.

There were also those poets and poetesses who sang their songs of romance and of consolation to the afflicted. Dar Hla (songs of Gong or drums) were different songs, chanted to the rhythm of gongs. Thuthmun Zai is sung seated with no dancing involved. Bawhha was the song that warriors chanted after a victory in war. It was a “battle-victory” cry raised by warriors returning from successful raids. There were many other folk songs such as Hlado, Chawngchen zai, Chai hla, Tlanglam zai, Ralrun zai and Chheih zai and many of these are still being heard. The lyrics of these songs express the purpose and occasion for their performance.

A Mizo patriot or warrior chanted a song after his victory. Hlado was songs of victory over wild animals, similar to the warrior’s victory, and usually chanted by hunters with a view to letting people know they were successful in their hunting.

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expedition. It was chanted on the way back from a fruitful chase before the hunter entered the village. The brave men, who played heroic roles and survived the deadly combats, boasted of their courageous efforts and successes by the chanting of victorious songs. The chants of the warriors were provocative in nature, while those of the hunter encouraged hunting.  

The two songs, *Hla do and Bawh Hla* were closely related; sometimes one song conveyed the chanting over an animal and sometimes over a human corpse. One of the songs, which within Mizo traditional culture conveyed the killing of a foe, is

*Sungho ka nu kha e,*  
*lh-ah zei mang man dek maw,*  
*Kan tume e, lu ilung liau ve,*  
*Sungleng e, mangin ka dawng selaw*  

The meaning goes,

Mother, what are you dreaming about?  
A head, our main target has come,  
Entertain us pleasantly.

The lyrics of the songs reveal the thoughts, emotions and actions in a simple fashion. Whether the event, is the making of war or the making of peace, whether it is victory or defeat, whether there are experiences of joy or sorrow, anger, love or hatred, contentment or disappointment, the Mizo gave expression to them in the form of songs. One of the songs that reveal the dream of a mother is,

*A Khi-ah khian rammu an au dial dial e;*  
*Ka nauvi pa tel ve maw, ral that ve maw.*

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168 J. Malsawma, *Zonun* (Aizawl: Aizawl Literary Society, 1980), 229-37. See also Hrangthiauva and Lalchungnunga, *Mizo Chanchin (History and Culture of the Mizo)* (Aizawl: Lalrinliana and Sons, 1978), 347-54. Laltluangliana in his book, *Mizo Songs and Folk Tales*, xii stated an example that Zamppuimanga once killed a wounded tiger just near the village with his dao. Putting one of his legs over the slain tiger, he chanted a *Hlado* which is a folk song meant for the occasion, and only after it had been chanted could the villagers come and collect the animal's body.  

The literal meaning goes, ‘Brave warriors shout together yonder over there, does the father of my child join them and kill an enemy?’ Kipgen affirms that, “No event or place of importance exists that does not have at least one song commentating it.”

This truth demonstrates the creative imagination of the non-literate Mizo. Malsawma, a high official in the Government of Mizoram and one who was actively involved in the development of Mizo literature, comments on the Mizo love’s for songs and composition:

> If the possession of a large volume of songs is to be used as the criteria of measuring the civilization of the people the Mizo would without any heresy, be counted one.\textsuperscript{172}

The songs of various types form a rich resource for an understanding of the Mizo culture and worldview.

Studies of Mizo folk songs reveal the status of women in the Mizo society.\textsuperscript{173} A great sense of individuality can be noticed in Mizo folk songs, especially enunciated by the women folk. For instance, Laltheri was the daughter of a chief and generally, the chief’s daughter was not supposed to mix with commoners. However, she happened to have fallen for a commoner and consequently, her brothers beheaded her lover. Gripped by fury, she neither drank nor ate and remained almost naked. On being asked by her mother to wear clothes and ornaments, she replied,

> Mother, I shall not wear my clothes,  
> As my lover lies cold and dead deep down;\textsuperscript{174}

And her mother was fearful lest she died of starvation, insisted she should eat.

Laltheri confidently and calmly replied,

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{170}}Laltluangliana, \textit{Mizo Songs and Folk Tales}, 4.  
\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{171}}Kipgen, \textit{Christianity and Mizo Culture}, 94.  
\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{173}}There were many women poets like Lianchhiari, Saikuti, Darpawngi, Laltheri, Lianrikhumi, Darlenglehi and Darmani.  
\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{174}}Laltluangliana, \textit{Mizo Songs and Folk Tales}, ix.
Sailo Princess may die out of loneliness,  
Never I die without food, mother.  

This also implies that the women were free to express their own views by ways  
of folk songs.

Many songs were sung to comfort people in times of trouble. “Tah hla” (Songs  
of weeping), came into existence when a great famine broke out the period between  
1300 and 1450 A.D. The Mizo suffered miserably from starvation and a subsequent  
epidemic, resulting in a great loss of human life of Mizo people of all ages.  
Consequently, to console one another in their loss, the people sat together and  
composed lyrics to lend a voice to their plight.

The Nau awih hla (lullabies) were born out of a mother’s attempt to help her  
child go to sleep on her back, according to Mizo practice. She uttered or chanted  
certain words, which became a popular practice. The songs used for lullabies  
occupied a special place in musical folksong and had appeal to both young and old.  
Unlettered women composed most of the lullabies and so there is an originality and  
natural charm about them. One of the lullabies sung by a mother or whoever was  
attempting to make the baby sleep, is the following and it is still in use today,

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\begin{align*}
Ka naui hi mu hle hle se, bei hle hle, 
A mut loh chuan keiman ka beng mu ange, 
A khi an khian lungpui a lo lum dawn e, 
Ka naui kha a delh ange suan rawh u.
\end{align*}
\]

The song means,

“Sleep, sleep my baby, against my bosom; if you do not sleep,  
I shall pat you to sleep; the big rock is going to fall on you from a  
height,  
Take care of my baby,  
For my baby may get hurt.”

\[^{175}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{176}\text{Lianthanga, Hmanlai Mizo Nun, 116.}\]
The tunes of the song and the wording sound so compelling. It is still popular and effective in lulling Mizo babies to sleep.

Children’s play songs were helpful for them in learning about their small world. They were generally sung with particular tunes. Some of the songs may not carry a meaning worth the name; however, they produced a pleasant sensation in the minds of the very young. They often described immediate surroundings using peculiar names for things but it was a way of learning new words and to that extent the juvenile songs were educative.

*Tum-bai-lek* is another play song, which a Mizo mother uses to teach her child by making her tiny fists to open and close as she sings the song. To induce learning to walk on her own, a mother would sing to the child, “*Kal chhet chhet, kal chhet, artui hlawh, hlawh kal chhet chhet,*” here the song implies, if a child attempts to take a step forward an egg would be given for a reward.

“*Dai aw su lep su lep, tuipuiah nge I tlak ang? Tuiteah, tuite ah zawng suanglung a tam e, tuiteah*”-This song is another insightful play song for a child. While singing this song, an adult lies on his, or her, back with knees bent, and the child sits on the upper part of the foot. The song asks the child whether he, or she, would like to drop on the side of the river or the stream? Depending on the choice of the child, the game would go on.

In a society where there were many superstitions and fears related to evil spirits, darkness was often frightening to a child. To take the child's mind off his, or her, surrounding as darkness was approaching, the mother often sang,
Thlapui, lo tla rawh,  
Ka nauin a awrh nelh nelh ang che.\textsuperscript{177}

The meaning is,

O, silvery beautiful moonlight,  
Descend on us;  
My baby will put you around his, or her, neck.

This means that the child looks at the direction of the moon and his/her attention is diverted to see the bright moon.

Love for and an understanding of nature is sometimes generated through songs. They help a child understand the importance of water for plants, trees and fruits. By singing this song, they expected abundant showers of rain to enrich the soil for the plants. For example,

\textit{Ruah aw sur sur;  
Fanghma to nan, buh to nan.}\textsuperscript{178}

This is an invocation for rain so that crops will be plentiful. The meaning is,

Rain, rain, come and pour,  
For the planting of cucumber;  
And to let the crops grow.

Similarly, the child learns the importance of sunshine not only for people but also for plants and other purposes. When there was no sunshine, the children would sing,

\textit{Ni aw sa, sa,  
Vaihlo pho nan, buh pho nan.}\textsuperscript{179}

The literal meaning of the song is,

Let the sun shine so brightly,

\textsuperscript{177}There is no specific document on this. However, this is still the practice of Mizo till date and it has been passed on from generation to generation.  
\textsuperscript{178}It is an oral tradition.  
\textsuperscript{179}Ibid.
To dry tobacco leaves, and to dry grains of paddy.

This implies that the children long for the hot sunny day that they might play and enjoy the sunshine. Through songs they acquired a certain basic understanding of the world of nature.

Women played a leading role in the composition of Mizo folksongs, Hmuaki, the earliest and the best-known poet among the Mizo, met her death due to her ceaseless efforts in composing songs.\textsuperscript{180} She was the first known composer of folk songs.\textsuperscript{181} Some songs of Saikuti were about the exploits of warriors and others were songs of inspiration, which were immensely popular. She was well known for her ability to compose a song on any theme at any time. She expressed every sphere of her life in poetic form. One such circumstance of a folksong composed by Saikuti occurred when villagers gathered around the Lungdawh (a stone platform) at the village entrance waiting for one another for the Jhum work and going to the forest.

The singing of a cicada attracted the villagers’ attention and when Saikuti arrived at that juncture, the villagers asked her to respond to the music of the bird. Immediately she responded, “You're troubling people who are on their way to work, the one singing sweetly in the tree without drums.” The effect was that everyone there appreciated the couplet and they declared the day a day of rest and all went home to indulge in making merriment for the rest of the day.

On another occasion where Saikuti responded to a situation with a verse, her composition quelled youthful anger. For some unspecified reason, the young men of the village were angry and they decided to burn the dried firewood kept for community

\textsuperscript{180}Thanga, The Mizos: A study of Racial Personality, 36.
\textsuperscript{181}Lalruangliana, Mizo Songs and Folk Tales, v-vii.
ceremonies. The senior citizens could not stop them and Saikuti was requested to pacify the situation. Immediately, she composed the couplet,

   Just as a weak fencing, I cannot stop them,
   Torch bearing young men who burn special firewood.182

   The effect of the song was so strong upon the young men that they were instantly appeased. It was said of her that she began to influence the village governance with her songs and everyone appreciated her talents. Lalthuangliana commented that she was as important and dignified at that time as any Poet Laureate in England.

Several women composed some of the earliest and best songs. These composers were household names in their own time and even afterwards. The two women, like Lianchhiari and Laltheri, had tragic romantic experiences and their songs were melodramatically sentimental.183 Lianchhiari’s songs tell of her undying love for a hnamchawn (commoner) young man and the song became popular. Darpawngi sung of her love life, her disappointments, and loss of children and friends. All the poets had their own way of expressing themselves because each one of them had their particular background and experiences in life. In spite of the good number of poetesses, there appeared no songs about the emancipation of women.

There were several male composers who were popular for the nature of songs they composed. Praise, valor, honor and exaltation of humanity and nature characterized their poetry and songs. Different lyrics based on these aspects of life depicted the creative ideas and imaginative talent of the Mizo. Awithangpa of Maubuan village was one of the first known composers of folk songs.

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182 Ibid., vii
183 Zawla, Mizo Pi Pute leh an Thlahte Chanchin, 278. See also Lalmanzuala, 46 and Lianthanga, 39.
From what has been described, it is evident that the Mizo, in their indigenous way of life tried to draw out the full potential of their community members. Though Mizo traditional education had limitations, and was different from the modern system of education, it served the felt needs of the people. Consequently when the school and Church system were introduced, many reacted negatively to the innovation. The traditional education of the Mizo provided a rudimentary knowledge relating to the survival of each community.

The socialization of boy children differed greatly from that of girl children. While boys were free to play, go bird-trapping, fishing or climbing trees, the girls were expected to do the household work, baby sit and help their mothers. The older children in the family looked after the younger ones so that the younger ones would grow up knowing their social responsibilities and obligations. In many respects, girls were expected to be more mature and resourceful than boys. Girls were educated in the norms of religion, culture and tradition of their family before they left their parents to start a new home of their own.

The Mizo society is a close-knit society and by nature and practice love to do things as a community. In different aspects of community life, whether in hunting, construction of houses, in clearing the jungles for agricultural farming or fishing, they often worked as a group. At the domestic level, the practice of Mizo young men was ‘Nula rim’ (the courting of young women) in groups at night in a girl’s house and at other times, to go to the jungle together with girls to collect firewood for domestic purposes. Learning and education among the Mizo most often took place in this setting as work and courting was experienced in groups.

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For hunting purposes, such as elephant hunting or hunting of other wild animals, the young men formed groups to go to the deep forest and encamped there for several days while waiting for their prey. In such circumstances, the elders and heroes of the village would take the leadership and they would recount and narrate their experiences and demonstrate their skills to the youth. Such situations offered an ideal time for learning practical skills in the art of hunting, warfare and other heroic pursuits. Frequently, social instructional interaction took place in the group-work place and was thus conducive to traditional learning in an unforced and natural manner.

In terms of relationships between the sexes, interaction within groups enhanced the development of relationships between boys and girls. It helped them to understand the aspirations of men and women and their perspectives. Thus, through interactive sessions, whether in the village or out in the fields, a traditional system of learning took place. The house of Thirdeng (Blacksmith) could be one such place where learning took place traditionally. The blacksmith was a skilled official of a village. In each Mizo village, he occupied an important position due to the nature of his work. The Mizo, by occupation, depended on cultivation for their livelihood. The blacksmith made all the agricultural instruments, such as hoes, chempui (a big chopper used for wood-cutting etc.), sickles or any other necessary tools. Not only was his service indispensable for the production of tools and other implements, but also for repairing tools. The villagers used to come to the blacksmith for his services and his house formed the center for group discussions. In this way his house served as a public institution where many issues were discussed relating to the society. For the service

\[185\] Lianthanga, Hmanlai Mizo Nun, 32.
rendered by the blacksmith, the villagers were to give the products of their fields as well as a portion from the animals killed in their hunting pursuits.

Although, moral teachings and social graces were imparted through the traditional institutions, Christian education, with its goal of providing, 'harmonious all-round development of the individual,' helping him, or her, grow in the pattern of Jesus Christ was an unknown concept. When the British government came into contact with the Mizo and their traditional practices, it became instrumental in bringing certain changes into the Mizo society. This transition was brought about by different agents, among which the British Missionary Society played an important role through their educational ministry. In many respects the Mizo have emerged as a modern Christian society. The following chapter will study the principles and methods adopted by the British missionaries and the subsequent impact of their teaching.