Chapter V

Contemporary Media Scenario of Mizoram

The main aim of this chapter is to map the print, literary and audio visual performative culture in contemporary Mizoram. More specifically, it deals with the study of three inter-related areas, namely the quality and quantity of the commercial press, the tardy growth of the cable television industry, and the continued presence of the literary and religious public sphere through the magazines, Kristian Tlangau and Thu leh Hla.

This period (1990s onwards till date) signifies the integration of Mizoram symbolically and materially into the Indian Nation State. With Mizoram becoming a federal unit, the cultural and economic policy of the region has to cohabit the macro policy of the Nation located within an amorphous global order. This negotiation between mainland India and the borderland Mizoram is further reconfigured by the advent of satellite television through transnational channels. Though the newspaper industry is yet to become resilient, there have been experiments in the local production and circulation of sound and images on cable television along with a concern for energizing the Mizo language and literary practices through the Church and civic bodies such as the Mizo Academy of Letters. This chapter will lay out the material and cultural conditions of production and consumption of both popular and literary culture.
The press, the cable television industry and the literary magazines are enumerated in the context of Mizoram becoming part of the Nation State. From the 1990's onwards, due to the liberalization policy followed by the federal Government, literary and media institutions are not only part of the national culture but participate in a global environment. In fact, the locally produced programmes for the cable television industry do not imitate the mainland popular culture—predominantly the Bollywood industry, but they seem to closely follow both Western and South Asian television industry especially Korean television channels.

As mentioned previously, Mizoram becomes a federal unit from 1986. This integration of Mizoram with the Nation State provides a new context for literary, artistic and media production and consumption. The Mizo language is yet to be commercialized and it goes hand in hand with the fact that the region has not yet developed capital based agricultural, industrial or service oriented economic sectors. The lack of commercialization of the Mizo language is reflected in the absence of a vibrant, capitalist newspaper industry. Except for one Mizo language newspaper which claims to have a circulation of more than 30 thousand for a population of about 11 lakhs, none of the other newspapers possess a circulation of more than 10 thousand.

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164 It is true that even in mainland linguistic regions, the official language is yet to become commercialized. Jeffrey points out the absence of commercialization of the Kannada language in Karnataka although its industrial urban indicators are better than other linguistic regions where language has been more or less commercialized.

165 Two newspapers namely The Aizawl Post and Zozam Times claim that they sell close to 10 thousand copies.
As stated in the previous chapter, the political atmosphere which prevailed in the state in the immediate decade after Independence failed to give rise to a public sphere including the growth of a newspaper culture. Perhaps, if Mizoram had not witnessed a period of turbulence for the first thirty years after Independence, the State’s patronage for the economy and culture, especially the Mizo language, would have allowed for more rapid growth of a capitalist press and wider diffusion and print consumption of Mizo language.

With the new ‘Look East’ policy, it is likely that the entire northeast region including Mizoram would witness an opening up of international borders with Myanmar, Thailand, China and the entire Southeast Asian region.\(^{166}\) This may provide an occasion for the growth of economy and media in the northeast region, including Mizoram.\(^{167}\)

From the early 1990’s, the landlocked region of Mizoram like other mainland regions in India began accessing global satellite television. The reception of both western television programmes along with South Korean television programmes


\(^{167}\) Some of the northeast radical groups are resisting this opening up of the international boundaries. Comments given by Mohn Kikon, the discussant at *Trapping and Un-trapping the Bordered: issues and challenges of people in cross-border situation* session of 2\(^{nd}\) International Conference of the Asian Research Borderlands Network-Asian Borderlands: Enclosure, Interaction and Transformation. 5-7 November 2010, Chiangmai, Thailand.
became very popular in many regions of the northeast including Mizoram. The Mizo appetite for watching soap operas from the Korean channels like *Arirang* rose phenomenally. A visible youth culture developed around these transnational channels which aired a variety of programmes including football.¹⁶⁸

As mentioned previously, the literary public sphere and the religious sphere have always been intertwined. The three important institutions that mediate literary culture in contemporary Mizoram are the Mizo Academy of Letters, the Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church with their renowned publications, namely, *Thu leh Hla* and *Kristian Tlangau*. Out of these three literary organs, *Kristian Tlangau* is the oldest, having a publishing history of more than a century. *Thu leh Hla* has a history of almost 50 years. Among other influences, these two journals appear to play an important role in the career of the Mizo language and they seem to shape its linguistic and literary trajectories.

The ‘*chanchin*’ and the ‘*thawnthu*’ are continuously debated in these journals. Though the ‘*chanchin*’ is the preferred form of narrative for these journals, the boundaries get constantly redefined in the literary criticism as practiced in the discussions engendered in the journals. This chapter will contextualize the importance of these journals for the growth of contemporary Mizo language and literature.

¹⁶⁸ See Daisy Hasan’s article on ‘*Out of the Box*’- Television Representations of North-East India in *Sarai Reader: Crisis/Media*, 2004. pp.126-129
In the previous chapters, there has been an adequate narrative description regarding the connected history of literature, print and performative traditions. This history of speech, text and print seem to present itself as independent of each other but a close enquiry may reveal a seamless flow between acoustic, visual, kinesthetic and the tactile media forms. The making of the field of the contemporary Mizo sensorium is a complex process which this chapter in a limited manner will attempt to describe and analyze.  

**Print Media**

Since the colonial government evolved a policy of isolation of the Lushai Hills District from mainland India, there is a notable absence of representative institutions including the lack of a newspaper culture. The colonial government and the missionaries patronized education only at the school level. In other parts of the country, the demand for school text books, literary publications and newspapers grew simultaneously along with emergence of nationalism. The colonial government was forced to at least rhetorically engage with representative institutional demands by constituting local civic bodies, regional legislative bodies and imperial judicial and legislative bodies. The connection between growth of regional languages, literary cultures and journalistic traditions occur in response to the changes instituted by the colonial rule. In the absence of representative aspirations, the Lusei language in its formative years served mostly to engage with religious needs rather than political or

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169 Cantwell deploys the term ‘ethnoneotic plenum’ to describe the collective structures of the community that unconsciously informs the making of literary, artistic and religious practices. Cited in Betsy Taylor’s *Public Folklore, Nation Building and Regional Others: Comparing Appalachian USA and Northeast India* in Indian Folklore Research Journal, Vol 1, No. 2, 2002: 1-27
community needs. The lack of a newspaper culture is also reflective of the representative aspirations of the Lusei people during colonial period.

During the first three decades after Independence, the volatile situation of the Mizo Hills inhibited the emergence of a public sphere to represent a conversational space between the State and the Mizo society. For almost two decades (1960’s to 1980’s) in the Mizo Hills District, the armed conflict between the radical Mizo National Front and the Government of India led to the imposing of Emergency and suspension of fundamental rights of the Mizo people. Since the fundamental right to freedom of speech was suspended along with the right to assemble, produce and distribute information regarding governance, the major casualty was the absence of a demand for a public sphere including the inauguration of a newspaper culture.

In other words, for almost 70 years of colonial and postcolonial rule, Mizoram did not experience representative forms of institution nor actively produce a counter public sphere. Since the rule of law was suspended, the need for information regarding governance was not available and the Government broadcast channels like All India Radio and Doordarshan purveyed censored news. When the Emergency was lifted and Mizoram was declared a Federal State in the mid 1980’s, there was a gradual demand for a newspaper industry. The changed political context did not give rise to a vibrant newspaper industry because the economy of Mizoram does not possess an adequate agricultural and industrial base. Also, the size of the population is not numerically large for expansion of readers or viewers.
From the mid 1980’s, newspapers and periodicals rose in terms of numbers but not in terms of circulation.\textsuperscript{170} This may be attributed to stable political rule and the uninterrupted working of electoral politics. Ever since the State formation, the Mizo National Front contested elections as a recognized political party and ruled Mizoram several times. The Congress party is the other important National political party that has contested elections in Mizoram. The newspapers have generally reported and commented on the policies of the ruling parties, opinions of the Church regarding these policies and implementation of these policies. Adequate space is also provided for writing about the cultural elite, notably the musical bands, and few newspapers carry advertisements. In other words, electoral politics has made it possible to produce and consume newspapers only from the last decade of the last millennium. Today, news is consumed as both information and commodity.

The term ‘\textit{chanchinbu}’ is used interchangeably for newspapers or periodicals. This has acquired a new currency in the changed political context. In other words, press as the fourth estate becomes possible when people’s fundamental right to freedom of speech and life is guaranteed by the State. The colonial rulers governed the hills by invoking the traditional authority of the chiefs even as they dramatically reconfigured the pre-existing fragile structures of authority and power. Along with the apparent authority of the traditional chiefs, the Church provided another principle for organizing the Lusei society. Together, between the Church and the colonial state, 

they blurred the difference between traditional and modern authority, Lusei state and society.

The term ‘chanchin’ as applied to journalism may imply objective news or reporting. In colonial Lushai Hills District, the distinction between state and society became blurred due to the apparent power delegated to the Lushai chiefs leading to the absence of a space for critiquing the state or to plant the seed for the profession of journalism. A critique of established authority came only with India gaining Independence but that critique took the form of an armed conflict. So, the seeds of a realist representation of authority and power in the form of journalistic discourse are a little more than two decades old. In other words, ‘chanchin’ as a realist journalistic narrative is possible only when the rule of law prevails.

This is not to say that there were no experiments in producing journalistic writings during the colonial period. In fact, the first newspaper, *Mizo Chanchin Laishuih* dates back to 1898 and was a handwritten newspaper, circulated among the colonial native officials in the Lushai Hills District. This was followed by an important periodical, *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* (1902), which lasted for almost four decades. The Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church have made two solid contributions to the Mizo journalistic tradition by producing two important periodicals namely, *Kristian Tlangau* (1911) and *Kohhran Beng* (1946). These Church periodicals are still being produced. However, all the three above mentioned
periodicals did not provide a critique of the colonial state, traditional power or Church authority. In fact, they were deployed to internalize the authority of these institutions.

Apart from these recognized periodicals, the Lushai Hills District saw the appearance of the first proclaimed daily newspaper *Ni tin Chanchin* which means ‘daily news’ started by a colonial official, A.G. McCall, in order to mobilize sympathy for the Second World War and also to provide news regarding the conscripted Mizos in the British Army. Among other reasons, as the borders between India and Burma became an active zone of conflict with the Japanese advancing through the Burmese territory. The news was mainly delivered in the English language but it was translated into Lusei by some natives. It seems that the Luseis had developed an appetite for news of this kind and the newspaper was very popular.

Around the same time, there was an effort from the newly educated class to produce literary and cultural articulations that instilled pride about their land and their people. The secular poetry associated with the Serkawn Concert in the late 1930’s is a reflection of an emerging nationalist disposition among the Mizos. The newly emerging educated class who were trying to imagine a horizontal community (community based on non-ascriptive status derived initially through a protestant ethic) came from non-traditional elite. In fact, the bulk of the supporters for the Mizo National Front belonged to this aspiring educated class. Since religious identity

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171 C. Vanlallawma, *Hringlang Tlang* p.20

172 The war news that Mc Call received was translated into Lushai dialect by Lalmawia and was printed at Thankunga Press. See C. Vanlallawma *Hringlang Tlang* p.21
preceded the political identity and the articulation of political identity coincided with an armed conflict, this educated class did not use the journalistic discourse to express solidarity immediately after Independence. Of course, the imposition of Emergency gave rise to the use of folksongs and other traditional performative genres. This cultural improvisation was made to substitute for the absence of the ‘chanchin’ or the ‘chanchinbu’.

**Brief Enumeration of Mizo Language Newspapers in Postcolonial Mizoram**

On the eve of India’s Independence in 1947, the Lushai Hills District theoretically came under the Parliamentary system of democracy. The first political party, ‘Mizo Common People’s Union’ was inaugurated in 1946 and the same year saw the appearance of their political organ, ‘Mizo,’ a periodical. It was soon followed by a weekly magazine ‘Zoram Thupuan’ in 1947 started by another political party, United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO) which professed secession from India and merger with the then State of Burma. In 1948, the Mizo Common People’s Union became ‘Mizo Union’ and the new outfit published a weekly periodical ‘Mizo Arsi.’

Apart from these overtly political publications, the Presbyterian Church also published periodicals like ‘Harhna Hruaina’ (1949) and ‘Upa Lengkhawm’ (1949) along with the Baptist Church’s ‘Kohhran Beng’. It is likely that the Church was getting anxious about the pronounced articulation of the Mizo community as

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173 See Cherrie L. Chhangte’s ‘Loneliness in the midst of curfew: The Mizo Insurgency Movement and Terror Lore’ in The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India. Edited by Tilottama Misra. p.239-240
linguistic, territorial and ethnic community in addition to being a Christian religious community.¹⁷⁴ In other words, the religious identity precedes the political identity and often feed into each other although occasionally they do not seem to complement each other. For instance, the important literary and cultural organ ‘Kristian Tlangau’ did not stop publishing when emergency was imposed in the mid 1960’s. The only occasion when the ‘Kristian Tlangau’ stopped publication was during the Second World War as they could not procure newsprint and other materials needed for publishing the magazine.¹⁷⁵

The Mizo Hills District Council of Assam in 1950’s experienced a new atmosphere among the freshly educated elites of Aizawl. There seemed to be a thirst for reading content which was neither overtly political nor religious. Apart from the regular Church based magazines and political organs, the decade saw an increase in non-Church and non-political publications which has not emerged in the region before. This may be characterized as efforts mainly coming from individuals who were interested in developing new literary and cultural taste against the background of developmental and cultural agenda of the Indian Nation State. Publications included themes from literature, education, children’s literature and also Government policies and programmes. Examples include publications like Thlirvelna (1953), a literary bi-monthly magazine from Lunglei, Zoram Hriattirna (1953), the District Council newspaper mainly announcing the Government’s information, Mizo Naupang (1953), a children’s magazine, Hun Thar (1954), a weekly paper on wars, and Tunlai

¹⁷⁴ The first issue of ‘Kohhran Beng’ explicitly mentions this kind of anxiety of the missionaries.

¹⁷⁵ Personal communication with Rev. Zosangliana Colney in November, 2011.
(1957), *Sikul Thlirna* (1957) and *Zirtirtu Thian* (1959), which were educational magazines. Nevertheless, it appears that there is an absence of journalistic writing based on objective facts among the publications, such as hard news and reporting.

Due to the Mautam famine in 1959 and the emergence of insurgency through the political organization, the Mizo National Front in the District, there was unusual decline in any form of literary or journalistic production.176 *Hruaitu* (1961), *Zalen* (1962), *Tunlai Chanchin* (1962-Govt. newspaper) and *Thu leh Hla* (1965) were the few papers that appeared during the period. These newspapers and periodicals could not continue their publications during the peak year of the armed conflict in 1966-1967. *Tawrhbawm* (1968) appeared at Aizawl only towards the end of the decade.

The armed conflict continued for more than two decades and there was a general repression of people’s voices including journalists. On several occasions, writers and journalists were physically assaulted and sometimes imprisoned by the Indian State.177 Also, when the MNF found that the newspapers did not adequately reflect the insurgent’s point of view, the journalists were subjected to similar forms of repression.178 Perhaps, for the first time, some idea of the public sphere emerged at this moment and the interests of the Mizo public outside the security concerns of the

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176 An exception to this general rule, ‘Kristian Tlangau,’ the organ of the Presbyterian Church continued its publications during the insurgency period.

177 Such incidents have been cited in MJA’s Souvenir, Mizoram Journalists Association, 1996.p.11

178 Personal communication with Robert Lalchhuana, owner of ‘Romei’ newspaper in 2005.
Nation State and the political concerns of the Mizo National Front, were articulated. The publication of the literary organ, *Thu Leh Hla* of the Mizo Academy of Letters during this troubled period may be an indication of the presence of a public expression that cannot be explained as reinforcing the ideology of the Nation State or the agenda of the insurgent group, Mizo National Front. In the writing of the postcolonial history of Mizoram, this democratic voice seems to have become invisible. This period offers a glimpse of a transition from peculiar traditional authority inflected by the colonial rule through a policy of isolation to a democratic representative form of governance in postcolonial India.

A number of newspapers came into existence between 1970’s and 1980’s. They were *Mizo Aw* (1972), *Zoen* (1972), *Romei* (1973), *Leitlangpui* (1973), *Zomi* (1973), *Harhna* (1975), *Youth Herald* (1975), *Chhawrpial* (1976), *Zobawm* (1977), *Varparh* (1978), *Hunthar* (1979), *Thuthar* (1979) and *Vanglaini* (1978). Of the Mizo language newspapers, only *Mizo Aw*, *Zoen*, *Harhna*, *Romei*, *Chhawrpial* and *Vanglaini* have survived. At this time, a majority of the Mizo language newspapers followed a tabloid format and they were mostly printed in Aizawl or Lunglei. While *Highlander* (1972) was the only English daily newspaper of that period which supported the militant political party, MNF, the newspaper *Mizo Aw* reflected the views of the Mizo Congress Party which identified itself with the Indian Nation State. Both these newspapers continue to be published till date. In all, 14 newspapers and periodicals were started in the Union Territory of Mizoram between 1970 and 1980.
As mentioned previously, the period of armed conflict comes to an end in 1985 by granting Mizoram statehood and absorbing the secessionist political outfits into representative Parliamentary political parties. The establishment of the legislature for the State of Mizoram inaugurated the period of normalcy and peace that has not been witnessed among its neighbours like Nagaland, Manipur and Assam. Political stability gave way to other developmental concerns like education, planning and economy, human resource and employment.


From the 1980's the category of daily newspapers distinctly emerged. This may be due to the legitimacy of producing and consuming news. Prior to the 1980's, both production and consumption of news were denied legal sanction. With the grant of Statehood and the arrival of representative form of governance, the press becomes a mediating institution between the State and the people. Though there is a lack of other linkages like technology, transport, advertising revenues, adequate
Disposable income of readers and demographic profile of the consumers for the growth of the newspaper industry, Mizoram for the first time experienced the need for information as news and commodity. In other words, there are partial conditions that facilitate the emergence of newspapers in Mizoram and the sudden spurt of newspapers may be attributed to this facilitating condition.

Literary Public Sphere

This section will continue to textually and contextually engage with the two important literary organs that shaped the career of Mizo literature namely, Kristian Tlangau and Thu leh Hla. In the previous chapters, some issues of the three journals were textually and contextually analyzed. To be precise, the first issue of Kristian Tlangau (1911) and the maiden issue of Thu leh Hla (1965) were textually examined along with the circumstances surrounding the production of these magazines. In this section, a similar exercise is being undertaken to study one issue of Thu leh Hla and Kristian Tlangau journals published in April, 2010. This exercise will enable one to make some limited observations regarding the trends in literary culture or tradition.

Thu Leh Hla

In 1965, the Mizo Academy of Letters declared in their inaugural editorial of Thu leh Hla, that the Mizo language requires to be standardized and made comparable to other modern Indian regional languages along with an effort to cultivate a literary culture among the Mizos. After more than 45 years, it appears that these twin purposes namely, ‘pedagogic’ and ‘aesthetic’ still permeate the functioning of the literary organ, Thu leh Hla.

Textual Analysis of Thu leh Hla, April, 2010

As this dissertation seeks to map the events that constitute the growth of literary and media history in the former Lushai Hills District and the postcolonial
Mizoram, the study identifies the sources that provide an account of the events. Indeed, the connection between the events and the sources that bring to light these occasions unfold the literary and media history of the region. The inauguration of Thu leh Hla as a literary journal marks a major event in the literary and linguistic history of postcolonial Mizoram. It simultaneously becomes a source for providing an account of the literary history of the region. In this section, the issue of Thu leh Hla, 2010 is used more as a source for tracing the journey of Mizo literature in general and Thu leh Hla in particular from its inaugural issue.179

Sikulpui (The Great/Mighty School) - C. Chhuanvawra

In this touching story, the author emotionally appeals to the reader to revisit the sacred precincts of the two most famous educational institutions, Sikulsen and Sikulpui of colonial Lushai Hills District which were foundational to contemporary Mizo society and culture. It is written in the context of these two schools being overrun by the increasing and indiscriminate urbanization of Aizawl city. The author traces the history of the passions that went into the making of the school and the intellectual energy that these ancestral educational institutions disseminated from the students who later on went on to become teachers, pastors, bureaucrats, army officials and important opinion leaders of the region. According to the author, Sikulsen was started in 1898 by the venerable missionary, D.E Jones who was

179 Since this dissertation seeks only to provide milestones in the literary and media history of Mizoram, no exhaustive analysis over a large time period of 50 years is undertaken. The analysis of the two issues, the inaugural issue and the 2010 issue is undertaken mainly to see if there are any broad changes in the trajectories of the themes, formats, content, circulation and consumption in a rather sketchy manner. Only three important items out of more than a dozen items are taken up for a literary and descriptive analysis.
fondly addressed as Zosaphluia by the hills people. D.E. Jones was deeply involved in the evangelical mission and his contribution to education was in the form of producing materials in the English language for school curriculum, developing the Mizo language through compilation of the earliest hymn book, and also establishing the mother institution, *Sikulsen*.

The author recalls the efforts of D.E Jones with a lot of affection and gratitude. In 1906, the next major institution, *Sikulpui*, was granted permission to launch a Middle English school besides *Sikulsen*. Till 1909, this important institution was housed in a hut and only in 1914 did the Government provide an unusually formidable structure lavishing more money than was invested on the Deputy Commissioner’s building. It came to be recognized as one of the most appealing structures in the whole of Lushai Hills District. The author invokes this glorious past and contrasts it with the ignoble intentions of the present bureaucratic dispensation. This unsympathetic attitude of the Mizo public at large is insensitive to the historical and cultural roots of the contemporary times.  

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*Sikulpui- C. Chhuanvawra (Translations are mine)*

The first formal institution for education in Mizoram was established on 15th February 1898, which fell on the 28th birthday of the white missionary, Zosaphluia (D.E Jones). The school was built between Synod Press and Bookroom, which at present is the Executive Secretary’s bungalow. The school was run on these premises until 1905. A new building was constructed and occupied from 1906 where the Boys Primary School is presently functioning and it’s called Sikulsen. Zosaphara (Edwin Rowlands) resided in the school. No modification has taken place till this day except to cover a small renovation of the floor.

In 1906, the Borsap (Superintendent of Lushai Hills District) granted permission for establishing a Middle School. Sikulsen introduced an English Section from 1907 and this went on for two years. The Middle School was a continuation of the Primary School which was an all Boys School. Therefore, the name ‘Boys Middle English School’ was given. Since the expansion of education in colonial Lushai Hills District was primarily a missionary enterprise, many of the students of this school who became teachers went on to teach at primary schools in rural areas of Mizoram. Being the only
middle school in Mizoram as well as the most prestigious one, it earned the name SIKULPUI. The nearby junction was named ‘Sikulpukawn,’ and is still known by the name today.

In July 1907, Zosapthara (D.E Jones) talked about the school in Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu magazine as:

*About the school: Middle English*

*Middle English section started from June in Sikulpui, Aizawl. Saitawni, Ngaithangvunga, Khianga, Saptea, Kawlkhuma, Lianhmingthanga were present. Middle English was to be taught over two years. Students successfully completing the course from Middle English were expected to be able to teach English in any of the schools in Lushai Hills District. The course structure followed: four years Lower Primary, two years Upper Primary and 2 years Middle English.*

Zosapthara( Edwin Rowlands)

In 1909, near Sikulsen, a hut was erected where classes were conducted until a formal structure got erected. In 1914, the Government constructed the Sikulpui building. It’s a wonder why the government spent such a large amount of money constructing the building! The District Commissioner bungalow which is now occupied by the Governor costs Rs.6,000/- to construct while it is said that the Sikulpui building cost Rs.15,000/-. For years, people said, “It is the best and most beautiful school in Assam.”

They took a lot of care while constructing the building. The foundation was dug up to chest level and broad flat stones were placed at the bottom and stones were placed on top of each other all the way up to the skirting of the wall. The area of the floor space was 3656 sq ft. which was arranged into 1 ft. by 2 ft. sq. moulded stones were placed in order. The four stair cases were constructed with 1 ft. by 2 inch and 6 inch thick solid stone. At the bottom of the stair case three stones measuring 3 ft long were placed on top of another three stones measuring 4 ft. long. A 6 ft. in length stone was placed right at the top. This was how all four stair cases were constructed.

As Zosapthara mentioned in Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu, the structure of education was 4+2+2. Middle School was till class VIII. This structure was followed for twenty years until 1930 when Assam Government tried to get a more unified structure within its region. At this point, the Middle School was up to class VI till 1981. By 1982, it was up to class VII.

In 1904, Chief Commissioner of Assam, Sir Bonfyld Fuller visited Mizoram and saw the good work carried out by the missionaries. He was so pleased with the work that he handed over all the schools under the missionaries control on the 1st April 1904. As it was established by the missionaries, it was under their control until Indian Republic on the 1st September 1952 when it was taken over by the government and became a government school.

Even after it was taken over by the government, it still remained a boys only school until 1957 after which it became a co-ed school and girls were allowed to be admitted.

In Sikulpui, as well as Zosapthara, there were many other prominent teachers: Chawngsiama, Hrawva, Rostosingh, Vankhama and Mena worked as teachers and headmasters. The first 28 pastors from Rev. Chhuahkhama to Rev. C. Pazawna were from this school. The one who started Salvation Army in Mizoram, Brig. Kawlkhuma, Brig. Sapliana and Brig. Ngurliana Sailo and father Alexis Sanglura were also alumni of the school. The school also produced 30 famous politicians, 8 Indian Civil Servicemen and 11 army, navy and air force officers as well as doctors and engineers. All the former students from this school held high regard for the school which in turn increased the reputation of the school.

The main reason why Sikulpui is valued is because other schools were produced from it, it is the ancestral school. It was the only Middle School in Mizoram for seven years. Even after Serkawn Middle School was established in 1914, they were the only two schools which produced teachers for other Primary Schools of the region. Before 1945, under the Post-war Re-construction Scheme, 8 Middle Schools were added to the already existing schools. Prior to this, Sikulsen and Sikulpui were the only
Tracing the genealogy of modern education in the colonial Lushai Hills District and postcolonial Mizoram, the author remarks, “Sikulpui hlutna ber chu Zoram Sikul dangte thlahtu, a bul ber a nihna, a upatna hi a ni.” In English, it may be translated as, “The main reason why Sikulpui is valued is because other schools were produced from it, and it is the ancestral school.” The author laments that it was able to protect the structure only with the intervention of INTACH.

Milu leh Mizote (Headhunting and Mizados) - Sangzuala

181 Milu leh Mizote (Headhunting and Mizados)- Sangzuala (Translations are mine)

Just by reading the title of the article, one may not feel the need to talk about the topic. But it becomes problematic when the non-Mizos call us ‘headhunters.’ This item is an opening of the topic for further discussion and clarification.

In Mizo language, the term ‘Lu’ has many uses for different purposes. ‘luman’ (compensation for the death of anyone), ‘lukhawng’ (the name of a kind of tax, duty, or bonus paid to certain near relatives of a person after his death or to have reward, recompense, blessing, advantages, etc, attached to it; to be a source of profit, gain, or advantage; to be profitable or advantageous)\textsuperscript{181} ‘lungkahna’ or ‘lu lumna’ (a place one can call a home – where he can rest his head), we also say ‘a lu nungin’ (counting every one young and old, everyone. \textit{Lit. every living head.})\textsuperscript{181} Most people value our ancestor’s place or land - ‘lu lumna.’ In wars and battles, Mizos take not only the head of their enemies, but also of their friends who died in the fight when they are not able to take home the body. The family members of their dead friends receive the head to organise a funeral. Therefore, ‘lu’ (head) plays a very important role in the life of the Mizos. But ‘Milu’ refers to the head of the enemies and this is what is needed for us to discuss.

We fought wars and raided our enemies, and took heads of the enemies that we killed. But can we be labeled as ‘a tribe/clan of Head hunters’ needs discussion. The white men ‘Sap’ referred to us as ‘head hunters’ in many of their writings, without any hesitations, our native writers also began to call ourselves ‘head hunters.’ We cannot deny the fact that our ancestors had the habit/tradition of taking heads of the enemies, but we should rethink whether we, as a ‘Mizo’ can be called ‘headhunters’ and that are we supposed to be proud of this label, needs further interpretation. For instance, in 1857, many armies of the
The writer of this piece seems to make a distinction between an ethical interpretation and an ethnographic interpretation of history. The author emphatically denounces the description of Mizos as ‘head hunters’ in the dominant historical accounts. He argues for a more positive description of the ethnographic detail provided in colonial narratives.

This is an interesting piece because it seeks to challenge the dominant colonial/Christian historiography that suggests the absence of rational human ordering of the Mizo world prior to the arrival of colonial and missionary rule. Sangzuala appears to eke out a rational ground for this supposedly bizarre practice. In his rendering of the practice, heads of both enemies and friends were collected from the battle ground and brought home, one to celebrate victory and the other to perform funerary rites. Further, he notes that these wars were fought for settling disputes regarding land. Thus, like other mainland kingdoms, resource mobilization

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East India Company rebelled against the British and this was referred to as ‘Sepoy Mutiny’ by the white men. But as time goes by, Indian historians began to refer to it as the ‘First War of Independence.’ This is known as ‘new interpretation.’ Even though the event or occurrence could not be changed or modified, there can be ways of interpretation and meaning.

One may argue that we, the Mizos did take heads as it was an honourable deed to come back with heads of the men that we killed in the battle, so we were addressed as head hunters. I cannot say that this argument is totally wrong. That is why it requires discussion.

On the other hand, there are a group of Mizo people who do not agree with the terminology of ‘head hunters.’ We took heads and fought wars against our enemies, but the reason for fighting the war was not ‘heads’ but for land or due to dispute between two chiefs. The ‘head’ was only a trophy for the young men who came back victorious to show their bravery. This is also an argument with a good standing. In America, the Red Indians peel the skin of the heads of their enemies they killed. The white men called them ‘Scalp Hunters,’ but they certainly do not call themselves one. Therefore, it is not always appropriate to agree with what other people label us with. This is another argument.

This topic does need to be discussed and given a rethought. People who say that we are not head hunters as taking head was not the main reason for wars.
was the ground on which disputes arose and conflicts emerged resulting in wars. So, according to the author, there is nothing primeval about the historic practice. In effect, this story argues for positively describing the Mizos and their past prior to the arrival of colonialism and Christianity.

Aizawl Khua leh Veng Hrang Hming (History of Place Names within Aizawl) –
Dr. Lalsawmliana Sailo

1. Zotlang- Aizawl
   Let me start off by saying that Aizawl city is built by the British officials. They came from Silchar to rule over our chiefs in 1890. They settled at Aizawl and established Aizawl Kulh ‘Fort.’ This is how Aizawl city came into being.

   In 1990, Mizoram Gorkhali’s celebrated their 100 years of stay in Mizoram. They formed a Committee which collected names of Gorkhali people who lived in Mizoram. According to the findings of this Committee, the Gorkhalis who served in the 1st Bn. Assam Rifles were given the privilege to get a ‘temporary settlement’ permit with a number of ‘Terms and Conditions’ on the recommendation of the AR Commandant to the Gorkhali soldiers with good ACR. They found out the names of two such Gorkhalis who were given the permit to settle in Mizoram, one of them resided in Dinthar, Kelpu Veng in 1892 and another in Zotlang, 2 miles from Aizawl above Sairang road. The name of this person staying in Zotlang was Subedar Sherman and the name of the place was known as Shermantilla. They were under Nikhama, chief of Luangmual village and they had to pay double the tax the Mizos were paying.

   This village was shifted under Vaivakawn Village Council election in 1954. By 1966, there were 3 Mizo houses and 33 Gorkhali houses in this village. In 1981, Mizo men changed the name to ‘Zotlang.’ In 1984, they became a separate Village Council and took on the name Zotlang instead of Vaitlang.

2. Laiputlang:
   A man named Lalkeseia who resides in Chawnpui informed me in our conversation regarding the origin of the name of ‘Laiputlang.’ It may be useful to know the correct information among many others. Pu Saia said, “My great grandfather Lalvunga was a ‘pasaltha’ or brave hunter. In 1870, Lalvunga, son of Lalluta set up a village near Hlimen and people fought for land during this period. The chief announced that whoever possesses a gun will be given the first privilege to choose a plot of land for cultivation.” Fortunately my grandfather was the first person to get a gun in the village. He named his son ‘Laiputhanga’ (Laipui means a gun). He selected the area which is now near Aizawl- Chaltlang-Ramhlun and the hill top was named ‘Laipuipa lo tlang’ (Laipuipa=Laiipui’s father, Lo= land for cultivation and Tlang= hill) and is now known as ‘Laiputlang.’

3. Tuikual Veng:
   By 1950 India became an independent country. There was a Mizo District Council at Aizawl. Land permit has to be acquired from the District Council from this time onwards. Many people were given
This particular story may be conceived as a reflection of an emerging appetite for a particular kind of Mizo historical geography. In earlier times, both history and geography were more fluid categories and these have become more rigid with the sedentarization of the Mizo society over the last hundred years. Though the author provides a very objective engagement with archival and ethnographic sources to plot the historical geography of Aizawl, this pre-occupation with time (history) and space (geography) is conducted within the empty homogenous time of the Nation State.

Even as these place names go through changes over a period of hundred years, the ebb and tide of Mizo nationalism contesting the Nation State’s claim over this territory and the people seem to play a role in the rearranging of boundaries and place names. It is in this context that the locality named, ‘Shermantilla’ in honor of Sherman, a Gorkha soldier serving in the colonial army was changed to ‘Vaitlang’ (hills of the mainland Indians) during the height of the insurgent movement and it was finally renamed as ‘Zotlang’ (hills of the Mizos) in 1981. The author gives an enumeration of the number of Gorkha houses (33) in contrast to the Mizo residents (3) in the locality during 1966. Paradoxically, the aspiration for an authentic ethnicity coincides with the Mizo achieving statehood within the identity of the Indian Nation land at Sairang Road. People started settling in the area by 1952-1954. They had a Village Council in 1954. Men of the village gathered at Thanghleia’s house to select a name for the village. Among them, Zahnuna and Thanghleia are still alive today. They decided on ‘Tuikual Veng’ for the name of the area. It became one of the biggest ‘veng’ or locality of Aizawl and now has been divided into two different areas, Tuikual North and Tuikual South.

During 1940’s when we were in high school, there were names of localities which do not exist anymore. People who have such information should write more about these in this Thu leh Hla magazine.
State. With the arrival of the statehood, there seems to be an increasing number of alternate histories of the region. In this story, the Gorkhas celebrate their hundred years of residence in Mizoram recalling their legendary ancestors like Sherman in whose behalf the place was named ‘Shermantilla’ later changed to ‘Vaitlang’ and currently assuming the name of ‘Zotlang’.

The Gorkhas had originally come to the Lushai Hills as soldiers of the British army and the British possibly would not have annexed the Lushai territory without the help of these hills people originally from Nepal. This complex connection between the British, the Gorkhas and the Luseis who do not actually belong to mainland India but appear to produce Indianness through the process of becoming part of colonial and post-colonial history, is indirectly woven in this simple tale of historical geography of Aizawl. From Shermantilla to Vaitlang to Zotlang, the Mizos have become less of a hills people and the urge to map the seduction of sedentarization allows the author to narrate the history of place names located in Aizawl.

It is equally true that the lure of the hills into an un-commoditized time and the irreducibility of the hills into just physical geography without a mythical investment also becomes part of the need to reconfigure literary and performative culture.\footnote{183 For instance, in an article which appeared in Thu leh Hla (2007) titled ‘Mizo Literature Hrilhfiah Dan hi’ seeks to reinstate the performative and expressive traditions associated with ‘thawnthu’ which prefigures the formal literary culture associated with colonial and post-colonial literary traditions. Refer Appendix-IV for the translation of the article.} The journal ‘Thu leh Hla’ occupies a space that accommodates and plays out these seemingly conflicting ideological positions. Perhaps, these positions ought to be
arranged on a continuum rather than as two exclusive and separate ideological moorings.

Some Comparison between the Inaugural Issue of Thu leh Hla (1965) and another issue of Thu leh Hla, 2010

Format:

The first issue of Thu leh Hla runs through 32 pages while the April, 2010 issue has 40 pages. The cover page of the former carries the name of the magazine, the volume number and year and the name of the editor. The latter has the name of the magazine and ‘A monthly Literary Journal of Mizo Academy of Letters’ below it, it also carries the month, year and volume number. It carries the emblem of Mizo Academy of Letters and a short quotation which says ‘A word can be a song, and a song can also be a word.’ It has the name of the editor on the bottom of the page. The inside pages of the first issue runs in two columns while the pages of the 2010 issue runs in one column. The quality of the paper seems to have improved in the latter issue. Thu leh Hla was initially a quarterly magazine and later on became a monthly journal.

Circulation:

The circulation of the April, 2010 issue is 1500 while 500 copies of the first issue were printed in 1965. The price of the magazine increased from Re.1 in 1965 to Rs.10 in 2010.
Content:

The 1965 issue carries 15 items including the editorial with 14 different contributors. The contributors include two pastors and a female writer who contributed a piece on Mizo women and their talents in weaving. The 2010 issue has 10 items including the editorial with 8 contributors. The contributors include two persons with doctorate degrees. A female writer, Buangi Sailo contributed a poem in this issue. (Buangi Sailo was awarded Padma Shree in 2011 in 'Literature and Education'. She is a famous Mizo poet).

The first issue does not include any poetry but has items related to ‘thawnthu’ and an indigenous, local understanding of stars and the ‘thawnthu’ stories associated with them.184 The connection between astronomy and astrology appears blurred in the description of the stars. The issue of 2010 has two poems but does not have any article on ‘thawnthu’. In other words, there is an elaboration of ‘chanchin’ which lays emphasis on documentary, historical and realist narratives.185

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184 Liangkhaia, the author of the story on stars identifies 28 stars and it is titled as ‘Mizo Arsi Hriat Dan’ (The Mizo Way of Understanding Stars). Among other things, the author narrates the origin of two stars, Hrangchhuana and Chawngmawii. In the popular conception of Mizos, these stars were once lovers on earth and when their love failed to fructify, they were turned into stars. Chawngmawii, the female counterpart belonged to a village that was hostile to where her lover, Hrangchhuana hailed from. Once when Hrangchhuana was secretly visiting his beloved, the chief and his men caught him and killed him along with his lover. Actually, these stars have been named because they tend to be seen together (almost making love) for some part of the year and very distant from each other for some part of the year. See Liangkhaia, Mizote Arsi Hriat Dan in Thu leh Hla, 1965. p.12-16

185 See articles on ‘A short history of naming localities in Aizawl city,’ ‘History of the Sikulpui school,’ and ‘Headhunting and Mizos.’ All these interesting historical narratives are written in an objective linear historical mode. There seems to be a reluctance to engage with an auratic or enchanted past.
The first issue has items which talks about the need for standardization of Mizo language. These writings reveal that Mizo language was in the process of standardization and there are debates on the usage of the words, meanings, formation of sentences and phrases. The issue of 2010 carries a lesson on the grammar of Mizo language produced by the Mizoram Board of School Education Language Board which is approved by the Mizo Academy of Letters. Both the issues give attention to issues relating to standardization of language, in the inaugural issue, the discussion was fore grounded by a literary and public personality, J.F Laldailova, whereas in the latter issue, the discussion was highlighted by a formal body like the Mizoram Board of School Education Language Board in consultation with the Mizo Academy of Letters. There seems to be formalizing of institutional mechanisms to engage with the question of standardization of Mizo language.186

Editorial composition:

It appears that there is no dramatic alteration in the way the editorials have been written in the past in comparison to the present. Both the editorials are more or less of the same length and talk about the functioning of the Mizo Academy of Letters. While the inaugural issue introduces the Mizo Academy of Letters and its aims and objectives, the issue of 2010 talks about the activities to be conducted on its Annual Day celebrations.

186 In the item on ‘Paragraph Chungchang,’ there is advice to the readers on the construction of a grammatically proper paragraph. There is a mention about the appropriate usage of Cases (small case and big case). It appears that there is a series on grammar and this item is a part of the continuing series.
Kristian Tlangau

It may not be completely off the mark to observe that the two famous Church institutions of Mizoram, namely the Presbyterian and the Baptist Church, have gradually abdicated the role of shaping Mizo literary and aesthetic tastes. The colonial white missionaries had taken on the extra burden of instituting Mizo as a modern language with script and print. Today, this burden of cultivating a literary culture has been parceled out to the Nation State via the Mizo Academy of Letters, the Language Board and other bureaucratic bodies. In effect, the two literary organs namely, ‘Kristian Tlangau’ and ‘Kohhran Beng’ have been deployed to intensify their evangelical effort and this fits well with the fact that Mizoram along with other Northeast states produced the largest number of missionaries in the country.187

Textual Analysis of Kristian Tlangau, April, 2010

In this specific issue that is being examined, a select number of items based on translation are taken up for analysis. Along with analyzing the content, the context of the stories is also examined wherever it is necessary. Apart from analyzing this specific issue of Kristian Tlangau, a limited comparison between the form and content of the inaugural issue with the issue of 2010 in undertaken for this section of the chapter.

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187 This statement needs to be researched. Here, it is formulated as only a hypothesis based on a cursory reading of a selected number of issues.
This issue carries an editorial, collection of news from the various activities of the Synod Presbyterian Church and also announces an essay writing competition in anticipation of the centenary celebration of the Kristian Tlangau to be held in 2011. The title of the article decided for the competition read, ‘The star of the Mizos-Kristian Tlangau’. There is also a section on questions asked by the readers for which the editor gave answers regarding clarification of Bible translations, rationalization and routinization of Church practices and revisiting the naming of days carried out by the white missionaries during the colonial period. The issue carries two sermons written by two different persons, a pastor and a Church elder (Upa).188 Apart from the above mentioned items, there are two articles, both written by Church Upas, C. Lalbiaktluanga and Lalzuia Colney. The last item is an obituary of the Synod Church leaders who passed away. This issue carries accounts of six such deaths of the Church ministers.

Editorial

In anticipation of the forthcoming Good Friday, the journal provides a fabled account of Jesus’ enormous sacrifice resulting in the iconic crucifixation. Apart from reiterating the mythical account, the editorial urges its readers to enact their moral worth through kindness towards the less fortunate ones that would befit the

188 The term ‘Upa’ has had a career of its own in the last hundred years or more. The literal meaning of the term ‘Upa’ refers to an old or elderly person. Traditionally, it is believed the chiefs appointed Upas (not necessarily based on their age) to act as ministers for running the administration of their kingdoms. With colonialism, the institution of Upas declined as the administration was carried out under the guidance of the British administrators but the white missionaries reinvented the Upas and their role in a more restricted manner. Though there is association in Mizoram primarily for the Upas (based on their age), it is only in the Church, the Upas (not necessarily based on their age) play a specific role in conducting the activities of the Church along with the pastor and the respective congregation. If one were to visit houses in today’s Mizoram, you are likely to find names prefixed with the term Upa and this is used only by the Church Upas.
occasion. Such act of kindness enables one to experience love towards God and towards others. Being Christians allows for spreading this message of love and experiencing the joy of sharing.

The editorial in the course of inviting the reader to share the mythical tale and the need to perform such exemplary acts appears to gently persuade the Mizo public to participate in the evangelical activity of the Church by voluntarily becoming evangelists. In some sense, the editorial like other items in the issue emphasizes the virtue of becoming evangelists and changing the world for the better.

Interactive Article based on Readers’ Questions and Kristian Tlangau's Response

One of the items based on questions that were received from the readers about issues relating to the Church is answered in a question-answer mode. The format seems to be intriguing for a journal published by the Church. It is likely that the format has been borrowed from the television medium. However, in this interactive format, only the name of the reader is appended to the text and the name of the person answering the question is not mentioned. It appears that the reader has to presume that the question has been answered by the editorial board.

1. Clarification regarding Biblical Exegesis

In the very first question raised by a reader named Lalmuana, the question of the authenticity to be accorded to sacral languages namely, Hebrew and Greek, is
indirectly posed. A certain anecdote in the Old Testament regarding the event relating to God's reprimand against the people of Nineveh for not obeying his commands is taken up for clarification. The Hebrew version of the Bible records that the people of Nineveh would be destroyed in less than 40 days for their heresy and the Greek version of the Bible mentions that the people of Nineveh will be destroyed in 3 days. The Kristian Tlangau’s response is interesting. Instead of saying directly that both are correct, the magazine observes that the Mizo translation is a derivative of the Hebrew Bible and it is necessary to accord more legitimacy to this scriptural text rather than the Greek version of the scripture. It is not surprising that such a judgment is made regarding these texts because the Mizo language itself acquires both humanity and sacredness due to its ability to become a script and at some level to produce scripture as well. The association of the nascent Mizo language with the ancient sacral language of Hebrew appears to be an interesting staging of conversation across civilisational planes. 189

2. On Regulating Local Church Practices

The next question that is posed by a reader named Lalhriatkima refers to the practice of the congregation members bringing flowers to ceremonially mourn the

189 From Lalmuana, West Phaileng (Translation work is done by the scholar)
Q. Our Sunday School text book published this year says that instead of “Ninevi would be diminished/destroyed in 40 days,” it is more likely that it should be “3 days.” Which one is the correct one? Do you have Septuagint to read?
Ans: The Old Testament is written in Hebrew. Mizo Bible has been mostly translated from Hebrew language and from a Revised Version. The book of Jona from the Old Testament is also translated from Hebrew and therefore we should use what our Bible says. Greek Bible Septuagint (LXX) is with us and as the author of the Sunday School text book says, it is written “3 days.”
dead on the occasion of their anniversaries inside their Church. The journal judiciously observes that it is a delicate issue and it has to be resolved by the respective congregations and the Church functionaries. However, it points out that it should preempt any display of wealth because it may not be in good taste to have people who are less well off finding it difficult to perform similarly.190

3. On Exegetical and Linguistic Transformations relating to different Mizo language translations of the Bible

In this question and answer discussion, one of the readers queries the two different translations belonging to two different periods on two different planes, one at the level of interpretation and other at the level of semantic transformation of the word ‘inpawl.’191 The reader has referred to the passage from Luke 5:36 which reads

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190 From Lalhriatkima, Speaker, Prayer Team, Electric Veng
Q. Many of the Church members have a practise of bringing flowers to decorate the Church to commemorate their dead relatives. Is this an acceptable practice for the congregation and for a believer?

Ans: We only came to know about the practice from your question, it is a very sensitive one and should be given a serious thought. The respective Church Committee should sit and decide on the matter. The practice is that at the end of the year, on 31st December, the Church commemorates the death of its members. The Synod does not encourage its members to spending too much money on the death anniversaries of their relatives, providing feasts for the communities, it has even given out regulations for such activities. There might be members whose income does not permit them to bring flowers to the Church; also, it might be a pain to some members to bring it, so it appears

191 Upa R. Sangchhunga, Bilkhawthlir

Q. The new translation of the verse from Luke 5:36 – He told them this parable: “No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old” is totally different from the old translation, please tell me the reason for the completely different translation.

Ans: I don’t know which old translation you are referring to, but I guess you are talking about the most popular translation. Let’s see the difference in the translation. Old Translation: Tuman puan thar pawt thlain puan hluiin an bel ngai lo (No one tears a piece out of a new garment and patches it up with an old
in the English language as *He told them this parable: “No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old.”*\(^{192}\) In this passage, Jesus urges his followers that the virtues of old practices like fasting need not necessarily be useful to redeem the spiritually fragile people. The meaning of fasting may not be accessible to all followers who lack a deeper communion. Fasting is only a means for a deeper communion and it is not an end in itself.

In a changing socio-economic context, it is possible that the comparisons between the old and the new may be a comparison between those who became Christians in the early years of colonial rule and led a pious life, to the present Christians who seemed to be more close to leading a life of the world rather than waiting for an after world. It is also possible to restrict the context metaphorically to the contemporary and analogically connect the comfortable relation between the Church and the powerful people in Mizoram. In the last hundred years of Christianity in Mizoram, the socio-economic context did not sufficiently change in the first half of the 20\(^{th}\) century. During the next 20 years after Independence, Mizoram experienced political turbulence. All the same, there has been considerable change in the

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\(^{192}\) Quoted from New International Version of the Bible.
economic, political and cultural realms in the last thirty years or so. Across political and economic contexts, the Church has had an eminent role to play in shaping the personality of the region. This query about the translation may be about its holding of power and authority across diverse political situations.

In the earlier translation, the term, ‘inpawl’ was specifically used to connote ‘to match’, although the term was used to also mean ‘to converse,’ ‘to communicate,’ and ‘sexual intercourse.’ It appears that the term which had varied usages and also seems to have had no taboo relating to the sexual act too, has presently acquired only the last connotation and along with it there has been a taboo attached to this natural act. In other words, when the Mizos were a speech community, the term was used variedly according to different situations and even when it was used to refer to the sexual act per se, there was no taboo attached to the signified and the signifier. Thus, it is possible to interpret that the Mizo language has switched codes from its being primarily a pre-Christian speech community to its becoming a dominant Christian literate community.193

4. On Coining Names for Different Days of the Week

This query from the reader concerns the need to formalize the names for different days of the week which were suggested by colonial missionaries.194 The

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193 There is a need to seek more evidence for the formation of what can be called as Christian literacy. The evolution of the Mizo language has the possibility of switching codes from its history of being a speech community to its becoming a literate community and the career of the word ‘inpawl’ thus explained.

194 Q. The naming of days across the week- 1st Day= Pathianni (God’s day), 2nd Day= Thawhtan (1st day /beginning of work), 3rd Day= Thawhleh (next day of work), 4th day= Nilaini (middle day of the week), 6th Day=Zirtawpni (last day of study), 7th day= Inrinni (Preparation day) 5th day=Ningani (5th day) This fifth day does not have a name like the rest of the days. Imagine it as a human being, how ashamed it
Christian calendar had been deeply internalized but there still remained the lack of linguistic grace that is accorded to already ordained names of the days. In Mizo, the name for ‘Thursday’ reads ‘Ningani’ meaning ‘the fifth day’ and the reader laments the pure functional nature that is associated with the name. The reader proposes ‘Nilaithawhtan’ as a better name which he claims was actually in use prior to 1940. The journal’s advice to the reader was to initiate an academic seminar on the matter and await the results of the seminar. It remarked that it was difficult for the body to make a distinction between those two terms ‘Ningani’ and ‘Nilaithawhtan’ and vouch for the latter.

The Sacral River Ganges Re-imagined as the Blood of Christ.

In a different article with a dramatic title, ‘Kraws Thisen leh Ganges Lui’ (The Blood of Jesus Christ and the Ganges River) that draws on an epic Hindu imagery of the River Ganges. This story gives an account of the Hindu mythology associated

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would have been! Even if they could not come up with a name for the day, wouldn’t it be better to use called ‘Nilaithawhtan’ like it was called before 1940? Even though it might be time consuming, I don’t think it would be much of a problem. Wouldn’t it bring progress to our literature?

Ans: Thursday in the English language is named as Nilaithawhtan, Nilini or Ningani. Our ancestors used Nilaini (Wednesday) as a holiday, and start working again on Thursday, the 4th day of the week. Ningani and Nilaithawhtan are both used by people. It is difficult to suggest which one is better for the name. It would be sensible to decide by organising a Literature Seminar and after a serious discussion, we would feel at ease to use whichever the experts decide for the name.

(Translations are mine)

195 The Blood of the Cross and the Ganges River- Upa Lalzuia Colney, Kanan (Translations are mine)

I had the opportunity to visit Varanasi (Benaras), one of the most famous cities of UP on 21-26 Nov, 2009 with our Synod Mission Board Speaker, Evangelist Lalramzauva Ralte and his team of 53
with the religious practice conducted on the sacred river bank. The narrative which clearly represents the Hindu viewpoint of seeking salvation through this ritual (of taking bath, drinking water from the Ganges river at least once in a lifetime and cleansing their sins in Ganges river, not knowing the blood of Jesus Christ.

First of all, let me tell you the history of this place hoping it would describe my point clearer. Varanasi was known as Benaras during colonial period and some people still call it by the old name. It is one of the oldest cities in the world and is one of the seven holy places for the Hindus. Varanasi has other important religious places too. The first Buddhist sermon was given in Varanasi and the Buddhists had built a temple there called Sarnath Temple. People say that the name Varanasi was given to the place because Varuna River from the north and Asi River from the south meets here. From its old name - Benaras, Bana means ‘to make’ and ‘Ras’ means river. The holy river of the Hindus – the Ganges flows through this land. The Hindus regard the Ganges as a river that can cleanse their sin and give them salvation. They believe that Ganges River was created by their goddess Kasi.

The river is famous not only among the Hindus but attracts people from all over the world like US. They collect the river water of Ganges and want to make sure they drink it before they die as they believe that it would save their soul and would purify them.

Hindus cremate dead bodies by the Ganges and I could count 17 in my short visit. When I enquired, people told me that about 200-300 bodies are cremated every day. Hindu religion is a very old religion and this fire lit for cremation on the river bank has not been put out for more than 5000 years. Sick people are brought by the river and await their death hoping the river would save their soul.

While we were on a visit, we saw people staging songs and dances on a platform that is built on the bank of the river. A thought that came to my mind was that these millions of people have not heard of the blood of Jesus Christ and our Kristian Thalai Pawl- (Youth wing of the Church) should come and perform songs and dances preaching the Gospel. Varanasi has a very small Christian population and therefore Christianity is not regarded a nuisance yet, we can still preach the Gospel freely. There is a small Para-Church and the Varanasi Mission Charitable Trust is taking the lead in the mission of preaching.

Our Synod had also taken steps in affiliating the Para-Church of Varanasi. Till now, there are 560 people who got baptized and the population slowly increases. There are 3,147,927 people in Varanasi according to 2001 Census and would have increased a lot by now. Among these people, there are only 560 Christian, they are far too less! Who will take the responsibility? The people are not aware that the blood of Jesus was shed for them in the cross of Calvary, and they believe the Ganges River can save them!

These 3 crores people do not know that the blood of Jesus is Salvation, they need someone to tell them. Many people go to the river hoping to their souls to be saved. The water that they regard to be holy is the most contaminated water filled with ashes of dead bodies. I really wish that all these people know that the blood of Jesus on the Cross can save them.

Jesus is calling them and wants to save them. Who will deliver this message to the people? Hundreds of people are dying not knowing this!
performing crematory rites on the banks of the sacred river) proceeds to convert the logic by suggesting that those millions of people who practice this ritual may be encouraged to believe that the Ganges River is after all the blood of Christ in itself. In other words, the author of the story fantasizes that these Hindus may be persuaded to think that salvation may be attained through the blood of Christ instead of drinking the contaminated water of the River Ganges.

This article supposedly seeks to attract the attention of evangelicals from Mizoram to take up the task of spreading the word among the ritual ridden Hindus. This Hindu religious site appears to provide an easy platform to set up missionary activities. The author imagines converting a captive audience of several millions flocking to this place every year.

Some Comparison between the Inaugural Issue of Kristian Tlangau (1911) and another issue of Kristian Tlangau, 2010

Format:

The inaugural issue of Kristian Tlangau (1911) runs through 16 pages while the issue of 2010 has 34 pages. The former does not have a cover page but carries the name of the journal and a Bible verse from the book of 1Timothy 2:7 which says, “And I have been chosen as a preacher.” It also has the volume number, month and year of publication and the price of the magazine. The cover page of the latter issue carries the name of the magazine, month and year, emblem of Kristian Tlangau and
mentions that the magazine was started in 1911. It also has the title of two stories from the issue and their page numbers.

Circulation:

The inaugural issue does not carry the number of copies produced but the issue of 2010 has a circulation of 27,500 copies. In 1919, about a thousand copies of Kristian Tlangau was printed and distributed in the Lushai Hills District for a Lusei literate population of over 4000. The price of the inaugural issue was 1 anna (4 paisa) and could be paid in money or an equivalent quantity of rice worth the specified sum of money. The latter issue is priced at Rs. 50 for a year’s subscription.

Content:

The first issue published in October, 1911, had twelve items. The front page contains a preface or editorial from the editor, R. Dala, (a Lusei pastor) regarding the magazine, explaining how and why it was produced. Apart from this editorial page, it carries an announcement which informs reader of how to subscribe to the magazine, its price and the mode of payment. It carries five articles, four exegetical pieces of four different Bible verses and a letter from a native pastor of Lunglei (South Lushai Hills).

\[196\] Presbyterian report, p 63
The contents include an editorial, collection of news from the various activities of the Synod Presbyterian Church. The news includes a visit by the John Amalraj, the Executive Director of Interserve India regarding their mission work in India, Light Educational Ministry (LEM) phonic training given to children, the Synod Executive meeting reports, Sunday Scholl text book, news of Synod leaders travelling to different places within and outside the country, activities of Synod Mission Board and Church Missionary Society, news of the Synod Revival Speakers Meet, the announcement of the newly elected Kristian Thalai Pawl (youth group), reports of the Women’s wing meeting, report of a Literature Seminar held in March, 2010 and so on. The issue also announced an article writing competition in celebration of the Kristian Tlangau centenary for the coming year. The title of the article decided for the competition was ‘The star of the Mizos- Kristian Tlangau’.

There is also a section of answers to the questions from the congregation in various parts of Presbyterian Churches in Mizoram. These questions express their doubts regarding biblical verses, practices of the Church, naming of the days of the week, translations of the Bible, and so on.

The issue carries two sermons written by two different persons, a pastor and an elder or minister (Upa) in the Church. The first sermon pertains to forgiveness of Jesus and forgiveness of fellow humans. The other sermon talks about the death and rise of Jesus.
There are two articles both written by Church ministers (upa). Upa C. Lalbiaktluanga from Hmunthar writes a travelogue concerning his visit to Israel, the Holy land of the Christians. The other contributor, Upa Lalzuia Colney writes about the irony of people bathing in the Ganges River to wash away their sins not knowing that Jesus shed his blood on the cross for them.

The last item is an obituary of the Church leaders from various parts of Mizoram. This issue carries six such accounts of deaths of the Church ministers.

Change in Editorial Body:

The frequency of the publication of magazine has remained unchanged, it was a monthly magazine then and it continues to be a monthly magazine now. The inaugural issue mentions three formal members associated with the publication holding the positions of Editor, Secretary and Treasurer respectively. In the more recent issue (April, 2010), the journal mentions the name of the Editor and of the three Joint Editors including Business Manager. It is likely that the journal has become more corporatized and its operations are clearly monetized and professionally managed. Earlier on, it was published from a small hand press loaned by Dr. Fraser, a venerable missionary doctor who fought against the colonial administration for the continuation of slavery in Mizoram. Today, the Presbyterian Church has multiplied its publications, runs a large printing press and a number of distribution outlets where their publications are displayed.
The inaugural editorial stated that it was produced only for dissemination of the Christian teachings, to explain Biblical passages and to collect and publish the news of missionary work in different places. Since communication was difficult on the hills and the believers and potential believers were scattered, the editor felt Krista Tlangau can provide a platform to communicate among various people involved in God’s work in the Lushai Hills.

The editorial of the issue of April, 2010 talks about the love of Jesus and encouraged the readers to offer their hearts in return. Since the issue of this month falls before Good Friday, it appears that this theme was selected for the editorial piece.

Local Cable Networks

Initially, the local cable networks distributed domestic and transnational channels to viewers in Aizawl and few districts (like Lunglei, Champhai and Kolasib) within Mizoram. Gradually, they started producing news bulletins and music videos in Mizo language. Perhaps, this was the first time that local entrepreneurs and creative artists commercially produced audio-visual programmes. It included experiments in producing other audio-visual genres like short films and soap operas.197

From a small number of cable networks which catered largely to the urban population in Aizawl, the cable networks have grown from three in 2005 to fifteen in

197 This study is based on a small survey conducted in 2005 and 2007. It is likely that some of these statistics presented do not indicate the present situation.
Till date, the genres of news and music videos have remained the most popular forms of audio-visual production and consumption.

In the early stages of satellite television, mainland television programmes like Chitrahaar around 1987, soap operas like Kasauti Zindagi Kay in 2006 were popular. It is true that most mainland Indian/Hindi programmes were found to be less culturally meaningful for the audience in Northeast in general and Mizoram in particular. For similar reasons, the federally funded Doordarshan channel was/still watched mainly for news programmes and rarely for entertainment.199

Even as the early initiative of commercial cable TV production concentrated on limited genres like news and music videos, currently, the genres have grown and there are a number of talk show programmes, singing competitions, talent shows and a variety of other interactive programmes as in the mainland Indian television industry. Recently, the important LPS Vision cable network started boxing competitions on a regular basis, attracting advertising revenue from the retail industry in Mizoram. In some sense, the cable industry is slowly entering a commercial phase.

Here is a brief survey of the cable industry in Mizoram conducted in 2005 and 2007: The first local channel of the region Skylinks was established on a Teacher's

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Day on 5th September, 1991. There were three competing cable TV networks in Mizoram—Skylinks, LPS Vision and Zonet until Skylinks was taken over by LPS Vision in 2009. Other smaller operators like JB cable Networks, LDF Cable and Eldo Zenith Links operate at Lunglei. These local cable networks are mostly located in urban areas are concentrated mainly in Aizawl and Lunglei. According to the latest Mizoram Journalist Association Report, 2011, there are 15 cable television networks in the whole of Mizoram.

*LPS Vision* and Zonet broadcast 24 hours music demand channels that are telephone based. Skylinks was the first cable network to introduce Mizo soap opera which was titled ‘Ngaihzual Nang Nen’ started in August, 2005. The serial was shown twice a week for 20 minutes. Hindi soap operas were very popular among the Mizos from 2005 to 2007. *LPS Vision* and Zonet has dubbed Kasauti Zindagi Kay in Mizo language and relayed the Mizo version.

*Zonet* provided local news everyday at 5:30 PM, local, national and international news every evening at 7:00 PM which is relayed again the same night at 10 and the next morning. *LPS Vision* has local, national and international news at 7:00 PM everyday also relayed again at 10:00 PM. It also provides local news every morning called ‘Chibai Mizoram’ at 6.30.

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200 Mr. Antony Chhuanvawra, proprietor of Skylinks says, “We began on a Teachers’ Day because we thought a TV channel is like a teacher benevolently providing information to the public.” (Personal interview with Antony in 2005)
The frequency of most of the local cable networks is about three hours of Mizo programme on news, entertainment and advertisements in the evening, relaying of English movies during the rest of the day, 24 hours music channels (religious music and secular music channels). The sources of information are mainly local reporters, press releases, NGOs and other satellite channels. There are no local news agencies in the State.

Music Videos and Films

The first Mizo music video album released in December 1985 was produced by Joseph Zokunga. It was a collection of music videos of famous singers of the time including C. Luri, RTC Laldhuawmi, C. Lalrinmawia, Helen Zaithankungi Sailo, C. Vansanga, Lalneihthangi, H. Laldanglovi, Zirsangzela Hnamte and the Joseph Band.201

Music videos have become popular among the Mizos in and outside Mizoram after the starting of the three local channels. There were more than 800 music videos made during 2005. In 2005, there were more than 40 recording studios in Mizoram and a number of Video editing studios.

The first film in Mizoram, ‘Ka Thlang ber che’ was made by Lalsawmliana, owner of LPS vision in 1984. The film is a love story that revolves around a Christian family. There are 18 characters and the duration of the film is 1 hour 20 minutes. The

201 See Mizo Aw (A daily newspaper of Aizawl), 17 December, 1985.
film was shot in a Video Home System (VHS) format and was distributed in the same format. The film was viewed in groups in community halls and houses through a VCR as there are no cinema theatres and cable television during this period. There are about 50 video films made in the year 2005.202

Mizoram does not have a film industry as such. Even though a good number of films are made, they are mostly short films—not more than 1 and a half to 2 hours. There is an emergence of the music video industry recently in Mizoram. The music video genres have an upper hand over films and therefore rule the entire entertainment industry.

Conclusion

This chapter deals with the contemporary media in Mizoram. The study documents the growth of press, electronic, literary and religious media as it has been in existence from 1990s onwards. The chapter pays attention to the altered political context of the region, which in effect forms the analytical part of this intervention. In short, documentation of critical media events along with an analysis of the political context formed the crux of this chapter.

202 Personal Communication with Lalsawmliana (owner of LPS Vision), in 2006.