CHAPTER FIVE
WHEN HAPPENED TO THE ZO SOCIETY IN BURMA?

An enquiry into the economy, society and gender relations among the Lai Zo

The Mizo tribes who had settled in Burma are called Chins and this is said to be a Burmese word which is used to describe all the various hill tribes, living in the region between Burma and the provinces of Assam and Bengal.¹ However as mentioned in the Introduction, all the Chin tribes would be not studied but a general study of the major Chin tribes like the Lai-Zo, would be carried out. They are the ones who are presently living in Falam and Halkha areas. It would be interesting to study them as they did not migrate to other areas but have settled directly from Kale-Kabaw Valley. They have stayed here and other tribe hardly settled with them and so they were not much influenced by other culture and hence they still practice a lot of their traditional ways of life even though there are some changes due to modernisation as will be studied in this chapter.

Social Stratification

The Zo society is often said to be egalitarian but in reality we find there were levels of stratification and there were differences between the chiefs, the wealthy families, the commoners and the slaves. This stratification can be seen in the various customs and practices of the people as studied in this chapter.

Chiefs and the people:

Most of the traditional Zo societies in Burma had a chief in their own villages. In Halkha and Falam districts the position of the chief is hereditary.² However if the

² B.Lalthangliana, Mizo Chanchin, (Aizawl, 2001) p.368
chief happened to die without any issue, the Council of Elders would decide on the person who would be their chief. According to Carey and Tuck, the chiefs were the lord within their territories because if any person wished to stay or work in a particular village, the consent of that village chief had to be taken. Further, a chief received tithes from his villagers and if he had conquered any tribe or villages, those villages also had to pay tribute to him. When a chief received tithes and tributes, it reflected that he was responsible for their protection and well being. The tithes which a chief received from his subjects were grains, a portion of their live-stock, a hind leg of the animal killed at a feast and a front leg of every wild animal shot or trapped. Apart from the chiefs the other persons who played a vital role in the well being of the village and who also received tithes from the villagers were the priest and the blacksmith. They served the villagers and sometimes did not have time to work in their own fields. The priests were therefore always given a portion of the meat whenever animals were killed. The blacksmith was the one who had to make and repair all the implements or tools used by the villagers. Every family therefore had to give him a portion of the grain after harvesting and a portion of the animals killed at a feast or at a hunting expedition.

**Economy**

The Zo in Burma practiced jhum cultivation or agriculture. All cultivation was done on the hillside as the terrain is steep and are in a high altitude. Their staple crop was maize but they also grew different types of other crops like millet, rice and jowar. The other important field crops were pulses or legumes such as beans, peas of

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{4} *ibid.*
different kinds and runner beans. Subsidiary field crops included melons, mustard greens and pumpkins. Yams and taros were also cultivated but they were usually consumed only during shortage of grain. They grew eatables not only in the fields but also in the house gardens and here they grew different types of spices and other vegetables. The people had two types of fields for cultivation — lopil and lo. Lopil are large divisions of land which was divided by the chiefs and his council. Lo means a field or land for cultivation. The boundaries between these lopils were usually natural features such as ridges or streams. Lo were the smaller divisions of land and its boundaries were marked by lines of small stones or shrubs. Lopil were further divided into two types based on altitude called lai lo and zo lo. Lai lo are known as the field which are lower in altitude and are sometimes called warm field.* This type of field can be used for several years in a row but the fallow period was quite long which could extend up to even thirty years. Millets, rice and other grains were cultivated in lai lo. Zo lo on the other hand were found high on the hill sides, so high that some of the villages did not have any zo lo. This type of fields were farmed only in one year and then left fallow for seven to nine years. Since the fields were situated at a high region, it was windblown whereby the soil was loosened and there was poor natural vegetation which resulted in it being less productive. The people therefore planted mainly maize which the people found to be suitable and this type of corn also required little clearing.

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* Terming lailo as warm field does not mean that lai means warm. Warm in the language is shim. Lai means middle while zo denotes a hill.
7 *ibid* pp.55-56
Before cultivation was carried out, the Zo people had to perform certain rites called *lopil nam, siapil nam, lo vun* and *lo ar ah* to the guardian spirits.\(^8\) *Lopil nam* and *siapil nam* ceremonies were carried out when new fields were to be used and it was to appease the guardian spirits of the fields. *Faang tsi diil* was an annual communal sacrifice to appease the guardian spirits. *Lo vun* and *lo ar ah* were personal annual inaugural sacrifices to inaugurate the plot.\(^9\) They were carried out at special small altars in each plot, two at the top and bottom and one at the cultivation hut.

After the sacrificial rites were held people started to work in their fields. They built a hut for them to rest and to sleep during planting and gathering.\(^10\) The implements used by them were only small axes, damahs, and a little hoe.\(^11\) The axe and damah were used for felling the jungle, and the hoe for clearing the weeds and grass. The fields were felled during the winter season. Felling trees and clearing of jungles was regarded to be the work of men though women also used to help them. The felled trees were then piled and burnt in March and April. Setting fire was done by the women and men. Grains were then planted by women. Crops were sown by dibbling holes at regular intervals and dropping several seeds into each hole. The holes were rarely covered up. Weeding was regarded to be the work of women alone and had to be done quite regularly. Weeding and cultivation which took place more than once in a season were considered to be the most 'onerous and back breaking

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\(^8\) H.N.C. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p.34  
\(^9\) *ibid.*  
\(^10\) Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.211.  
\(^11\) Foreign, External A. September 1890, Nos.64-66
tasks in Chin agriculture, and these are the works of the women. Harvesting and reaping of the crops or grains was done by both women and men. So it can be seen that the people especially women almost did not have any respite in the field work.

Pottery which was made of clay was the work of women. Pots were used for holding water and liquor and also for cooking. Weaving was also done entirely by women on looms. All the processes for making cloth – right from picking cottons, ginning and others to weaving were the responsibilities of women. They had to make cloths not only for themselves but for the whole family. Besides making clothes they also had to weave all the bed sheets and blankets. They weave and make clothes during the lean season when they do not have to go their fields. Thus it can be seen that women did not have any time for leisure or rest.

Besides cultivation, the Zo people also reared animals. The main animals reared by them were mithun, pigs, dogs and chicken. Among the animals domesticated, the most important animal was the mithun. The people held the mithun to be in high regard so much so that the wealth of a man was judged by the numbers of his mithun. At the birth of a mithun calf, a sacrifice was offered and a rest day was also observed. The mithun was used as bride payment, tribute and sacrificial offerings. In the Feasts of Merit, they had to kill at least three mithuns. These animals were taken out to the forest to graze during the day and were kept in a pen in the evening. Pigs were found in abundance in any village and almost all the

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12 F.K.Lehman, op. cit., p.55. The method of cultivation is still practiced by the people and this is known from the interviews with the people of Chin District, Myanmar carried out during the present work.
13 Carey & Tuck, op. cit., p.214
14 Interview with Mr.L.Thawng from Falam, Myanmar on 21 Feb.2001 in Lunglei.
16 H.N.C.Stevenson, op. cit., p.46
families in a village would rear a pig. They were the scavengers of the village. They were kept under the house during night time and as the people merely relieved themselves from a hole in their house, it was the pigs who cleared and cleaned up all the waste. The domesticated animals were used mainly for sacrificial purposes and they were not eaten if there was no specific purpose. However the animals to be slaughtered for sacrifices were to be free from blemishes. But it should be noted that milk of the animals was not consumed by the people as it was considered to be a taboo and they believed that drinking the milk of the animals would make them adopt the manners of the animals. The authors did not give the reason for the taboo of drinking milk but it could be assumed that the people did not rear big milk producing animals like cows as the domesticated animals were not big milk producing animals and people were not familiar with them and did not approve of drinking their milk.

The Zo people were fond of hunting during the lean season of cultivation. The animals were killed either by beating the jungle, shooting or trapping them. Hunters were to abstain themselves from women before a hunting expedition. They also believed that menstruating women were dangerous as they would displease the animals of the jungle. In other societies also we often find that menstruating women were kept separate and were considered to be dirty. Similarly in the Zo society, hunters would not touch a menstruating woman before they went for hunting as they considered that they would be unlucky in their venture. This was the result of patriarchal thoughts which assumed that menstruating women were dirty and should

17 Carey & Tuck, op. cit. p.180
18 F.K.Lehman, op. cit. p.173
not pollute other people. This is a restriction of sexuality. Hunting was necessary for them not only to procure meat for the family but also to gain social status and prestige. According to their belief, some animals were to be killed in order for the hunter and the wife to enter paradise after their death. They also believed that the animals which they killed during their lifetime would follow them in paradise and that they would be regarded as a great person. When animals were killed it was considered to be a time for rejoicing. They celebrated when a hunter was successful in shooting big games and also some other animals like deer. So hunting for the people helped them to procure meat for their daily food. It also offered them a social and economic status and helped them in spiritual fulfillment. However hunters avoided shooting black monkey and the loris as they were considered to be “ill-omened animals”. They also used to display the antlers and heads of the animals which they have killed, at the varandah of their house but the head of the tiger was never displayed.

Besides hunting, the Zo people were also fond of fishing. Villagers did not claim water rights to the streams running through their boundaries. To catch fish, the people shot them with gun and bow; caught them in bamboo traps and with cast nets; poisoned them; tickled them and also by draining off the stream into other channels and then baling out the deep pools. However the most common way to catch fish was by poisoning the water by using the sap of certain creepers.

**Trade:** Although the Zo people were involved in agriculture and could procure their supply of meat from the forest yet trade was an important part of the social life of the

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19 *ibid.*, p.183
20 Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.217
Zo people. Trade amongst them may be divided into two heads – internal and external. In the pre-British period, prior to monetised economy, trade was done by barter system. However in the post-British period, as money began to be circulated, cash was slowly used. But it should be noted that barter system was used for a very long time. The internal trade as mentioned was confined to barter system.\(^{21}\) There were some villages that specialised in a particular craft such as the Khuahrang villagers who were skilled in making pots.\(^{22}\) These pots were made by women which signified that women were highly skilled and they could make the pots not only for their family use but also for selling to other villages. Though there were some people who made these pots at all seasons of the year but they were mostly produced during the lean period of agriculture. This was so because they had the time to work without taking time off from farming and also because the men of the village could travel about selling their pottery. It was also seen that the Laizo villages used to sell their finished products such as blankets.\(^{23}\) These blankets were casually sold by travellers who were actually on other business. Thus in the Chin Hills, there were villages specializing in production of certain artisan wares but as seen in the earlier chapter, in Mizoram there were no villages specializing in specific crafts.

The various industries were purely domestic industries and goods were manufactured by women. Men did not weave blankets nor did they make pottery. However selling these manufactured goods were done by men. It could be said that women did not go around the countryside selling their wares mostly because women were confined to their villages and were supposed to look after the household and

\(^{21}\) Foreign, External A, September 1890, Nos. 64-66
\(^{22}\) F.K.Lehman, \textit{op. cit.}, p.161
\(^{23}\) H.N.C.Stevenson, \textit{op. cit.}, p.104
had many chores in their hands. Thus women were confined to their village and they
did not have control over the things which they themselves made through hard
labour. The goods which they made were sold by men and so they had no decision
making role. Moreover since they hardly went to other places, their mobility was
also restricted.

The Zo people also had external trade relations with the plain people of
Burma and India. The most important articles imported were salt and iron. Salt trade
was carried out by the Falam chiefs with the Sawbwa of Kale.\textsuperscript{24} Iron was imported in
the form of raw ingots, knives, and other tools which the Zo smiths forged or re-
forged them into tools for their various needs.\textsuperscript{25} According to Lehman, brass, bell
metal, aluminium and silver was also brought from Burma or India. These metals
and the products made out of them constituted the people's heirloom goods and were
used in all formal exchange transactions. Carey and Tuck also mentioned that round
bell metal gongs which were regarded in high esteem by the Zo were also imported
from the plains of Burma. In a later period, the brass and metal pots which were also
highly valued and which constituted as important in paying bride price were brought
from India through the Lusei people. These metals which were imported were used
for different purposes and some of them were even melted for women's jewellery.
Other items of import were silk thread, coloured cotton yarn, yaw plaids, beads and
in times of scarcity rice.

As there was no money economy, commodities which were imported were
exchanged for some other goods. The Zo people who grew maize used to save the

\textsuperscript{24} Carey & Tuck, \textit{op cit.}, p.214
\textsuperscript{25} F.K.Lehman, \textit{op cit.}, p.166
husks and sell them to Burma, where it was used to wrap the large cheroots smoked by Burman women. They also gathered beeswax and sticky lac and similar jungle products to sell in Burma. They even used to raid the Burmans and hold them to ransom in order to get the things that they needed. The horns of deer and other animals were also exported. The most valuable were tusks of elephants and the horns of the rhinoceros.

**Various Customs of the Zo**

**Marriage:** The youth of the Laizo or the Zo in general in the Chin Hills were quite free to mix with each other. They often worked together in the fields and also in collecting firewood and other things. Boys used to visit a girl in her house in the evening. The girl had to always make the boys happy. Even though she may be tired and was in need of rest, she had to serve the boys and the boys would often ask her to light their pipes for them. Boys were also free to sleep in the house of a girl they fancied. Sometimes boys of around 10 to 15 were often seen to sleep at a particular girl’s house. This was because boys did not have a *zawlbuk* or bachelor’s dormitory as was seen among the Mizo and there were no restrictions of their movement in their village. On the other hand, girls were not supposed to roam around and especially in the evening they were all supposed to stay at home.

From F.K. Lehman’s work we learn that the different tribes of the people are patriarchal and patrilineal. Most of the people follow monogamous marriage while the chiefs and some aristocrats often have more than one wife. If a man had more than one wife, the first wife is regarded to be the true wife and she was also superior

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26 Information of these aspects of Laizo society has been collected from, besides other sources, interviews with some persons from their society, eg in an interview with Renlopari of Taisun Village, Chin Hills on 7th May 2005 in Lunglei.

27 Interview with Mr. L. Thawng from Falam, Myanmar on 21.2.2001 in Lunglei.
to the other wives and could even take part in the family religious rites. The men could marry their mother's brother's daughter but they were completely forbidden to marry a father's sister's daughter.\(^{28}\) Though the youths especially the girls may have a secret love for someone, finding a life partner for them was usually in the hands of the parents.\(^{29}\) Hence marriages were usually arranged by the parents of the young man, who searched for a good girl for their son. The essence of being a good match did not consist in face and form but the girl's character which was judged by the character of her work in the fields and in the house.\(^{30}\) When looking for a prospective daughter-in-law, they also preferred 'one who did not have a reputation as a lover of fine food'.\(^{31}\) They also looked whether the girl's family had many sons as they wanted a wife who would produce sons for them.\(^{32}\) Preference of sons over daughters reveals that men were regarded to be superior to women. If a girl was a good tiller of the soil and good in household chores she was regarded to be a good match. If she was found to be suitable, ambassadors or intermediaries were sent to the parents of the girl with some pots of beer and they proposed marriage to the parents. The price of the girl was discussed over the beer. Discussion of the price was very important for them because the girl was an important asset in her father's house who performed all the household duties and in the fields, and if anyone else wanted to take her away, compensation must be paid to the parents. This highlights the fact that a girl was considered to be something like a owned property or just an

\(^{28}\) F.K. Lehman, *op. cit.*, p.123. This particular information was gathered and this is corroborated by Renlopari from Taisun Village, Chin Hills who came to Lunglei and was interviewed on 7\(^{th}\) May 2005.

\(^{29}\) Duh Cung Nung, *Lai Nuphungh*, (Falam, 2001) p.23

\(^{30}\) Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.189


\(^{32}\) Duh Cung Nung, *op. cit.*, p.23
important asset to be used for working only. So parents practically sold their daughters to be wives and love was not taken into consideration at all. On the other hand, Lehman says that 'marriage payments are not a simple return for a wife and or rights over the offspring she will bear. Rather, they are earnest money, indicative of further payments to come. Bride wealth pays, in a sense, not for the marriage as such but for the right to an alliance with the wife-giver and his agnates.' This comment of Lehman will be discussed later. If the parents refuse to accept the proposal, they return the pots of beer which they had received from the boy’s parents.

The value of the marriage price demanded varied according to the girl’s own physical perfection, character and the social status of her parents. Social status was determined by the fame of the paternal line and the number of Feasts of Merit the girl’s father had given. The marriage price was divided into two parts – the manpi or main price and the mante or lesser price. The manpi varied from one small mithun for a poor man’s child to seven full grown mithun in the case of a beautiful and hardworking daughter of the Chief. The recipient of the manpi was usually the bride’s mother’s brother or the brother of the bride called pu. The units of the manpi were siate (young mithun), siapi (cow mithun) and nufa (a cow mithun and its calf). The mante consisted of a number of other payments to the bride’s family which were distributed among the girl’s relatives. They in turn had to bring something for the bride such as some animals to be killed or ornaments for her. They also were responsible for her well-being later on. The mante was calculated according to the

33 Carey & Tuck, op. cit.
34 F.K.Lehman, op. cit., p.125
35 H.N.C.Stevenson, op. cit., p.123
36 Mithun and such other animals are not paid in kind anymore but is paid more or less in cash and distributed among the girl’s relatives.
*manpi.* Wife’s families were also obliged to provide assistance in the form of grain beer and food when their wife-givers performed one of the major feasts.

If the parents accepted the proposal of the young man, a day was fixed, and his parents gave a feast to the whole village, to which the girl’s families were also invited. The bride was then brought to the boy’s house, and on the way a number of clothes were laid along the path. These clothes were a gift to the bride. The priest then killed a fowl and examined the liver, and announced whether the spirits have approved or disapproved the marriage. If the first fowl which was killed was not found to be favourable, a second fowl was again killed which, more often than not was found to be favourable. The girl was then to enter the house and the women watched her entering the house and note which foot enters first and what she first said and did, and they prophesied good and bad according to her behaviour. The marriage ceremony was then over and the people were more concerned with their drinking spree and continue till late at night. The feast could even last for many days according to the wealth of the family. The couple did not sleep together on the first night. The bride slept with her friends and the bridegroom also with his friends.37 From the second night, the couple would sleep together. A bride must take with her a number of ornaments which were considered to be valuable at that time. She also had to take her personal belongings, tools for working in the fields and other things which were considered to be required by her. She also must take as gift to the grooms sisters at least ten *taiaawk* cord belts and a number of *tirdawh* metal pipe-

37 Interview with Renlopari from Taisun, Myanmar on 7th May, 2005 in Lunglei. Also Duh Cung Nung, *op.cit.*, p. 33
cleaners. These were distributed among the real sisters and cousins of the groom. The number of these gifts varied directly with the value of the manpi.

The people who received manpi and mante as mentioned were obliged to support and help the couple whenever the need arose. At the birth of the first child, the recipient of the manpi had to give a feast in the baby's honour when he first went to see the baby. He may take a fowl or a pig according to the amount of the manpi he had received. The pig also had to be at least three fists in girth. The bride's family also had to give gifts of grain to the groom or to his father as these were known as rual han (grain basket). The pu also should aid and protect the child (tu). He must at all times offer his tu food, lodging and economic assistance in times of distress.

Since residence is both virilocal and neolocal, a married man may at first live with his parents, but if he was not the youngest, they build their own house soon after their marriage or after the first child had been born. This was also because the youngest son inherits the house site of his father. After a married man established a house for him and his family, he would not built a full house but rather almost a wattle house. Over the years, he would accumulate things for the family and if he could afford he may perform a series of sacrifices whereby he could establish his house as a ceremonial entity.

After getting married, if the man gets tired of his wife or wanted to marry another girl he could easily get rid of his wife by telling her to go away. If a man divorced his wife, he could not recover the price he paid as a bride price. On the

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38 H.N.C. Stevenson, op. cit., p.122
39 ibid., p.128
40 ibid., p.126
41 F.K. Lehman, op. cit., p.121
42 ibid., p.178. Also mentioned by Renlopari from Taisun, Myanmar on 7th May, 2005 in Lunglei.
other hand, if the woman was the one to divorce her husband and left him at her free will, the bride price had to be returned back to the husband. However it can be noted that this law was there in theory but in reality it could be assumed that women hardly left their husband at her free will because women did not return back the bride price. So even if the wife wanted to divorce her husband, she could not do so, as she could not afford to return back all the things such as mithuns, gongs etc which was paid to her father as her bride price. But if the wife was mal-treated by the husband, she may leave him and he could not claim the price he paid for her. Children born to them during their married life belonged to the father in case of separation or divorce and the mother had no claim to her children.\(^43\) If a woman committed adultery, the husband could forgive or divorce her. The husband had such a claim over her that if he desired, the wife could be made to leave the house without any of her personal properties such as her clothes, earrings and necklaces.\(^44\) On the other hand, Carey & Tuck have mentioned that though a husband can divorce his wife for adultery, he loses the price that he paid for her. Hence he instead tried to make the seducer pay him compensation, but this was rarely paid as they were averse to the shedding of blood over the virtue of women.\(^45\) At feasts, when men and women drink and get drunk, adultery was considered to be no offence and was regarded as a mistake which anyone could commit.

In the family, men were the head of the house and all decisions were taken by him. He was supposed to protect the family from danger and construction of house was entirely his responsibility. On the other hand, women were solely responsible

\(^43\) Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.210
\(^44\) Khup Za Go, *op. cit.*, p.18
\(^45\) Carey & Tuck, *op. cit.*, p.207
for all the household chores. Cooking was always done by women. They also had to bring the firewood from the forest. While coming back from the jhum they never went empty-handed but bring back food for the pigs and firewood while men often go empty handed behind the women. They rose very early and pounded the rice and start cooking. While cooking, they very often went to the wells or springs to fetch water. All the works which were done in the house, except some repairs of the house, were done by women. Men hardly looked after the children and if the mother had to go out to the jhum, the younger child was looked after by an elder sister who was still too young to work in the jhum or grandparents who were too old to go out. The women were also supposed to smoke continually not only for the sake of smoke but mainly to supply the men with nicotine.

The Zo people in these hills had a saying that “a man should drink, fight and hunt, and the portion for women and slaves is work.” Accordingly, they were quite fond of assembling together and drinking. They also had many occasions for feasts in which animals were killed and pots of beer or liquor were consumed. When a man was successful in his hunting and brought home the animals, that was an occasion for a celebration which was incomplete without a feast and liquor. Relatives visiting from other villages also called for a celebration. When a person died, the relatives had to give a feast and provide liquor as a remembrance to the departed soul. They also had a series of feasts which a person had to give to the whole village so that he could attain a status of honour. The most important feast which a person could give to attain social prestige was the khuangcawi feast. The khuangcawi feast needed a lot

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46 Interview with Renlopari on 7th May 2005 in Lunglei and Thawng on 21st Feb.2001 in Lunglei
47 G.A.Grierson, op.cit., 57
48 Carey & Tuck, op. cit., p.186
of preparation and took several days to perform. In the initial stage of the feast, smaller animals such as pigs, chickens, goats were sacrificed to all the *khuachia* spirits and to the house spirits. However in the major sacrifices one or more mithuns were needed to be offered. The meat was eaten by the people of the village and guests from other villages. Any meat that was left over from the feast was distributed to all the houses in the village.⁴⁹ In these festivities women had to prepare the liquor being consumed and if there was a dance, women were expected to take part in it. However, they were never the ones who would decide that a celebration or a feast would be given. They merely followed the dictates of their menfolk and take part in the various celebrations and festivals.

### Burial custom

Amongst the Zo people it was their custom to bury their dead. However the way a corpse was treated is different for the chiefs or wealthy persons and a commoner. The custom of burial could also differ among those who died a natural death and those who died by accident and those who died during child birth. Infants who died before they attained their first birthday were called *hlamzuih* and they were kept inside a pot and buried under the house. They also kept a boiled egg with the corpse so that the egg would guide the baby to the abode of the dead.⁵⁰ Women who died during child birth had to be buried on the same day that she died. An axe was buried along with her so that she would clear the way to the place of the dead as her way was considered to be strewn with branches and obstacles would be there. In the evening after her burial, unmarried girls would go to the riverside and perform a dance called *Cherawkan* as a farewell to the departed soul. Other persons

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⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.188
⁵⁰ H.L.C.A, *op. cit*, p.275
who died after attaining one year were all bathed as they believed that the corpse would smell of living beings and would not be able to enter the place of the dead.\textsuperscript{51} They were then dressed in their best clothes and decorated with whatever they possessed and the corpse was kept in a sitting position inside the house. Those who died a natural death were buried near the house as they did not have a separate cemetery. However some persons who died of some other causes were buried outside the village. If the dead person had killed an enemy, he was made to wear a turban. If he had sexual relationship with a married woman, he was made to wear the black feather of a cock.\textsuperscript{52} If he had slept with two sisters, he was made to wear two white feathers of a cock.\textsuperscript{53} They did this to show that the person had performed something great or unusual. If the dead person was a chief, the corpse was kept in a coffin and a fire was lit under it. A pipe was inserted in the coffin and the waste or the liquid from the body was drained off. This was done to dry the body and after a month the bones were taken and buried. While the corpse was still in the house the family had to feed the whole village. If the dead person was someone who was prominent and had given feasts of merit, the relatives had to kill several animals and many pots of liquor to feed the people who had come to pay their respect and console the family. The feast sometimes lasted for several days and so the family had to spend a lot of their resources on it.

Inheritance: In the family, the youngest son who looked after the parents and the household was the one to inherit the house, lands, cattle and all the properties of

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\textsuperscript{51} Duh Cung Nung, \textit{op.cit.}, p.115
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{ibid}
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the father. The heir had to support the other members of the family if they were still unmarried and living under the same roof. A leper (a later identification), or one who was dumb, deaf and blind or had other physical deformities also could not inherit the property as they were regarded to be incapable of carrying out the normal duties of life. If a widower who had two wives and had children by both the wives should die, the property was divided between the youngest son of each wife, that of the first wife taking all the property which the father was supposed to have possessed until he married the second time, and that of the second wife taking all the property which the father acquired during the second marriage. If there was only one son by both the wives, he could possess everything. If a man was childless he could choose his own heir. However he had to first consult his paternally related males to give him a son to adopt and help him in his house and if the request was refused, he could select anyone he liked, even a slave and install him as his rightful heir. In adopting a heir, a Zo man would always look for a boy as girls could not inherit anything so boys were always preferred.

In case of chiefs, the elder sons were expected to build their own villages, from which they received tithes but they had to pay taxes to their father during his lifetime and after his death to their younger brother since he became the head of the family and tribe. Properties of women were the ornaments and clothes she brought with her as a bride, her other clothes, hoe, pipe and spinning and weaving apparatus. In general women could not inherit any of the properties of her father while she could inherit her mother’s personal properties. After being married, if her husband

54 Carey & Tuck, op. cit., p.209
55 ibid p.209-210
56 ibid
died before they had a child, she returned to her father's home and she could take only half of her property and the remaining half went to her husband's heir.\(^57\) If the husband died after they had a child, the wife could remain in her husband's house and do all the necessary works in the house and in the field and look after the children. However, the man next in line of inheritance after the deceased's children was usually appointed as *ro veng* which means guardian of inheritance. If the widow was thought to misuse the deceased husband's property, she was often challenged in the village courts. If she happened to have a lover, the *ro veng* could turn her out of the house and take over both the property and the children.\(^58\) If she happened to be divorced by her husband without any fault of hers, she could take all her personal properties, half the cotton and two-thirds of the cotton thread and one-third of the total grain in the house and in the field.\(^59\) If a married woman died before having a child, her personal properties were equally divided between her husband and her closest male relative. An elder brother could also claim the widow of his brother for his wife whether he was married or not. The widow however had the option to accept or refuse the proposal. Since she would then be an inferior wife (second wife) so the proposal was usually refused. If the proposal was rejected, she had to return to her father's or nearest male relatives.

**Slavery:** Among the Zo tribes in Burma, there were two types of slaves — those who had been captured by force in the wars and they were known as *sal*. There were other slaves and they were those who had submitted because of poverty or crimes they have committed, to the chiefs or other wealthy persons or those born of

\(^{57}\) H.N.C. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p.166  
\(^{58}\) *ibid* p.173  
\(^{59}\) *ibid* p.166
slavery and these section of slaves were called *bawifa.* However slaves in this region were not treated like slaves are generally expected to be. Although slaves could be killed by their masters and that female slaves could be taken as concubines by the chiefs if they so wished, bad treatment of the slaves was rare and they usually were taken to be a member of the family. Slaves had to work like any other men for their living, but their work was neither long nor arduous. All that they earned belonged to the master but the food of the slaves and their masters were the same except in times of scarcity. He also slept in the house but he did not marry. He could have an affair or a child by other slaves but they were not married. Moreover slaves could free themselves by paying a certain price or if they could repay the debt which they owed to their masters.

Submission of slavery could be due to accumulated debts which the person could not pay and therefore agreed to become the slave of the lender until he repaid the debt, which could not often be paid. If a man was caught stealing he often gave his daughter or son to slavery until he paid some 20 times the amount of whatever he stole. A man fleeing from his enemy, or from debt, or from punishment would ask to be accepted as a slave in return for protection and food.

Women slaves as mentioned earlier could be taken as concubines by the chiefs and their children were also regarded as slaves. They could not marry and had to do everything to please their masters. Thus they had no freedom and sometimes they were even forcibly taken as slaves if they were very poor. Hence women who had no one to depend on were in danger of being taken as slaves.

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60 Duh Cung Nung, *op. cit.,* p.177
61 Carey & Tuck, *op.cit.,* pp.203-204
62 *ibid*
Religion:

The Zo in Burma believed in the existence of supernatural beings who controlled their lives and production and could even bring disaster or illness upon them. The beliefs and the names of the spirits differed among the various tribes but the general beliefs and practices of the Zo is studied. The Zo believed that there was a Supreme God called *Kozin* who lived in the heavens. However they did not worship the *Kozin* but was believed to rule over everything. *Kozin* does not denote any specific gender and so it can be said to be a neuter gender. *Khuachia* were the bad spirits and resided in large rocks, springs and other significant places. They could cause illnesses. Some *khuachia* were also found near the village site and were supposed to be the village guardians. They therefore had to be propitiated with sacrifices at regular intervals and when the people thought that misfortune fell on them due to the wrath of the *khuachia*. The Zo also believed that there were certain gods who inhabited the village sacrificial places and some who protect houses, families and individuals. They also had the belief that all these spirits could be placated with food and liquor. Communication could be established by means of various sacrifices offered by the priests or by the head of the household for which mithun, pigs, fowls, goats and dogs were killed as per the occasion. The meat offered to the spirits was only a small portion of the animal such as the liver, the head or the legs with some cups of liquor (*zu*). The other portions of meat were eaten by the family members and the priest.

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63 *ibid*, p.197
64 Vumson, *op. cit.*, p.16
The sacrifices or the religious ceremonies could be classified into three groups - personal, household and communal. Personal sacrifices were offered to the guardian spirit so that a newborn child may be safe. Some of the sacrifices were for appeasement of ancestor’s spirits, to protect against sorcery, to cure sickness and to avert death by accident. The household sacrifice took place in a definite series and it was often for general prosperity in the household and after the Feasts of Merit. The personal and household sacrifices were not very expensive as animals which were to be killed were usually fowls, cock and pigs. The communal sacrifices were made when the village had to take up a new land for agriculture which was often after three or six years. There were also sacrifices to make the village, resting place and the village spring clean. Another sacrifice was also made communally after the harvest of the grains after the first year of a new field. The communal sacrifices were to be conducted by the village priest and all the expenses for the sacrifices in which a mithun and some pigs that were killed were borne by the whole villagers. When household and personal sacrifices were held, the family should not be disturbed. To show that the sacrifice was being held, a bunch of green leaves were hung at the entrance of the house. During the day they were also not supposed to talk to anyone nor could they do any work. When communal sacrifices were held, the village gates were closed and a green branch would be hung at the gate, so that anyone trying to come to the village would know that it was a taboo to enter and would rather go to some other village. In most of these sacrifices, women did not take part in the sacrifices nor did they eat the meat of the animals killed. Though

65 H.N.C. Stevenson, op. cit., pp.157-158
66 Foreign External A. September 1890, Nos.64-66
67 Carey & Tuck, op. cit., p.199
none of the writers or the people interviewed knew the reason for the exclusion of
women in the sacrifices, yet it could be said that this was done as women did not
have any space in the proper religious sphere. They were relegated to the
background and since they were regarded as inferiors, they were not given the
chance to take part in the sacrifices. Women were also regarded to be so low that the
meat of the animals sacrificed were not eaten by them.

The Zo people believed in life after death. They had the belief that after a
person died, its spirit went to pial rang or mitthi khua. A person could enter pial
rang which was in heaven only by great effort through the Feast of Merit and
Celebration. Women could not enter pial rang by her efforts alone, she could enter
the place only through her husband. If the husband had performed the Feast of Merit,
then she could enter pial rang. Mitthi khua on the other hand was below the earth
and was placed for the commoners and women also could easily enter it. They
believed that the spirits retains in death the rank attained in life. All spirits passed
through a certain pass and there the spirits were examined whereby their earthly
status was established and the place to which they would go was determined. Apart
from performing the great feasts, good deeds and bad deeds did not seem to affect
them after their death. They believed that when a person is murdered, the spirit
cannot enter the place of the dead but remains restless and hovers near the earth until
the death is avenged. After the blood has been avenged, the spirit can happily go to
the allotted place. However the spirit of the slain becomes the slave or the servant of
the slayer even if the death is avenged. They also believed that all the spirits of the
animals which are killed by a person and the animals slaughtered at the various

68 ibid p.196
feasts of merits would be theirs in the place of the dead. They also believed that the enemies they have killed would be their slaves if they perform a certain ritual for it. The Zo also had the belief a person can be born again as an animal, insect or even as another human being.

Thus the Zo people in the Chin Hills remained isolated and lived according to their beliefs and traditions for a long time. However in 1886, the British annexed Upper Burma and captured Thibaw, the King of Burma and later extended the British empire to the Burmese western borders and occupied the Kale and Yaw valleys. In the initial stage the British had no intention of colonizing the Zo country as the land was barren and had no commercial usefulness. However in 1887, British administrative officer Captain Raikes sent messengers to the chiefs of Sukte, Kamhaw, Sizang, Falam and Halkha asking them for a meeting. A meeting was then held in which there were some topics of discussion in which the most important was to stop raids within the territory. This was one of the reasons why the British wanted to subdue the Zo chiefs. The British put forward the excuse that they had to provide security for their enterprises in the plains and as the Zo often used to raid and plunder the plains, the British wanted to put a stop to it. However the Zo chiefs and the people were not ready to readily submit to the British and several incidents occurred between them. Expeditions were then sent to the hills and as a result the Zo people submitted to the British authority in 1896 and the area became known as indirect administered areas. The entire hill of the Zo people of Burma was divided into three parts – Paletwa was in the north Arakan Hills district; Matupi, Mindat and

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69 Vumson, op. cit., p.113
70 W.S.Desai, A Pageant of Burmese History, (Calcutta, 1961) p.246
71 F.S.V.Donnison, Burma, London, 1970) p.82
Kanpetlet in the Pakokku district and Tedim, Falam and Halkha were in the Chin Hills District. The British did not interfere much in the social and economic system of the people. They also preserved most of the customary laws. However the entry of foreigners and being administered by another government which brought new laws and other measures was bound to make some changes in the society.

The British government then appointed Administrative Officers to look after the hills and there was not much interference and other people rarely visited the hills. The people who came into contact with them were the Zo from Lushai hills and the Chins from the plains or the Burmese who came mostly for trade. However after the British administered the hills for some years, Rev. Arthur Carson who was a member of the American Baptist Mission came to evangelize the Zo. He arrived in 1899 and settled at Halkha.\(^72\) The Carsons dedicated themselves for education, evangelism, literature, agriculture and other kinds of development programs.\(^73\) He then used his economic and medical knowledge to win the people. He also created a written language for the Zo people and translated the New Testament of the Bible. He opened a school in Halkha with the help of some Karen teachers. In the initial stage, the medium of instruction used in the schools were Burmese. The Carsons were later joined by Dr East in 1902 but he had to go back home for medical reasons. He later returned with his new bride in 1904. His wife Emily worked especially among the Zo women and children.\(^74\) Rev.Cope and his wife also came to Halkha in 1910 but later moved to Tedim. Cope was dedicated to education and literature of the Zo people. In fact, the government appointed him as an Honorary Inspector of Schools

\(^72\) Rev.Dr.Chum Awi “In Search of the Lost Souls of the Chins” in www.burmalibrary.org/rg.burma/archives 
\(^73\) ibid
\(^74\) www.temple-baptist.com/history/east
He also wrote text books to be taught in the schools. As the Zo people in Chin hills used different dialects, he wrote the text books in three languages – Halkha, Laizo and Kamhau languages respectively. In 1911, Dr Woodin and his wife came to Hakha as physicians of Hakha Mission hospital. They were again joined by Rev. Chester U Strait and his wife and Rev. Johnson and his wife. The last missionaries left the hills in 1947 when they were evicted by the Revolutionary Military government of the Union of Burma.  

Christianity was not readily accepted by the Zo in the Chin hills. The first converts were Thuam Hang and Pau Suan and they were baptized in 1905 by Dr. East. In 1907 there were only 12 Chin Christians gathering together for a meeting and it was called First Chin Baptist Association. After twenty five years, in 1926 only 450 men and 376 women were registered as Christians. One of the reasons for the people to be reluctant to be converted into Christianity as mentioned by Stevenson was because the missionaries prohibited them from drinking zu. Zu as mentioned before was an integral part of the Zo life. They believed that their function or occasion for celebration or mourning would be incomplete if they did not drink zu. So when the missionaries advocated that Christians should abstain from the various feasts of merit and zu, the people had the belief that they enjoyed life in their traditional religion and had the idea that Christianity would be a bore without zu.

Moreover the Zo said that their own god khuazing had blessed them and even after their death they would be in pial rang with all the best food and so they need

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76 Rev.Dr. Chum Awi, *op. cit.*
77 Dr. Vumson, *op. cit.*, p.144
They were content with their life as the chiefs and other prominent persons had all the things to enjoy themselves during their lifetime. Even in their funeral customs they feasted and drank for many days. So in the initial stage, the prominent persons did not want to convert to Christianity and those who were converted were the commoners especially the poor and the destitutes.\(^7\)

It was also stated by B.Lalthangliana that one of the reasons for the people to remain loyal to their old religion was because they saw no difference between the missionaries and the British administrators who were all white skinned.\(^8\) They were not happy with the government as they regarded the British as a power which dominated over them and who took the local powers from the natives. So when the missionaries came to the hills they were viewed with suspicion.

Another reason for the slow growth of Christianity was the spread of Pau Cin Hau’s teachings. Pau Cin Hau was born in 1859 at Tedim.\(^9\) He was said to have founded a new religion called \textit{lawki}.\(^3\) His teachings were quite similar to the old traditional beliefs. However he was against the elaborate and expensive sacrifices and funeral rites. As he had been to Lushai hills, he also had heard about the teachings of Christianity and so some Christian beliefs were also incorporated in his teachings. But he was in favour of drinking \textit{zu} and this was much appreciated by the people. He also developed a script and it was the first time that the Zo people had their own script. His script had around 1050 alphabets and using the script he even

\(^7\) Pu Duh Cung Nung, \textit{op. cit.}, p.275
\(^8\) \textit{ibid.}, p.276
\(^9\) B.Lalthangliana, \textit{op. cit.}, p.682
\(^3\) Duh Cung Nung, \textit{op. cit.}, p.267
\(^4\) Vumson, \textit{op. cit.}, p.148
wrote six books.\textsuperscript{84} He was also regarded to be able to cure the sick thereby influencing a lot of people that many became his followers. But slowly his teachings died down and by 1975 he had few followers who were still faithful to him and that was especially in Tiddim areas.

The missionaries especially the pioneer missionaries of the American Baptist Mission were involved in trying to develop the people and were responsible for introducing education. As mentioned earlier, Carson opened the first school. After he died his wife Laura continued the work. She wrote a book for the other missionaries, taught in the school and continued medical works also. She tried her best to work for the Zo women by teaching the women about hygiene and other things that were beneficial for them. She translated some portions of the Bible and also translated 126 hymns to the Halkha Lai dialect and published an English-Halkha Dictionary. \textsuperscript{85} Besides these, she wrote the \textit{Lairam Htawk Tsaok} (A Primer of the Lai Dialect of the Chin Language) and \textit{Jesuha nun chung bia} (A life of Jesus).\textsuperscript{86} Dr. East opened the first dispensary in Halkha which proved to be beneficial for the people. Rev. Cope with his interests in language was quite fast in learning the language. He studied the various dialects in the hills and reduced the Tiddim-Kamhau and Falam-Laizo language into writing in 1924.\textsuperscript{87} With his knowledge of the language, he too translated some portions of the Bible in Laizo dialect. He wrote several text books which were taught in the schools. The books were \textit{A Chin Primer in the Sizang Dialect, No.1, Nate Thu Bu} (General Science) for Class I – IV, \textit{Cindamna Thu Bu} (Hygiene) for Class II – IV, \textit{Ganan Bu} (Arithmetic) for Class I – IV and \textit{Zolai Sim}

\textsuperscript{84} Duh Cung Nung, \textit{op. cit.}, p.269
\textsuperscript{85} B.Lalithangliana, \textit{op. cit.}, p.683-684
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{87} Duh Cung Nung, \textit{op. cit.}, p.253
Bu (A Primer of Tiddim-Kamhau) for Class I – IV. He translated the New Testament into the Kamhau language.

Education was therefore started by the missionaries but the government also tried to help the workings of the missionaries. The government in 1905 gave an annual grant of Rs. 107/- for education in Chin hills. The first Government Primary School was also opened at Falam in 1906. By 1910 there were about 10 schools opened by the missionaries and all of them received a grant of Rs. 70/-. The first Middle School was opened at Halkha in 1913 and had about 30 students. In these schools which were opened, girls did not benefit from them as they were not allowed by their parents to enter schools and this would be discussed later.

From the inception of education in the hills, the medium of instruction was in Burmese and this continued till 1925. This was because the Administrative Officers in Chin Hills thought it better to impart Burmese language to the people as there were a lot of different dialects. It has also been said that the Zo people had even taken lessons from Burman Interpreters as almost their entire trade was with the plains and as Burmese was the language of the market, they had the desire to learn Burmese. However in 1923 there was a discussion of the future of education in the hills. In this meeting, it was decided that all the teachings and writings should be done in Roman script and the medium of instruction would be in the local or vernacular language. The second language would be English and medium of instruction in Burmese was to be stopped.

This created a lot of controversy among

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88 ibid
89 ibid
90 Confidential, No.B/2127, No.24 of 1902. E.O.Fowler, Offg.Superintendent, Chin Hills, 14th June 1902
the people. In spite of this, the number of schools and students increased and in 1931 there were 31 schools. The first person from the Chin Hills to finish matriculation was Hau Za Cin Paua in 1931 and the first person to graduate from Laizo was Siah Luai in 1938.\textsuperscript{92}

Besides the American Baptist Mission there were a lot of other Christian denominations like the Anglican Church, Presbyterian, Seventh Day and Roman Catholics who worked in the Chin Hills. They all have contributed to the spread of education in the Hills.

When the schools were first opened, people were quite reluctant to go to school to receive education. The youths were also hesitant as they did not know the value of education and likewise the parents also saw education as a means of wasting their time. They wanted their children to help in the jhum and go for hunting or for some other things which they considered to be worthy from their perspective. The government then ordered that all village chiefs or headmen should send some students to the schools. Moreover, it was also decided that the chiefs’ son should receive education. So the first students were mostly the sons of the chiefs or the council of elders who were forced to go to schools.\textsuperscript{93} As the families did not have the extra surplus to pay for the fees and their food, it was decided that the village should pay for their needs. Hence the villagers used to collect grains and firewood for the students.\textsuperscript{94} At the initial stage it was mostly the sons who were sent to school. Girls also wanted to be literate but the idea that the parents had was that girls should stay

\textsuperscript{92} Duh Cung Nung, \textit{op. cit.}, p.254
\textsuperscript{93} H.L.C.A, \textit{op. cit.}, p.149
\textsuperscript{94} \textit{ibid}
at home and do all the necessary household chores and also help in the fields. They regarded that school would make them useless in the house and they would not be able to find a suitable husband. Parents did not want their daughters to be educated as they thought that schools would make them useless to do their works at home and in the fields. They also thought that educated girls would not get husbands. However as time passed girls also slowly got the privilege of being sent to school. However after finishing high school, since there was no college in the hills, they had to go to the plains to graduate. This meant a lot of expenditure for the family and parents were not willing to spend a lot on their daughters. So girls receiving higher education were scarce. However sons of the well to do were sent to the plains and received higher education. As girls did not receive higher education, there were few jobs offered to them. Some of the girls were sent for college courses but they were very few. Moreover, most of the girls who went out of the hills to receive education were mostly trained as nurses. Therefore it can be seen that education in the hills was quite biased. Boys could get higher education which means better jobs while girls had to work in the lower ranks.

One of the significant changes brought about by the British administration was the position of the chiefs. Earlier there were the tribal chiefs who were known as mi uk in Falam and ukpi in Halkha region. They were the over all chiefs of all his clans. Under his suzerainty there were village chiefs. These village chiefs had to pay certain tribute to the tribal chiefs. After 1922 the government issued an order that only the tribal chiefs would be known as ‘chiefs’ and the village chiefs as

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95 Interview with Mr. L. Thawng from Falam, Myanmar on 21st Feb. 2001 in Lunglei
96 ibid
The tribal chiefs also became more powerful and could fine an offender up to Rs. 50/-. All the villagers had to pay some portion of their grains to the tribal chiefs and this proved to be a burden for the villagers who were far away as there were no proper roads. Some of the earlier dues which the people had to pay to their chiefs were also done away with by the government.

Another change introduced by the government was the abolition of slavery. Slavery as mentioned earlier could be of different types. In spite of some slaves or bawi who were well treated by the owners or masters, the Deputy Commissioner of Falam issued a order on 23.4.1939 that all slaves could be freed. Those who wanted to be freed had to pay a mithun or Rs.60/- for the men and Rs.25/- for women. Thus many bawi became free persons. However there were some slaves who preferred to stay on with their masters. Thus slavery slowly became extinct in the Chin Hills.

Another change which took place in the hills is the dying of the various feasts of merit and drinking on different occasions. When money economy began to be introduced in the hills, cash became difficult to acquire and as they began to have more contact with the plains, the people wanted to accumulate cash. So instead of spending their hard earned surplus for feasting and feeding the whole village, they began to use the money for other purposes. Moreover when the people embraced Christianity, the missionaries encouraged the people to refrain from the various feasts of merit as they regarded it to be a heathen practice. Thus the Christians did not participate in the feasts and gradually people began to stop feasting the whole

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97 H.L.C.A, op. cit., p.153
98 "Slavery" Deputy Commissioner Office, Falam, Chin Hills, No.2V-2, p.21 in B.Lalthangliana, op. cit., p.674
village. Thus they abandoned their traditional feasts and sacrificial ceremonies which were associated with their past religion. According to Lian H. Sakhong, "These were the key social and ritual activities through which the transformation of identities and communities are accomplished." The Christian missionaries also taught the new converts that they should abstain themselves from drinking. Hence the Christian converts did not take part in the drinking bouts and they also stopped from making liquor. This habit slowly influenced the other people also. Though there are many people who still drink, they do not drink openly and so it can be said that drinking spree in which all the whole villagers used to participate was slowly done away with. This had its impact on women as men who were drunk often used to abuse their wives and so there was a lot of wife beating. However as they stopped drinking, these abuses were slowly done away with. Hence women were spared one source of abuse and could have some freedom for themselves.

The funeral system also changed. As already mentioned, in the earlier phase the people did not respond to Christianity with enthusiasm but at present about 98% of the Zo in Chin Hills are Christians. Since most of the Zo people are now Christians, the Christian custom of funeral is now followed. At present they do not practice slaughter of animals and the corpse is not put in the house for days. The corpse is usually buried in the same day or the next day. As the custom of feeding the whole village was not practiced anymore, the people need not spend a lot of resources on funeral rites and so they now could save their harvest.

99 Lian H. Sakhong, Religion and Politics Among the Chin People in Burma, (Uppsala University, 2000) p.344
100 Samuel N. Lynn, "Voices of Minority Ethnic Christians in Myanmar" in www.cca.org.hk/resources
The entry of western culture, Christianity and education also changed many of the lives of women. Prior to the advent of the British, women were confined to the house and in working in the fields. However as education slowly spread, women were enrolled in the schools and later many of them had their own jobs outside their home. Many of them became nurses and teachers. However, women officers were still very few. The professions which they often take up are nurses and clerks.¹⁰¹ So it is found that women who took up salaried jobs were often in the low rank and lesser paying works. In literacy rate, when compared to men, women's literacy rate is much lower. In the field of religion also, some of the women were educated in Theological Colleges and the church now has allowed the women to be ordained as ministers. Hence in the Chin Hills, women pastors are to be found. However these women pastors are all single women.¹⁰² Moreover these women pastors are all almost serving under the Baptist Church and there is no women pastor in the Presbyterian Church.¹⁰³ There are also women deacons and in the church meetings, women delegates are sent to represent the women wing. But even though they may be pastors and take part in all the religious affairs, the head of the churches are all men. So all important decisions are very often taken by the men and women had to follow the rules and regulations laid down by the men dominated church. In the sphere of politics there are no women politicians as yet. This can be because men do not appreciate women who take up politics and also because of the political situation in the country. As one looks into the present scenario and the traditional society, it appears that the situation has not changed much in the society as women were never

¹⁰¹ Interview with Ms.Lalbiaknem from Chekkhan, Myanmar on 30th April 2005 in Lunglei.
¹⁰² ibid
¹⁰³ Interview with Mr.Lalmuansanga from Tahan, Myanmar on 19th December 2005 in Lunglei
decision makers in the family and in the society and today also they are not the
decision makers. This could be due to the patriarchal thoughts and values which still
exist in the society in which men are the sole decision makers and that women had to
follow the dictates and terms laid down by men.

The political situation in Burma which greatly affect the lives of the Zo
people in Burma could be traced back to the pre-independence times of Burma.
When Burma was to gain independence from British, General Aung San, the leader
of the Anti-Fascist Freedom League (AFPL) wanted to incorporate the small pre-
British independent states of Shan, Karen, Kachin and Zo (Chins) into Burma. He
then called a meeting called the Panglong Conference with the representatives of
these small states. In this Conference, Aung San assured the representatives that ‘...
the Hill people would be allowed to administer their own areas in any way they
please and the Burmese would not interfere in their internal administration.’\textsuperscript{104} He
also knew that the Zo people wanted to retain their old customary laws and hence
made the Chin Hills an administrative division of Burma with special status called
the Chin Special Division.\textsuperscript{105} Thus the Zo people signed the Panglong Agreement on
February 1947 and thereby agreed to join the Union of Burma hoping that there
would be no racial or religious discrimination. However Aung San was soon
assasinated and the AFPFL was split into three factions. The hope of the Zo people
that there would be development, racial harmony and equal treatment also did not
materialise under the Prime Ministership of U Nu. This was because the Burmese
central government controlled education, finance, revenue, police, defense, foreign

\textsuperscript{104} New Times of Burma, February 11, 1947 in Dr. Vumson, \textit{op. cit.}, p,190
\textsuperscript{105} \texttt{www.zomi.info}
policy, economy and trade. There was little that the minorities could do by themselves. The Minister of the Zo Affairs Council had no control over development projects as Burma National Planning Commission had full control over development projects. Even if a project was made, the money hardly reached the hills.¹⁰⁶

Situation for the Zo people became more difficult when General Ne Win took over the government in 1962 by a coup de tat. The government tried to uplift Burma culture and emphasized Buddhism, Burmese language and Burmese dress. In spite of Panglong Agreement and constitutional provision for freedom of religion, Buddhism was made the state religion. The Zo language was taught only upto Grade 2 and Zo language was banned as a medium of instruction in the schools.¹⁰⁷ Moreover the government also did not put the hill people’s histories, cultures and customs in school and university curriculum.¹⁰⁸ All the important cabinet posts and high civil service positions were also held by the Burmese. As the British employed a large number of the hill (frontier) people in the armed forces, there were many hill people holding important positions in the army. Brigadier Ya Lum Tang who was a Kachin was forced to resign from the army and Colonel Dalzakam, a Zo was also dismissed and the Air Force Chief of Staff who was a Karen was also replaced.¹⁰⁹ Thus the hill people in Burma faced a lot of discrimination and difficulties under the Burman Government. Since life was hard and also life threatening, many of them migrated to other countries. Many of the Zo people have also entered Mizoram and it is believed

¹⁰⁶ Vumson, op. cit., p.203
¹⁰⁸ Vumson, op.cit., p.204
¹⁰⁹ ibid., p.205
that there are about 50,000 Zo people in Mizoram.\textsuperscript{110} Many of them also fled to Delhi, Kolkata and other foreign countries.

When the people as a whole faced a lot of problems, it is not the men alone who had to be burdened with the situation, but it is also the women who had to face many hardships. The soldiers who were stationed in the hills were encouraged to marry Chin girls and to convert them to Buddhism, using rank promotion as an incentive.\textsuperscript{111} There are also many cases of rape by the soldiers on the womenfolk. The women had to find solutions to fend not only for herself but also for her family. As living became difficult and earning money became a problem under the government, the women had to go out of her house and try to procure the various needs of her family. Thus, there are a lot of women who are engaged in trading and who had to go to various countries of South East Asia to buy goods and then sell it somewhere else. Thus many Zo women from Burma are entering Mizoram to sell their goods. It can be assumed that women travelling to and fro are at a risk of being raped and other physical abuses by the men especially the soldiers. However, they are compelled to do it so that their family could benefit from them. Besides engaging in trading activities, women are also seen to work as helpers in different homes in different places.\textsuperscript{112} To earn money, they do not hesitate to work as a low paying job. However, though they may work hard and procure money for the family, the income

\textsuperscript{110} F.Lalremsiama, "Impact of the Myanmarese Settlement on Mizoram" Paper presented at the seminar on \textit{Cross Border Movement of People in Mizoram on 25th April 2002, Aizawl.}

\textsuperscript{111} Salai Za Uk Ling & Salai Bawi Lian Mang, \textit{op. cit.}, p.82

\textsuperscript{112} Dr. Sangkima, "The Coming and Settlement of Myanmarese in Mizoram since the beginning of the Twentieth Century AD to the Present", paper presented at the seminar on \textit{Cross Border Movements of People in Mizoram on 25th April 2002, Aizawl.}
which they generated is not at their disposal. Their fathers and husbands still have the rights over them and also control the money which the women earned.

Thus, it could be seen from this chapter that the Zo women and men in Burma (Myanmar) are introduced to a new culture and a new way of life. Though they are exposed to a new culture and have even adopted many of it, they have still retained many of their traditional culture and values. From the studies done in the chapters we know that patriarchy was firmly entrenched in the Zo society and gender relations was in favour of men. The system of patriarchy did not change after being administered by the British and being exposed to a new culture. We also find that there are many similarities and dissimilarities between the Zo and Mizo and their gender relations. To know the exact point of their similarities and differences, a comparison would be done in the other chapters. However in order to know how patriarchy was rooted in the society and how this system affects gender relations a study would be done on the genesis and growth of patriarchy.

113 Interview with Ms.Lalbiaknem from Chekkhan, Myanmar on 30th April 2005 in Lunglei.