

MARALAND

Yesterday & Today



P. T. Hlychho

604
3



Born on 12th June, 1947 at Saiha the capital of Maraland in southern Mizoram, the author began his School education in the Private High School, Saiha, but suffered a set-back for some years due to the insurgency of Mizo Hills District, which broke out in March, 1966 while he was doing his matriculation.

He later joined the Cherra Theological College, Cherrapunji in 1968 and obtained Diploma in 1971, and completed his degree course from the Eastern Theological College, Jorhat in 1975. He first joined service as a Clerk but for a short period, left his job to continue further studies in St. Edmund's College, Shillong and passed degree course in Arts in 1978. After graduation in Arts he took up a job as Asst. Teacher in the Garo High School, Shillong till he finally joined Banking service in 1981, and worked as Officer in the Bank.

He married a Garo lady C.T. Sangma in 1975, and the couple are blessed with three sons and a daughter, who are now in various services and working in India and abroad.

To his credit he wrote the English - Marâh Dictionary, which is the first of its kind. He also wrote some other books, such are, Thy Kingdom Come, Via Dolorosa, Saint Paul, Marâh Proverbs; these books are written in Marâh language, but the books on Mind of Christ and Maraland [yesterday and today] are written in English.

P. T. Hlychho.

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Maraland

[yesterday and today.]

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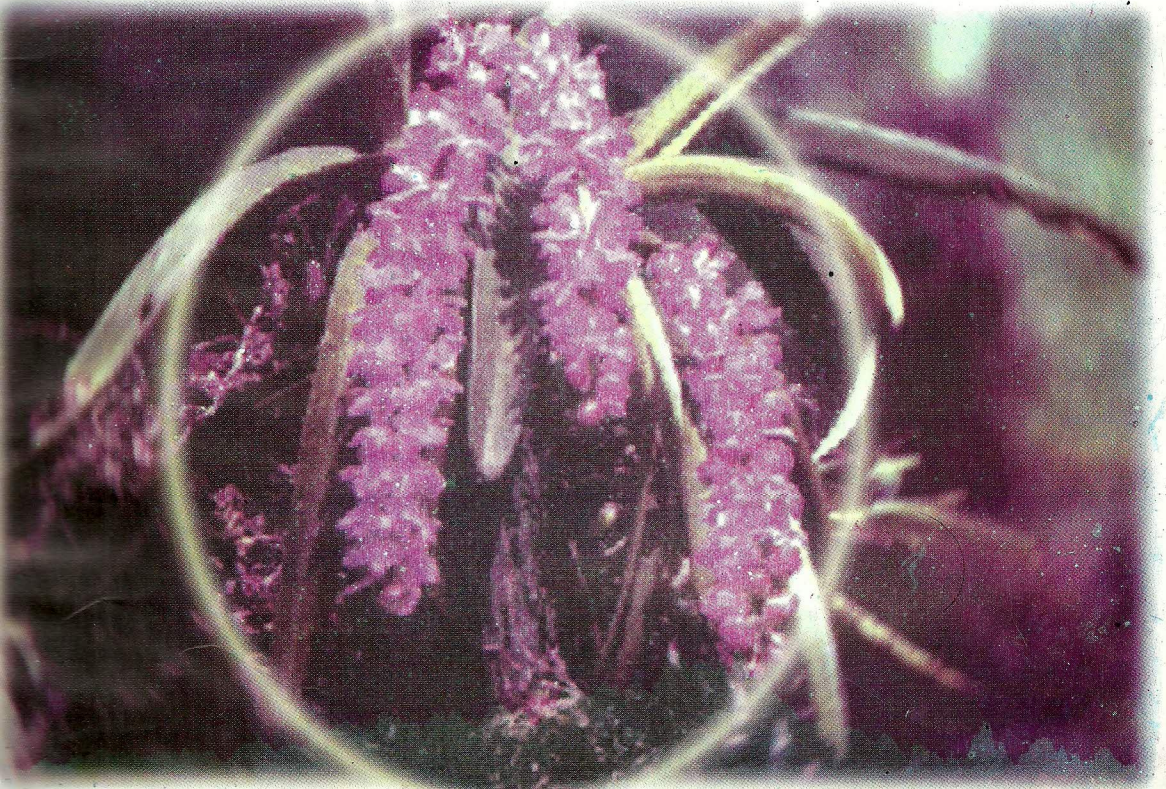
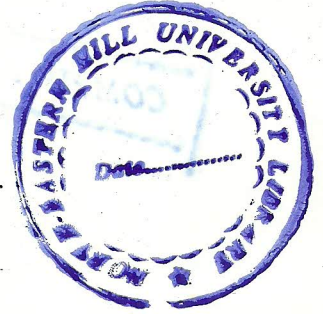
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Dedication.

To my Dear and Near ones with love:

- [1]. C.T. Sangma [wife].
- [2]. Abraham [son].
- [3]. Gracy [daughter].
- [4]. Benjamin [son].
- [5]. Andrew [son].
- [6]. Michael Blair [son-in-law].
- [7]. Rivotiyou [daughter-in-law].
- [8]. Christie Ninie [grand child].

P.T. Hlychho, Author.



A species of orchid.

Foreword.



Maraland is an exotic and exquisite land. Its unique mountains and rivers, falls and pools, caves and lakes, flora and fauna, songs and dances, rituals and sacrifices, religion and cultures, feasts and festivals, etc. are mostly unexplored realities. These make the land as mystical as a legendary land like that of a fairyland or the abode of the *Lyurâhripa* [unseen spirits] who lived side by side with the *Syukipas* [tiger-men].

On their contemporary, there lived an invincible man called *Châhdua*, whose tale informs us that he was a great hero being respected more or less like the supernatural being, the *Khasôh* or *Pachhâhpa*, which are different names used on various occasions for the *Chazohpa*, [the Almighty God], to suit his divine attribute, nature and character as they are revealed in different forms to mankind according to the change of place and time.

But now, as time is passing so rapidly, we are compelled to march ahead very fast to catch up with the dawn of 21st century, which is an information era being rightly called the Computer Age. While history is being written and re-written for our knowledge bank, the latest kinds of technology are also sweeping us off our feet with a strong force.

At such a crucial point of time, we need to revive ourselves with tradition, rekindle our spirits with a renaissance of cultural pride, and draw inspiration and sustenance from our rich and resplendent heritages, for which purpose, we only act, move, struggle and survive.

I am sure this book will provide rare insights into the heritage of our land and people, and inspire us to take up responsibility to preserve and enrich the traditional heritages that God has given us as our national identity.

Dated Siahā,
the 5th. June, 2007.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Khipō', with a date '10/6/07' written below it.

[S. Khipō]

CEM., MADC. Siahā.



Executive Body of M.A.D.C. Saiha

From left to right

Sitting : Mr. K. Hrahmò, Mr. S. Khipò (C.E.M.), Mr. M. Tiabi.

Standing : Mr. H. Sahlò, Mr. B. Tusa, Mr. K. Chhuabei, Mr. S. Lalremthanga, Mr. Laikaw, Mr. K. Beisa, Mr. V. B. Byhna



MADALAND GOSPEL CENTENARY

Celebration 1907 2007

Yanna I J H church, Hh chhanna

Date 28.12.2007

Speaker Pm Hh chhanna

Theme: *Arise, shine* (Lm 101)

Message.




We know that among the most ancient of our cultural roots is mankind's desire to emulate the eternal, cosmic rhythms that has commanding influence over our known universe in many ways. The language of nature and its life-forms, their infinite symphony and the inner pulse of life has influenced all our pasts just as strongly as it will also shape all our futures. No human community is exempted to its force but each one, depending on its location and environment, always expresses itself in a unique ways.

Maraland is such a treasure-house of ethnic cultural wealth but still unexplored and has not been exposed to outside world. It is required therefore that the resplendent heritages of our land are to be well preserved and further enriched if and when they are required, for which consideration, Siahia-Flósaik, Hawthai, Vyhtu, Zyhno and Chapi are all but one nation having to relinquish their own personal ethnic habit, desire, privilege, and interests; and also to abandon all that have different forms or styles that are occasionally felt in our national unity, lest they become hurdles in the process of rebuilding a greater land or stronger nation which notion is nothing but the interest of our own well-being.

Apart from that we have the collective responsibility to capture the philosophy, refinement, life-style, social customs and values, by documentating the festivals and rituals of each group of this very special region, and portraying also the dances that are integral to every occasion, in order that they are never forgotten by the new generations in the days to come.

This book, I hope, should be an eye-opener for people who appreciate and admire the magnificence of the human race, the most important of the species in our world.

Dated Siahia,
the 5th. June, 2007.


10/10/07
[S. Vadyu]
Chairman, MADC. Siahia.



Maraland Gospel Centenary Celebration, Shillong - 2007



Message.



Among the various ethnic communities that dwell in the State of Mizoram, the Marâh tribes have a unique and special distinction, and this book deals about how the Marâh tribes maintain continuity in the face of incredible changes. The said tribe certainly refreshes and regenerates itself continually by drawing sustenance from old spiritual rites, and also by maintaining the mental ethics and traditional beliefs.

As we look into the aspect of the future, and at the turbulent changes occurring all around us, transforming the face of the world as we see it very often, one may feel that it is a time we revive ourselves with tradition and custom, and rekindle our spirits with a renaissance of cultural pride, and draw sustenance from our rich heritages, because these are the only means of our national stability and continuity that are indeed essential for today and tomorrow.

I hope therefore that this book will provide readers and research scholars with rare insights into the tradition of the Maras, their ancient history, their lives and customs, their beliefs and rituals, their practices and habit, their cultural patterns, their folklore and dances, their festivals and language among others.

Dated Siaha,
the 5th. June, 2007.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Laikaw', written over a horizontal line.

[M. Laikaw]
E.M. i/c Education, and
Chairman,
Letter of Publication Board,
MADC, Siaha.

L I T T L E R I C E



LEGEND

International Boundary	— — — — —
Divisional Boundary	— — — — —
RAIP Road	— — — — —
P.F.D. Road	— — — — —
RDC Road	— — — — —
State	— — — — —
Inter Village Path	— — — — —
Lake	○
Town	⊙
Village	●
Stave	▲
Water	— — — — —

Scale 1:100,000

Surveyed by
T. N. S. S. S.

Preface.

Whenever I came across a book that deals with the Marâh tribes such as the *Lakher*s, or even the *People of India - Mizoram*, in which the Marâh history and about the land are discussed in short, I realized that very common words or names are written with wrong spellings, and very often such wrong spellings are not only misleading the readers but also convey them wrong meanings and informations they carry therein.

Of late, it is found out that almost all the mistakes are committed unaware for the simple reason that those writers used Mizo men as interpreters who might have a little knowledge of Marâh language or might also be able to understand or speak to some extent, but failed miserably to use correct spellings when they are put in writing or recording.

In fact, the Marâh language has more vowels in the alphabet than in the alphabet of Lushai, Hmâr, Kuki, Paite and Lai; who are the neighbouring tribes. The extra vowels, such as: **a, â, ã, âh, ao, o, ô, i, ie, y** and **yu**; are purely new letters to them, so the exact pronunciation are impossible and they may instead feel that their teeth are almost breaking while trying to pronounce them correctly. So it is quite reasonable for those interpreters of the past to make mistakes one after another when the language was put in writing.

Sometimes, such mistakes may become quite serious to the extent of hurting the sentiment of the concerned tribes specially when when their lives, habit of eating, customary laws, practices, traditional heritages are wrongly mentioned or interpreted. Obviously this was the main reason for creating the post of a Lakher Clerk in administrative departments like D.C's and S.D.O's offices right from the time of British rule in India particularly in Assam.

Now that the Maraland and its local administration known as the Marâh Autonomous District Council are totally annexed to the State Government of Mizoram, it is advisable that such interpreters or translators, as the aforesaid Lakher Clerk, is indeed required in every department. This kind of privilege is being extended leniently in the States like Meghalaya and Nagaland, in order that it may create a better atmosphere between the ethnic tribes, and bring mutual understanding or good relation among the general people of the State.

It is felt very often among high thinkers that mutual understanding within the ethnic groups in the country or state is always a lasting solution to the problem of divisive tendency or separatism the people are facing not only in the country but also in many parts of the world. So it is highly solicited that the government of Mizoram, instead of inclining to adopt a policy of suppression or oppression towards the minorities groups of the state, like Chakmas, Marâs and Lais, may give priority to uplift and develop them in order that they too may become at par with the main stream of general people of the State, and that equality and unity will prevail in the land for the prosperity of the State as a whole.

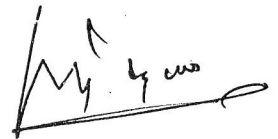
On the other hand, the Marâs themselves, especially educated people, have a collective responsibility to make corrections of all the mistakes that have been committed unaware in the past, and also to capture the philosophy, refinement, life-style, social customs and values, by documenting the festivals and rituals of their land, and portraying also the dances and songs that are integral to every occasion, instead of putting a blame on others, if they are not really allowing themselves to drift away from one another.

In our view, many books are coming up rapidly in Mizo and Marâh as well, and it appears that even though many of them are very good and useful some are not to the mark of our expectation ; apart from the fact that we have very less books in English which deals with our customs and traditions for further exposure to the outside world. In view of this, the book on Maraland [yesterday and today] is written in order to define the meaning of the places and names, or expose the things that are unknown as though they are still hidden, with the intention to preserve the customs, practices and rich traditional heritages of the people of Maraland.

And above all, this book is written purely in compliance with a song, which inspires me to the extent of changing my habits, aims, desire and outlook. In fact, it changes my whole life to forgo all the things that I may have so desired to grasp for my own personal gain; it runs:

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun,
Does his successive journeys run;
His Kingdom spread from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

Dated Shillong,
20th September 2007.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P.T. Hlychho', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

P.T. Hlychho,
the Author.

General Information:-

01. Location Southern tip of Mizoram
02. Area 1500 Sq. Kms.
03. Population in India 53,874 [2001 census].
04. Capital Siaha [Saiha in Mizo].
05. Saiha 1450 metres above Sea level.
06. Distance from Aizawl 378 Kms.
07. Literacy rate 82.47%.
08. Blue Mountain 7100 ft.
09. Sawhmo tlâh 8124 ft.
10. Kolodyne biggest river in Mizoram.
11. Palâ Tipo biggest Lake in Mizoram.
12. Religion Christianity.
13. Best Season October to April.
14. Language spoken Marâh, Mizo, English, Hindi.
15. Communication The Hqr. Siaha and Tipâh are by Mizoram State Transport, while all the villages within the district are connected by the jeepable roads. And Saiha is connected by Satellite Station for STD facility.

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MARALAND

[A Land of Nostalgia]

Location:- Maraland is a land of the Marâs, perches partly on the fringe of the southern corner of Mizoram in north-east India on one side, and the other larger part of it clings on to the edge of the north-western part of the Chin Hills in Myanmar, and some lesser portion is again attached to the Arakan Hill Tracts, which is popularly known as the Khumiland in the south.

According to a pamphlet on Maraland - A profile, which is issued by the Mara Autonomous District Council, Siaha, the land is encircled by the clear and blue Kolodyne river known to the native people as *Beinô* meaning princess or queen, which makes the region appear like semi-island. It further says that the land is really a world of unexplored wonder. Mother nature flares in all her full beauty and glory. Exquisitely picturesque and colourful with gorgeous array of flora and fauna, and the land represents unfathomable beauty designed by divinity, to take your breath away.

To quote the words of Reverend Arthur Bruce Lorrain Foxall, which say, "The country they [Marâs] occupy is about the size of Wales. Although they live in one large area, yet their country is divided. One part is in Assam in the South Lushai Hills, another part in the Chin Hills of Burma, and a third part in the Arakan Hill Tracts. They live on the borders of Assam, Burma and Arakan, geographically, in the North of Arakan Yoma Mountains." [See an introduction of the Grammar and dictionary of the Lakher or Marâh Language].

Accordingly, the land is divided into three parts by the international boundary of Indo-Myanmar [Burma] and the Arakan Hill Tracts that is adjacent to Bangladesh, and its division took place at the time when these two countries [India and Burma] attained independence from the British rules in 1947.

According to Reverend [Dr] Lai-u Fachhai, the Maraland thus straddles three provincial states of different sovereign countries - the western part is being a part of Mizoram state in north-east India, the eastern region

became a part of the south-western corner of the Chin hills of north-west Myanmar and the southern region is also included in the Arakan hill Tracts. This is the way how the location of Maraland is clearly mentioned by those early and present writers.

To state further the demarcation of the boundary prior to the time of its division, or before the formation of Mizo Hills district, or before the independence of India, we may safely quote Mr. Parry, who was a well-known writer of the region in late 18th century. He has even drawn a clear sketch map of the country and described its boundary, which is shown at the introductory part of this book, and made a remark clearly which states, "The Lakhers, are, to be more correct, the Marâs, Lakher being merely the name by which they are known to the Lusheis, inhabit the south-eastern corner of the Lushai Hills district, south of the Halka subdivision of the Chin Hills, and the extreme north of the Arakan Hill Tracts."

He goes on to say that 'most of the villages are enclosed in the large bend made by the Kolodyne river [Beinô], which, after rising in the Hills near Haka and flowing in a southerly direction, takes a sharp turn at a place somewhere south-east of Ngiaphiah village, and flows northwards through the low valley known as the *Pakaoby* which lies in between Ngiaphiah and Chapi villages till somewhat north of Muallianpui village in Lushai hills, when it again turns to the south and flows down through the deep gorge in between Saiha and Lawngtlai towns and directly flows to the Bay of Bengal at Akyab in Myanmar.

To quote yet another writer, Reginal A. Lorrain, who says, "Lakherland [Maraland] is a country far remote from civilization in extreme Further India, being bordered on the north by Assam, on the south by Arakan, on the east by Burma [Myanmar]. Practically the whole of the Lakher or Marâh country covers a large area of the North Arakan Yoma Mountains, and while the countries which border Maraland come under the British flag, Lakherland

or Maraland itself does not own allegiance to any Government, but is ruled entirely by its own Chiefs, presiding over their own villages, with the exception of a few Lakher [Marâh] villages on the Assam frontier who own in some slight measure allegiance to the Assam Government, and the Lakher Pioneer Mission Station is built on Saikao village in the extreme frontier amongst these Maras.

There are a few Marâh villages in the western part of the Lai District, such as: Muabuh, Saizawh, Rukuah, Paithâh and Beinô Chhopahru, they all situated at west of the Kolodyne river [Beinô], between that river and Lunglei; and also some powerful villages of the Sabyh and Vyhtu tribes of the Marâh Nation on the east of the upper Kolodyne river [Beinô] in the Haka subdivision of the Chin Hills." [See the Lakhers on its introductory part].

In addition, an oral tradition also says that in the most early days, or at the time when the Siaha chief, who was known as Laichi, and his associates and advisers [namely, the Azyu and Zothyu clans among few others] came down to the present Maraland, they first settled in Siaha, and when the families of the village increased rapidly to almost unmanageable size, Mr. Tluangtum Hlychho estimates it to be more than 500 families, some villages were established in and around the main village - Siaha, and the area covered for the extension of villages have gone beyond a prominent mountain known as the Phypi tlâh or Blue mountain till Dawhzyu [Darzo] village.

The villages that are said being established by the chief of Siaha, Laichi, included Tlaopi, Noh-aotlâh, Vyhbu, Chiarâh, Sangyu, Lôtia, Dawhzyu, Saka, Lôphia, Thiahra, Amôtlâh, Khitaw or Tisôpi, Siahatlâh, Thosaih and also Amôbyu. Evidently these villages are said to be new colonies being extended and established by the chief Laichi and the villages were once ruled by his own sons, who were his legal heirs, but some villages are now annexed to the Lai Autonomous District Council, within the State of Mizoram.

These people are being referred to, once, by Mr. Mackenzie as "The Shindus or Shandus, [these are the names always used for the Lakhers or Maras], who are a formidable nation living to the north-east and east of the Blue Mountain." This statement, as it appears, must have

been written in 1884. Now the Hlychho the royal clan is called in this region as Hlawnehing by the Lai tribes, and their ancestor Laichi, chief of Siaha, was known among them as Lianchi. But Hlawnehing and Hlychho are one clan from a single race having different names only in Marâh and Mizo languages.

The Marâs, in the ancient of days, as the majority historians incline to believe, might have come down from the Eastern Region of Tibet. This idea is supported by Mr. Shyam Narayan Singh, Professor of the Cachar University, who says, "Regarding the migration of the Marâh, it was known that at first the Marâh lived in the Eastern region of Tibet. From Tibet, they came out in two groups. The first group of them came down earlier along the Brahmaputra valley and settled somewhere in the places we now called Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur," of the present North-Eastern Regions of India. This claim is accepted by most of the recent historians.

For instance, there are Solo clans of Nagaland and Manipur, who are originally believed to be one of the Marâh clans as there are evidently the same Solo clan existing among the Marâs till today. Besides there are some groups of people who identify themselves as the *Miram* tribes in the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, and there is the *Maram* tribe of west Khasi hills district of Meghalaya; so these *Miram* of Assam and *Maram* of Khasi hills are probably the same group of people, who were known as the Marâs before they came down to Indian territory; in fact, they were called *Miram* by the Chins when they were living in Halka of Chir Hills in Myanmar.

Dr. S.N. Singh goes on and says, "The other groups of Marâs came down along the *Irrawady* river and probably entered the Burma plain," and this place was known to them as *Leisaih*, where they first lived for quite a pretty long period in fourteen and fifteen centuries. Later on, some of them migrated in a smaller groups and in different times and also in different directions into Indian territory in order that they might be able to find out a suitable fertile land for permanent settlement."

In this way, they scattered in the whole of Maraland, as Tlôsaih-Siaha group occupying the western

range of the land; Vyhtu and Hawthai groups on the north-east region, however, a majority groups of Vyhtu clan still remain in Haka district; Zyhno groups are in the southern region that is adjacent to the Arakan Hill Tracts; and the Chapi-Ngiaphiah groups are in the middle of the land; while Lôchei, Heimáh, Liah-lai, and Lytu or Leita groups occupy the eastern regions of the land that falls in Myanmar now.

The Marás, from this time onwards, are permanently identified themselves as the Tlôsaih-Siaha group, Hawthai group, Zyhno group, Chapi-Ngiaphiah group, Vyhtu group, Lôchei group, Heimáh group, Liah-lai group, Leita or Lytu group, and so on. All these groups of people formed the common Maráh Nation, and they were collectively regarded by the Britishers as a brave and powerful Nation, who were also unformidable warlike people who took a pleasure of head-hunting in leisure time, and they lived in the farflung region of the far-east India.

Though each group of the Maráh Nation has its own dialect, and each group can be easily identified from the way or dialect it speaks, but all of them can understand to each other. In fact, their languages have as many as 70 to 90 percent similarity while differences are mostly in pronunciation and accent, and the common lingua franca is the Tlôsaih language in which the Bible and Hymn books are put in writing.

The unique characteristic of their language is that though every group has its own dialect, all the words of every language have no consonant at the end of each word, and that all the words of each language have to be pronounced with an open mouth except very few words which are adopted from other languages in later days. Otherwise the language itself will disqualify a group from the required criteria to be included as one tribe in a group known as the Maráh Nation.

On the other hand, Maraland occupies a vast area of land, and located in a tri-junction of Indo-Myanmar and Bangladesh borders, due to which geographical interiority road communication from every side is neglected. As a result, there is a vast area of unclaimed land known as **No-man's land** in the southern regions. This unclaimed or unoccupied area of land has become a

haven for any group of the underground outfits and other militancies of the North-Eastern regions of India till regently.

In 2004, I happened to be in Saiha, capital town of Maraland for the purpose of releasing my first book, the **English - Maráh Dictionary**, and while I was staying there, something very serious had happened to my great surprise that so much amount of money, amounting to five to six crores of Indian currency was looted from the State Bank of India at Lawngtlai Branch. This amount, to my opinion, may be the biggest amount that have been looted in the whole world and that is from a Nationalized Bank.

As a bank Officer myself, I know for sure that that much of money might not be easily carried away by a single jeep, but it was claimed that the robbers did so. The point for argument is that the government of India has not circulated a thousand rupee's note in those days, and no bank is expected to keep only five hundred rupee's notes at the same time. However, to talk about something purely on guessing, it will amount to as though I am unnecessarily wasting my valuable time for a wild goose chase.

Lawngtlai town is roughly 10 kms. away on a straight way from Saiha, where I was staying. The worse part was that the government of Mizoram failed miserably to find out the culprit till today. According to an open gossip that was spreading among the general public, the money was looted by the underground activists who were likely residing in this Noman's land that's why the culprit could escape a scot-free, and that the government of Mizoram is bound to sit with a tight lips.

Few years back, I also read an article of a daily News paper i.e. the Shillong Times, in which it was flashed out clearly and said that all sorts of arms or weapons even of the latest model like AK-47 can be procured from Saiha and Lawngtlai towns in southern Mizoram, as these towns are locating in a very closed border to both Myanmar and Bangladesh.

To quote yet another writer Mr. N.B. Sâchhei, a senior lecturer and head of department in Physics subject from the Saiha Government College, Mizoram, who says, "For so long the Marás had never realized that they were

a great Nation on this planet which we call the Earth. However, God has been so good to them that he had opened two ways for them in order that these savage and head-hunting tribes too were made a recognized nation among many others, as they also have a distinctive identity with a different and beautiful language of their own. This is how the Maras were fully recognized and known as a separate Marâh Nation right from the time of British rule in India.

But as the land was straddled between the Chin Hills of Myanmar and the Lushai Hills of India, they are not known much to the civilized world as different people for further recognition and then their real identity have not been exposed, for a simple reason that the people of the two neighbouring regions, such are the Lushai and Chin tribes are so similar to them in physical structure as well as their appearances; inspite of the fact that the Marâs are totally a different Nation from all aspects.”

Mr. N.B. Sachhei then says further that in the first place, God sent the American Baptist Mission [A.B.M.] to the people of Chin Hills in Myanmar, and Rev. A.E. Carson and his wife Laura Hardin Carson came and arrived to this place on 15th. March 1899, and they settled at Hiakha [Halka] town, and opened a Missionary Station there. From here Rev. Carson and his wife worked mostly among the Lai or Pawi tribes [who were known as Chin tribes], and made an alphabet for them in order that their language might be made a possible written language; apart from that they also translated the four Gospels and Acts of Apostles from the Bible in their language.

In this way, the American Baptist Mission concentrated their works among the Lai or Chin tribes in this particular region and its neighbouring areas, which includes the villages like Thantlang, Zokhua, Lungbang, and three other smaller hamlets [but names are not mentioned], in which the Chin language is mostly used.

But the neighbouring villages like Zaothô, Zaopei, Lautu or Lytu, and few other Marâh villages into which the American Baptist Mission had never entered as they knew well that they would not be able to work among them for missionary work due to language barrier, though these villages fall within the territory of Chin Hills. It is obvious therefore that the Marâh people in the Chin Hills

were not included in the field of the American Baptist Mission at the time when the said missionaries first arrived in the land.

He goes on to say that in the second phase, the Lakher Pioneer Mission [L.P.M.] Rev. R.A. Lorrain and his wife Moud Louise Ulander also came to Maraland, which is then the immediate neighbouring country of the Lushai Hills, and arrived at Saikao village on the 26th September, 1907. Saikao is called Serkawr in Mizo dialect.

Fortunately, Rev. R.A. Lorrain - the Lakher [Marâh] Pioneer Missionary, prior to his coming to the Lakherland [Maraland], had an elder brother named Rev. J.H. Lorrain, a London based Baptist missionary, and who worked among the Lushai tribes, which Missionary station is located at Serkawn village near Lunglei town in the southern Lushai Hills; and this place happened not far from the Maraland. This made the situation much easier for the Lakher [Marâh] Pioneer Mission to start his work among the head-hunting tribes of the Marâs.

Soon the Lakher Pioneer Mission also opened its missionary station there at Saikao [Serkawr in Mizo] and began to work among the Lakhers [Marâs], and their work focused mainly on preaching and spreading the Gospels of the Lord Jesus Christ, into every village of the Lakher or Marâh people who were then known as heathens in religion and were head hunting tribes at their leisure time, that was when the Pioneer mission starts its missionary work among them from 1907.

Thus the Lakher [Marâh] Pioneer Mission field was extended to the western parts of the Chin Hills in Burma [Myanmar], and included all the Marâh speaking villages there, inclusive of those villages like Zaothô, Zaopei, Lautu [Lytu] and few other villages on the northern side, and all other Marâh villages of the surrounding areas specially in the southern side within Myanmar were also included in the Lakher Pioneer Mission field in addition to the [Marâh] villages which fall within the territory of the present Mizoram, but these areas are in India.

The area of land covered by the Lakher Pioneer Mission's [LPM's] field, and the Marâs inhabited areas in the Chin Hills of Burma [Myanmar] is much wider than the Marâh inhabited areas of the Lushai Hills

[Mizoram] in India.” [See *Thlihua* Annual magazine’ 2003, page 58]. Moreover, the Lai tribes were hardly known living in the whole of the Maràs inhabited land of both India and Burma in those days, because they [Maras] were compactly living particularly in the Falam District, for fear of the enemy’s raid. The Lais or Chins, on the other hand, were more in number so they scattered in the whole of Chin Hills, mixing with many other tribes.

The aforesaid two Christian Missionaries eventually had a quarrel over the disputed areas of the Maraland specially in Chin Hills. In fact, the Chin Hills was also divided into two districts, of which the northern district was known as Falam district with its headquarter at Falam, and the southern district was called Mindat with its headquarter at Mindat. And the disputed area of the Maràs inhabited land fell mostly within the Falam district.

To make the matter worse, and at the time when Mr. Thompson became the District Administrator as the Deputy Commissioner of the Falam district, Rev. [Dr] Cope, the American Baptist Missionary, was also posted at Falam, which was the Missionary headquarter of Chin Hills; and Rev. Cope submitted a written complaint to Mr. Thompson claiming all the Maràs villages to be included into his Missionary field, and that the Lakher Pioneer Mission should not be allowed to encroach or extend its mission field to the Chin Hills, and he deliberately ignored that his mission work had never been extended into the Maràh inhabited territory of this area.

Mr. Thompson, as the District administrator of the area, promptly took action and summoned the two parties into trial for justice, and tried to settle the dispute once and for all. The meeting for the treaty was then summoned on 24th May 1938 at a place which was popularly known to the native Maràs as the *pakaoby* which means ‘a low valley’ near the Kolodyne River, and this place happened to be within the jurisdiction of a Maràh Chief, named Kichhò of Ngiaphiah village in Myanmar.

It appears that the Maràs, in those days, were not friendly and unwilling to extend good hospitality to the foreigners, from the fact that they constructed a house known as the *kala o* which means ‘a house for foreigners’ as the word *kala* means foreigner and *o* means a house.

The foreigners including Indians were called *kala* by the Maras in those days. And those foreigners attended the treaty or committee were accommodated in this *kala* house. The deliberation was attended by :-

1. Mr. Thompson, the Deputy Commissioner of the Falam District, Myanmar, who chaired and convened the meeting;
2. Rev. [Dr] Cope, American Baptist Missionary [ABM], who was the complainant;
3. Mr. C.U. Strait, American Baptist Missionary to the Chin Hills;
4. Puhpa Kichhò, chief of Ngiaphia village, in whose jurisdiction the meeting was held;
5. Rev. R.A. Lorrain, Lakher Pioneer Missionary [LPM], was the accused;
6. Rev. A.B. Lorrain Foxall, missionary and co-worker of the Lakher Pioneer Missionary;
7. Rev. K. Heisàh, the first Maràh ordained Pastor;
8. Rev. Leitò, a young Maràh pastor.

Mr. Thompson the then Deputy Commissioner of Falam District convened the meeting, and according to the oral tradition, it is said that there was an uproar scene and heated exchange of words, which were witnessed in this crucial meeting by the spectators. Mr. Thompson, as the convener of the meeting and the district administrator, finally passed an order in favour of the American Baptist Mission that all the eastern regions from the Kolodyne river should be given to the American Baptist Mission.

Mr. N.B. Sàchhei further says that since 1972 the Maràh people who settled in this region have decided to come back to the Lakher Pioneer Mission, which was their Mother Church, and also because the people cannot really understand the Chin language of the Falam district. They also realized that the Maràh Bible and Hymn books are written in their own language which is more convenient for them to use.

I personally visited some places like Ngiaphiahta, Lôcheita, Lôcheipi, Ngharo, and some neighbouring villages alongwith two friends - Messrs. KL.Mahei and Sàchò Hlychho in the year 1967, and had a chance to attend and witness the conference of the Church there, which they called ‘*Pakhypi*,’ it was held at Lôcheipi village. The people of this region are mostly Vyhtu and

Sabyh clans of the Marâh tribes, and though many of them can fluently speak Chin language, they used mostly Vyhtu and Sabyh [Marâh] languages at home. The Church services were, however, conducted in the Chin language again; Bible was read in Chin and Hymn was also sung in Chin language, which practices were considered a great inconvenience for ordinary but majority members of the Church. In fact, few privileged and educated members only can preach sermons or deliver speeches freely in Chin language.

Now that most of the Church leaders, who attended the conference had a chance to have a glance at our Marâh Bible and Hymn book, which they could easily read and understand, realised that they should not be always in the American Baptist Mission mainly because of the language barrier which caused a great problem for them, especially in the conduct of Church services. And to my great relief I began to learn that those majority people have come back to their Mother Church, that is, the Evangelical Church of Maraland, which is only a new name that was formerly known as the Lakher Pioneer Mission.

I knelt down beside my table before I could realize what I was going to do at that very moment, and prayed, "Lord, Almighty, you have caused the fall of the great Berlin wall of Germany, probably for their national Reunification; and why not to Maraland? I know and believe that you can do it again if you like." But the unmistakable answer is yet to come sooner or later.

According to Rev. [Dr] Lai-u Fachhai, who wrote about this eventful meeting between the American Baptist Mission [ABM] and the Lakher Pioneer Mission [LPM] says, "After several years of service in Maraland and Khumiland, the Lakher Pioneer Mission [LPM] was compelled to hand over some parts of its fields to other Missions. In 1937, by making an agreement between the Baptist Missionary Society and the Lakher Pioneer Mission, a part of the Maraland, particularly the western regions of the Kolodyne river [Beinô], such as Paithâh and some villages, were given to the former. Another part of Maraland that fell in Khumiland was first handed over to the Anglican Mission with the arrival of the Rev. Francis in Khumiland at Paletwa in 1925."

When we talk about Khumiland of the Arakan Hill Tracts, we are to remember that there are many clans of the Marâs, who have been living there for many years, they are, *Khithieh*, *Hnaihly*, *Lâpîh*, *Lynoh*, *Mathihpi*, *Khaimeichhò*; and some clans belonging to the *Heimâh* and *Liahlai* groups are also living side by side with Khumis from before in the Arakan Hill Tracts. Actually these groups belong to the Sabyh clan. [See the Lakher page 3]. It is also believed that the Khumi tribes of the Arakan Hill Tracts as a whole were no other than the sub-tribes of the Marâh; and some people would go further to argue and say that they were another group of the original people of the Marâs from the fact that the general Marâs referred to them as the '*Matu-Marâ*' a combined name for both Marâh and Khumi, which combination of names clearly indicates the unity or oneness of the two tribes.

Apart from the Lakher villages in Haka district and the present Maraland in Mizoram, there is yet another group, the inhabitants of which are half-way between the Pawis and the Lakhers, and it is difficult to say exactly what tribes they are or they belong to. Such villages are Hnaro [Ngharing in Mizo] in Haka district of Myanmar, and Iana and Siatâh of Maraland in Mizoram. They must be classed with the Haka villages like, Motu, Khabô and Zyuphia; and they are actually known as Vyhtu group, but in Lushai they are known as Vuangtu. The customs followed in these villages are partly Marâs and partly Lais. But the majority of them identify themselves as the Marâs. This might have been the main reason why the Vyhtu people of Siatâh and Iana villages were, once, inclined to be identified themselves as the Lai tribes, but only when they realized that more than 75 percent of personal names and proper nouns with most of the spoken words are identical with that of the Marâh language, so, they realized and are convinced now that they belong to the Marâs tribes.

After realizing the fact that the Vyhtu clans are the Marâh tribes most of the Vyhtu groups, who live presently in Myanmar also have identified themselves as the Marâs now. In fact, Mr. Khimy, who was popularly known as Ngôcho Paw from Lôbô village belongs to the Vyhtu clans, he was one among the former Lakher Clerks. The

other Lakher Clerk to have been employed in the pre-independent period was Mr. N. Leipò who was better known as Dawhleí Mahpaw hailed originally from Laly village. He later became a nominee member to the Lakher Autonomous District Council, that was in early 1970s. It is said that the majority group of Vyhtu clan broke their allegiance and affiliations to the American Baptist Mission of the Chin hills since 1972, and came back to their Mother Church, that is the Lakher Pioneer Mission which was once established among them in the early days of Rev. R.A. Lorrain.

Reverend [Dr] M. Zakonia Hmòcho, the Ex-Senior Executive Secretary of the Evangelical Church of Maraland, belongs to Vyhtu group of Siatàh village, which name means Elephant got stuck in a deep marsh, and Iana village means a place where *la* ceremony is held, which names are literally Maràh names including Hnaro, Lytu and others of Haka district. And interestingly, Siata and Ainak are the names translated in Mizo or Lai, but both Siata and Ainak in Mizo, lose the meaning of their names.

Besides, many Vyhtu youths are employed in the Maràh Autonomous District Council, Siaha, and there are one to two elected members representing the two villages in the said District Council. There is no confusion to their identity, as many educated people are coming up very quickly from this group, to realize their own original identity without further mistake.

This is exactly the case with people of Tlaopi and Noh-aotlàh villages. The name Tlaopi literally meanings a big marsh, to indicate that there is a big marsh in which various kinds of wild animals had a pleasure of taking their mud-bath; and Noh-aotlàh means a hill from which the Solar eclipse was witnessed, to indicate that the event solar eclipse occurred when the chief of Saiha and his people lived in this place. *Noh* means sun or solar, *ao* means eclipse, *Tlàh* means mountain or hill; as the name of Siaha means Elephant's teeth to indicate that there are plenty of elephant's teeth found here when the people of Saiha first came to this place.

From this fact we may safely say that the people of Tlaopi and Noh-aotlàh villages are no other than our own flesh and blood, who belong to Hlychho, Choza,

Nòhro, Nòtlia, Vyhtu, Kharia, Zawman, Demio, Zang... Satho, Azyu, Bòhia, Siakhai, and so on, but they have called themselves now as Hlawnehing, Chinzah, Nuhrin, Nutlai, Vuangtu, Khenglawt, Zathang, Bawitlung, Zinhlawng, Sathing, Aine, Bunghai, Siakhien, and so on with the intention to Mizonize themselves only to the benefit of some vested politicians, but the historians have classified them as Maràh, and had never included them among the Lushai [Mizo] ten tribes.

In fact, the name Niawhtlang in Mizo is wrongly coined, so naturally it carries a wrong meaning, as the word Ni means sun. Awh is a noun, which, in the form of a verb only is Awk, indicates that sun is caught in a trap; but the eclipse Awk is a proper noun by itself, which word cannot be changed into another word in the form noun as Awh, otherwise the name will bear wrong meaning.

The tribes mentioned above have never form a nation as Mizo, but the Khawhling, Thangchhuah, Sailo, Zadeng, Chhakchhuak, and few others, or the so-called ten Clans of Lushai formed Mizo nation for themselves. Time will prove the fact slowly and we have to wait and see simply with patience that truth shall surely make us free from ignorance.

As a matter of fact, all the sub-tribes of the Maràh came into existence after they have left their original homeland at Thlàtlàh. In other words, the Lakhers gradually formed themselves into a separate tribes of Nation after they broke off from the Thlàtlàh and their original homes in the Chin Hills. But this separation from their original place make them vulnerable and became an easy prey to the enemies or the neighbouring tribes who are bigger nation like the Lushais or Mizos. If the Lakher Pioneer Missionary have not established the Church in Maraland on a firmed Rock, the land should have been cut apart into smaller pieces not to be known or to rise no more, and they should have been tilling and toiling without rest for other tribes like slaves.

Rev. Lai-u Fachhai goes on and says, "In 1939, a remarkable meeting between the Lakher Pioneer Mission and the American Baptist Mission of the Chin Hills took place at the British Government transit Bangalow at Pakao [valley] to resettle the boundary of their respective

intended Mission fields [quoted from the history of American Baptist Chin Mission, 1989]. The *Pakao By*, [which means Low Valley], is a point at Kolodyne [Beinô] river, which is situated between Chapi and Ngiaphia village, where the Kolodyne [Beinô] river flows from south to north. The Lakher Pioneer Mission was represented in the meeting by:

1. Reverend Reginald Arthur Lorrain,
2. Reverend Albert Bruce Lorrain Foxall,
3. Rev. Hratlu Nôhro, a young Marâh aid, and
4. Rev. K. Heisa, the first ordained pastor.

The American Baptist Mission [ABM] of Chin Hills of Myanmar, was represented in the meeting by:

1. The Reverend [Doctor] C.U. Strait,
2. Reverend [Dr] C.W. Cope.

Mr. Thompson, the then Deputy Commissioner of the Chin Hills, acted as the Chairman and was apparently a decision maker of the meeting .

After long discussions and even heated exchanges was witnessed in the meeting, the Lakher Pioneer Mission's [L.P.M's] fields of the entire Lytu and Lôchei areas, and a bigger part of the region occupying by the Vyhtu clan, and few villages of Chapi - Ngiaphiah clans were handed over to the American Baptist Mission [A.B.M.] by the ruling. The Lakher Pioneer Missionary was visibly so sorry to lose those villages where he had already started his missionary work in medical, education and preaching ministries that had gained with considerable converts.

The oral tradition is another available source of history; it is to pass on from generation to generation through the method of story telling, but it is reliable, in many cases, as written documents, and according to one such an oral traditions, it is said that even after a long discussion and deliberation in the meeting, the convener - Mr. Thompson was a little hesitant to make a final decision by himself, so he asked the local people first to choose whether they want to be included in the Lakher Pioneer Mission of India or in the American Baptist Mission of Burma.

By then, the people with majority voice had preferred to be included in the Chin Hills of Burma only for fear that they will not get sufficient supply of salt

from India. In fact, salt was being supplied, in those days, from Chittagong [Bangladesh] through Demaggiri village of Mizoram due to lack of good communication on land. The supply of salt from India was never enough, mainly because it was to be carried by men to Maraland by means of headload system. They were worried whether they will get salt regularly in that way or not, apart from the Demaggiri of Lushai Hills is too far from Burma.

Accordingly, it was decided that the bigger part of Maraland was to be included in Burma, and that this decision has become final and bound, although the Lakher Pioneer Missionary felt that it is a bias decision ignoring his right. However, this decision can never be altered afterwards. It was again accepted later as the boundary line between India and Burma when the two countries attained independence in 1947.

The Lakher Pioneer Missionary - Rev. R.A. Lorrain, after knowing that the people themselves had preferred to be included in the American Baptist Mission's field, and that their preference has become a decisive factor to turn down his own claim over them, became visibly very sorry and so irated, thus boycotted to partake a dinner prepared by the host for all the delegates. He, along with his party men, left the place immediately and came back to his Missionary station at Saikao in India, left only his painful words of farewell to those Marâs who were present there, which say, "You, senseless Marâh people of this area will be very sorry sooner or later for making such a ridiculous decision as this."

Another source of information, though it is a bit doubtful, further says that the Lakher Pioneer Missionary failed to control his temper, slapped on the head of Rev. [Dr] Cope. It further says that the American Baptist Missionary, on his return journey to his Mission station at Falam, got dysentery and suffered seriously while he was on his way home. He died within a few days and was buried in Falam itself. But unfortunately his wife was away at the time of his death, and it is said that she never paid a visit to the place after her husband's death for fear of the rumour or gossip which spread among womenfolk of the Falam that the Lakher Pioneer Missionary must have some magical powers to cause the death of Rev. Cope.

Prior to this eventful meeting, some Marâh villages like Paithar, Saizawh, Mualbu and Beinô Chhopahru were also handed over to the Baptist Mission's field of Mizoram in 1937; and in the south, more Heimâh and Liah-lai villages of the Arakan Hill Tracts, were added to the field of the Anglican Missionary Rev. Francis in 1925, as it has been pointed out earlier in this book.

As per the aforesaid decision of the meeting between the American Baptist Mission and the Lakher Pioneer Mission held at the *Pakaoby*, Maraland was divided further, and a bigger part was taken away to the Chin Hills of Myanmar. So, naturally, Maraland is now distributed into three parts, namely, the western part being included in Mizoram of India; and the eastern part falls under the Chin Hills province in Myanmar, and the southern part becomes a part of the Arakan Hill Tracts or the Khumiland.

But some villages in the western of Kolodyne river like Paithâ, Rukua, Saizawh and others were taken with mutual consent to the Missionary field of the Baptist Society of southern Mizoram, which station is based at Serkawn village near Lunglei town. It is also clearly mentioned in the book called the Lakhers that the early Christians of the Baptist Churches specially from Serkawn and Lunglei villages had been constantly praying to God that he should also send Christian Missionary to the Lakherland knowing quite well that the Lakhers [Marâs]

had a different language of their own and can not understand Lushai.

Their prayer should have been answered that the Missionary Society called the Lakher Pioneer Mission was soon formed in London, and eventually Rev. R.A. Lorrain with his brave wife volunteered to work among the savage tribes whom they called - the head-hunters or Lakhers; but the people called themselves Marâs. At the same time, the Welsh Presbyterian Mission was working in northern parts of Mizoram covering a bigger area of land, and they worked side by side with the Baptist Missionaries.

This is how Mizo [Lushai] people are soon converted into Christianity and also taken to the western civilization, and the Roman script was adopted as a means of reading and writing. In the first place, Bengali script have been introduced to the northern parts of Mizo hills, and the influence of Sylhet people, with the help of Tripura Rajas was very fast penetrating in the Lushai hills. Besides Chittagong and Silchar are the two business centres the Mizos could reach easily in those days.

Mizoram has become a hundred percent Christian State now, but to me, the people are only religious fanatics, who embrace about 80 different denominations of Christianity, and above all, the extremist groups claimed ridiculously that they are the lost tribes of the Jews, who belong to the Manasseh descendants.



