CHAPTER -IV
STRUCTURE OF
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(i) FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Clan Organisation:

The Hmars are a patriarchal people tracing down their consanguineal link through male line- Pahnam which is a division of ‘Hmar tribe’. They claimed to be the collective offspring of their great ancestors-Miachal, Niachal, and Melachal who had formed a separate ethnic group known as Hmar tribe.

The clan called Pahnam is a very important social institution of Hmar society. The members of pahnam regards each other to be kinsmen. Hmar society is patrilineal and descend is traced in the male line. The clan is also a patrilineal social unit. There are as many as 24 clans in Hmar society. The pahnam or clan is a clear cut division of the tribe, the members of which traced descent from a common ancestor who is also regarded as the founder of the clan. In addition to the members who belong to the clan by birth, the women who were married to the men of a particular clan also become members of their respective husband’s clan. Thus, a pahnam consist of men sharing a common ancestor, their wives and the children who were born in the clan. The girls among the children will remain as members of their father’s clan only until marriage.

As per Hmar tradition, the clan (pahnam) is exogamous. Ideally, a man of one pahnam should marry a girl from another pahnam. However, the rule of exogamy is not strictly observed, particularly at the present times. There are marriages within the same clan but with the restriction that no marriage takes place between relatives within three generation of one another. As a matter of facts, each clan is divided into a smaller kinship based unit which may be called lineage (Hnamsiper or hnam kaupeng). The 24 clans are divided into as many as 210 lineages. There is greater effective social intercourse between member of a particular lineages than between members of the wider pahnam group.
The solidarity of the *Pahnam* is manifested in the performance of various customs and rituals with the life cycle of an individual. All which concerned with customs and ritual are dealt with the male members of their respective *Pahnams*. (Riengsete, 1986:51 This shows a strong sense of partrilineal bond in the society. The importance attached to the solidarity of the *Pahnam* members is particularly revealed during the performance of rituals and feasts.

All matrimonials arrangements are done at the level of *Laibungs* (kinsmen). This group of *Laibungs* appears as a single clan or *Pahnam* in all matters of social obligations and customary habits. Payment of bride price and other follow in a more elaborate form between the *Laibungs* and the relatives of the bride’s party.

In the event of death among *Pahnam* members it is the duty of all the head of the clan’s family to arrange all the necessary rites required as per traditional customs and practices. It is also an obligation and a must for the *Farnus* (female members belonging to one’s own clan) to cover the death body with a traditional shawl before burial. Thus, to ensure social security, the clan members of both sexes extend their maximum help socially, emotionally and economically to all its members. During distribution of the bride price *Manpui* (principle price) goes to the bride’s father who keeps the larger parts, and the remainder is distributed among the male members of the clan. This strengthens the bond of clan membership. Marriage is one of the important occasion in which the activities of the *Pahnam* members are displayed at their best.

It may be pointed out that the various clans and lineages were important kinship groups. The Hmar people think more in term of clans, What may be called clan-consciousness seems to be growing stronger than before. Even their settlement patterns were clan wise.

**Hmar Family:**

In the social fabric of any society or community the family is the nucleus and this is also true of the Hmar society. It is through families that societies present themselves biologically ad culturally. Families have varied considerably in form. From one region to another, one generation to another and from one culture to another. The Hmar family consists of members related to each other by blood, marriage and adoption, all having the same social, economic and religious status under a single head.

In a Hmar community, the family has patrilineal continuity, each generation being linked to the next in a genealogical succession through males. The position of father in the
family carries the highest authority and his decisions are regarded as final in all matter. He is known a ‘in khat pa’ or ‘in nei pa’ which means head of the family or owner of the house. The honour, prestige and the success of the family solely depend on him.

A Hmar family usually comprised of grand parents, husband, wife, married or unmarried children and grand-children. Practice of adoption is prevalent in case the the couples are barren.

In each generation, a man brings his wife to his father’s house. As the family grew, a new house is built for the additional members. But there is no such established social order that the pattern of family should necessarily be of the joint type. A large family sometimes break because of personal clashes. According to the ideal type of Hmar ideology, a man’s relation with his father and mother was expected to take precedence over the relation with his wife. A man was even expected to divorce his wife if his parents demanded from doing so. Many personal tragedies resulted out of this norm. However, a man is so closely bound to his wife that he would take her side and leave aside the ancestral home to find a new household. It was also a practice that where there were too many members in a family, the eldest son or whoever first entered in the marital stage, establishes a separate household in order to avoid inconvenience. Thus, it may be said that the neolocal type of family system is also practiced.

In a Hmar family, the bride is introduced to the family traditions and practices and gradually enable her to become an effective member of the unit. A married couple lives with the parents for some years and move out to established a separate house when they have several children of their own. They are then properly sent off the entire family to their new house.

One calls one’s father Pa (Father) and never mentioned the name. The wife will invariably follow the same term. Wives would not call their husbands name. Same was the case with husband too. Whenever occasion demanded to call husband by a wife or wife by a husband, the usual practice was to call after the name of the eldest son or daughter, i.e father or mother of so and so. Sons or daughter, even after becoming husbands or wives, will considered it disrespectful to utter their parents’ name.

Children’s are thoroughly trained to perpetuate the socio-cultural, religion and traditions of his family before he leaves his parents to start a new home of his own.
Child Naming:
The practice of child-naming was given great importance by the indigenous Hmar community. The first born child of the couple should be named by the child’s paternal parents, usually from the male side, and preferably whose child is a male. In the case of a second child’s naming, preference was given to the child’s maternal family.

A name is given to a child with great significance attached to the name. For example, if the name of the child is Vomkaplien (VOM-short for wild bear, KAP-shoot or hunt, LIEN-big) the name signifies that either of the child’s father or grand-father has already hunted and killed a big wild bear. Likewise, if the hunted animal is elephant (SAI) the child’s name would be Saikaplien. The growing clan consciousness among the Hmar is seen even in child naming. For instance, if the name of the child begin with Zo or Ngur, the child can be identified as belonging to Zote or Ngurte clan. ‘--- Giving of name to a child was strictly observed before the completion of seven days counting from the date of the child’s birth. (Riengsete, 1986:23)

Marriage:
Before marriage the parents of both the prospective bride and bridegroom usually has a close watch and detailed observation of each other family history to prevent taking of a spouse from a family having a hereditary diseases. While selecting a son-in-law the economic condition of the family was considered to be more important than boy’s personal qualities, provided he had no physical or mental defects. Likewise, in the case of a daughter-in-law the greatest attributes were physical beauty, physical health to ensure progeny, efficiency in domestic work, ability to exert hard labour in agriculture work and a good reputation which means that the girl was not known for clandestine pre-marital sexual practices with other persons. This was mainly because of the cultural value on virginity of girl and social approval of illegitimate child. While the society was tolerant of the free mixing of boys and girls, there was social degradation on pre-marital sex on the part of the girl which did not permit intimate relationship with boys.(Nunthara, 1996:87)

After sunset, young men of marriageable age, stuffed with pouches of tobacco went about in village and started courting girls of their choice. The boys and the girls would sit around the kitchen’s furnace (Thuk) and fireplace (Tap), and it is around this Tap that a boy or a girl would lead them to matrimonial bond. Here, the boy would watch the girl rolling cigarettes called Dumzuol and it is through the waistband of this Dumzuol that the message of love is conveyed between the boy and the girl. Any acceptance or rejection of the boy’s
proposal by the girl would be expressed in the form of coloured thread used as Dumzuol’s waistband. Green or blue waistband of the Dumzuol would indicates reciprocated love and acceptance, while red waistband signified refusal and rejection. In this unique language of love, a strand of the girl’s own hair used as a Dumzuol’s waistband is a mark of ‘intense ardour’ and symbolizes the deepest love. When a girl does not know how to respond a visitor, she can simply use a white colour waistband while offering the Dumzuol to him. It indicates that her mental frame is in a neutral state and therefore the suitor has to wait while scores of white-banded Dumzuol are being reduced to ashes during the visits. The evening session can be terminated according to the wishes of the girl. She has to signal it by simply pointing the Dumzuol towards them while offering it. In that case the unlucky suitor have to take it in their own stride and head back for the Zawlbuk, the youth dormitory. The girl, however, must not discriminate between her lover and the rest of visitors in her attention and hospitality.

The various types of marriage found in Hmar society are as follows:

(i) **Pawibawmchawi (Chongmolak)**: It is a form of child-marriage. In this form a marriage the minor girls was brought to the house of boy’s parent. The minor girl had to stay there till she attained marriageable age (generally, marriage age varies between 22-31 for boys and 18 – 27 for girls) during which the boy is strictly prohibited to sleep with the girl. Chongmolak take place only when the parents of both sides are in good terms.

(ii) **Sawngpui a Innei**:

Sawngpui a innei is the approved and properly arranged marriage which are always favoured and held in high esteem. Since this type of marriage is a costly affairs those who married under this form boast of it and often proudly sei “kei chunipui hnuoi a pasal/nuhmei nei ka nih insawnnaw (Keivom, 1982:371) meaning ‘don’t you know that I was married under the great sun’.

(iii) **Thalpui hnuoi a Innei (inruk)**:

This type of marriage occurred when both the parent of the boy and girl disapproved their son’s and daughter’s marriage, or though approved, but if the girl have illegitimate pregnancy due to pre-marital or extra-marital sex indulgence. Also, if the economic condition of the family involved is poor this type of marriage occurred since it is less expensive that the former sawngpui marriage.
(iv) **Tlankawp**:  
Tlankawp is an elopement. It is a marriage by mutual consent of the boy and the girl without the consent of their respective parents and without any of the usual formalities. However, the young couples are always bound to comeback to their parents as a sign of their submission and remission and thereby regularized the marriage.

A Hmar marriage may be the outcome of youthful courtship-followed by the approval or arranged by the parents. Indeed, in the matter of matrimonial affairs ample freedom is given to choose his or her life’s partner without much interference. However, in general, the proposal made by a son or by the parent should be acceptable to both the parents and their children. While choosing life’s partner to practice of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage (Mo’s, Br’s, Da’s marriage) known as **Putu Innei** is considered to be the most preferred type. Patrilateral cross-cousin (Fa’s, Si’s, Da) marriage was not rare either. The Hmar people practiced monogamy but this does not mean that pre-marital and extra-marital sex indulgence were uncommon.

Both the clan and family were important in regulating the choice of a partner in marriage. Formal proposal for matrimonial alliance is first initiated only by the boy’s parents a female relative or a boy’s mother as a match-making woman may take the initiative should the proposal be acceptable to both the parties, a go-between, an ambassador called Palai (go-between messenger) would be sent to negotiate the marriage proposal to the girl’s family. While negotiating, the boy’s Palai would offer Zu (rice-beer) to the girl’s family. Acceptance to drink Zu by the girl’s family symbolized the acceptance or otherwise of proposal. After the preliminary discussion is over the boy’s Palai would leave **Thirdam** (a hoe and a cloth) as a token of confirmed matrimonial engagement of the boy and the girl. After fixing the wedding date, the Palai goes to the girl’s house along with the bride price and hand over the same to the bridal party. It may be interesting to note here that the bride price are never paid in full at a time as per the Hmar customary laws. When everything is settled, marriage was solemnized with great feast in the house of the bridegroom’s parent. The girl’s parent also solemnized the sending off day to their daughter by inviting their dear and near ones at their house. On the arrival of the bride to the groom’s house, the **Theimpu** (village priest) would conduct a religious ceremony connected with marriage with the sacrifice of a fowl- Arjangtouk (fowl from the bride known as LAWI-AR and fowl from the groom) to the spirit (Khuonu-Khuopa) to secure for the couple blessing for the longevity of
their lives. “Khuonu-Khuopa’n mi huoltawn raw sen” (Keivom, 1982:110) meaning “Let Khuonu-Khuopa guide and protect us’ were the repeated words used in their prayer.

In the absence of monetary economy, animals like Siel (Mithun) and Vawk (Pig) formed the common standard of ‘Bride-Price’ payment. A Hmar bride-price is fixed within three to seven Siel. (Zarzolien, (1987”297) Generally, the bride-price falls into three parts, viz:

(i) Manpui (principle price) which is paid to the bride’s father, who then distributed among the kinsmen.

(ii) Manisiper (subsidiary price) which is divided under three heads:

(a) Panghak (trustees) is distributed among the bride’s father ‘s zawl (ritual kin).

(b) Nisum (Aunt’s share) is exclusively bride’s paternal sister’s share.

(c) Sangdon man (attending sister during her childhood) is a price for attending the bride by her elder sister during her infancy and is given to the eldest sister of the bride.

(iii) Pusum is the bride’s price paid to the bride’s maternal father, or, in his absence, to maternal uncle.

In Hmar society, the Pu (maternal grand-father) have an absolute power to make and mar the marriage of his niece (Tunu). The amount distributed might not be a large amount but was symbolic enough of the recognition of the girl’s natal family of the relationship that bound the natal family the other members of the same clan or the symbol of the desire to create such relationships. A final kins who played important roles in Hmar socio-cultural life are Makpa (sister’s husband), Laibung (kinsmen) and Pu (maternal uncle).

**Divorce:**

The practice of divorce, according to Hmar custom, is not the monopoly of the male only but female may also take recourse to it. The one who was responsible of the divorce would forfeit the marriage price – agreed at the time of bride-price payment. Broadly speaking, the indigenous Hmar society witnessed as many as eleven forms of divorce and separation as under:

(i) **Mak:** It is a divorce initiated by the husband. The husband himself, or sometime his relative or Makpa (in collective terms it is applied to all the son-in-laws of ego’s clan) would take her to her patenal’s home along with Sekhat (One Mithun
or its equivalent) as Makman (fine/payment of divorce). In this case a woman can take all her personal belonging.

(ii) **Suminsou**: It is a divorce initiated by the wife. The wife was belonged to refund the marriage price known as Suminsuo, received by her relative.

(iii) **Peksachang**: It is another form of divorce by mutual consent between husband and wife. Since they are mutually separated the wife would not claim any marriage price (Hmar bride price are never paid up in full at a time) if still unpaid at the time of separation nor was it obligatory on the part of the husband to claim the bride-price he has paid at the time of marriage.

(iv) **Sunlaitan**: Similar to that of Peksachang. Sunlaitan is also a case of divorce by mutual agreement between husband and wife. The only difference is that Sunlaitan required the marriage price to be equally shared by the husband and wife. Marriage price, here, is applicable only to Manpui (the principle price).

(v) **Invetna leia In the**: It is a divorce or separation on the issue of insanity of either of the couple after three years of treatment. In the case of a wife leaving her husband before the stipulated years she will be treated as Siminsuo and is oblige to refund the marriage price they have received. In the case of a husband leaving his wife before the stipulated years, he was treated in the same manner as Mak in respect of marriage price.

(vi) **Pasal umnaw kara Zam**: This is a separation by the wife on account of long absence of the husband from the house. If the wife refused to continue to live with her husband even on his return, she was treated as Suminsuo. If the husband wanted to dissolve the marriage, he is to be treated same as Mak regarding marriage price.

(vii) **Nuhmei Tlansan**: It is deserting and abandonment of a wife by the husband. In such a case, the wife become the rightful owner of the family properties provided she looks after the children.

(viii) **Uire**: Uire is adultery, and adulteress was punishable by a divorce in which the husband was entitled to seize all the properties she brought with her at the time of marriage and the bride-price will have to be given to the husband with a fine of Sekhat.
Among the various forms of divorce and separation, Mak and Suminsuo are the two most common among the Hmar people.

**Role of Woman:**

Traditional Hmar social system was such that there was dominating role of menfolk in the family and society. Practically, the status and role of women in traditional Hmar society has no limited. “What is considered to be the job of a girl would not be touched, even in just, by a boy” (Thanga, 1978:23). From childhood, the role assigned for girls and mainly household chores which were always heavy and burdensome. A girl of fifteen years is capable of making all kinds of designed in weaving handloom and is expected to produce the family requirement in her spare time. What Rev. Zairema (1976:26-27) wrote about the works of Lushai woman in this context is equally applicable to traditional Hmar woman. “She has to get up at dawn to bring water and cook morning meal. At the same time she has to pound to dehusk rice. To separate the chaff from dehusked again needs practice and skill. The man will not help even in this arduous task and found it more paying not to learn the art at all. When morning meals are over she has to prepare lunch packets and follow the men to help in the jhum. After working the whole day she must carry back firewood or feeds for domestic animals of which she is in sole charge or she may also be required to carry wet clothes of the man to be dried over charcoal fire in the evening for she is responsible to cloth all her family members. She considered weaving clothes as holiday from the more strenuous works”. Infact, a wives used to remain so preoccupied with domestics and other obligatory activities that they could hardly find time to look after their children. Even then their husband would never help in sharing their duties, for helping the wife was often called ‘Thaibawi’, (a henpecked husband), which is a derogatory term in the Hmar society. A man is often called ‘Tuai’ (feminine) if he performed the work meant for women.

A woman, either a wife or a daughter, was not considered in the matter of succession to the headship. They did not have any legal claim on the family property. In the absence of a male heir, the woman may head a house only as a caretaker and to control the disposition of the family’s property. Custom and usages circumscribe their freedom of action. Widow’s with minor son do not sell or dispose off their property. Under certain compelling hardship only, and after discussions with the nearest male relatives, they may do so. A mother with minor children is, therefore, regarded as the trustee of an estate until the son assume the
headship on maturity. In the absence of a male child, the nearest male relatives becomes the legal head of the family and its property on the mother’s death or retirement. Under such circumstances, the eldest daughter may become the head, so far as the domestic management is concerned. In the case of death of the family head, the adopted son, if any, will succeed as the head of the family and will inherit all the family property. Thus, among the Hmars, women were under an autocratic dominance of their menfolk. Though they continued to enjoy affectionate bond with the natal family and were entitled to received presentation on certain occasions, they ceased to be legal members of the natal family after marriage, and they could never acquire true membership in the conjugal family in the politico-jural domain. (Nunthara, 1996:86) Chapman and Clark expressed the places of women in the following statements. “A woman has no right at all. Body, mind and spirit, she belonged from her birth to her death to her father, her mother, her husband. Her manfolk could treat her as they like and a man who did not beat his wife was scorned by his friends as a coward”. (Chapman, 1968:13)

**Inheritance:**

Hmar society being a patrilineal society, inheritance transmitted in the male line. In the absence of monetary economy, the property of a Hmar usually consists of both movable and immovable possessions. The movable property may include guns, spears, musical instruments, different kinds of ornament, utensils, and animals like mithun, buffalo, cow, pig, dog, and so on. The immovable properties include farms, house site, etc. Women are not allowed to inherit any property except a small share at a time of marriage which they carried with them as a form of bridial items. The Hmar follow the patrilineal system of inheritance in which the sons inherit the property of the father. The sons also bear the responsibility of looking after their parents. Certain Hmar clans like Faihriem, Leiri, Changsan and Khurbi follow the system of primogeniture whereby the eldest son inherits paternal properties while other clans follow ultimogeniture whereby the youngest son inherits the paternal properties.

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The various types of inheritance in the Hmar society are given as follows:
(i) **Pa-Rohluo**: This is inheritance from a father (Pa=father, inheritance=Rohluo). The youngest son (eldest son in the case Leiri, Khawlum, Changsan and Faihriem) is regarded as the formal heir to a father’s property. However, in actual practice, all the brothers share the father’s property but the youngest always inherits a major share. A father, before he die, often divides his property among his sons, which is a must to be accepted. The one who is to be the heir gets and live with his parents in their old age or until his parents retired. In the case of failing to take up his duty he cannot claim the privileges of becoming heir to his father’s property: the heir will go to the next younger brother. Even a (Sawn illegitimate son) can claim to inherit all his father’s property in the absence of other brother. A Thaikem nau (son by a concubine) comes after legitimate sons and before Sawns.

(ii) **Pa Unau Rohluo**: This is inheritance from a father’s brother (Pa=father, Unau=brother and Rohluo=inheritance) similar to inheritance from a father with slight difference. For instance, A and B are husband and wife. A dies without a son, the heir C is the nearest male relation to the deceased the father, or a brother. As a result C will inherit his uncles property, promising that he will look after his uncle’s widow B. If C refuses or failed to look after B, the right of inheritance will automatically goes to the nearest relative from the male side who may be prepared to nourish and look after B. In the case of B preferring to live with her own relatives she is at liberty to do so. If the deceased A leaves a minor son behind him and his widow B goes to his nephew the nephew will look after his unties and the minor son in return that he will inherit his uncle’s property, if A or his children have any debts B the nephew will have to pay them. If he refuses to pay up A’s debts he will lose the inheritance and will have to return anything he has received out the estate.

(iii) **Unau Rohluo**: It is inheritance from a brother (Unau=brother, Rohluo=inheritance). If the deceased leaves behind no child, his brother succeeds to the whole estate. However, if the deceased has left a minor child but his brother unable to undertake the duty of looking after the deceased widow and children, he cannot inherit the estate and the widow is at liberty to find some one else who is ready to inherit the estate and support her and her children. In such a case the relationship between the deceased family and his brother will remain unaffected.

If the deceased widow claims to administer her husband’s estate on behalf of her minor sons she is entitled to do so and the deceased brother have no right to
object her claims. However, if the widow commits adultery before her sons maturity, she is Uire (adultery) and the deceased brothers can take his children and estate and turn the widow out. However, if the widow commits uire after sons become a grown up adults and if the sons have no objection no one from the decease brothers side cannot turn out the widow out.

(iv) **Chawmhlum Rohluo**: This is inheritance by a person who has supported the deceased. A man whose relatives are unable to look after or refuse to do so after seeks someone to support him and live in his house in return to inherit the estate he owned. Thus, the man who look after him come to live in his house and look after him till he die. This type of inheritance should be in agreement between the inheritors and the deceased Laibung (kinsmen/male relatives). (Keivom, 1982:108).

(v) **Rohluo ding Siem/Rohluotu Siemfawm**: A man in the absence of any sons or male relatives can entrust and appoint anyone to be his estate’s inheritor. He may also adopt a son who will look after and support him till he die: the adopted son will inherit all the deceased property. To safeguard his position the adopting father will ask the chief to recognise the boy as his adopted child and heir so that no one have a say in the matter of sharing the estate.

(ii) **RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION AND PRACTICES**

The principle philosophy of Hmar religious belief lay with Pathien-God, the ultimate ground of everything. **Pathien** is highly regarded as the omni-science which remained constant through the ages. The belief in **Pathiern** is the focal point round which the whole Hmar religious philosophy revolves.

**Concept of God**: According to Zarzolien (1987:17), the history of Hmar religions has been based on the ultimate principle of monotheism under the caption called **Sakhuo**. The words **Sakhuo** owes its origin from **Sa**=animal and **Khuo**=God, which implies that **Sakhuo** is the worship of God through animal sacrifice. Infact, the term **Sakhuo** means religion-a coherent system of beliefs and practices relative to supernatural order of being, which marked the religio-cultural matrix of the people.

Primitive Hmar Sakhuo is mono-sacrificial religion. God is ‘Pathien’ – the Creator, the Merciful and the sustainer.

In common parlance. ‘Pathien’ is interpreted as God. The word ‘ Pathien” has been derived from **Pa**=father, and **Thien** =Holy or reverend, which in its primary sense means
Holy father. Thus, the term “Pa” suggest a close relationship between father, and “Thien” Him, the supreme object of worship.

So great was their explicit interpretation of Almighty God and His attachment to the people, that one of their songs’ reminiscence about their affirmation to Pathien with the following verse:-

*Hei chibai pathien (vawithum).*

*Inchon raza ka hnina.*

*Khuongsen, khuong ngo ka hnina.* (Keivom, 1980:88)

Hail to thee Almighty God ( Three times).
I beg they providence in hundred folds.
The red-drum and white stem I entreat.
In they glorious Name I pray.

Here – God is hailed as the all-in-all of all, the focal point of Sakhuo and every prayer, which provide the basis for the development and understanding of the early Hmar religious philosophy. True to this traditional affirmation, Pathien is the influx, the Divine Reality, the Alpha and Omega of all within the compass of her history. (Zarzolien, 1987:19)

The Hmars’ vaguely believed Pathien to be somewhere above the clouds in heaven and called upon Him as “Chunga Pathien”, which confirmed the fact that Pathien is the most conspicuous cosmic in the Universe.

Some Hmar elders argued that monotheism was the crux of Hmar earnest zeal to preserve their monotheistic cult that the people opted migration form Central Asia, as they were hammed by heathens with their multifarious gods and goddesses or pluralistic world view.

**Polytheism :**

According to Zarzolien (1987,22) one of the most important factors conducive to the development of Polytheism among the Hmars was “Power Concept”. As the problem of survival is intimately bound up with economic resources, the egoistic tendency of man and his desire to acquire power or to be a good hunter and fortune in turn brings him to the belief that every object, animate or inanimate, possesses a kinetic power for good or evil.

The other probable speculation of the new breakthrough of polytheism in the society is the ‘egoistic emotions’---fear of phobias or irrational fears, inherent in the minds of the masses.
With the sort of a background, some elders were of the view that it was during the post-migration period, when the people came to settle down within a definite topography at Lenthlang in the present North East India that they lost the uniformity of their worship and traditional religion—Monotheism.

Henotheism – God and the Gods:

The apparent form of monotheism, as already discussed, gradually transformed into a certain unique kind of polytheisms or henotheism as time passed on. In the heavenly abode of Pathien, another co-eternal goddess known as “Vanvomnu” come into prominence thereby opening a new vista of dual worship for the people. Vanvomnu is regarded as the wife of ‘Vanhrit”, who is equally powerful, and has more assignment in the spiritual realm. (Zarzolien, 1987:24-25).

Traditional Hmar history tell us that “Khuonu-Khuopa” is the god with absolute power over mankind. He determined the wishes and life span of every human life on earth, and as such the people would appease and worshipped him --“Khuonu-Khuopa’n Mihuolton raw she”. (Let Khuonu-Khuopa guide and protect us) were the repeated words utter in their prayers.

The Hmar people also believed in the existence of numerous spirits beyond human control, the supernatural beings, some of which were good while other were bad. This division between the God and Gods who live in heaven, and the other spirits of the world manifested itself in the two forms of sacrifices—“Ramhuoi Biek” (sacrifice to the bad spirits) and the ‘Sakhuo Biek’, (sacrifice to God).

In the religious systems of Hmar people, one had to submit to the domain of the ‘Ramhnuoi’ (evil spirit) which rules the world beyond the village domain. As much as the daily activities of Hmar people had been in the domain of the Ramhnuois such as work in the jhum fields, their daily life was filled with the constant fears of the Ramhnuois. Therefore, to appease, most of their sacrifices are directed towards the Ramhnuois who are believed to have caused misfortune or any illness to the people.

As a result of this morbid fear or phobia, the people who know nothing of material causes performed many ritualistic offerings to appease the Ramh-uois: the actual sacrificial offering required for any misfortune or illness was known only by the priest who were
considered to have telepathic contact with the Ramhnuois. The Hmar people gave a variety of names to the spirits such as Khawchawm (spirit that comes to the village at dusk, a bad one) Khuovang (numerous group and not too bad), Zasam (mostly in the forest, a dreadful one). Phung (daylight spirit, and can cause sudden dizziness and miserable sickness), Lasi (good famine in spirit who bless the hunters and often associated with man), Nelhau-arawi (mischievous little imps noted for their unrelentable menaces i.e. damage to the standing crops, scattering of agricultural implements in the jhum-huts during sleep).

**Animistic Worship**: Traditional Hmar society believed in the presence of supernatural power in the animate or inanimate object such as mountain, river, trees and epidemics. The spirits associated with any unnatural phenomena were held to be empower to do much harm or much good to mankind. Therefore, they try to please these powers by means of different types of propitiations and worships. In the words of Lorraine (1940 : 112).

“They believed that demons of such a place can capture the souls of man and would result in the death of man. So if a person is sick, they used to go to such place and offer sacrifice of fowl, or goat or pig. They considered that it was unlucky to jhum the land nearby and if a man is going to cultivate land near such place and offer sacrifice first, in order to appease the demons, before he cultivate the land”.

Strange enough, although the Hmar people worships such as stone, trees mountains, rivers and other natural objects, they do not worship any heavenly bodies such as the sun, the moon and the stars, and zoolatry as well.

**Fetish Form of Worship**: 
Like any other form of tribal religion, traditional Hmar people believed certain objects to have supernatural or magical power to realize the desired ends of the person who possesses or use it. The people ‘belief in the power of ‘Dawi’ (magical) was so great that it became the main form of worship for a Hmar family. According to Songate (1977:77), fetishism was in full swing among the Hmar people in and around 1228 A.D. The Hmars have great skill in their occult power, and even believed that the death will rise from the grave if their ‘dawi’ had been properly applied.

**Ancestral Worship**: 
The Hmar people have a firm belief that the spirits of the dead ancestors are constantly present. It was a popular among the people that the soul of their ancestors’, after death,
passed through certain different stages and need to be propitiated and worship as ‘Rau-biek’ or ‘Pipu Thlarau biek’. While performing various sacrifices they would utter and prayed in the name of Miachal, Niachal, Nelachal to bless them with rich agricultural harvest from the bounty of ‘Pathien’, the Almighty. These three words are believed to be the names of Manmasi’s sons who is believed to be the first ancestor of the Hmar tribe.

To propitiate the soul of the dead, the family of the dead prepares a special feast at the end of a year after their death. A priest would be summoned to performed a rite called ‘Thitin’ (sending off of the dead spirit). Colourful clothes and shirts and birds’ feathers are hanged over the grave as the final rite for the dead. They believed that the dead would depart forever.

**Life after Death:**

Another striking features of Hmar in the days of yore was their conception and belief in life after death. The belief in evil spirits called Houi gave rise to the belief in the existence of human spirit and the world after death. Their firm belief, in the pre-Christian days, was that the soul after death migrated through certain different stages of the Raupuikhuo (spiritual world)---Mithikhuo (village of the death). Pielral (the world-beyond or beyond the river of death) and Vanram (paradise or heaven’s kingdom—abode of the righteous in heaven).

Mithikhuo is believed to be the abode of most of the dead except the Thangsuo. (J. Shakespear I (1912 : 63-64) Says that Thangsuo which carries much honour in this world and also the right of admission to Pielral after death, can only be obtained by killing a man and each of the following animals—elephant, bear, sambar, barking deer, wild boar, wild mithun, a poisonous snake called “Ruolngan”, a bird called “Vahluk”, “Mu-vanlai” (hawk in the middle of the sky) and a series of feast to the village, where life is troublesome and miserable. The souls of those persons who did not lead a virtuous life while they were alive in this world are supposed to go here.

To reach Mithikhuo, one’s departed soul had to cross through Hringlang hill where one can see the land of the living which make the departed soul lonesome and tempted by the past life while alive in this world. But when the spirit reached a place called Luonglo-Tui (heartless, water which removed feelings) and (Hawilo-Par) (no look back flowers) the spirit drank the Luonglo-Tui and pluck the Hawilo-Par which then the spirit is being released from the desire for the land of the living (Shakespear, 1912,63).
The second stage Pielral, a world-beyond is considered to be the abode of bliss. The spirit of those person who neither led a virtuous life nor a sinful life while they were alive are supposed to go to Pielral. Those who achieved Thangsuo can directly enter Pielral. In Pielral, they are supposed to be fed with ‘food and drink’, by fair maidens.

The last stage Vanram is the happy abode of the righteous in heaven. According to Pudaite (1963:57). Vanram is the ultimate spirit home where all the good and holy ones are expected to go and live forever. Those souls spending considerable time in Mithikhuo and Pielral may also finally go to Vanram.

Role of Priest:

In the traditional Hmar society, the priest known as Thiempu, plays an important roles in the religious rites and ceremonies. The Thiempu was an indispensable person in the village, where religious service was required in almost all walks of life, (Pakhuongte, 1983:14). He performed all religious rites and practice for the sick and the death, also offered specific sacrifices for a specific purpose.

When there was any illness the Thiempu first diagnosed the patient and then he was able to tell which particular spirit or spirits caused the illness and which particular type of sacrificial offering is required. Since each type of evil spirits demanded a particular type of sacrificial offerings, as many as there were different kinds of evil spirits causing different type of illness there were equal number of types of sacrifices, the details of which were known only by the Thiempu. In the case of an epidemic in other villages, the Thiempu influences the chief to issue an order to disallow visitors to pass through the village, (Pudaite, 1963:52). Thus, religious ceremonies in the traditional Hmar society were not conducted directly by the worshippers themselves but with the help of Thiempu who performed those on behalf of the worshippers.

Unlike the Hindus and many other societies, the Hmar had no class of people in the society exclusively for the Thiempu. A Thiempu could be any clan or family who was aware of all the performances of various sacrifices and had thorough knowledge, to the satisfaction of all, for the prescription of the offering of specific purpose. According to Shakespeare (1912:80), the only training necessary to become a Thiempu is to commit to memorise the various “Hla” (chant). or charms, which have to be muttered while performing the sacrifices. A bushel of rice, as priest-tax, known as ‘Thiem-Tham’ was given to the Thiempu for his services to the community. In addition to this, the Thiempu also received a good portion of the meat killed for every sacrifices.
Sacrificial Ritual:
The Hmar has three kinds of sacrificial rituals: Khawtlang Inthawi (for the whole community), Sungbing Inthawi (for a family) and Mimal Inthawi (for an individual).

(a) Khawtlang Inthawi:
Every year-end the Hmar people would amass stones as high as a man’s height on the village outskirts and made an altar on top of it and worshipped “Pathien”. This ritual was performed for community as a whole. They would sprinkle animal’s blood and rice flour on the altar and chanted.

*Hei Chibai, chunga Pathien (vawi thum)*
*Tiena ka pu lei, Kachin leilung Himaloi.* (Keivom, 1980:91-94)

In English:
Hail Thee, God on the highest, (three times)
Ancient Kachin and Himaloi, land of my forefathers.

This ritual was performed for their well-being and prosperity.

(b) Sungbing Inthawi:
This ritual was done for a family in order to appease the spirits of their ancestors and to please ‘Pathien’. There were two kinds of Sungbing Inthawi:

(i) Sakhawnhmang: A pig would be sacrificed for this. The priest would pierce the pig with a spear on its axilla and all the members of the family, at the same time would rest their hands on the pig’s head. By doing this, they believed that the sacrificed pig would carry all their infirmities away. In addition, a cock would be sacrificed as well.

(ii) Sesun Inchawng: A Siel (mithun) would be sacrificed for this rite. The whole village participates in this solemn celebration. Therefore, this was a very burdensome ritual. Only the rich and the well off can perform this rite. Though this rite was performed for their well being, it was, in fact, done to appease the spirits of their ancestors and ‘Pathien’, so that they would be granted a place in ‘Pielral’ (the world beyond/beyond river of death/paradise).
(c). **Mimal Inthawi:** There were different kinds of Mimal Inthawi, but most of them were performed for the health and well being of the person concerned. This rite was done for ‘Pathien’, and not for the evil spirit.

**War and Head-Hunting:** The Hmar people fought many war in the past with their kindred tribes. In the days of yore all the dispute were settled by the Chief and his Councillor. If the settlement or judgment was not acceptable to either party because of the counter claim of their respective stand for righteous cause the matter was settled by show of force.

The Hmar method of making war very simple: to raid the enemy’s village and carry off as many captives and as much loot as possible. For them, making war was nothing but giving a retributive punishment to the wrong doer. It is interesting to note here that in wars the Hmar people never acted in excess upon the child and the mother. It was considered wrong to kill mother and child :Nu nau chu hla ro (spare women and children). This, of course, was on humanitarian ground, and in fact they considered it unsporiting and undignifying job. “As the brave warriors were seen in the distance the whole population rushed out to meet them with horns of Zu for their refreshment, beating drum and gongs, and shouting praises of their bravery. Led by the warriors, the crowd danced before the slain’s head which were hung on a tall bamboo poll called **Ralngul**. In this way celebration lasted more than a week.

Head hunting was not a customary practice of the Hmar people in the days of yore. Although local tradition maintained one such incident that Hrangkhup chopped of the head of Thrawnglai’s mother and returned home to make a grand festival, it was because of only family feud: head hunting was not indulged in and warriors parties did not went out simply to get heads. However, “a man who had killed his man was thought more highly of than onewho had not, and, therefore, when a man did kill a person he brought the head home to show that he was speaking the truth; but the raids were not made to get heads, but for loot and slaves. The killing and taking of heads were merelt incidents in the raid, not the cause of it (Shakespeare, 1912:60)

**Funeral Ceremony:** Funeral Ceremony of the Hmar were performed in three ways, catagorising the dead in three categories;

(a) **Hlamzuia Thi** : If a child dies shortly after birth, usually written a year of its birth, it was buried by only the elders without ceremony, below the house (traditional
Hmar houses were all elevated from the ground). A hlamzui cannot be buried by an unmarried man or woman due to the belief that if an unmarried person buries the hlamzui his/her babies will die in the same way.

(b) Thithra: When a person dies in a normal circumstances it is called thithra-a-thi (a natural death) and the dead body would be honoured with a complete funeral,

(c) Sar-Thi: Deaths from accident, in child-birth, suicide, drowning, or those caused by wild animal’s attack, or in war were known as Sar-Thi (unnatural death). The sarthi corpse were not allowed to be laid on bed or floor like those who died as in Thithra. Even if the corpse is brought inside the house, the head of the corpse should faced the verandah of the house.

In the days of yore, the Hmar people were very particular about the observance of funeral rites solemnities on the death. It was their firm believed that the departed souls and the concerned gods needed constant proportion within a year after their death. In the past, the Hmar people had a popular belief that every departed soul so journey a year or so on the earth and then only proceeded to its spiritual destination.

Generally, when a person expired the deceased person’s Laibung (kinsmen) would offered a pot of Zu (rice-beer) to the bereaved family and friends as a mark of condolence. It was customary for the Laibung and Zawl (ritual kin) of the deceased to kill animals in his honour on the day of mourning as Ruong-nghak-sa. Here the Laibungs has an obligation to give a portion of the meat to their Farnu as Farnu-Sa (meat for sister), and the deceased Pu (maternal grand-father or uncle) would take the Sanghawng (neck portion) of the animal and carried home by the Fei (spear) of his dead Tupa (sister’s son).

In a Hmar society, Pu has many obligation towards his Tupa (Sister’s Son) and Tunu (sister’s daughter). He was the key man of the condolence meeting. The whole congregation would be served with Zu by the Pu as Pu-Zu (rice-beer from grand father). It was customary for the Pu to received Lukhawng (a due which is payable to man’s Pu when he dies) which consisted Meitawk (matches), Lamsat Chem (dao), Feithrut (spear), and Tuomhawk (cloth). If the Pu has performed a Zawk, which was a very rare personal feast arranged by a Pu in honour of his Tupa’s grand success in the field of various competitions like hunting expeditions, wrestling, wars, etc, during his life time, he could make an additional demand of Thratman(price for generosity)- a mithun or equivalent cash of rupees 40/-. (Vara, H.V. 1980:12)
The last ceremony on death was known as Thi-trin (departure of the soul) which they performed after an elapse of a year or so. The occasioned was celebrated by killing an animal or two by the family.

**Social Obligation to the Death:**

There was a system of social obligation in the Hmar society where basic values centered round “tlawngaina”* emphasizing the finest traits in human beings. Tlawmngaina bounded a person to be courteous, considerate, unselfish, courageous and industrious, a person must always be ready to help others even at considerable inconvenience to self and must try to surpass other is doing ordinary daily tasks efficiently. Thus, thlawmngaina bounded every young and old to render their free services to the death and the bereaved family.

When a person dies, all the villagers would observe a taboo called “Um Ni Kham” for a day or two where no one is allowed to do any work. So as a part and parcel of their duty to help the bereaved family, relatives, friends and neighbours extend material help (mithiralna) like giving fire-wood, sugar, rice, etc. Young men and girls helped them by pounding rice and collected materials needed for all the sacrificial feast and the funeral ceremony. Regarding dirge, the whole congregation sang a song like the ‘Semruk Hla’ or “Lamkhozo Hla’ with view to consoled or mitigated the fates of the bereaved (lusun) family.

The duties of the elders (tarhai) was to wrapped the corps by cloths and put on the stretcher called ‘Hlang’. The hlang was then carried by the Makpas (sister or aunt’s husband) and other close friends. The last procession towards the Thlan (grave) was led by the village Theimpu (priest) which was known as “Thlan lam zong”.

To condole the bereaved family, young men of the village would slept with them; sometime they slept there until another person dies in the village. They share with each other in times of weal and woe especially during the hour of grief and sorrow under tlawmngaina.

**Graves and Memorial Stone:**

Mithi-Vui (burial) always took place in the evening; a person who dies before noon was always buried on the same day. The village cemetery known as Thlanmuol were situated at the outskirt of the village.

When a person dies, all young men from Zawlbuk came out to dug the grave while girls prepared tea for the young men, and also collected water, rice, firewood, etc. from each
of the villagers for the bereaved family. Generally, thlan-khur (pit) of about six feet deep, seven feet long and four feet wide was first dug out; then a narrow hold just large enough to hold the mithi-ruong (corps) was prepared. After the completion of grave digging, the burial took place; the corps was lowered into the exact position of the narrow hole and then sealed by wooden logs or flat stone known as thlan-khar after which they filled it with earth (pil).

Another form of digging grave was known as ‘Thlanpangsuot’ where a hole about the same size of the former was dug, and a narrow hole to accommodate the corpse was burrowed out at the side wall of the grave. After the completion, the corps was pushed into the hole; the main pit of the grave being filled in with earth.

The Hmar people from time immemorial has been erecting tombstones for the perspectual moment of their dead people in the society. The erection of memorials are called ‘Thlanlung Phun’ or Rolung’, and such occasions are observed sometime with community feast.

In the days of yore, the Hmar language had no script of its own. The Hmar language that was in practice was oral language. As a result the Hmar people did not inscribe any name or words of particulars of the death on the tombstone erected over the graves, except some pictures of animals captured by the deceased during his lifetime.

POLITICO – JURAL INSTITUTION:

At what stage and period did the Hmar evolve their political system and what were the motivating factors, which contribute to the evolution of their political institutions. The increase in production because of improved technology or use of better means of production such as iron implements must have been resulted in a more organised Hmar society (Lal Dena. 1990 : 135) In order to regulate social relation of production among the members of the society, various institutions such as village council, the institutions of priesthood, blacksmith, etc, were thus evolved. Moreover, the Hmar people, being a nomadic tribe were always engaged in war against one another for the possession of land. Under such prevailing circumstances, there arose a need for strong person who could lead and protect it from external forces. Thus, such person who conquered new territories and built new village eventually became the Lal (Chief).
(I) The Chief:

As the Hmar people became more stable with settled agriculture as the mode of production, the Hmar traditional political institutions also centered round chiefship to which the position of Lal became more and more deep rooted in the society. It is assumed that communal ownership of land was the basic features of the land tenure system among the Hmar people. The commoners had almost equal access to the village land and normally considered it to be theirs as much as the Lal and the village-councilors. However, the Lal was recognised as the sole owner of land. The traditional sanction of the Lal’s proprietary right was made explicit by the ‘Busung-Sadar’ (Rice and Flesh tax) given to the Chief by the commoners. The people also rendered forced-labour whenever asked for without any wage. Such traditional sanction, strictly observed by the people highlights the sole territorial proprietorship of the land by the chief.

Each village of the Hmar people was a separate State, ruled over by its own Lal to which all the legal authority was attached. The Lal was, in theory, at least a despot: but the nomadic instinct of the people is so strong that any Lal whose rule was unduly harsh soon found his subjects leaving him, and he therefore constrained to govern according to custom and convention.

(II) Village Administration:

In the administration affair or the village government, the Lal was assisted by a council of Khawnbawl-Upa (Chief Councillor) and the Khawnbawls (Councillors). The Khawnbawl-Upa was selected from the Khawnbawls members whom the Lal usually selected them from among the economically well-to-do families and who were also experts in traditional customs and rules, and socially in the upper ladder. However, the common man might also attain high status by displaying themselves through basic values such as chivalry, bravery, and prowess in hunting and in war in the traditional setting.

The Lal presides over the village council which discusses all matters connected with the village, and decides all disputes arises from among the commoners of the village, for which they received fees called Salam (a fine payable to Lal and khawnbawls who have tried a case) from the party who losses the case. For the opening of the Court, which was generally held in the evening in the Lal’s house, the complainant must supply Zu (rice beer) to the Lal and his Khawnbawls. In the case of the complainant becoming the winner, the
looser not only reimbursed him his expense of the Zu but also paid the Salam. The Lal receives a portion of each fine levied, a practice found to prevent undue leniency.

The Lal and his Khawnbawls combined the three modern functions of legislature, executive and judiciary. They represented the effort of the society to evolve a machinery for self government. In the council, the Lal was the traditional village head in all spheres except purely ritual matters, having had the authority to enact laws and at the same time executed these laws at his discretion. However, the Lal was not wholly free from constrain – he was bound to some extent by the advice of his Khawnbawls, for they were the most influential persons in their respective locality and through them the Lal could gain loyalty and support of the whole villagers. The Khawnbawl-Upa was like Prime Minster and Khawnbawls or the councilor as Ministers in the modern Government set-up.

Besides the Khawnbawl-Upa and the Khawnbawls, the Lal appoints the following officials—Thiempu (Priest) Tlangsam (Village Crier). Thirsu (Blacksmith) and the Val-Upa (Youth Commander).

(III) The Thiempu:

In the Hmar administrative set-up, the Thiempu were holding high officer next to the Lal and his Khawbawls in the village. The Thiempu was an indispensable person in the village, whose religious services was required in almost all walks in life. He therefore, became the obligatory intermediary between the people and god or gods in the society. His power, especially on religious matter was beyond challengeable. In his priestly capacity, while performing religious sacrificial on behalf of the whole village community, even the Lal would bow to him for his blessing. He would performed sacrifices and rituals at least twice in a year for the good-health and well-being of the community, both for the family and the individuals. He also performs all sacrifices for the sick and the dead, offers prayer for the prosperity of the crop, and ‘sanctifies the village’ from the influence of demons and evil spirits. For performing those connected with cultivation he received a basket of rice, but for some it is not customary to take payment, and the fees depend chiefly on the position of the person who had to pay them.

Besides his religious duty, the Thiempu was also empowered to decide those cases which the council could not due to want of evidence and of the case comprehensiveness of
the case, decide upon. Such cases were normally settled by administrating oath or ordeal to test the innocence or guilt of the concerned parties (Lal Dena, 1990:138).

Above all else, the Thiempu has exerted tremendous influence upon the mental outlooks of the people, and it was perhaps, owing to their egoistic tendencies the superficial beliefs were implanted in the minds of the ignorant masses thereby paving the way for the ushering in of pluralistic world view. In the non-literate society, the people were adamant to the intrigues of the priestly class, and took everything for granted. The Thiempu therefore, dominated the social and religious life, and the man’s lodge constitutes the bulwark of tradition (Zarzolien, 1987:95)

(IV) The Tlangsam:
The Tlangsam plays an important role in the village administration. He was messenger of the Lal and his Councillors: announcing any emergency and other social announcements to the people. He also supervised public works in the village. The Tlangsam was exempted from forced labour and actual works in the community labour. He was entitled to remuneration a small basket of paddy from each house in the village annually for his services to the people. It may be mentioned that the Tlangsam was normally selected from a relatively low status family as the occupation was considered to be low and cheap by the well-to-do families. However, the Lal gradually used this occupation to favour one of his favourite families, thus, gradually diminishing the social stigma attached to it.

(V) The Thirsu:
Though not a member of the village council, he was the key person in the agricultural life of the people. He was responsible for making all kinds of agricultural implements and the repairing works of the villagers. Thirsu levied a small basketful of rice per household annually from those who uses his services.

(VI) The Val-Upa:
The Val-Upa were one of the greatest assets of the Lal as they alone has the organisation force and capacity in the traditional social setting though the institution of Zawlbuk (youth dormitory). It was the Val-upa who mobilized the youth and rendered voluntary services to
the society in time of peace, natural-calamities, etc. The Zawlbuk under the command of Val-upa also served as a sort of military wing of the village political organisation by imparting strict discipline and vigorous training in the art of tribal warfare, defence, etc, to protect and to give security to the village in time of intra-tribal feud. The Lal and his Councillors were very much aware of the Val-upa’s organising power and constantly thus tried to please them as they were the very backbone of their power and prestige.

Other important officials of the Lal were Sadawt and Thlapawi. The Sadawt was the Lal’s personal Thiempu and the Thlapawi, a helper to the Sadawt and is usually a friend of the Lal.

**ZAWLBUK**

In the Hmar traditional society, social control was a village-wide affair and its chief instrument was the institution of Zawlbuk – a bachelor’s quarter or youth dormitory, which occupied a central position in the village organisation and administration. Origin of the Zawlbuk institution among the Hmar cannot be traced back but one may assumed that is was as old as the tribal culture itself.

Different scholar have put forward the existence of dormitory among the aborigines around the world. Mr. Peal S.E.(1891:801-2) drew attention to the fact that ‘from Bhutan to New Zealand and from Marquises to the Niger, the system existed’.

R. Briffault in his book ‘The Mothers’ 1927 mentioned about the Secret Societies in which men and women were admitted in the dormitory in Africa and the Upper Congo. Moreover, many prominent writers like Shakespeare (1912:20) and other gave vivid and detailed accounts of dormitory system in India. This dormitory is known by different tribes like ‘Ariju’ among the Aos, ‘Longshim’ among the Thangkhuls, ‘Ghotul’ among the Muria. ‘Zawlbuk’ among the Hmar and Mizos and so on.

Unlike many tribal societies, where boys and girls were known to have shared the same dormitory no Hmar female were allowed to enter the Zawlbuk. In general terms these places are tabooed to women and to the uninitiated. They are used as dwelling or meeting places of the men, and in them various ceremonies are held: they constitute the social, political and religious centers in the public life of the men. All young men of the village were
to sleep in the Zawlbuk. As a result most of the youth above fifteen years spent more time at the Zawlbuk than in his own house. They could only leave it when they married and set up of own houses.

Expert in all activities, excelling other and possessing the highest social status, because of his performance, was called Val-upa and he happened to be the leader of the Zawlbuk. All the inmates of the Zawlbuk, under the supervision of the Val-upa performed their duties whenever necessary. They young boys of age below fifteen years of the village have to keep up the supply of firewood for the Zawlbuk this duty continuing till they reach the age of puberty, when they cease sleeping in their parents’ houses and join the young man in the Zawlbuk. If a boy failed to supply the fire-wood, or any of his duty, he was severely taken to task. Other duties include fetching waster, and other tasks as may be assigned to them from time to time. In this way a very strict rule was observed and no room for idleness was given. Hence, Zawlbuk was the place where the children learnt good conduct, manners, responsibility, etc.

It was in the Zawlbuk that unmarried men gather in the evening to sing a song, tell stories and make jokes. Various occasion and festivities songs were also practiced till it is time to visit and court their sweet-hearts, after which they return to the Zawlbuk to spent their night. In case of any emergency or difficult in the village or when there was any threat from the enemy, these men were always on great alert to meet such situations. Hence, Zawlbuk was also used to protect and give security to the village.

As an institutionalized mechanism of social control and socialized education, the Zawlbuk played a very significant role in imparting the Hmar tribal philosophy of life Tlawmngaina- that is self-sacrifice, selfless devotion, respect for the elders, bravery, etc. Thus, a man who practices the precepts of Tlawmngaina is looked up to and respected.

In the dormitory, the youth learnt their folk tales, traditional customs and laws, agricultural methods, hunting and everything about their community life. By the time they left the Zawlbuk, they knew all about sex, morals and social customs of the community. In short, all the basic qualities which comprises the socialization process were inculcated in the Zawlbuk. In fact, traditional Hmar Zawlbuk was a symbol of solidarity and collective effort – its members defended the village, performed works and collective nature during natural calamity such as fire, death, famine or such other which require community services through
the philosophy of Tlawmngaina. Thus, the Zawlbuk for the Hmar acted as school and made them perfectly trained for the future life.

ECONOMIC INSTITUTION

The economy of the Hmar people was by and large agricultural and rural. Infact, agriculture was the main source of the Hmar livelihood. Shifting cultivation, also known as ‘jhooming’ was the age-old mode of production and forest constituted the main source of several products, particularly timber, teak, fir, pine, sal, oak, bamboo, etc. According to Dena: (1990:135) “internally the economic activity of Hmars was marked by the absence of market oriented production. The process of distribution took the form of gift and counter-gift and ceremonial exchange and the distribution involved channeling upward of products and services to socially determined allocative centers such as chiefs, priest, and blacksmiths”.

At the end of the year in every year, the village council has a session known as Ram Rorel and decided upon the method of distribution of jhum land for the year’s cultivation. No other part of the village land other than the agreed ranges or stretches of land should be cleared for the year’s cultivation by any family. The Chief and his Councillors had the privilege of selecting a tract of land within the agreed ranges. Next to the Chief and his Councillors came few individuals, the Chief’s favourites selected by him like Lal Thirsu (Chief’s black-smith) who has the second choice in jhum land. The rest of the ranges was then publicly opened for year’s jhum cultivation by lot.

The clearing of jungles started in early January-February and are burned in late March or early April, closely followed by the first round of weeding works. Seeds are sown in mid- April and harvesting is done in November-December.

The most striking feature of Hmar economic activity centered round the agricultural partnership or corporate labour (Inlawm) and ”the agricultural work party …largely confine itself to the unmarried young men and women”, (Nunthara, 1996:107) This cooperation labour started right from the beginning of clearing the jungle till the end of harvest.

Corporate labour was highly cherished by the Hmar people, For the young man, it was like dating a girl in modern society and the demand for work partnership was accordingly high, for beautiful girl. It had been observed that the social interactions in the
agricultural land were of intrinsically intimate nature characterized by perfect co-operation. It was precisely because of this that the sentimental value attachment to the agricultural land was so great among the Hmar people. This has been confirmed by many folk songs, festivals and folk tales.

The economy of Hmar traditional society was self-sufficient economy and the production included all locally consumable food stuffs such as rice, cereals, maize, yam, hot chili, beans, potatoes, cucumber, water-melon, melon, pumpkin, and livestock like cow, mithun, pig, dog, chicken, etc. Tobacco and cotton are also grown for home consumption.

Cottage industry in Hmar economy was no less important. It included cotton weaving, basket making, iron work, pottery and etc. Cotton weaving of every kind was carried on exclusively by womenfolk. A girl, at the age of five, is provided with toy loom called tatebem by her mother on which she learns the process of weaving. Thus, a girl of fifteen is capable of making all kinds of designs and is expected to produce the family requirement in her spare time. (Pudaite, 1963: 48). Though the women weaves the cloth, the man is responsible for supplying all the materials needed for loom. The process of weaving is called puonkhawng. The weaving is excellent, and is done on complicated indigenous hand looms, home-grown cotton being used, (A.G McCall, 1977:182) The Hmar people are also experts in the art of making baskets of numerous designs and sizes required for various purposes in their day-to-day life. The patterns are very numerous, each being adapted to some particular use and were known by names. The materials for the manufacture of baskets were bamboo and cane easily available in the forest. The various types of baskets used by the Hmar people were as follows:-

**Tieng:**
This is a big sieve made of bamboo with small and large holes used for separating unwanted grains from rice in square shape.

**Bahuk:**
Like Tieng, Bahuk is a mat like structure but without any holes. It is used for spreading rice for drying and is kept near the fire-place.

**Bemkhuong:**
This is a small basket with lid, mainly used by women for keeping balls of thread.
Dawrawn:
This is a tall truncated cone tapering downwards used for carrying goods and unhusked rice.

Kawngvar:
This is an open work basket used for carrying firewood and water pots known as Tuithei which are made up of large bamboo only.

Leidar:
This is a bamboo tray, leaf like structure used to separate the full grain from the chaff. This Leidar is considered culturally very significant as coins which are always preferred as bride price are counted in this Leidar.

Leikhawr:
This is small basket used for taking out or measuring cleaned rice for cooking. This is also used or holding balls of thread while preparing the warp of weaving.

Paikawng:
This is used for carrying paddy and other articles from jhumfields. It is also used for conveyance of wood and water tubes called Tuithei.

Rêl:
This is one of the prestigious basket designed: this basket is supplied with a conical lid and chiefly used to keep valuables in. The outer layer is finely split bamboo closely woven, and this is lined with broad leaves well dried, which are held in their place by an inner layer of bamboo more loosely woven. This baskets are quite water-proof and are considered as bride’s property for keeping valuables and ornament by the bride.

Tlam:
This is a big container used by male only to carry paddy and other articles from the jhoom. There are also several sorts of flat baskets for holding grain, each with its particular name.

Pottery is the work of the women among the Hmar people and she is very clever at it. When a village site is selected great importance is attached to the availability of the belpil khur (potter’s pit). The variety that the potter designs are not too many and the same pattern is followed year by year. Within this limited variety are bu-bel (rice – cooking-pot), hme-bel (curry-cooking-pot), thleng-bel (covering and eating plate), ngan-bel (distillation for fermenting rice - beer), and zu-bel (rice – beer pot). The largest varieties are the zu-bel and...
ngan-bel which runs any where from two to five gallon. A small variety called dum-bel (smoking-pipe) of different shaped and sizes are also made, and these are mainly for women.

For iron works, the blacksmith does little more than make and repair the simple agricultural implements of the village. The manufactured items were like chem. (dao), hrei(axe), kawite (sickle), fei (spear), thal (bow and arrow), besides a few musical instruments.

The Hmar people were also very fond of hunting and fishing. In order to satisfy their hunger for meat, the Hmar snared for the smallest hawks to the biggest hornbill, and the smallest squirrel to the largest elephant. Elephants are capture by digging pitfalls on narrow ridges between precipices. Tigers are trapped under a platform of heavy logs. Similarly, fish were catches by ordinary nest and spears.

In short, as Dena (1990:135) has observed that “what Malinowaski has written about tribal economy in general actually reflects the economic organisation of Hmars…..the whole tribal life is permeated by a constant give and take, that every ceremony, every legal and customary act is done to the accompaniment of material gift and counter gift, that wealth, given and taken, is one of the main instruments of social organisation of the power of the chief, of the bonds of kinships and relationships in law”.

The Bawi (Slave) System: In the traditional Hmar social hierarchy below the Vantlang (commoners) was a class known as Bawi (Slave). The practice of Bawi system used to be very common among the indigenous Hmar society. There were various forms of becoming a Bawi or, to obtained a Bawi who were further classified as bellow, according to the manner in which they become Bawi:

(i) Inpui Bawi (Suok): Widow, orphans and others who were unable to support themselves, and hae no relatives willing to do so would take shelter in the house of the Village Chief as Bawi. This Bawis were known as Inpui Suok. They were looked on as part of Chief’s household and do all Chief’s works in return for their food, clothing and shelter. On reaching a marriageable age, they were allowed to marry and set up a house of their won, but were still in some respects a Bawi for some more years.

(ii) Chemsen Bawi: They were criminals who took refuge in the Chief’s house to escape from the consequence of their evil deeds. Murderers, to escape from the avengers and public trial rushed to the Chief’s hose and saved their lives. However, their safety were
limited only within the premises of the Chief’s house: should he ventured outside the Chief’s premises the murdered family could avenged him at any time.

(iii) **Tuklut Bawi:** They were the poor and the needy people who voluntarily sought shelter in the Chief’s or richman’s house during famine. According to Shakespeare (1912:49). Tuklut Bawi were those who, during was, have deserted the losing side and joined the victors by promising that they and their descendants would be Bawi. A Tuklut Bawi and his family can be freed after paying a Siel (mithun) to the mater who was entitled to keep them as long as he liked.

(iv) **Sal:** Persons captured in tribal was are known as Sal. As soon as they became Sal they also became the personal property of their captors. The captors used to exchange their Sal for food and guns, one strong sal being worth two guns.  

**GENERAL FEATURES**

**Food and Drinks:** The Hmar people’s habit of food and drink had borne a distinctive mark of the people indigenous Hmar society. The habit formed an integral part of their social living.

Cooked rice is the staple food of the Hmar people. They eat with curry usually with hot chilies mixed with a local soda known as Changal (salty ash waster drained through wood ash). They were also very fond of mixing curry with Sathu (fermented pig’s fat) which is a queer sort of palate titillation. The method of taking meal was simple. The food was put on a large dish of wood called Invawng Thleng placed on the floor of the house, the meal would be served by the house-wife, and all will sit around and help themselves with their hands. Other important dishes of the Hmar is Chartang (mixture of meat, vegetable and hot chilies) and also Hmepawk (stew curry).

Three meals are taken, one shortly after sunrise, one at mid-day, and one at dust. Pumpkins, cabbage, onions, brinjal, yams, cucumbers, creeper beans, ginger, arum, bamboo-shoots, and many forest herbs and leaves, provided the main aids to a staple diet of rice or maize, none of which is ever taken in the ground form. The chief fruits taken by the Hmar people included banana, papaya, guava, mango and the various wild plum, mulberries, fig and the nutty fruits of the forest. Honey was a luxury item and the Village Chief was, by custom, entitled to ownership. All these various items were collectively available, but individually there were by no means always at hand.
As regard drinking, the Hmar people has a very simple taste. With his meals he drinks Butui-lawk (the soup in which the food has been boiled) and sip the Hmetui (soup of curry) sparingly, washing the meal down with a draught of cold water.

In the case of intoxicating drinks (Zu) the Hmar people only took when they had full leisure to enjoy them and in company with a party of friends. The re were two kinds of such drinks, one was simple, partially fermented rice known as Zu-pui (rice-beer): the other, a distilled one was called Rak-Zu. Zu-pui was a frequent part of the day’s diet, and on special occasions Rak-zu was used. However, Rak-zu was never a daily item of diet for the ordinary home, it having being rather the mark of some real festa. On the other hand, the place of Zupui in the traditional Hmar society was as that of tea in the modern civilized society. In the words of Mrs Grimwood (1891:15)

They have a beverage of their own which
they make of fermented rice water……

They called this liquor Zu.

**Dress and Ornaments:**

Traditional Hmar dresses for both sexes were very simple, prepared only by women as a Hmar girl took great pride in her weaving skill and supplied sufficient clothes for family consumption. Different designs on the dresses and ornament of the Hmar people, specially the dresses and the ornaments of women, not only made them attractive but they worked as identify symbols of the tribe since time immemorial. Moreover, designs of an individuals dresses and ornaments also reflected one’s position in the fabric of socio-cultural life in the Hmar society.

The Hmar males’ traditional dresses was very simple, consisting of a single clothe about six by four feet wide, in such a way that the right arm always remained uncovered by the cloth. During winter, one or more clothes are worn, one over the other, and also a white coat of thighs length fasted at the neck. Another clothe was used for lower body from the hips down to the knees. This is called Hren-pereng and was used as a substitute for modern half-pant. Hats used by common men were made of bamboos and canes which were generally flat and circular in shape. Wearing turban was also in vogue.

As regard the dress of womenfolk, they worn better dresses than their male counterpart. Indigenous Hmar women had a great fascination for coloured cloths neatly
designed. A Hmar women used a cloth of such a length as to go round the waist down to keens. The other garment for covering the upper portion known as Hmar-Am which is unseamed petticoat, fastened with a string at the waist was a dress considered to be the best wear.

Hair dressing was still another important aspect of the Hmar dress-habits. Both males and female combed their hairs backwards and knotted it at the back. It is interesting to note here that the Hmar people were believed to be the progenees of Tukbemsawm, an anonymous word for Hmar,, who tied his hair in a knot at the back of his head. All the descendants of Tukbemsawm who adopted his hair-style were known as Hmar(Songate, 1977:67). Hair-dressing and hair-decorating were, however, more prevalent among the Hmar women especially among the unmarried women. For hair dressing they used a wooden or brass comb and hair-pin called Tawmkou. Samkhim was the term for types of hairdo which is an identifying marks of Hmar women. Every women plaits her hair into two straps and makes an interlacement or a knot above the forehead by bringing forward such straps above the ear.

Both traditional Hmar males and females were fond of using and wearing ornaments on different part of the body. Most men have their ear pierced and wore earring made of wood, or cornelians suspended by a piece of string. A two-pronged pin of a brass with a head shaped like “G” was the commonest ornament used in their hair-knot. Irrespective of sex, traditional Hmar people were accustomed to earring necklaces made of precious stones, such as ambe, agate and cornelian which they brought from Burma. A tiger’s tooth were also often worn around the neck which are thought to have magical properties. Although not popular, a bracelet known as Dampa was also worn by a few Hmar males. The womenfolk used almost the same ornament as their menfolk.

Smoke:

Both traditional Hmar sexes were very fond of smoking indigenous tobacco known as Dum. The Hmar traditional smoking was mainly of two types. One called Dum-ziel or Dumkhu smoking mainly by the youth which resembles modern biri or cigarette without any filter. The other type of smoke was pipe-smoking known as Dumbel smoking mostly practiced by the elders. The pipes of the men and women differ. The man used a bowl made from bamboo while women’s pipe were more complicated and beautiful by designed. The pipe has a container made of either bamboo or metal, in which
the nicotine water (Tui-bur) is collected for consuming (tui-bur hmuom) but without swallowing for a minute or two, after which it would be ejected.

**Festival and Dance:**

In the days of yore, most of the Hmar festivities and ceremonies were related to their agricultural life. During their festival, dances and music are assigned prominent part along with rice bear or Zu which is widely consumed by them. Mainly, the Hmar people had three festivals celebrated annually. These festivals which are attached to the Hmar social life were the Chapchar Kut, the Sikpui Ruoi and the Pawl-Kut. These festivals had assumed such larger dimension in the Hmar tribal life that it became socially significant.

The Chapchar Kut which was also known as ‘Spring Festival’ was a popular festival of the Hmar and their other kindred tribes in the past, usually held sometimes in March or April every year after the completion of burning and cutting of jumh land. It last to four or five days. On the first day they killed pigs late in the day so that by the time the feast was ready they started drinking Zu. Young people prepared things for the festivals – collecting their kith and kin to a pig feast: elders including women spent the second day by drinking Zupui (rice beer). Everyone carried with them plates of rice, boiled eggs and meat and offered their friends with great joy. The third day and fourth day were spent dancing, drinking and feasting. On the fifth day, it was customary to try and finish all the Zu contributed and collected for Chapchar Kut.

Sikpui is the biggest and grandest festival of the Hmar tribe. Sikpui, a celebration of the affluent, of the merciful providence is, in itself, a celebration of life and being alive, good harvest, peace, unity, love, brotherhood, joy and happiness. Moreover, it is also a time of thanksgiving.

Sikpui has a long memorable past. The Sikpui Hla or Sikpui song with its deep meaning deciphers that the Sikpui was celebrated after they had crossed the red sea. The Sikpui Hla elicited the long time celebration of Sikpui under the guidance of God, with the clouds leading the multitude at day time, and by fire at night. Till to day, the composer of the copious Sikpui Hla is not known. However, it shows, as some Hmar historians contends that the Hmars were in the same band crossing the Red Sea under Moses, the patriarch.

The original ‘Sikpui-Lam’ (Sikpui Dance) was performed in the winter season as the name ‘Sikpui’ (Winter) implies here. On such mirthful day, a slope of stone was laid in the
center of the dancing ground known as ‘Lamzawl’; the Khuongpui (drummer and choir leader sat on it and the people danced merrily in circle in two rows around the slope of stone. The first row consisted of old-folks. The married couples- pair by pair, the village youths and the children in order of seniority; the second row comprised of those persons who were partner less to dance within the Sikpui-lam.

The Pawl-Kut festival was celebrated by the villagers immediately after the harvest of rice was gather, usually in the month of December. It continued for a day or two, depending on the availability of Zu. The last day of the festival was observed as Hrilh. ‘Hrilh’ is a period during which no work must be done except the ordinary household work. It is applied to the special days set apart from observance of anything which passes a religious significance or anything that is unlucky (thienglo) by the Hmar. ‘Hrilh’ may be divided into two - ‘hriih’ due to the occurrence of the misfortune, and ‘hriih’ on account of a festival or a sacrifice. The Pawl-Kut festival was marked with festivity since ‘Pathien has blessed them with abundance of rice and for which they all should be thankful. In short, as thanksgiving, every one should mark the occasion drinking, eating and merriment after the harvest.

Though the Hmar do not maintain written record about the exact beginning of these festivals, some traces can be made through their traditional songs and legends that they might perhaps begin these festivals at the time of their Shan state settlement.

Hmar dances can be categorized as functional ones. They reflect the expression of joy on the harvest of a good crops success of hunting expedition, honouring the best hunter. They also dance to ward off grief on the death of an important person or chief. In this way dance for Hmar, was to heighten the feeling of joy as well as to drain out the feeling of sorrow. In the Hmar society dance was not a personal achievement but part of the whole social process. It reflects the continuity between self and society. The dances of Hmar also reflect the total co-ordination of team work. This dancing accompanied by song containing historical and mythological description of the past thoroughly educated the young to perpetuate the culture and traditions of the community. Thus, underneath the garb of a get-together and merriment there is a strong sense of social solidarity.
There are different types of dance performed by the Hmar people which are given here as below:

**Chawn Lam:**

Chawn Lam is the celebrating dance of a sacrifice or ceremony usually of there days’ feast given by an individual or family over such things as a good paddy harvest or a bumper of crops, etc, and also his success in life. The person playing host to the villagers kills animals for feast.

**Dar Lam :**

When a wealthy or an important person in the community dies, a Dar Lam dance is performed on the funereal occasion and at no other time, to show their last respect to the departed soul. The funeral procession is led by a dancing party followed by a bier (hlang) carried by kinsfolk of the bereaved family and their near ones. Drums, Darkhuong (a big Burmese gong), Darbu (small gong) specially a set of three different sizes each producing a different tone, forms the funereal band.

**Hrang Lam :**

Hranglam is another types of dance to celebrate the successful raid or hunting. They sing a long and dance for the whole night. “Hrilh’ also known as “umn ikham” is observed during the occasion . The Hrang Lam is performed by both sexes in circle around the enemies head or killed animals.

Tlang Lam and Khuol Lam are other well known dance used to be performed on ceremonial occasions.

**Forms of Communication:**

Any form of inter-personal communication in a primitive society is closely related to the occupation and socio-political atmosphere of the people concerned. Prior to the advent of written literature among the Hmar, the most popular forms of communication are through signs, fire-signals and gong and drum. They are used on different occasions as under:-

**Signs:** These are normally resorted to when the other party is not immediately present. When a person selects a particular site of land in the jungle for his jhum cultivation he would put a crossed stick in the main path pointing towards the selected site. The system goes on even in the case of other occasion which the man has assumed to himself ownership of.
Should a man finds a beehive or a hornet’s nest he would put the crossed stick nearby so that nobody would touch it. He may even cut the bark of the tree at the foot to confirm his claim.

**Fire-Signal:**

When the Chief of a village want to convey to the neighbouring Chief that his village would burn the felled forest for jhum the next day, for precautionary measure, he would convey the message by putting up a great fire on the top of the nearest hill.

**Gong and Drums:**

Gong and drums of various sizes are used to communicate misfortune as well as festivity being observed at the particular time. The specific beating of these drum and gongs also indicate either misfortune or festivity.

**Summary:**

The foregoing discussion gives a general profile of the traditional Hmar social structure. The Hmar are a patrilineal society. The family consist of members related to each other by blood, marriage, and adoption – all having the same social, economic and religious status under a single head.

The Hmar society is divided into as many as 24 (twenty four) different partrilineal clans which are again divided into several sub-clans. It may be mentioned that these clans formed an important kinship group in the Hmar community life. Even their settlement patterns are usually clan-wise.

Usually after his marriage, a son lives with his parents till a brother junior to him got married. Marriage among Hmar is not restricted to any particular clan, tribe or community. They have four main types of marriage, Matrilateral cross-cousin (Mo’s Br’s Da) marriage known as Putu Innei’ is considered to be the most preferred type. Monogamy is their ideal form of marriage. For the birth of an illegitimate child, a Hmar male procreator has to pay an amount of fine to the father of the child’s mother. After this payment the child’s belonged to him.

The whole Hmar kinship system is mainly based on the importance of one’s own lineage. In Hmar society, a man is under the direct authority and control of his agnatic kin, his father, father’s brothers and other male members of his own lineage. The general rule of inheritance is from father to the youngest son,
The principle philosophy of Hmar religious belief lay with Pathien-God, the ultimate ground of everything. The belief in Pathien is the focal point round which the whole Hmar religious philosophy revolves. Strange enough, although the Hmar people worship such as stone, trees, mountains rivers and other natural objects, they did not worshipped any heavenly bodies such as the sun, the moon and the star, and zoolatry as well. In short, the Hmar traditional religions was naturalism or a sort of nature worship.

Every Hmar village used to have a chief who had absolute authority over all the matters concerning the village. He was assisted by a council of Khawnbawl Upa (Chief councilor), Khawnbal (Councilors) and other village officials such as a Thiempu (priest), the Thlangsam (village crier), the Thirsu (blacksmith) and the Val Upa(youth-commander). In order to regulate the social relation, the institution of Zawlbuk (Bachelor’s dormitory) occupied a central position in the village organisation and administration.

The economy of traditional Hmar society was mainly based on land and forest. There is almost absence of flat fertile land. In the past when the Hmar had very little mobility they had to fend for themselves. As such, they had to grow everything they needed. They grew food grains, pulses, vegetables, root crops and cotton to meet their need of food and cloth. Traditionally, the entire population of the Hmar can be classified as cultivators. Hunting and rearing of animals, etc. were practiced only as secondary occupations. The practice of ‘Bawi’ (Slave) system was also common among the traditional Hmar society.

Cooked rice was the staple food of the Hmar people. Honey was a luxury item and the village chief was entitled to ownership. Zu (liquor) played an important role in the socio-cultural life of the people.

The Hmar people fought many wars in the past with their kindred tribe. They bury their dead.

Traditional Hmar had three principal festivals viz. Chapchar Kut, Sikpui and Pawl Kut. These festivals had assumed larger dimension in the Hmar tribal life that it becomes socially significant. The whole village wore a festive look in a primitive tribal fashion in each of these festivals. Traditional Hmar dances were not personal achievement, but part if the whole social system. Their dances reflects a strong sense of social solidarity.

Signs, fire-signals, gongs and drums were used as form of communication in the past Hmar tribal life.