

FESTIVALS AND-DANCES OF THE MIZOS

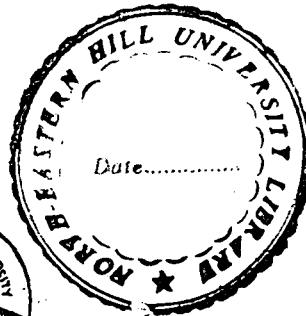
(A Case Study)

BY

ANDREW H. VANLAL DIKA

Dissertation

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY
SHILLONG (INDIA)

1995

SOC
Des.

NEHU LIBRARY 1035-25
Acq. No.
Acc. by
Date 6-7-05
Class by
Sub. Heading by
Enter by
Transcribed by



A. C. Sinha

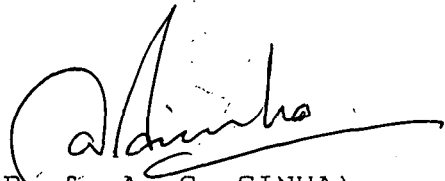
Phone - 27644 Residence
Phone - 23234 Office
Gram - NEHU

Department of Sociology
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY
SHILLONG - 793 014 (INDIA)

SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **FESTIVALS AND DANCES OF THE MIZO (A Case Study)** submitted by **Mr. ANDREW H. VANLALDIKA** in part fulfilment of the requirement of the Master of Philosophy programme in Sociology of the North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, embodies the record of original investigation carried out by him under my supervision. He has been duly registered for the award of the M. Phil. degree. This study has not been submitted for any degree of any other University.

February 28, 1995
Shillong.


(Prof. A. C. SINHA)
Supervisor
Professor of Sociology

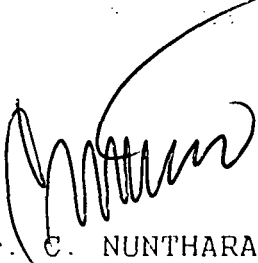


पूर्वात्तर पर्वतीय विश्वविद्यालय
पू. प. वि. वि. परिषद, शिल्लोण - 793022 (मिवालय)
North-Eastern Hill University
NEHU Campus, Shillong - 793022 (Meghalaya)

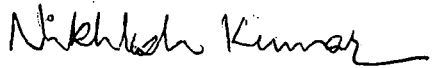
Page :
Grange : NEHU

This is to Certify that **Andrew H Vanlaldika** has satisfactorily completed all the course requirements in the Master of Philosophy programme in Sociology. The following course were offered by the Department :

- i) Advanced Sociological Theories
- ii) Perspective on Development
- iii) Philosophy of Social Science, and
- iv) Historical Methodology


Dr. C. NUNTHARA
HEAD
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
N. E. H. U.

Head
Department of Sociology
North Eastern Hill University
Shillong—793014


Dr. NIKHLESH KUMAR
CONVENER
RESEARCH COMMITTEE
N. E. H. U.

Reader in Sociology.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I express my deep sense of gratitude to my teacher and guide Prof. A. C. Sinha, Dean, School of Social Sciences, N.E.H.U., Shillong, for his valuable guidance and keen interest throughout the course of my research work. I wish to express for his intelligent criticism and constant encouragement all along the course of this investigation, but for which this study would not have been possible.


My sincere thanks are also due to the Head and other members of the teaching staff of the Department of Sociology, N.E.H.U. for their valuable suggestions and useful comments.

I am deeply indebted to all my friends and well wishers, who have been rendering direct or indirect help to me in the completion of this work.

I would like to acknowledge the financial support which I received as Junior Research Fellow from the Department of Higher and Technical Education, Government of Mizoram.

Last but not the least, to my dear Parents, I owe a debt for bearing with me all the hardships but at the same time encouraging me to complete my work, hence I dedicated this work to my Parents with sincerity and love.

SHILLONG
28, FEBRUARY 1995.


ANDREW H. VANLALDIKA

CONTENTS

	PAGE Nos.
Acknowledgment	
List of Tables	
List of Illustrations	
CHAPTER - I : INTRODUCTION	1 - 44
A. STUDY AREA	
B. MEANING OF FESTIVALS AND DANCES.	
C. METHOD OF STUDY.	
CHAPTER - II : FESTIVALS AND DANCES OF THE MIZOS	45 - 63
CHAPTER - III : ANALYSIS OF DATA	64 - 86
CHAPTER - IV : CONCLUSION	87 - 105
BIBLIOGRAPHY	109 - 110
GLOSSARY	111 - 112

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE Nos.
1.1	Age of the Respondents	66
1.2	Religion of the Respondents	67
1.3	Occupation of the Respondents	68
1.4	Educational Qualifications of the Respondents	69
1.5	Sex of the Respondents	69
1.6	Marital Status of the Respondents	70
1.7	Sub-Tribe of the Respondents	70
1.8	Village/Town of the Respondents	71
2.1	Main Factors of the Breaking Down of Traditional Festivals and Dances in Modern Society	72
2.2	Possible that Traditional Festivals and Dances can be Modified on the Line of Modernization	74
2.3	Main Factors of Differences in the Styles and Rhythm of Dances	75
2.4	Traditional Dances are Replaced by Modern Dances	77
2.5	Participation in Traditional Dances	78
2.6	Traditional Festivals-Hindrances to Social Progress and Development	79
2.7	Younger Generation Consuming/Taking 'ZU' During Christmas and New Year is an Indication of their Tendency to Revive Traditional Festivals	82
2.8	Government Attempt to Revive Traditional Festivals will Succeed Without Church's Support	84
2.9	Christianity Alone is Responsible for bringing about the Disintegration of Traditional Festivals and Dances	86

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE No.

1. Map Showing Study Area

PLATE NO.

I	CHHEIHLAM DANCE	106
II	KHUALLAM DANCE	106
III	SOLAKIA DANCE	106
IV	CHAWNGLAI - ZAWN DANCE	106
V	MIZO YOUTH PLAYING GONG AND DRUM	107
VI	SCULPTURE MIZO MALE FIGURE ON THE TRACTOR OF THE APPROVE MIZORAM TABLEAUX'S 3-D MODEL	107
VII	CHERAW DANCE	107
VIII	MIZO YOUTHS IN FESTIVE ATTIRE WITH GONG (DARBU)	107
IX	MIZO GIRL IN FESTIVE DRESS	108

CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

Mizoram is a mountainous region which became the 23rd State of the Indian Union on 20th February, 1987. It occupies the north east corner of India. It is bounded on the north by the Cachar District of Assam and the State of Manipur, on the east and south by Chittagong Hill tracks of Bangladesh and the State of Tripura. Mizoram is geographically situated between 21° 58' and 23° 35' (N) and 92° 15' and 93° 29' (E) latitudes and covers an area of 21,087 Sq. Km. The tropic of cancer runs through the territory. The boundary with Myanmar (Burma) extends 270 miles and with Bangladesh over 158 miles. Thus, it occupies an area of great strategic importance, having a total international boundary length of about 630 miles - with Bangladesh and Myanmar (Burma).

For administrative purposes the state is divided into three districts namely, Aizawl (12,590 sq. Km), Lunglei (6000 sq. km) and Chhimituipui (2,473 sq. km). Each district's is in charge of Deputy Commissioner. Mizoram has a population of 6,86,756 i.e., males 3,58,978, and Females 3,20,756 which is predominantly tribal and Christians. Its literacy rate is 82.27 percent, males: 85.61 percent, Females: 78, 60 percent, the second highest literacy rate in India State next to Kerala. The majority of the total population lives in the rural areas and are still on the old pattern of agriculture. However, it is note worthy that there is no landless peasant and there is no exploiting landlord in Mizoram.

PHYSIOGRAPHY

The whole state consists of ranges of hills running north to south in parallel series, separated from one another by narrow valley with only a very small portion lying in the plains. The hills are very steep and precipitous whereas the eastern sides are somewhat gentler. The average height of the hills and ranges are about 900 metres, though here and there are peaks over 1829 metres in height and the **PHAWNGPI** (Blue Mountain) the highest peak in Mizoram rises to a height of 2165 metres. The territory, in fact, runs lengthwise-length being twice the breath.

Forests of trees and bamboos cover most of the hills, but scars left by constant jhumming may be seen. Amidst this jungle covered of hills and narrow valleys, there are a few small plains in Mizoram which are believed to have been formed in beds of silted up lakes. The largest plains is Champhai which has a length of about 11.27 Kms and the widest part is nearly 4.83 kms across. Now the whole of the plains has been converted into permanent cultivation of rice-fields.

There are many rivers in Mizoram but only a few of them are worth mentioning. The most important and useful rivers are the Tlawng the Tuirial and the Tuivawī which drain the northern portion of the country and eventually join the Barak. The Southern areas are drained by the Chhimituipui (Kolodyne) on the east with its tributaries, the Mat, Tuichang while the

karnaphuli at the mouth of which stands Chittagong (Bangladesh) with its tributaries the Tuichawng, Kau, De and Phairuang form the Western drainage system. All the rivers in Mizoram are fed up by monsoon rain only, They swell rapidly during the rain and recede shortly after the rain.

In winter and dry season the volume of water in the Rivers is very small and many Rivers are almost dried up. Some of these rivers are unnavigable and greatly hinder transportation of goods and make the construction of road costly. Attempt has been made to harness these rivers for developing Hydro Electrical Projects which is urgently required for domestic lightning and development of large, medium and small scale and cottage industries also. There are only few Lakes in Mizoram. The three largest Lakes are Palak, Tamdil and Rungdil. Most of the Lakes are situated in high altitudes, except Tamdil and Rungdil. Most of the Lakes are situated in high altitudes, except Tamdil which is about 100 kms from Aizawl. These Lakes have not Yet been developed for effective economic use.

VEGETATION : FLORA AND FAUNA

The sides of the hills are covered with forest of bamboos jungle, Rainfall and temperature of the state are most suitable for trees, plants and bamboos. The tropical forests of Mizoram abound in a great variety of flora and fauna. They are filled with bamboo groves and wild plantains at the lower

altitudes. As the hills rise higher, the woods grow dense with canes and creepers, Orchids of various colours and shapes - Pinkish white bouhinia, Sparkling Clusters of Rhododendrons, sun-flowers and many other wild flowers lend delightful hues of the greenery of Mizoram.

Wild animal which used to be numerous in the past are becoming very scarce now due to devastation of forest, the home of Wild life and indiscriminate killing of wild animals by hunters; Leopards and Bears are to be seen in the Western part of the State where population is thin and forests are a bit thick. Wild dogs are very common and Bears of different varieties are also found and reported attacks of human beings by Wild Bears are often received in the State of Mizoram. Even game birds are also becoming scarce. A few are still to be seen in the less population are as include the jungle fowls, hern-bills peasants, doves, pigeons etc. So Wild life of all kinds has been sadly depleted in the State. Fishes are also becoming very scarce mainly due to using explosive materials and poisons for fishing purpose. Of late effort has been made to check this indiscriminate killing of Wild life by different organizations backed by the State Government.

Known as the Land of enchanting hills, Mizoram is famous for its vast expanse of jagged mountain ranges shrouded mystically in reddish-blue haze. Blue mountains and deep narrow valleys swift-flowing rivers, forest with an assay of

flora and fauna, quaint relics of glorious part, quiet Hamlets and bustling towns make Mizoram a tourists choice.

CLIMATE

As a Whole Mizoram has a pleasant climate throughout the year. It is neither very hot in the summer nor very cold in the Winter because tropic of Cancer runs across the territory in the Middle. During Winter the temperature varies from 11 C to 21 C and in the summer it varies between 20 C and 29 C. The entire area is under the direct influence of the monsoon. It rains heavily from May to September and the average rainfall is 245cm per annum. Winter in Mizoram is rain free and is very pleasant. The skies are wonderfully blue and in the morning the mist formed between the hills gives an enchanting view of wide stretches of a vast lake of cloud. Mizoram has great natural beauty and an endless variety of landscape and it is rich in fauna and flora. Almost all kinds of tropical trees and plants thrives in Mizoram. The hills are Marvelously green. The climate on the hill top is much better, healthier and pleasant then in the valleys which are humid and hot.

STATE OF ECONOMY

Agriculture is the occupation of the Mizo people. But the Mizo way of cultivating land is very primitive and wasteful. It is also destructive of the forest wealth. They practice, what is known as **Jhum Cultivation** : This is a slash and burn method of cultivation. A plot of land is cleared off all its

vegetation, then they dry leaves and tree trunks are burnt. Over the ashes of these forests, seeds are sown. For the next Year cultivation, they again move to the other sites of the hills cutting down the forests and burning them again. In this way, they shift their cultivation very Year, In some cases, it may involve shifting of their villages. There are no permanent sites for cultivation and there is no permanent ownership of land. The land belongs to the community.

But enlightened agricultural policy now a days strives to do away with the old "slash and burn" method. The cultivators are made aware of the most unscientific and wasteful method of cultivation, i.e., "Jhumming". The permanent system of cultivation is being encouraged and practised. As a result, the traditional pattern of jhumming is gradually giving way to modern methods of production, permanent and terrace cultivation.

Paddy is the chief food crops, followed by Maize. They are grown on the slopes of hills. One of the chief constraints in increasing agricultural production is the lack of irrigational facilities. There are schemes to grow plantation crops like rubber, coffee, tea etc. The state of the Forest report 1991 says that Mizoram leads the state in afforestation with an increase of 683 sq. km of forests. There is no major Industry in Mizoram. Handloom and handicraft are the major industrial activities in the State.

THE PEOPLE

The word **MIZOS** is a generic term and is used to mean hill men or high landers. The Mizos' are a numerous family of tribe closely knit together by common tradition, customs and culture, mode of living, Language and rites. In ancient times, the Mizos were living like nomadic tribes for the cause of Jhum cultivation. The history of the origin and coming of the Mizos' to their present habitat is shrouded in mystery. No systematic research has been made so far. There is no authentic record about the mystery of the Mizo people before the 17th Century. From whatever record is available, it is accepted that Mizos are of Mongoloid stock and are believed to have immigrated in to their present habitat, possibly sometime between 1400 and 1700 or 1800 A.D. from the upper Burma. But no scientific study as to how, when why and from where the Mizos came to this isolated landlock hilly terrain called Mizoram, has ever been conducted.

However, the Mizo historians such as K. Zawla and Rev. Liangkhaia have pleaded that the Mizos were in the Chin Hills in Burma from ³ 1400 A.D. To 1700 A.D. and their gradual movements of Migration started between 1700 and 1730 or 1740 A.D. But in the absence of any written history more accurate dating cannot be accepted and more then thirty Years are reasonable for migration, which could have been only in a series of movements.

On the whole, the Mizos migrated from Burma for mainly two reasons—pressure of the Chins or the stronger clans of Burma and the pressure of over population, passing through the Chindwind valley and the Chin Hills and finally came to present Mizoram, Tripura, Chittagong Hill tracts in Bangladesh, Manipur and North Cachar Hills (Assam). The areas inhabited by the Mizos are contiguous to one another, although they are, at, present under different administrative units. Thus they are Mizos not only in Mizoram, but also in the state of Manipur, Cachar District of Assam, Chittagong Hill tracts, Tripura and Chin Hills in Burma.

Since they possessed no written records it is difficult to tell the origins of the Mizos and there are various stories about their past. According to an old tale Mizos came from **CHHINLUNG** or mythical rock which was located in Myanmar (Burma) and they spread over a wide area extending far beyond into the Manipur State, Cachar, Tripura Chittagong hill track and Burma but contiguous with the boundaries of Mizoram. The Mizos are a distinct unit linguistically, culturally and ethnologically. They are a dedicated people bent on preserving and consolidating their identity and values.

The Mizos are divided into many tribes\sub-tribes and clans, such as Lushai, Pawi (Lai) Hmar, Paihte, Ralte, Lakher (Mara). The Mizo people are honest, simple sincere are outspoken, sturdy, independent, enterprising and courageous. They are intelligent people, very friendly and very

hospitable. Though in olden days, there were constant wars and strifes among the different tribes and hence they were at daggers drawn with each other, yet, at present, they have established good relationships among themselves. They are no longer nomadic tribes but live in fixed dwelling houses. They ~~were~~ ^{have} developed a healthy family life, bound together by realities of kinship form.

SOCIAL LIFE

The social unit was the village. Around it revolved the life of the Mizo. Mizo villages were built on safe mountain ridges and enclosed within strong stockades and their number was small. Thus they were usually far apart with wretchedly rough paths in between. Each village was self contained, self-governing and had to be self-sufficient. Its territory extended over a wide area. Within this the village would choose a fresh hillside every year for cultivation. This would be divided out between all the families and ideally the same hillside would not be cultivated for another ten or fifteen years. The surrounding territory would be exhausted before then and that meant the whole village needed to move to another site. This was the semi-nomadic life to which the Mizos were accustomed and very well adopted. This autonomous village system generally worked well and ensured the limited needs of its primitive community.

The largest buildings in the village were the Chiefs house at the centre and the bachelor's dormitory ZAWLBUK prominently located at the central place, where the other houses were erected according to convenience. All of them would be abandoned when the village moved. What remained unchanged was the pattern of life, the type of houses and furniture, and the way of hunting and cultivating their crops. These were all inherited from the distant past.

In a way the focal place of the village was the ZAWLBUK where all the young bachelors of the village slept at night. ZAWLBUK was the training ground and indeed, the crucible wherein the Mizo youth was drilled and shaped into a responsible adult member of the society. The ZAWLBUK is the centre of village life, and is the most useful institution. The younger boys are under discipline in the same way as in the boarding house in a public school, the young men use it as a club and dormitory, travelers can put up in it for the night and the chief uses it as a meeting place where he can make known his orders. As all the young men are concentrated there, they are always available for any unexpected emergency or for any urgent work. Discipline is strictly enforced in the ZAWLBUK and no interference from outside is tolerated.

VIRTUES AND VALUES

The kind of life they traditionally lived had given them self reliance. They had to fend for themselves, for their own

village, and nobody owed them a living. They fostered basic skills and simple virtues. Honesty, courage, self-discipline, mutual help, a readiness to organize and be organized largely summed up in the untranslatable word **Tlawmngaihna**. This virtues was-an highly prized, and has certain elements in common with courtesy and chivalry.

The Mizo code of conduct or ethics revolve round this **TLAWMNGAIHNA** an untranslatable term meaning on the part of every one to be hospital, kind, unselfish, courageous and helpful to others. **Tlawmngaihna** to a Mizo stands for that compelling moral force which finds expression in self-sacrifice for the service of others. It is the case of their philosophy of life. In war or peace, in dealing with individuals or in day-to-day public life, it was this spirit of **Tlawmngaihna** which guided their thoughts and actions. We thus see that **Tlawmngaihna** embraces various types of activities and manifest itself in various forms which can be summed up as "Group over self" wherein self-sacrifice for the needs of others is the spontaneous outcome. A man who practices the precepts of **Tlawmngaihna** is highly respected.

The Mizos are a gregarious lot and form a close-knit homogenous society with no class distinction from social, religious and economic point of view and no discrimination on grounds of sex. In this close-knit and gregarious society some practical principles of self-help and co-operation have been solved since time immemorial, for the fulfillment of social

obligation and responsibilities. Construction of community halls, preparation of water points, construction of paths leading to their jhum-cultivation and so on are done through voluntary works called **HNATLANG**. Under this 'hnatlang' system the villagers are expected to contribute labour for the welfare of the community and each family is under obligation to contribute their Mite. The same spirit of 'hnatlang' punctuated with "Tlawmngaihna" enjoined the villagers to participate and render all possible helps whenever there is an occasion of death or marriage or community feast in the village.

POLITICAL SYSTEM

In the beginning, the right to rule over the Mizos was enjoyed by those who had the power and ability to command a large number of people and to repel any attack by other chiefs or enemies. The chieftains thus, originated in the physical and intellectual power of any person. In other words, one, who had the ability to organize a force became a chief. Such a person became the guardian and defender of his people. It, thus, appears from the above interpretations that the institution of chieftainship emerged out of the collective needs of group life which characterised tribal living. But there is no definite record when and how in the past, this institution took concrete shape. But it can be reasonably asserted that this happened at quite an early stage of evolution in their group.

In ancient times Mizo society was composed of the **HNAMCHAWM** or commoners governed by a chief aided by officials of his choice. The chief had council of elders or **UPAS** to assist and advice him in the discharge of his duty. The upas or elders were men of his individual choice, nominated without considering the option of the villagers. And he himself possess the sole authority to dismiss there elders or UPAS. the chief deals with all cases between his villagers in accordance with the customary laws of the land. Thus, the chief had wide powers in the village administration. However, his rule was not usually very harsh for it was not in his interest to alienate any of his subjects and drive them into the arm of other chief. The bigger the village the stronger the chief. The institution of chieftainship was hereditary. As regard succession the eldest son of each chief was the heir and succeed to the village and lands on his father's death.

POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE CHIEF

As regards the powers, Privilege and status of the Mizo chief he had wide powers and considerable privilege in holding and administering the village. In other wards he was a real-centre of authority in the village administration. None could dare speak against his activities or criticize any act of his. Though in theory, his role was autocratic, in actual fact, a great deal of mutual trust existed between the chief and the people due to the fact that the people could and often did migrate from one village to another, if they lost trust in

their chief. This meant that an unpopular and autocratic chief lost of his followers/villagers through migration, thereby becoming, loss powerful in war and also losing his share of the tribute levied from the villagers, So the chief's position in the village administration was to some extent that of benevolent ruler. All the time, he could not afford to be autocratic or indifferent to the opinion's of the council of elders and the real goals of the villagers.

A part from the powers of appointing a number of village officials such as council of elders, village crier, blacksmith, village priest, and Ramhuals the chief had tremendous executive powers in the village administration. The chief with his officials used to rule the people of the village in accordance with the customary laws. These village officials had different function/duties entrusted by the chief who carried out individually for the uplift of the socio-economic standard of the village masses. This council of elders discussed all matters connected with village, decided all disputes between people of the village, assisted and advised the chief in the discharge of his duties. He, thus, presided over the meetings of the council. He, often, tried to influence the consent or opinion of the council of elders in his favour. He, sometimes, got his decisions accepted by them because most of the elders were men of his individual choice. Even then, such an effective control depended very much on the personal character, calibre and influence of the chief. The

chief had also the power to dismiss the elders, no doubt, but he could never show his whims and fancies in the exercise of his prerogative. As he enjoyed considerable powers in the village administration. he could not ignore the advise of the elders and the general well-being. of the villagers. The chief help the villagers in their difficulties and adversities, encourage them in all ways possible and also reward them in their achievements. When the villagers were found guilty of misdeeds or infringement of established customs, they were punished by the chief. In other words, he was the administrator, the protector and guardian of his village. Hence, the villagers, on their turn, had to obey chief's orders and carry out duties assigned to them individually and collectively. Thus, they used to he help the chief in all possible ways.

Besides, the chief taking advice from the expert jhum cultivators on the selection of various plots of lands for good jhumming, had to allot lands every Years to the villagers for cultivation according to his whims and fancies. He had the privilege to select the best plot of land for his own jhumming.

Regarding judicial powers, The chief used to administer justice according to the customary laws of the Mizos. The chief and the council of elders constituted as the village court decided all types of cases and disputes. The chief and



his council of elders were thus the highest court of justice among the Mizos.

Apart from executive and judicial powers already discussed above, the chief had in the beginning, the traditional right to inflict the capital punishments to seize food stores and property of villagers wishing to migrate to another village, to own the lands, to tax traders within his jurisdiction, to appoint his son as chief within his own lands, and to attach the property of villagers when he deemed fit or wished, with or without fault on the part of the villagers.

PRIVILEGES AND STATUS OF THE CHIEF

The village chief was the head of the village administration and as a token of respect for his high status, he was entitled to certain privilege. Most of these privileges had their origin in ancient custom or in the willing and voluntary contribution of the people. All villagers are bound to perform certain services for the chief and to pay him certain dues. The chief house was built by the villagers without paying any cost either for labour or collection of building materials. The villagers were bound to obey such orders. But in return for house building, labour by the villagers, it was customary for the chief to feed the villagers.

Whenever a case for dispute was tried by the chief and his council of elders, they were to get remuneration known as **SALAM**. The party losing the case, had to pay to maximum fine of Rs. 40/- to the winning party. Besides the losing party had also to pay 'Salam' Rs 5/- or a pay to the chief and his council of elders who usually spent the same on feast. As a rule the chief has not much difficulty in releasing a fine. **PALAIS** are sent to the person fined and a time by which he must pay is fixed and the fine is released in cash or in kind. In a case, a dispute was compromised, Salam was shared equally by the two parties in the dispute.

If the chief or his son goes on a journey some of the elders and Ramhuals have to accompany him and carry his clothes without any payment.

A chief entitled to the following dues from his villagers. The villagers had to pay the forelegs of all animals killed by hunting or trapping to the chief. This due was called **SACHHIAH**, flesh tax. The second tax was **FATHANG** - a traditional paddy tax. The villagers were required to pay the chief six tins of paddy, equivalent to about three mounds after every harvest or Rs 2/- per Year, if sufficient paddy was not harvested. The payment of his tax differed according to the fertility of the jhum lands. Another was **CHI-CHHIAH** salt tax. Salt was prepared by the villagers from salt springs with the permission of the chief.

The chief also had special rights over Bee nest. Bees nests found on a chief's lands are the property of the chief, and no one can take honey or wax without the chief's permission. In regard to the status of the village chief, it may be pointed out that he was prominent at all social and religious gatherings and festivals of the village and the villagers were bound by custom to obey him implicitly and also to carry out his orders into practice without any condition. He being a head of the village, was also the leader in war, the owners of land, the protector and father of his people, It, thus, appears from the above that the chief was really a despotic ruler. But the social mores were so shaped through the process of evolution that he could seldom effort to exercise unrestricted power over his people. In fact, there was a great deal of mutual trust that existed between the chief and the people. The Chief must protect, let them use his lands to cultivate and help them in time of famine or other distress, and in return the people must pay him certain dues, render him certain services, and come to his aid when called upon by him for assistance. He was thus, an object of intense devotion and respect in the Mizo society.

VILLAGE OFFICIALS

There are a number of village officials appointed by the chief to aid and advice him in the exercise of his powers and functions. They are the following;

1. UPAS or Council of elders : They were the main administrative assistants to the chief. The chiefs had upas, a council of elders to assist and advise them in the discharge of their duties. In fact, they were the highest official in the village.
2. THE TLANGAU or Village crier : Each Chief had a Tlangau, a village crier whose main duty was to proclaim chief's order often in the night, regarding the works to be done the next day by the villagers. For his services, he received a basket of paddy from each house hold every Year.
3. THE THIRDENG or the village blacksmith : He has to repair the tools of the villagers and as remuneration gets a basket of rice from each house in the village after the harvest, as a rule. The 'Thirdeng' remuneration varies from village to village. The Thirdeng can also claim a small share in every animal shot or trapped by a viller, this is known as the **Thirdeng'sa** and consists of the spine and three ribs.
4. THE PUITHIAM or the village priest : The puithiam is one of the most important officials in the village. He was well versed in the practise of the Mizo religion. He offered sacrifices to the 'Ramhuai' in accordance with traditional rites. He acts as an mediator, a go between human being and the Ramhuais. Through this puithiam a man

can know what and when animal should be sacrificed in order to please 'Ramhuai'. The position of puithiam is hereditary. There are two kinds of puithiam viz. **BAWLPU** is a priest, who presides during illness and offers the sacrifices that especially characterizes these occasions. He is also regarded as a prophet and medicine man. There cannot be more than one Bawlpu in a village.

The **SADAWT** is a priest who presides at festivals like **Khuangchawi, Sechhun** and others, Without 'Sadawt' no religious sacrifice can be performed. The chief always has different 'Sadawt', and his 'Sadawt' played an important part in village administration too. The priest is remunerated for his services in paddy. The system of remuneration varies in different villagers and is again a matter of local arrangement.

5. The RAMHUALS or Jhum Cultivators : They are the people who advise where jhum should be cut each year and are allowed first choice of fields to cultivate. In consideration of their getting first choice of 'jhum' they have to pay heavier 'fathang' to the chief than ordinary villagers. People who are good cultivators are always selected as 'Ramhuals' and the number of Ramhuals varies in different villages.

6. The KHAWCHHIAR or the Village Writer : The Khawchhiar used to play an important role in the chiefs system of village administration. He was also an important link between the

chief and the superintendent and between the chief on the one hand and the villagers on the other hand. A part from keeping the record of all the tried cases by the chief, he used to maintain vital statistics, register, villages house list, roaster of people in the villages to be called for coolies work and a list of all guns in the villages. For all these works, he was exempted from coolies work and house tax.

Thus the chief, with the help of officials and the council of the elders, used to run the village administration. The British rulers also thought it fit and experienced to continue the indigenous system of village administration through the chiefs.

TRADITIONAL RELIGION

The Mizos, like other primitive people, were animists .
According to their old religious tenets the Mizo's believe in one supreme being called **PATHIAN** who is the overlord of men, the creator of everything and a benevolent being. They also believe in **RAMHUAI** (demons) who inhabit the streams, the hills, Caves, rocks, trees etc. The 'Ramhuai' are the evil spirits, who are responsible for all the ills in this world. It was to appease these evil spirits that offerings and sacrifices were frequently made whenever someone fell ill or was visited by misfortune. In short, they have to be propiated for health, good harvest and general well being. The priest

was suppose to know which spirit was responsible for a particular illness and how to appease them/him. Offerings and sacrifices to be made were prescribed and also performed by the priest according to their traditional rites.

The form of sacrifice was varying according to the type of illness.

The mizo's believed in the existence of other worlds wherein the spirit of the dead lived. One of them is called **PIALRAL** (Paradise) which was situated beyond the pial river (RAL means beyond or the other side; hence pialral meaning 'beyond the Pial'). Those who are admitted to the 'pialral' are supposed to live perpetual bliss and are freely fed with husked and clean rice. They believe that in pialral all the good things are available in plenty and those who enter the realm of the pialral' live and enjoy eternal happiness without having to labour any more and oblivious of the world they have left behind. The **THANGCHHUAH** people who had hunted and killed a number of dan-gerous animals and had given a number of feasts according to their social customs will go to pialral where they would live in luxury, comfort and happiness. The other spirit world is known as the **MITTHI KHUA** (dead mens' village or the hades). This is a much inferior world where life is more troublesome and difficult than in the world of the living. Those who do not earn enough merit will live in 'mitthikhua'.

According to mizo belief, the souls of all the deadmen are believed to pass through **RIH** lake, a beautiful natural lake located inside Myanmar (Burma), near Champhai, a bordering village of Mizoram. The spirit, however, soon returns and therefore stays near his original home or village for about three months. It is therefore, Customary, when the bereaved family sits for meal, to keep one seat vacant or to set apart a little cooked rice and every curry and put them near the main door of the house for the spirit of the departed one. On the expiry of three months the bereaved family performs the **THITIN** rice (i.e., sending of the dead) to bid farewell to the spirit of the deceased. Until this done, no member of the family would be invited to any function by their neighbours. After the 'Thitin' rite has been performed the spirit acknowledging that he is no longer wanted by the bereaved family would go his own way weeping toward 'Mitthi-Khua' : On the way there is **HRINGLANG TLANG** that is a hill from which he could get a good view of the land of the living. As he looks back from there with a great longing his space slows down. That is why he is made to wear behind his ears the **HAWILO** (no looking back) flowers which make him unable to turn back, however, much he might wish to do so. Finally, he reaches the **LUNGLO** (heartless, feelingless) river, the water of which is clear and much weeping in order to forget all about the world of the living.

The journey, however, does not end there. He still has to face one more inescapable, dreadful experience. In one village there live an immortal **PAWLA** on the entrance of whose house all paths to the wall of the dead converge. There stands Pawla holding his big and powerful bow with pellets as big as Eggs and he shoots at all the spirits that come that way. His bow is strong and the pellets so deadly that it causes painful tumours which take at least three years to cure. Those whom Pawla shoots at with his bow cannot enter 'Pialral' but are destined to dwell in the 'Mitthi Khua'.

There are certain persons on whom Pawla cannot shoot at. These are the spirit of **Thangchhuah** and the **Hlamzuih** who are entitled to enter 'Pialral' straight away. The 'Thangchhuah' are those honoured persons who have given the prescribed major feasts and also killed in the chase certain animals such as elephant, a bear, a sambhur, a wild mithun, a barking bear, a flying fox, an eagle and a king cobra. The Hlamzuih's are those who die in infancy and are generally buried under the house without any ceremony along with an egg. It is the egg which, rolling on, leads the spirit to 'Pialral'.

Since the advent of Christianity in 1894 more than 95 percent of the Mizos embraced the Christian Faith and the primitive beliefs described above have become more or less things of the past.

LOCATION OF STUDY AREA

The present study is carried out in Chhimituipui District of Mizoram. Chhimituipui District is situated in the southern part of the Mizoram state. The eastern and southern part of the district is surrounded by Myanmar (Burma), the western part is with Chittagong Hill tracts of Bangladesh and northern part is with Lunglei district of Mizoram.

Chhimituipui District is divided into three Autonomous District Council Viz: Lai Autonomous District Council (L.A.D.C), Mara Autonomous District Council (M.A.D.C) and Chakma District Council. The area of this district is 3957 sq.km. The total population is 99376. Total inhabited village is 199. The density of population per square kilometres is 17 (Census of 1991).

There are three (3) Sub-Division such as Saiha, Lawngtlai, Chawngte. The Chhimituipui District has four community Development Blocks. These are Chawngte, Lawngtlai, Sangau and Tuipang. Saiha town is the head quarter of Chhimituipui District. It is a hilly town of 1225 Metres above the sea level. It is an important place as administrative activities are set up here. Many metal roads have connected Saiha with rest of the town, and big villages of Mizoram. National Highway No. 54 runs up to Saiha. The office of Dy. Commissioner, who is the administrative in-charge of Chhimituipui District was located at Saiha along with various

MAP OF CHHIMTUIPUI DISTRICT.

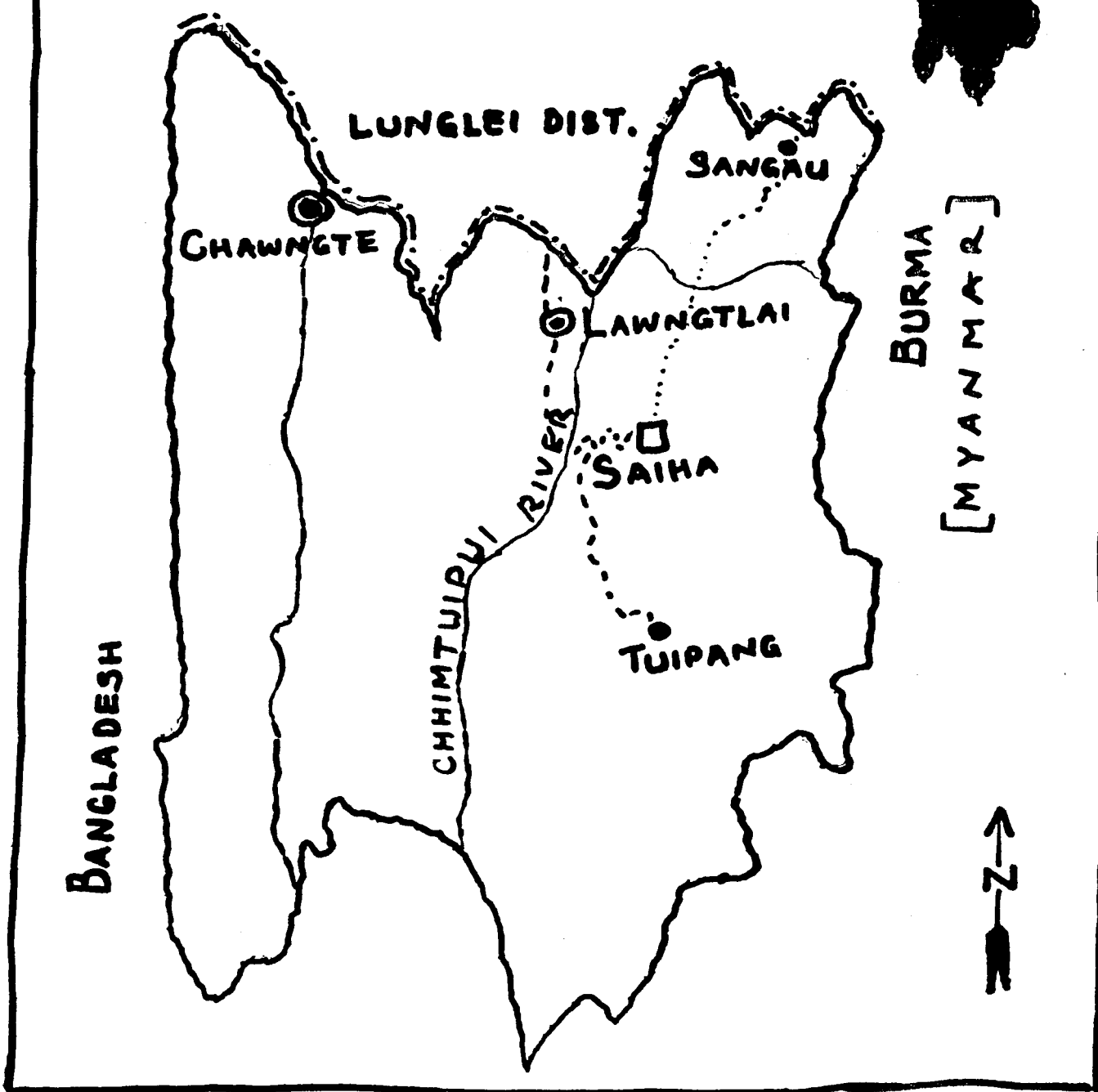
REFERENCE

DIST. HQRS : □
 SUB-DIVN : ⊙
 C.D. BLOCK : ●

BOUNDARY :

INTERNATIONAL : ~~~~~
 DISTRICT : = = =
 SUB-DIVISION : - - -
 C.D. BLOCK : . . .

ROAD:
 METALED : - - - -
 UNMETALED :



important Department offices. There were three (3) main dialects in the town: **Mizo, Mara** and **Lai**. Besides Saiha, other important towns in Chhimituipui District are Lawngtlai, Tuipang, Chawngte, Sangau, Bualpui etc. And these are selected to collect data to our present study.

B

MEANING OF FESTIVALS AND DANCES

Festivals

Different scholars have given different definitions of festivals according to their own cultural system. Webster Dictionary define Festival as ⁶ "a day or period set aside for celebration or feasting especially one of religious significance. An organized series of special wants and performances". Asian Cultural Centre (1975) defined the festival as ⁷ an occasion to wear new cloths, decorate the houses, sing hymns, let of fire works, prepare special meals and exchange good wishes. It can have a religious meaning or it may be associated with a particular season, but be it in any part of the world, the festivals have much in common for the joy of living and gratitude for natures bounties are universal. The festival is a periodic religious celebration or series of performances of a certain kind, often held periodically.

Charles Winick (1956) in the dictionary of Anthropology⁸ defined festival as collective rituals, often centering around magical operations. A festivals may also be a period which is specially marked for public religious observance. They are social in nature and symbolize the feeling of a whole community. Usually they are very durable and marked by their holiday character. As society developed, festivals become more elaborate, numerous, and a stylized. There may be festivals to mark the emergence of a seasons or the end of one. Gnanambal⁹ in her book **festivals of India** (1967) define festival as institutionalized religious observance. They are occasions for social groups, large and small, to assemble for public worship and rejoicings.

Thus a festival is a social institution which provides an occasion for individual or communal worship of different gods and deities, for eating the special food, wearing fine clothes and for meeting kith and kin. The primary theme of most of the festival is religious but they have their social and psychological ends as well. They provide opportunities for social groups and individuals to gain realize from tensions and obtain emotional satisfaction in an atmosphere free from native cares and anxiety. They also promote a feeling of fellowship among the members of the group or groups participating in them.

Rituals and prayers followed by offerings are the essential features of festivals. Feast are obligatory in many

of them. Feasting and merriment which are also very common, provide an element of joy. The rituals are accompanied by animals sacrifices. Some festivals also attract very large number of people from the neighbouring areas and distinct places too.

The festivals are not mere occasions but deep-rooted traditions and customs woven into the fabric of human life. The festivals is a kind of renewal. It is a means of escape from the hum-drum and dullness of daily life. It is no wonder that many find a kind of a fulfilness in the festival. During the festivals, people forget their miseries, problems and worries.

10

Every festival has its two aspects - Sacred and Secular. These two aspects of a festivals are intimately inter-woven yet analytically distinct. The sacred performances are held to please the god or supernatural for the communal or individual welfare. The secular aspects of festivals provide the people with occasions for eating, drinking, dancing, merry-making and social visits etc.

Sacred Aspect

During the festivals they worship-nature and natural objects, ancestors, gods and deities. The rites and ritual performed by the tribals centred round the propitiation and conciliation of benevolent and malevolent spirits which abound their hilly forested surroundings. They worship some spirits

and deities inhabiting trees, streams, rocks, springs etc. The benevolent spirits are represented by stones, bamboos, rivers and are worshipped regularly at the family and village levels.

The second group of religious activities found among the tribes is ancestor-worship. The ancestor spirit is known variously. The tribal conceive these ancestor spirit as essentially benevolent spirit but they become harmful if timely and befitting sacrifices are not made in their names. The ancestral spirit may appear in dreams or express themselves throughout the village shaman.

The third group of religious activities consists of the worship of the supreme being, village gods and deities. These gods and deities have their origin in the natural environment around them. Special worship and sacrifice are made to these gods and deities.

The main sacred performance of the tribe is to offer some sacrifice to the gods and deities or to the ancestors. If one observes the cycle of festivals one notices the sacrifices being made both on the village as well as on the family level. The sacrifices of the expensive animals are usually done on the village level while the sacrifices of the fowls and pigeons or of small pigs and goats are normally made on the family level.

When the specializes makes a sacrifice, he invokes and make suitable prayers and seeking the blessings and merry of

the respective gods for prosperity, health and happiness of the village. The analysis of these simple prayers made on different occasions reveals that they specially invokes the god to save them and their villagers from death and disease and grant them rich yield and protect by wild animals and the natural calamities.

Among the tribe, the sacred specialist are of two types (1) head of the family and (2) village religious specialist. When a sacrifice is to be made on family level, the head of the family himself becomes the sacred specialist as the god accepts any offering made by him. On the village level a village priest combines both the sacred and the secular powers. From the religious point of view he makes all the major sacrifices and is incharge of all the religious responsibilities. It is the duty of the priest to maintain healthy relationship between the commoners and the gods by making timely sacrifices on behalf of the villagers. It is for him to decide with the help of the other elder members of the nature of sacrifices for a particular spirit on a particular occasions.

Secular Aspects

The secular aspects of the festivals provide entertainment and diversion to the tribes. Pressures is clear to their hearts. Among the tribes, as a delicacy, particularly at weddings and certain festivals bread are prepared with

rice-flour. In almost all the festivals they eat the non-vegetarian foods besides their principal food rice prepared by the female members of the household.

The tribal festivals would appear lifeless if no reference made to the practice of drinking rice-beer on these occasions. 'give me rice beer or give me death' may be summary of tribals instinctive craving for rice-beer which can be rightly called their 'National' intoxicating drink. Drinking of rice-beer is so important that nothing of a public character can be ratified without the drinking of rice-beer. It is compulsory to offer rice-beer libations to the major spirits, the ancestors, and the other spirit during worship.

The tribals behaviours is characterized by a carefree, uninhibited attitude and a joyous frame of mind. Male and female, adults and children all gather together for the occasions to indulge themselves and to meet their friends and relatives. Dancing and singing holds a very important role in almost all the festive occasions. Different tribal communities have a large number of different dances according to the special seasons and festivals. Thus the dances are a part and parcel of the tribal religious life.

During some festivals, the people continue to dance for the whole day and then till late in the night. This is the period which is also noted for courtship and for the selection for the girls for marriage. This is the period when old friend

meet with their heart open during or after the dance in the night. They have safe place all around the village especially in the night to meet and mix freely. Kinsman from other villages are invited, for the occasions, relatives brings gifts along with them. In this manner, the village community is bound together, all human and divine, living and dead partable for the festivities.

Thus in feasting, drinking, dancing, singing, mutual visits and exchange of gifts, the idea of tribal solidarity is expressed. The entire village community, males and females, young and old, join in these manifestations of joy and exaltation. Each individual member is aware of his fellowship with his community. He experiences and expresses his joy and exaltation not merely as an individual but as a member of a community. These festivals also provide occasions for the reunion of relatives and friends.

Levels of Celebration

The tribal celebrated their festivals on three level viz., family, village and religion. There are some festivals which are observed by individuals family only. In village level festivals, all the people of the village take active participation. Apart from these, some festivals are observed on regional levels.

Family Level Festivals

In family level festivals, the head of the family performs the rituals in the house. Sacrifice of fowls and goats are made to the ancestors and family deities for the welfare of the family members and for good harvest. On the festival day, all the family members eat delicious food and drink rice-beer to their heart's satisfaction. Friends and relatives are also entertained.

Village Level Festivals

The principal, pompous as well as the largest number of festivals are observed on village level. The ritual performances are conducted by the village sacred specialists. The sacrifices of the buffaloes, goats, fowls, etc., are made by the priests. The village priest propiated the village duties, ancestors etc., for the welfare of the entire village. At these festives occasion the tribal eat their best food, wear their best clothes, drink rice-beer to their heart's satisfaction and young males and females dances for the whole night.

Regional Level Festivals

Some festivals are observed at the regional level and these have special centres where a number of villages take part. On the occasions of these festivals, fair are organized

into different areas. For this occasions the tribal, buy new clothes for themselves.

Religious Specialists

A religious specialist is someone who is more skilled in the performance of certain religious tasks than other members of his community.

In tribal festivals, the actual worship and offerings given to gods and deities, is helped by an individuals who has the tack and insight necessary for controlling the supernatural universe. The first clearer of forest became the custodian of the worship and sacrifices given to different spirits, gods and deities.

There are three types of sacred specialists found among the tribals, viz.,

(a) The Village Priests

The sacred specialised are known by different names in tribal communities. He is the religious representative and the minister of tribal village community. His office is hereditary, he is ordinarily the descendents of the founder of the direct line through the first born son or his nearest agnate.

By and large, his office is honorary and the people do give him some help so as to facilitate his priestly task. He

is highly respected in the village. His role is purely cultic. He has no formal training or any sort of formation for his office. The only requirement is familiarity with the rites and formulae. As the representative of village community, he offers sacrifices in the name of all gods and spirits in the village on the occasion of major and important festivals.

(b) The Head of the Family

The head of the family, who is the bread-winner as well as the priest for the family, without any specific priestly name, offers a sacrifice in the name of the whole family on the occasion of some festivals. On the festival days he maintained cordial and loving relationship with his ancestors by offering sacrifice to them. Apart from this, he officiates as sacrifices before sowing and at the end of the work on the threshing grounds. His wife plays a minor role in the sacrifice. She helps him to prepare the sacrifice. Sometime before the sacrifice she shares his fasts, and after it she shares the feast.

(c) The Shaman

The third type of sacred specialist is known as Shaman who divines at times of sickness. He does not necessarily have to be a community man. He is generally poor, peculiar in his behaviour and he seems to have psychic powers. He has a long training, until he gets

used to be 'trance' as a sign of shamanistic credibility. In times of sickness, both men and animals, and at the time of bad crops, the shaman is called upon to contact the spirit world. He does it by going into a trance and gets the feel from it and lets know what kind of spirit has caused the prevailing ills and evils, and what kind of sacrifice is required to propitiate him.

Among the above mentioned three ritualistic functionaries, the village priest occupies the most important place at the time of festival celebration.

DANCES

11

According to Webster's Dictionary, Dance is to perform either alone or with others a rhythmic and pattered succession of steps usually to music; to move or to move nimbly and quickly up and down or about (as from excitement or emotion).

12

'Amongst the arts, dance is at once the most primitive and the most sophisticated'. There is hardly a civilization or culture where the awareness of human movement as a vehicle of expression of joy and of sorrow is not evident. Perhaps before man began to speak and to paint, he began to dance. The earliest cave paintings of practically all civilization bear testimony to man's urge, not only to dance, but to capture this movement in colour and line. This urge has assumed many shapes and forms at different periods of history and in different regions of the world. On one level, whether in time

or space, these forms embody man's innate universal desires to express human joys and sorrows. On the other, they are different clearly distinguishable on account of their particular content and the distinctive form and style through which this content is manifested. And yet, in spite of the great variations and multiplicity of themes, forms and styles of folk art, folk dance continues to be a distinct category characterized by an overwhelming quality of spontaneity of participation of everyone, without an artificial barrier between the creator and actor, the performer and the audience. The intimate relationship of the folk arts with functions of daily life, whether of food gathering, hunting, collective activity in the context of rites and rituals connected with these functions and the beliefs of the performers in the propitiation of the spirits links them to one another.

No wonder then, that one of the oldest of the arts is the art of movement - dance. Assuming one form or another, it flourishes everywhere. Its origin are rooted in the pre-historic past, for long before dance grew to be a complex art early man took pleasure in swaying, turning, stepping and stamping rhythmically, just as small children do today. Aware of the movement of the powerful forces of nature, early man moved in ways he hoped would appease those forces or give him power over them. Hunter danced before battle, tribes danced to exorcise evil spirits and to propitiate the gods. There were

dance to bring rain, dances to celebrates the harvest, dances of birth, puberty, marriage and death.

Each of the worlds great civilizations has produced its own dances. In one sense, all have been similar, since, all have made use body can move in so many ways, dance forms have varied enermously from culture to culture.

13

'Whenever dancing prosper and whatever bodily movements different cultures favour, there are at least two basic kind of dance, edification or amusement of the dancers who perform it. The other basic kind of dance assumes that its movements can be watched with pleasure, infact, exists to be watched'.

Dance is not simply a visual art, it is kinesthetic as well, it appeals to over inherent sense of motion. As we watch dancers on stage, our own muscular systems react to the strain or relaxation of their movements. We cannot only observe what happens, we also, in some emphatic way feel it.

Man is not alone in wanting to dance. Many birds and animals appear to dance at some time or other. Like them, man also has probably danced from the earliest stages of evolution. It is agreed that human beings have developed most of their dance styles by the imitating various movements of birds and animals exclusive to their land. He experiences pleasure as well satisfaction in rhythmical movement, since this exercises his body and, at the same time release inner tensions. Moreover, it can induce hypnotic trances. This may

have led to the believe that dance has magical powers, and so it came to be used in early cults and rites for propitiating the gods and driving away evil spirits. By dancing man expressed himself in away which he conceived as the past powerful and eloquent of the means at this disposal.

He celebrated by dancing, he gain courage by dancing and oftenlike the birds and animals around him, he cousted with the help of dance. Dance is found among all men, whether in primitive or advanced societies. It functions vary in these societies from religion to pure entertainment. So in all probabiliy, dance goes back as far as man himself but its styles and forms are many some very new, or at least seemingly so, and others of great antiquity.

The dances have been classified into various categories such as the static, ring, motif, line pattern, ecstatic, social, bellicose or war, erotic etc. All these are based on the movements of birds and animals. In pure biological terms dancing has been described as a physiological phenomenon originating from moter reflex due to intense excitement leading to heightened activity. Human beings express their finer emotions and sentiments through dancing.

C

METHOD OF STUDY

Methodology for the study includes intensive field work among the Mizos of Chhimtuipui District, which is still very much bounded by the indigenous Mizo traditions. For the purpose of collecting data 25 'knowledgeable' persons were selected. These were persons known to have excel in either folk-dances or knowing folklore of the Mizo community. Formal interview was also included secondly, secondary resources by consulting published materials, books, reports and unpublished documents.

SOURCES OF DATA

The study is mainly based on Primary data, which were collected through an interview schedule and by means of questionnaire method administered personally by the researcher in Chhimtuipui District. The secondary data were collected from Governments' reports, journals, various articles and other relevant sources.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the dissertation is to present a true picture of the Mizos' festivals and dances and to find out how its affected the life of the Mizos. Following are the main objectives of the proposed study :

- (i) To provide an analysis of the role played by the festivals and dances in Mizo annual cycle of life.
- (ii) To describes the various festivals and dances with a view to examine their social significance.
- (iii) To examine the extent of change in the styles, items and symbols of the Mizos' festivals and dances.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS LITERATURES

There has been a very little works on festivals and dances as far as Mizoram is concerned. This may be due to the lack of first hand materials such as books, journals, articles etc., on this subject. This dissertation purports to be the first work on festivals and dances of the Mizos. As mentioned before the need to have such a work was felt because no analysis of the Mizos' festivals and dances was known to have attempted by any scholars. The field of the study was found to be suitable because the scholar belongs to Mizoram, and has the advantage of getting first-hand knowledge of festivals and dances of the Mizos.

PLAN OF STUDY

The dissertation is divided into four (4) chapters. The first chapter is an introductory part dealing with

- (a) the study area,
- (b) meaning of festivals and dances, and
- (c) method of study.

Chapter two (2) describes in vivid detail the festivals and dances performed by the Mizo people. Chapter three (3) presents a detailed analysis of data collection. The final chapter deals with the conclusion of the present study. At the end, illustrations and selected bibliography have been given.

References

1. **Statistical Handbook of Mizoram : Department of Economics and Statistics**, Government of Mizoram, (1992), p. 11.
2. ibid. : p. 14.
3. Zawla, K. : **Mizo Pipute Leh An Thlahte Chanchin**, Gosen Press, Aizawl, 5th Edition, 1989, p. 17.
4. McCall, A. G. Major : **Lushai Chrysalis**, London, 1949, p.96.
5. Vumson : **Zo History**, Published by the Author, Aizawl, Mizoram, p. 16.
6. **Webster's New World Dictionary**, Pitambar Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1981, p. 181.
7. **Festivals in Asia**, Asian Copublication Programme Series Two, Sponsored by the Asia Cultural Center for UNESCO, 1975.
8. Winick, C. : **Dictionary of Anthropology**, Philosophical Library, New York, 1956, p. 39.
9. Gnanambal, K. : **Festivals of India**, Anthropological Survey of India Publication, Calcutta, 1967, p. 13.
10. Singh, Ajit K. : **Tribal festivals of Bihar**, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1982, p. 7.

11. **Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Vol. I,**
Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc; p. 572.
12. **Vatsyayan, K. : Tradition of Indian Folk Dance,** Indian
Book Company, 1976, p. I.
13. **Anderson, J. : Dance,** Newsweek Books, New York, p. 8.

CHAPTER - II
FESTIVALS AND DANCES OF THE MIZOS

Festivals and Its Origin

Mizo's are agriculturists. They practise what is known as Jhum cultivation : a 'slash and burn' system of cultivation. They slash down the jungle, burn the trunks and leaves and cultivate the land. All their other activities revolve around this jhum operations and their festivals are all connected in one way or another with such agricultural operations. Mizos have three major festivals called 'KUT'- such as (i) Pawl-Kut, (ii) Mimkut, and (iii) Chapchar Kut . On the occasion of these Kuts or festivals there is a **HRILH** or **awm** (holiday) for the whole village. As these feasts are occasions for the villagers to enjoy themselves and merry make, no penalty is held to attach to the breaking of the hrilh which is merely imposed to ensure all or nearly all of the villagers being present in the village for the feast. The festivals are celebrated in every village with great gaiety. It strengthen the association of different clans. On these festivals personal grievances are forgotten. People forget their grievances and embrace each other in a spirit of mutual well-being. Its involves the full community participation.

The origin of the festival cannot be traced. But one thing is clear that before they come to Burma the Mizo's already had some kind of festivals. Any way we shall try our best to trace their origin and discuss the practices.

1. **PAWLKUT** A harvest - festival celebrated during December to January after the harvest is over. It is perhaps the greatest festivals, after the harvested food is in plenty and the villagers sit back and enjoy the fruits of their Year's labour. **Pawl Kut** celebrated with great enthusiasm and gaiety with singing dancing and community feasting.

1
Regarding its origin, it is believed that when our fore fathers were settled down in the valley of **RUN** river, there occur a great famine called **THINGPUI TAM** (one kind of bamboo) for three Years. Many persons died and many left their places in the absence of food. But fortunately after four Years of famine their come a time when they get a large quantity of rices, and other vegetables from their fields. Each and every household get more then their need. They called that Year as a rich Year. Then they had enough rice and other eatable things to feed/give their domestic animals also, and they were very lucky in taming domestic animals too.

At that time one Mizo's Chief (Kawlni) summoned his village elders **Upas** and other important persons in the villages in order to know about their opinion, how to spend the large quantity of their foods. The Chief along with his upas decided to celebrate, in such away that, they were going to prepare 'public feast' and asked each and every household to prepare children meat for the purpose of the day, They request all the people in the village to participate in its

celebration. When the day come all the people come out with their cooked rice and meat and ate together with their neighbors and friends.

The next morning wealthy persons contributed their pigs and continued their celebration. Some bachelors organized game for the day. Such as **SAKHUILUT** game. They collected some straws from different fields (paddy) and made Sakhuilut and covered it with straw. At the end they kept some portions of meat and the competitors while bending try to get the meats with other friends, Even the elders after eating and drinking with Rice-bear participated in it. That portion of meat which different competitors tried to get is known as **LUH KUT SA**. After Sometime what ever the meat on the celebration is called 'Luh Kut sa'.

After some Years they omitted the ward **LUH** and used only the **Kut**. and they still practice eating together with friends and serving rice and meat to the mouth of their friends. This stuffing rice and meat to other friends mouth is known as **CHHAWNGHNAWH** or **CHHAWNGHNAWT** When the bachelors collect the straw, they collected some straws from one persons paddy field, who has not Yet harvested all his paddy, so he got angry with the bachelors. But the chief and his elders intervened and said that nobody could complain about collecting paddy from the paddy fields by saying that it was already the time of **Pawl** and majority of the people finished collecting their paddy from their fields. The chief and his

elders announced that the people should collect their paddy before the celebration and those who had not finish it before it could not complaint. Hence this celebration is called **PAWL KUT**.

After celebrating many Years, now **Pawl Kut** is generally regarded as children's festival. In **Kut** (festival) night every house/family try to eat special rice, meat and eggs. Those who have grandson/ granddaughter burnt chickens eyes for their Nephews and Nieces. And their grandson and granddaughter make necklace from these chickens leg-horn. And when they wear they feel that they look very beautiful and feel very proud of it. In the evening everybody dresses and wears their best. clothes and bring out their special rice, meat and eggs to share with friends. They had their feasts, especially at the entrance of the villages where there is a special place called **LUNGDAWH**. Though it is regarded as children's festival all the people - participate in it. By saying **CHHAWNG, CHHAWNG, CHHAWNGI** the people try to stuff their rice, meats and eggs to their friends mouth. They chose one another for doing this. For the purpose of this festival the Young-men and Young-women even the children collect rice and maize from every house. From that collected rice and maize they prepare 'ZU' (rice bear) for the occasion and sometimes they sell it and buy what ever they like. The method of collecting there donations are quite interesting. It is more or less same with modern's day carol. In every house where they are intended to collect donation

they sing a song together. The most popular song goes like this.

"Mim neiin mim pe u,
Fang neiin fang min pe u,
Chhahwhchhi pawng e, lai pawng e",

It meaning is close to like this.

Give us these who are having corn
Give us these who are having paddy

When they give donations to them they bless them with songs.

It goes:-

"Dam ang che, dang che,
Tarkun khup binhin dam ang che,
Kum tin buhza thlo ang che",

It means

"Live,.... Live
Till you are old enough
And have lots of paddy every Year".

When they did not give them, they curse them like this :

"Thi ang che, thi ang che,
I ngal ngetin thi ang che".

It means

"die .. die.....
before you are old enough".

MIMKUT : Mimkut or Maize Festival usually celebrated during the months of August and September, after the harvest of Maize

and other crops are over. It is celebrated with solemnity and dedication albeit with a spirit of thanks giving and usual fare of singing and dancing. It is a festival expressly dedicated to the memory of the dear ones who had died and departed from the earth. The first - fruits of the Year's harvest are consecrated and offered at the **Lungdawh** (Memorial platform) of their relatives.

Legend goes that once upon a time there were two lovers- Tlingi and Ngama. Ultimately they got married after they had grown up and then they led a happy life. Unfortunately, after many Years of happiness, Tlingi passed away and Ngama was left alone in the world. Ngama long his wife Tlingi very much and every day he cried for her. After many days he was fainted and become unconscious for many hours. During that he went to the **Pialral** (the abode of the dead) and there he met Tlingi his beloved wife. Tlingi was very thin and Ngama asked her about her condition and the cause of her thinness. Tlingi answered that the cause of her thinness was shortage of food in the abode of the dead and she was not in a position to become healthy and fat. She requested Ngama to go back to the world and send her some fruits and crops which were in plenty in their paddy fields. Then, Ngama returned to the world and did so as he was requested to Tlingi.

After some years Ngama again became unconscious longing for Tlingi. His soul went to the **Mitthi Khua** and met Tlingi again. This time Tlingi was very healthy and felt very happy.

Ngama asked Tlingi, the reason for being healthy and happy. She replied that she received the fruits and crops sent by him and she have enough for her daily foods, so she was very healthy and felt very happy. Ngama returned back to the world and he kept aside some portion of fruits and crops for his beloved wife, every year. When other people came to know about his practice they also follow his way and from this practice emerged what is known as **Mim Kut**.

The **Mim Kut** or festival is exclusively dedicated in honour of those persons who had died during the past year. Fresh vegetables, maize, bread, necklaces and cloths are placed on the memorials of the dead. In houses in which some one had died during the year **ZU** is drunk and sing some sentimental songs. Sometimes the relatives of the dead cry when they sing a song in remembrance of the dead person. On the third day every body can eat vegetables, maize, breads and any other things which are placed for the dead. And after this they request the spirit of the dead to go to the abode of the dead, and the soul of the dead reluctantly goes to the **Pialral** (abode of the dead) in order to fulfill their relatives wishes.

CHAPCHAR KUT : Chapchar Kut was the greatest of the festival. It was celebrated with great festivities usually during the month of March or the advent of spring. By this time the Mizos completed their jhum-cutting, the most arduous task of their jhum operation. A little respite between the jungle clearing

operation and the burning of jhum is heightened by the thaw of spring with the trees in the forests bursting up with the new leaves and flowers and the cold winter spell giving place to the spring. This is perhaps the gayest of the Mizo Kut, which is celebrated with great fanfare and eclat.

2

It originated during the time, when the Mizos settled in **Suai tlang** (hill). Legend goes that, the chief with some young-men go for hunting. But fortune did not favour them and they turned back to their village empty handed. The bachelors were shy to go out to the street to meet their girl friends. Knowing about this, the chief killed pigs and asked the other to contribute chicken and invited the youngmen for dinner in order to save their face. They were very happy and other people also joined in it. Those who participated, went out to the street and started dancing, drinking and eating. From this onward every year they celebrated this and it become one of the greatest festivals of the Mizos.

In ancient times, the event was celebrated with drinking and dancing called **Chai**. People dressed themselves with their best garments. It was a day of rejoicing, and the best food was served in the family. There must not be any undesirable atmosphere in their midst. Meat and eggs were eaten to the full. In the evening all the community came out in the open, and the young-men and young-women formed a big circle and

performed the **Chai** dance. They stuffed meat and eggs on one other's mouths.

They prepare everything in advanced They made **ZU** (rice beer); trapping animals and birds. Every household try to eat meat on festival day. The first few days are spent by the young-men hunting animals and catching fish for the feast. Then an appointed day, the Mizos kill pigs drink Zu and have a fest. The next day is known as the **Kut Zan** and all the people gather round the village **Lung dawh** a stone platform put up as a memorial to the dead, and plates of meat, rice, eggs, etc., are brought out and people give titbits to their friends to eat and all drink Zu. The next day is known as **Zu Pui Ni** which is passed in drinking Zu and in the evening the chief collects all the youngmen and girls and gets them to dance and sing. This is known as the **Zuthing chawini** and more Zu is drunk and they continue to drink Zu until the supply runs out. The last day is known as **eipuar awm ni** and is **hrilh**. It is thought that any one going to the jungle on this day will be eaten by a tiger. This is the most important feast in the Mizo year and is to celebrated the arrival of the Mizo New Year.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the Mizo observe three festivals in a year. Such as **Pawl Kut**, **Mimkut** and **Chapchar kut**. **Pawl kut** is celebrated when the paddy harvest is over, usually during the later part of December. **Mimkut** is celebrated usually in the month of August, when the Maize harvest was over. It was a festival of the dead so it was not

celebrated with so much pomp and rejoicing as that of **Chapchar kut**. This was the month called **Thitin Thla** in Mizo, literally meaning "the month of farewell to the dead". Chapchar kut is celebrated sometime in the month of March or the advent of spring. The festival was celebrated with dancing and singing. It is usually held as soon as the jhums have been cut. It last for about a week or more.

Besides these festivals, the Mizos celebrate Christmas, Easter, New Year, Thlaithar kut (New crops festivals), Good Friday, after they convert to Christian faith.

1. Christmas : Christmas is one of the greatest festivals of the world. It is the birthday of Jesus Christ, (the son of God) who was the saviour of this world according to Christian beliefs. It is celebrated on the 25th December to commemorate the birth of Christ. The exact date of birth is not known, but it has become customary to celebrate his birthday on this date. Well before Christmas, the people sent Christmas cards to their dear friends, sweet-heart, family members as a token of Christmas wishes. Church and houses are specially decorated this day.

On the eve of Christmas, i.e., 24th night, church service is held and youngmen and youngwomen have a Christmas carol. They visit every houses, singing beautiful Christmas songs from the gospel hymns, and their own composed one. Then the

house owner contributes some cash money for the celebration of Christmas. In short, Christmas is observed with special pomp and grandeur. Church service, holy-communion, dance and song, feasting are the chief traits of this festival. One can notice that the Mizo way of celebration is more or less same to the western countries.

2. New Year : The Mizo observed new year like other tribes in India. It is celebrated in the month of January. Church service was held on the day and feasting is also a part and parcel of this day.

3. Good Friday : It is believed to be the holiest festivals as on this day Christ was crucified. Here again church service is held and Holy-communion was arranged. Bread and tea are the special preparations during this festival.

4. Thlathar Kut : The new crops festival is celebrated by the Mizos with great enthusiasm. It is celebrated in the month of August. At this time they already had harvest their cash crops like maize, etc. A special church service is arranged and the converts bring harvested corns and other things to the church 'to thank God' because he help the people in agricultural works and blessed them, as a result they could reap the crop. Again they prepared delicious food and meats for the community.

DANCES

Vibrant, carefree, gregarious and blessed with rich culture and beautiful environment the Mizos can boast of several community and folk dances which have been handed down from generation to generation and developed under the influence of the birds, the beasts the hills and valleys. It is to be remembered, however, that these dances have been evolved not for show on stage, but for community involvement and participation. The most popular group dances of the Mizos are given below :

I. Cheraw : One of the most unique and interesting dances, cheraw, is sometimes known as "Bamboo Dance", only because bamboos are used in the dance. But it has nothing to do with bamboo. It is rather a dance for the spirit of a child who had died. So it used to be performed as means of sending the spirit to proceed to the paradise peacefully.

³
The origin of cheraw is not known for sure. It is possible that the forefather's of the Mizos brought it with them from their early abode in the far east Asia. Although, cheraw is performed, so ways the legend, with a specific purpose to pave a safe and victorious passage for a child (on leaving this mortal world) to the abode of the dead. Cheraw is, therefore, a dance of sanctification and redemption performed with calculated precision and elegance.

Cheraw is the dance of the girls performed with bamboo poles. The dance is performed by an alternate stepping in and out from between and across a pair of horizontal bamboos, which are held against the ground by persons sitting face to face at either end, who continuously tap the bamboos open and closed rhythmic beats. The bamboos when clapped, produce a sharp clapping sound, which give the rhythm and timing to the dance, the dancer steps in and out to the beat of the bamboos and maintain the dance with confidence and grace. There are many variations in the pattern and steps in **cheraw**, imitation of the movement of birds, the swaying of the trees and so on.

II. Khuallam : The term **Khual lam** means dance of the guest.

This is a very grand and beautiful dance usually performed by men only. The more the members, the more spectacular the dance looks.

According to the tribal religious of the Mizos in Pre-Christian days, the soul after death goes to either "Pialral" (Paradise) a place of bliss and luxury or **Mithi Khua** (abode of the death) a land of sorrow or penury. To earn a place in **Pialral**, the Mizos believed that a man had to attain it by merit either by proving his mettle in war or in hunting or by being a man of distinction in social life. To earn the latter qualification calls for performing various ceremonies called **Khuangchawi** which included offering community feasts and dances. When performing this **Khuangchawi** it was customary to invite relatives from nearby villages. Such quest from nearby

villages would then enter the arena of the "Khuangchawi" with a dance called **Khualham**. It is normally performed by men dressed in **Puandum** (traditional cloth with black, red and green stripes) with the accompaniment of a set of gongs known as **Darbu**.

III. Chheih Lam : 'Joie de vivre' would have been the proper epithet to describe chheih lam a dance of joy and exhilaration. It is a dance performed with the accompaniment of song called **Chheih hla** to the beat of a drum or bamboo-tube or clapping of hands. The people squat round the floor in circle, while the dancer stands in the middle reciting a favourite song or may be, reeling out his own in loud outburst of conviviality while the dancer enlives the occasion by various movements of his limbs and body.

An expert 'Chheih dancers cojoles and entices his audience and tries to coax them into joining him in the dance. It is then 'bonhomie' to join him and dance to the beat of the song. Any one can try this dance and it was no specific choreography but to get into the mood and 'live it up' chheih lam' is performed on any suitable occasion, normally in the cool of the evening, after the days' labour is over. It used to be done in association with drinking **Zu** (a local beer) and in the middle a man dances and led the singing.

There is no such proper and systematic step in Chheih lam. It depends solely upon those persons who are performing the dance. Sometimes it can be slow and sometimes it can be very fast.

Some of the songs which they sing while performing **Chheih lam** are :

- a) Fam ila keizawng a pawl nem maw;
Lungruni nen a thianga leh a rem lo;
Ka damchhan hmel hmuh an phal love.

Its meaning is like this.

I don't care if I die,
Cause I can't stay with my girl,
Even they didn't allowed me to see her face also.

- b) Sikin manding sap i lungmual e;
German ral lian tawn in tir suh ka lungdi;
Ka suihlunglen tur i dawn love.

It goes :

Sikin manding Commander you are so ignorant,
Please don't send my darling to meet/face German's force,
Don't you think about my logging for him.

IV. Chai Lam : Chai is another dance of the Mizos, normally performed on the occasion of **Kut** (festival). It is a community dance with men and women one after the other in circle holding each other on the shoulder and the nape. The dancers sway to and fro and swing their feet to the tune of the song sung by all of them in unision, while a drummer and a gongman beat

their instruments. Horns of Mithun is also an important instrument used for the accompaniment of the song. **Chai** is a very enjoyable dance, but it is not a very appropriate one for show on stage. In olden days **Chai** dancers were plied with rice beer continuously as they kept on dancing. Legend has it that once they started the chai dance it was difficult for them to know when to stop. The Mizos in ancient times usually performed chai dance during Chapchar Kut (festivals) only. So its origin can be trace, back with the origin of Chapchar Kut.

It is a dance performed during the Kut by youngmen and youngwomen in a mixed dance. Men and women standing one after the other in circle hold each other on the shoulder and the nape. Men will hold women's shoulder and women in turn hold men's nape. In the centre is the drummers who is the leader beating a drum, and the horn-man reciting the song to be sung by the participants. First, the drummer will sing the song and other will sing after him/ Nobody's can sing before the drummer. After the drummer beats his drum four times, he will start singing and simultaneously the dancers will start dancing. The dancers sway to and fro and swing their feet to the tune of the song sung by all of them in unision while a drummer and gongman beat their instruments. They are plied with rice-beer continuously as they kept on dancing.

Some of the chai dance songs are the following :

- a) Tlan rawh, tlan rawh, lalvung tlan rawh ral an ti,
Tualkhei ralah lalvunga ka tlan ngai love.

Its English version is like this

Run run, Lalvung run, they said our enemy is coming,
No, the brave Lalvung never run in the face of the enemy.

- b) Ka chun-i nu'n khiangawiah mi tir,
Ka leng rih dawn hmunlo ram lovah.

My mother requested me to marry
But still I want to be a bachelor for sometime.

Rallu Lam : Strictly speaking Rallu Lam is not a dance as such. It is rather a celebration or a rite in honour of a head taken in a war. When a warrior comes back after a successful said, the chief accords him with a colourful celebration in the village. The celebration consists of the re-enactment of the heroic exploit of the warrior. Celebration of Rallu lam varies from village to village.

Sarlankai : One of the most beautiful and interesting dances of Mizoram known as **Sarlankai** is the dance of Lai community. Originally Sarlankai was the dance performed in honour of a head taken in a battle. No song is sung in this dance. Only gongs and symbols or drums are used to keep the beat. Men and women dancers make a raw, the leader guides them by beating a drummer or cymbals, They also beat the gong to keep the timing while the hero, brandishing

a sword and a shield dances in the middle. The leaders, will beats the drum or cymbol slowly and carefully. After he beats the drum or cymbol two times the dancers will bend their heads in front to show their respect to the people. Then after the leader beats the drummer cymbols three times the dancers will start dancing.

Because of its adaptability as a drill sarlamkai has been taken up by most of the schools in Mizoram for their cultural activities now a days.

SAWLAKIA : This is a dance peculiar to the Mara people of South Mizoram. It is a beautiful and a spectacular dance performed by a group of people. In former times, the dance was performed in association with successful hunting and is performed in honour of a head taken in a battle. Its method of dancing is more or less the same with sarlamkai dance. The only difference in the dance is the dress and tempo of the dance.

Thus we can say that the Mizos can boast of several community and folk-dances. They love to dance as much as they love to sing. The dances are expressions of the gay, carefree spirit of the Mizos. Some of the most popular dances of the Mizos are cheraw, khualams.... sarlamlai, chheihlam, and chai.

References

1. Zawla, K. : **Mizo Pipute Leh An Thlahte Chanchin**, Gosen Press, 5th Edition, Aizawl, 1989, p. 56.
2. ibid. : p. 59.
3. **Mizo Lam Thenkhatte**: Government of Mizoram Tribal Research Institute, p. 19.

CHAPTER - III
ANALYSIS OF DATA

In the previous chapter, we have highlighted the general characteristics of the Mizo Society and its traditions. Social, economic, political organizations and geographical location, We also discussed about the changes in the traditional organization brought about by new forces. In this chapter we proposed to present and discussed the data collected from different respondents in Mizoram in order to know about the festivals and dances of the Mizos. 25 respondents are interviewed from different towns/villages and different sub-tribes. Most of our respondents have first hand knowledge about the Mizos festivals and dances and are actively involved in different cultural activities.

When we asked the meaning of Mizos festivals and dances, they answered that Mizos festivals and dances are meant for Mizo community. They said that like other community in the world the Mizo have their own distinct culture, traditions, festivals and dances. Since the Mizos were agriculturists in olden days, their everyday life involved with hard working in their fields. Sometimes, in order to escape from this drudgery and monotony of their everyday life they organized social gathering for the entire villages and every villages was expected to participate in this social gathering. At the beginning this gathering was very simple but gradually it become more and more complex. Our respondent thinks that out of this later stage, the Mizos festivals and dances were developed. Since the Mizo do not have written records about

their history, most of our respondents said that it is very difficult to trace the origin of the festival and dance of the Mizo. However, they argue that the Mizo festivals and dances are as old as the Mizo race itself. They are part and parcel of the Mizo culture and without them the history of the Mizo cultural system cannot be complete. They generally believed that before they came to their present habitat(Mizoram) they already had various kinds of festivals and dances.

According to our respondents the social significance of the Mizo festivals and dances are many. Their festivals removed drudgery and monotony of their everyday life. They also said that their festivals strengthen the association of various clans and sub-tribes of the Mizos. it provides happiness to the individual, they forget their personal grievance on these occasions and they embrace each other in a spirit of mutual well-being. Likewise, their various dances provide extra-occasions for the individuals to participate in the public and communal rejoicing which cement the social solidarity and unity of the mizo. They point out that it also gives extra-enthusiasm and vigour to their life.

Thus our respondents agreed that the various festivals and dances of the Mizo played an important and significance role for the unification of Mizo community as a whole and they claimed that these festivals and dances are an integral part of the cultural practices and social life of the Mizo community. We also tried to discuss the **Socio Economic**

Background of the respondents. In the formation of human personality as well as in the moulding of thoughts and action, social surrounding plays a considerable role. The respondents in the present study comes from different economic background and belong to diverse age groups, education levels etc.; Most of our younger respondents are actively involved in various social works. Majority of them are leaders of various associations and social organizations. Whereas most of our older respondents are taking parts in various church activities and infact some of them are church elders in their respective church. For a proper probe into their attitudes and behaviours, therefore the social background must adequately be understood.

Table 1.1 : PROVIDES AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS.

Age Group (Year)	No.	Percentage
20-29	5	20
30-39	3	12
40-49	7	28
50-59	5	20
60-69	3	12
70-79	2	8
Total	25	100

AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

As shown in table 1.1 the age group is based on the questionnaire distributed to the different respondents. The age group of the respondents was categorized into groups with

a gap of ten years. The respondents having the lowest age is 20 years and the oldest among is 76 years of age. Out of the total, about one third of the respondents i.e., 28 percent, belong to the age group of 40 - 49 years while the lowest number of the respondents i.e., 8 percent are between 70-79, and another 20 percent were between 50-59 years. The remaining 12 percent are between 30-39 and 60-69 years respectively: In our research study we have included individuals of all ages so as to get a clearer perspective about the festivals and Dances of the Mizo society.

Table 1.2 : PROVIDES RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS

Religion	Denomination	No.	Percentage
All are Christian	I.K.K.	10.	40
	E.C.M.	5	20
	BAPTIST	6	24
	PRESBYTERIAN	3	12
	U.P.C.	1	4
Total		25	100

RELIGION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Table 1.2. reveals that Christianity is the religion of all the respondents, i.e. out of 25 respondents 100 percent are christians. However, they belong to different denominations. 40 percent, of them belong to I.K.K. (Church of Jesus) 24 perc-ent belong to Baptist church, whereas 20 percent belong to the E.C.M (Evangelical church of Maraland),

12 percent are Presbyterian and the lowest 4 percent is from United Pentecostal church popularly known as U.P.C.

I.K.K. and E.C.M. is a local church and most of the members of I.K.K church are Lais whereas most of the Mara's belong to E.C.M church Majority of the members of the Presbyterian church are Lushai. Those who belong to Baptist church are generally coming from Lunglei District of Mizoram. Every denomination has its own church its council or church elders and its code of conduct binding on all its members.

Table 1.3 : PROVIDES OCCUPATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Occupation	No.	Percentage
Govt. Service	11	44
Contractor	3	12
Cultivators	2	8
Student's	5	20
House Wife	4	16
Total	25	100

OCCUPATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

The diversification of occupations and profession is evident in table 1.3 which gives us the occupation of our respondents. The table show that nearly half of our respondents i.e. 44 percent are government employees. However their ranks and status is of different type. Among them, there are Gazetted officers, who are heads of their respective department, others are Lecturer and teachers, teaching in different government institutions. Farsons engaged in contract

are 12 percent, whereas 8 percent are cultivators, 16 percent belong to housewife and the rest 20 percent are Students, studying in different educational institution.

Table 1.4 : PROVIDES EDUCATIONAL GOALIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Education	No.	Percentage
Illiterate	2	8
Primary	3	12
Matriculation	4	16
P.U.C	5	20
Graduates	6	24
Post Graduates	5	20
Total	5	100

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Regarding the educational qualification of the respondents only 8 percent are illiterate whereas the rest of them i.e., 92 percent are educated. Out of 92 percent 12 percent had primary level, 16 percent are Matriculates, 20 percent are P.U.C., another 20 percent belong to Post Graduate and the highest category belong to Graduates level i.e., 24 percent.

Table 1.5 : PROVIDES SEX OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sex Group	No.	Percentage
Male	20	80
Female	5	20
Total	25	100

SEX OF THE RESPONDENTS

As much as 80 percent of the respondents are Males whereas only 20 percent are females.

Table 1-6 : PROVIDES MARTIAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Marital Status	No.	Percentage
Married	15	60
Unmarried	10	40
Total	35	100

MARTIAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

60 percent of the respondents are married, while 40 percent are unmarried.

Those who are unmarried belonging to the lower age group and are still living with their parents.

Table 1-7 : SHOWS SUB-TRIBE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sub-Tribe	No.	Percentage
Lai	10	40
Mara	6	24
Lushei	9	36
Total	25	100

SUB-TRIBE OF THE RESPONDENTS

All of our respondents belong to Mizo tribe. However Mizo is comprised of different sub. tribes such as Lai, Lushei,

Hmar, Mara. So in order to have a clear picture of our study efforts have been made to include all the different sub. tribe in our investigation. Out of these different sub. tribe, we select Lais, Lushei and Maras tribes for our study as they represent the bulk of the Mizos population. However, lesser known tribe like Ralte, Paite, are included in the Lushei tribe in order to have easy approach to our study. out of these,40,percent belong to Lai community. 24 percent are Mara and the rest 36 percent are Lushei community. There are different dialects for almost all these different Sub. tribes. But they all speak Duhlian dialects and it is the common language of these people. Besides 'Duhlian' dialects those who were educated can speak English and Hindi.

Table 1.8 : REVEAL VILLAGE TOWN OF THE RESPONDENTS

Village/Town	No.	Percentage
Saiha	10	40
Lawnhtlai	8	32
Tuipang	3	12
Sangau	4	16
Total:	25	100

VILLAGE/TOWN OF THE RESPONDENTS

According to table 1.8 the place in which the respondents resides is divided into two categories i.e., Village and Town out of 25 respondents 72 percent reside in urban area whereas 28 percent are from rural area.

All of our respondents agreed that the Mizos traditional festivals and dances have been passing through a gradual process of breaking-down in the face of modern world. Some of the older respondents however, said that though there is a gradual breakdown of these traditional festival and dances, there is no such real danger for its complete breakdown in the near future. They further claimed that if the younger generation is wise enough, they will realize the importance of these traditional festivals and dances and they will not allowed its complete eradication from the complex modern society. Rather they believed that these educated and intelligent generations will try their best to revive these festivals and dances because these people will know that these are part and parcel of the Mizo culture.

Table 2.1 : MAIN FACTORS OF BREAKDOWN

Factors	No.	Percentage
(A) Christianity	9	36
(B) Westernization	Nil	Nil
(C) Both (A) & (B)	16	64
Total	25	100

We already know that cent percent of our respondent says that there is a breakdown of traditional festival and dances in the face of modern society. But our table 2.2 clearly shows that there is a sharp difference of opinion regarding the causes and factors of these breakdowns 36 per cent of our respondent claimed that christianity is the main factors of

this breakdown whereas majority i.e., 54 per cent agreed that both christianity and westernization are the main reason.

Here we have a very interesting background of the respondents. Those who claimed christianity as the factor of the breaking down of traditional festivals and dances are mainly belonging to the older generation of our respondents. They are generally less educated and normally narrow in their outlook. They are 'born again' christians (Those who have made personal commitment and choice to follow christ) and for them, all the changes taking place in Mizo society was mainly due to the impact of christianity.

Compared to these people, 54 per cent of our respondents generally belonging to the younger generations suggests that both christianity and westernization equally played important roles in the gradual breaking down of Mizo traditional festivals and dances. These people are more educated well read and have a wider outlook. They say that the forces of westernization is coming first to Mizoram and later christianity make its impact among the Mizo people due to westernization and for them both are equally responsible for this breakdown. We can see a generation gap among our respondents.

**Table 2.2 : POSSIBLE THAT TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS & DANCES
CAN BE MODIFIED ON LINE OF MODERNIZATION**

Possible	No.	Percentage
Yes	18	72
No	7	28
Total	25	100

As regard this table 2.2 shows that as many as 72 per cent of the respondents think that our traditional festivals and dances can be modified on the line of modernization. But 28 percent of our respondents believe that if we try to modify any of our traditional festival and dance they may lose their originality and significance so they does not favour any modification of our traditional festivals and dances. They further suggests that if we really want to preserve our cultural heritage we should have in the same time preserve its originality and authenty as best as we can.

However, those who think that these traditional festivals and dances can be modified on the line of modernization claimed that every social institutions are subject to modification in order to adjust to the changing environment. Hence most of the civilized people in the world always modified their practices on the line of modernization without losing its originality. Thus according to them Mizo traditional festivals and dances can and should be modified on the line of modernization.

All of our respondents i.e., 100 percent felt that the styles and rhythm of the dances differ from region to region.

Table 2.3 : MAIN FACTORS OF DIFFERENCE

Factors	No.	Percentage
(A) Geographical Location	15	60
(B) Existence of Difference Sub-Tribe in Mizo Society	5	20
(C) Both (A) & (B)	5	20
Total	25	100

According to the above table as many as 60 percent opined that the main causes of these differences are geographical location. They say that in the olden days every Mizo village was independent and self sufficient, had its own chief and village elders. There was war and conflict between villages for supremacy. As a result there was no regular communication between villages and they could not know each other properly. Since they did not have a chance to know each other, there practice of dances were also affected and as a result there was a slight and little difference in the styles and rhythm of each village dances. Because of this, sometimes we face difficulty in identifying the genuine and real styles and rhythm of the dances.

However, 20 percent of the respondents claimed that the existence of different sub-tribe in Mizo society is the main factor as each particular sub-tribe has its own dances. But another 20 percent of our respondents think that both

geographical location and existence of different sub-tribes in Mizo society equally attributes for these difference of the styles and rhythm of the various dances of the Mizo community.

As we know that, traditionally 'ZU' had played an important and significant role in Mizo society. Especially all their festivals and dances are involved with the drinking of ZU. Infact these festivals and dances cannot be done without ZU. In response to this question all our respondents think that **without the consumption of ZU**, the Mizo traditional festivals and dances cannot be completed in the real sense.

Dances have an important role in the education and socialization of the tribal child. Children sit between their parents knees, their tiny hands strikes the cymbols and metals keys or held the drumsticks. It is almost seen that they absard the rhythm and postures of the dances. Vibrant, carefree and blessed with rich culture and beautiful environment the Mizo can boast of many community and folk dances. These dances have been meant for community involvement and participation. All respondents agree that dancing play an **important role in the education and socialization** of children in Mizo society.

They point out that, next to family it is through dancing that the Mizo children learn their first education. Dancing educate them to discipline themselves, to respect their elders and to behave with their peers in the society. It is through

dancing that they know how to become responsible members of the society.

Table 2.4 : TRADITIONAL DANCES ARE REPLACED BY MODERN DANCES AMONG YOUNGER GENERATION

Replaced	No.	Percentage
Yes	13	52
No	12	48
Total		100

Our respondents were asked whether they think that traditional dances have been replaced by modern dances among the young generation. In response to this question our table 2.4 reveals that 52 percent of the respondents think that traditional dances are gradually disappearing from the Mizo society and expressed their regret about it. This is mainly due to the impact of Christianity, westernization and modernization. They think that because of modern inventions like Tape-Recorder, TV etc., traditional dances are slowly replaced by modern dances like Disco, Break dance etc.

But 45 percent of our respondents argued that traditional dances like Cheraw, Sarlamkai, Sawlakai etc., are still very much popular these days, especially among the younger generation in Mizoram. They opposed the suggestion that traditional dances are replaced by modern dances. According to them this claimed is baseless and the younger Mizos are very much aware of their traditional practices. But due to the lack

of fund and sponsorship from the government and various enterprises, it is difficult to perform our traditional dances, since it involved a community level participation.

Table 2-5 : PARTICIPATION IN TRADITIONAL DANCES

Participate	No.	Percentage
Yes	20	80
No	5	20
Total	25	100

Participation in dances is in two ways. People either dance and sing or sit as spectator.

Out of 25 respondents 20 persons (80%) take part in various traditional dances, whenever they have a chance, while 25 percent do not take part in the traditional dances due to disabilities and health. However, they said that they do take part in various traditional dances in their hey-day.

Mizo society is exposed to many cultural influences. As a result the old traditional ways that bind Mizo society together seem to be disappearing. Therefore, there seems to be a general desire to revive certain cultural practices, observances and values. All our respondents would like to revive traditional festivals and dances. However, the way they like to revive is different from each other. Some would like to **revive** it as traditionally as possible, while the others would like to modify certain practices such as abandoning the

drinking of ZU and still bring back the traditional sense of unity and solidarity in the Mizo society through festivals and dances. Any way, all our respondents feel a need to revive traditional festivals and dances that would help to preserve the culture and identity of the Mizo people.

Table 2.6 : TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS - HINDRANCE TO SOCIAL PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT

Hindrance	No.	Percentage
Yes	3	12
No	22	88
Total		100

The above table indicates that the bulk of respondents i.e., 88 percent strongly agree that our traditional festivals is not a great obstacle to Social progress and development in Mizo society. They claim that these festivals provide opportunities for social groups and individual to release their tensions and obtain emotional satisfaction in an atmosphere free from native cares and anxiety. They also promote a feeling of fellowship among the Mizo people participating in them. In short they bring solidarity and unity among the Mizos and this lead to social progress and development in Mizo society. Whereas 12 percent do not believe it at all.

As we have mentioned before the Mizos are divided into many sub-tribes, such as Lushei, Lais, Maras etc., they have

their own community folk dances. Generally all these folk dances are known as Mizo dances. All the respondents think that dances **does not divide** them on the line of sub-tribism. But some of the respondents believe that some factors like (especially politics) adversely affected the relations of various sub-tribes of the Mizos in a negative way and sometimes there is no mutual trust among these various sub-tribes. So they think that this may affect the institution of dance too. As a result of this, the institution of Dances can also contribute for the division of Mizo people on the line of sub-tribism in the near future.

All of the respondents do not agree that modern festivals like Christmas, New Year etc. play more important role than traditional festivals like Chapchar Kut, Mim Kut etc. After their conversion to christian faith the Mizo have festivals like Christmas, Easter etc. like other christians in the world. So it is a common believe that these modern christian festivals replace traditional festivals and play more important role for the unification of Mizo community as a whole than traditional festivals. However, our respondents argue that if we carefully examine and compare between these modern and traditional festivals regarding the role they played for the unification of Mizo community, traditional festivals **out-weigh** modern festivals. They said that in the past festivals brings the people together, as every festival is meant for the community participation. It provides unity

and social solidarity among the people and through this, co-operation and equality is achieved. They further argued that now-a-days most of the Mizo people belong to different dominations. and due to this, the way they celebrate, Christmas, New Year etc. cannot be the same, even some denominations like Seventh-Day Adventists do not celebrate Christmas at all. So according to them, modern festivals divide the Mizo community and as long as they belong to different denomination, modern festivals cannot be unified the Mizo community as a whole.

The cent percent of our respondents agree that as far as todays observances of festivals and dances are concerned, it does not conflict with christianity. There is no more drinking of ZU and a festival is celebrated within a limited time. The drinking of 'ZU' is substituted by various kinds of competitive events for those, who desire to participate in them. The traditional dances like **cheraw**, **chheihlam** were dances, exhibited by different groups. Sometimes the best groups are awarded with beautiful trophy. Todays observance of festivals and dance is more of a cultural association, therefore, it does not clash with christianity in Mizo society.

Table 2.7 : YOUNGER GENERATION TAKING 'ZU' DURING CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR IS INDICATION OF THEIR TENDENCY TO REVIVE TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS

Indication	No.	Percentage
Yes	10	40
No	15	60
Total		100

At the beginning of their conversion to christian faith they gave up their old habits of drinking ZU as the Missionaries demanded the Mizo converts to abandon it. Of these born again christians respondents usually belonging to the age groups of 40 - 60 years claim that the drinking of 'ZU" and merry making by the younger generation during christmas and other modern festivals cannot be an indication of their tendency to revive traditional festivals like **Mim KUT, pawl kut** etc. They accept that younger generation way of celebrating modern festival is more or less the same with traditional way of festivals, but among the younger generations there are true born again christians who never indulge in this kind of celebrations. So that the younger people drinking ZU and making merry with their friends without the consent of the church and family during christmas and other modern festivals are purely due to the process of modernization and westernization and not their tendency to revive traditional way of festivals celebration. They contend that social evils like alcoholism, conflict and family break

down or drug addiction are the result of western culture indirectly brought about by the British.

But surprisingly 40 percent of our respondents mostly belonging to the younger age group wonder that the younger generation taking drugs and consuming ZU during modern festivals may be an indication of their tendency to revive traditional festivals. These days most of the younger generation is nominal christians and sometimes they find the teaching of christianity very hard to follow since the teaching of christianity does not allow the drinking of ZU and other worldly merry making. Thus, 40 percent of the respondents believe that the younger generation is aware of their cultural heritage and their drinking of ZU during christmas time may be an indication of their tendency to revive traditional festivals.

From time immemorial Mizos had the tradition of drinking ZU played an important role in their cultural system. Originally there festivals and dances could not be performed without the drinking of ZU. Indeed ZU is a part of their every day life.

But strongly enough cent percent of our respondents believe that without ZU Mizos festivals and dances will not lose their originality and significance. Though they drink that this may affect these institutions especially regarding its originality, it would not affect much of it. They insisted

that ZU can be substituted with Tea as tea is becoming very popular among the Mizos.

All of our respondents does not favour the total elimination of traditional festivals and to preserve only modern christian festivals. Rather they would like to revive the traditional festivals and give much importance to them like christmas and other modern festivals.

Table 2-8 : GOVERNMENT ATTEMPT TO REVIVE TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS WILL SUCCESS WITHOUT CHURCH SUPPORT

Success	No.	Percentage
Yes	4	16
No	21	84
Total		100

After the Mizos got converted to Christianity, the institution of church is one of the most important and powerful institutions in the whole Mizoram. Every church has its council of elders and its code of conduct are binding on all its members. The church and its elders are found to play a very significant role in the smooth administration of the village besides its primary function of regulating the religious life of the people. Since every Mizo is christian and member of one of the churches, they never try to break the law of the church.

Our table reveals that 84 percent of the respondents feel that without the support of the church the government's effort

to revive traditional festivals cannot succeed. However, 16 percent of the respondents insist that the institution of church should look after the moral conduct and religious life of its members and do not interfere in the policy of the government in Mizoram which are secular aspects in nature.

All our respondents agree that there is a change in the styles, symbols and instruments of Mizo festivals and dances. They claim that with the impact of the west, Mizo society underwent a radical transformation. Now a days most of their traditional symbols and instruments are replaced by modern artificial symbols and instruments as they are hard to found it easily. And sometimes the styles of traditional dances are mixed with modern dances. Even today's observance of festivals is also quite different from the past. There is no more drinking of ZU in public, it is more of a cultural observance, a preserving of traditional heritage.

No doubt each and every sub-tribe of the Mizos has its own community dances; but cent percent of our respondents do not believe that this will not bring **disharmony** and hatred among the different community of the Mizo. At present every community is contended to be a part of Mizo society. Hence, their dances can be called the dance of the Mizo society as a whole.

Table 2.9 : CHRISTIANITY ALONE IS SOLE RESPONSIBLE FOR BRINGING ABOUT DISINTEGRATION OF TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS AND DANCES

Responsible	No.	Percentage
Yes	16	64
No	9	36
Total		100

The advent of christianity in 1894 brought about far-reaching changes in Mizo society. Cent percent of them were converted to christianity. Christianity made such a great impact Mizo that their values and mores underwent a radical transformation. They have been exchanted with their new-found faith and with so much dedication and sub-mission that the entire social life and thought process have been altogether transformed and guided by the christian teachings and church organizations directly or indirectly. As many as 54 percent of our respondents claim that christianity alone is responsible for the disintegration of the traditional festivals and dances. Whereas 36 percent claim that christianity alone cannot be responsible for the entire disintegration. Apart from christianity it is equally due to the process of modernization and westernization.

From the above analysis, it is clear that the respondents have different attitudes and opinions about festivals and dances of Mizos.

CHAPTER - IV

CONCLUSION

The present study throws light on the history of the Mizos festivals and dances, their role in the annual cycle of Mizo life and their changing aspects in modern times. We have analyzed traditional settings of Mizo life. We have noted that the term 'Mizos' as a generic term and to mean Hill-Man or High-Landers. Since they possess no written records, it is difficult to tell the origin of Mizos and there are various stories about their past. According to an old tale Mizos came from **CHHINLUNG** or Mythical Rock which was located in Burma and they spread over a wide area extending far beyond into Burma, India and Bangladesh. Again in the absence of any written history it is hard to explain where and when did they come to their present habitat of Mizoram. However, most of the Mizo Historians believe that the Mizos were in Burma in the Chin-Hills and they migrated from Burma to their present habitat for mainly two reasons -- presence of the Chins or the stronger Clans and the pressure of the population.

The Mizos are a distinct unit linguistically, culturally and ethnologically. They are a dedicated people bent on preserving their identity and religion. The social unit of the Mizo society was the village, around which revolves the life of the Mizos. The largest buildings in the village were the chief's house at the centre and the bachelor's dormitory known as **Zawlbuk**. Prominently located at a central place while the other houses erected according to convenience. All the young-

men sleep at night in 'Zawlbuk'. It is the centre of the village life and is a most useful institution. The younger boys are under discipline in the same way as in a boarding house in a public school, the young men use it as a club and dormitory, travelers can put up in it for the night and the chief uses it as a meeting place where he can make known his orders. As all the youngmen are concentrated there, they are always available for any unexpected emergency or for any urgent work. Discipline is strictly enforced in the 'Zawlbuk' and no interference from the outside is tolerated. In short, the 'Zawlbuk' was the training ground and indeed the cradle wherein the Mizo young was shaped into a responsible adult member of the society. The first loyalty of the people was to his village and the chief.

The Mizo code of conduct or ethics, which guides their thoughts and actions in war and peace is called **TLAWMNGAIHNA** - an untranslatable term meaning on a part of a man to be hospital, kind, unselfish, courageous and helpful to others. To a Mizo it stands for that compelling moral force which finds expression in self-sacrifice for the service of others. All voluntary services are rendered by the Mizo people under this useful custom. They are close-knit homogenous society with no class distinction from social, religious and economic point of view and no discrimination on ground of sex. Social obligations were not taken lightly. In this close-knit and gregarious society some practical principles of self help and

cooperation have been solved since time immemorial, for the fulfillment of social obligation and responsibilities.

Each village is ruled over by its own chief. The chief was a real-centre of authority in the village administration. All matters of villages administrations are decided by the chief assisted by his council of elders or **UPAS**. In dealing with cases the chief and 'upas' are guided entirely by Mizo custom. Though in theory, possibly the chief is a despot, and though chief can and occasions doubtless do commit tyrannical acts, the basic relationship between a chief and his people is one of mutual benefit and mutual help.

The Mizos were originally animists. They believed in a spirit called **PATHIAN** who is the overlord of men, and in **RAMHUAI** (demons) who are responsible for all the ills in this world. They also believed in the existence of soul and life after death or other world wherein the spirits of the dead lived. After death, the soul goes to **PIALRAL** (Paradise) or **MITTHIKHUA** (dead Man's abode). In 'Pialral' all good things are available in plenty. Husked and clean rice is abundant and the life is luxurious. The people, who had hunted a number of dangerous animals and had given a number of feasts, would go to 'Pialral', they lived in perpetual bliss, comfort and happiness, and are freely fed with meat and cooked rice. Those men who had not performed meritorious works, will live in 'Mitthi-Khua', which is a place of sorrow and troublesome. The traditional religion or belief is, however, today of academic

interest because all these primitive religious practices have since been discarded and forgotten as the Mizo have embraced a new religion Christianity.

We have also analyzed the meaning of festivals and dances. As regard to festival, different scholars have given different definitions according to their own view. Webster Dictionary defined it as "a day or period set aside for celebration or feasting especially one of the religious significance. An organized series of wants and performances". Gnanambal defined it as an institutionalized religious observances. They are occasions for social groups, large and small, to assemble for public worship and religious. Anisian cultural centre defined it as "an occasion to wear new clothes, decorate the houses, sing hymns, let off fire work, prepared special meals and exchange good wishes. It can have a religious meaning as it may be associated with a particular season, but be it in any part of the world, the festivals have much in common, for the joy of living and gratitude for nature's bounties are universal. The festival is a periodic religious celebration or series of performances of a certain kind, often held periodically". Thus, we can say that, a festival is a social institution which provides an occasion for individual or community worship of different gods and deities, for eating the special food, wearing fine clothes and for meeting kith and kin. The primary theme of most of the festivals is religious but they have their social

psychological ends as well. We also said that every festival has its two aspects - **Sacred** and **Secular**. These two aspects of a festival is intimately interwoven yet analytically distinct. The sacred performances are held to please the gods or supernatural for the communal or individual welfare. The secular aspect of the festival provides the people with occasions for eating, drinking, singing, dancing, merry-making and social visits. And most of the tribal celebrated their festivals on three levels such as family, village, and region. Village level festival is the most important and pompous as well as the largest of the three festivals.

A number of scholars agreed that Dance is one of the most oldest and primitive among the arts. They claimed that there is hardly a civilization or culture where the awareness of human movement as a vehicle of expression of joy and of sorrow is not evident. Perhaps before man began to speak and paint, he began to dance. Assuming one form or another, it flourishes everywhere. Its origins are rooted in the pre-historic past, for long before dance grew to a complex art easily man took pleasure in swaying, turning, stepping and stamping rhythmically, just as small children do today. The dances have been classified into various categories such as the static, sing, motif, line-pattern, ecstatic, social, bellicose or war, erotic etc.,. It is believed that all these are based on the movements of birds, and animals. Human being express their emotions and sentiments through dancing.

We have also highlighted the Mizos festivals and dances in Chapter two (2). As we mentioned earlier, the Mizo economy is based mainly on agriculture. They practice what is known as 'Jhum Cultivation'. All their festivals are in some way or other, connected with agriculture operations. KUT is the annual festivals following the rhythm of the agriculture seasons. Although these festivals were not strictly religious festivals a kind of religious aura attached to them and there were many taboos to be observed, and many semi-sacred rites and customs to be performed ZU always figured largely in these events. This was rice beer of various degrees of potency.

The three major festivals are -- Pawl Kut, Mimkut and Chapchar Kut. Pawl Kut is celebrated during December to January after the harvest is over. Mimkut is usually held during the months of August and September after the harvest of maize and other crops are over. And Chapchar Kut is celebrated sometime in the month of march or the advent of spring.

No doubt these festivals gave release to people whose lives were generally harsh and monotonous. The festivals are celebrated in every village with great gaiety. It strengthen the association of different clans. people forget their grievances and embrace each other in the spirit of mutual well-being. it involves the full community participation.

The most common secular features of these festivals are the drinking of ZU in plenty, feasting, singing, dancing,

merry-making, social gathering etc. Their festivals would be meaningless and lifeless without the consumption of ZU. It seems that if there is no ZU their festival would lose its social significances and they would have no charm in their festivals. Their festivals is a kind of renewal. It is also a means to escape from the humdrum and dullness of daily life. It is no wonder that many find a kind of fulfillment in the festival. During the festivals, they forget their miseries, problems and worries. Thus in drinking, feasting, dancing, mutual gathering and exchange of gifts, the idea of their solidarity is expressed.

There is also sacred features of these festivals. On the occasion of these festivals there is a **Hrilh** for the whole village. It is thought that the breach of this **Hrilh** will bring misfortune to the breaker, his family and sometimes to the whole village. On these occasions, the Mizo also placed some special fresh vegetables specially for those persons who had died recently. They also erected a memorial stone for their relative who are no more in this world during these festivals.

But after their conversion to christianity they have a lot of other modern festivals like Christmas, New Year, Good Friday, Thlaithar Kut etc.,. Among these, Christmas and New Year are the most popular and important festivals which are celebrated by the whole Mizo community with much pomp and grandeur. Christmas is the birthday of Jesus Christ who was the

saviour of this world according to Christian faith. It was celebrated on the 25th December of every year. Church service is held and youngmen and girls have a Christmas carol. Church service, holly communion, dance and song, feasting are the chief traits of this festival.

New Year festival is also observed by Mizo like other tribes in India. It is celebrated in the month of January. Its method of celebration which is more or less same with Christmas celebration.

And the **Thlathar Kut** festivals is celebrated by the Mizos with great enthusiasm. It is usually celebrated in the month of August, after harvesting is over. A special church service is arranged and the people bring harvest crops to the church 'to thank God' as he help the people in agricultural works and blessed them, as a result they could reap their crop. They prepared delicious food and meats for the community.

Good Friday is believed to be the holiest christian festivals as on this day christ was crucified. Here again, church service is held and Holly-communion was arranged. Bread and tea and sometimes feast are the special preparation during the festival.

Thus we can say that Mizo modern festivals were the festivals of christian. Here also we can see the sacred and secular aspect of these festivals.

Like their traditional festivals, feasting and social gathering was the common features in these festivals too. This clearly shows that the Mizos people were very fond of eating food and meats. To them without feasting there festivals is not completed in a real sense. So despite, their conversion to christian faith they did not completely abandoned some features of their traditional method of festivals. In its sacred aspects, church service, holly-communion, Mass-special prayer, etc., were organized. New crops were offered to the God in order to thank him for protecting them and their crops.

At the beginning of their conversion, every church is very active in arranging church services, holly gathering etc., and the people responds it with their heart and much enthusiasm. But recently the activity of the church was very low and even the people did not respond it properly. It seems that most of the younger generation prefer party, and get together with their friends instead of going to the church service during festivals events. Instead of feasting with the church members they went out for picnic with modern inventions like Tape-Recorder, Camera foreign made beer etc. Sometimes it seems that its secular aspects outweighed its sacred aspect in modern Mizo society.

We have also discussed in detail the various dances of the Mizo community. They are blessed as they are with a beautiful environment and a rich culture, are a vibrant and sociable people. They love to dance as much as they love to

sing. They can boast of a number of folk and community dances which have been handed down from generation to generation to the other through the ages. The dances are the expressions of the gay, carefree spirit of the Mizos. It should be mentioned here that these dances are not intended for stage performances. Rather, they have been evolved for community involvement and participation.

The most popular dances of the Mizos are cheraw, khualam, chheihlam, chai, sarlamkai, solakia and chaunglaizawn.

Here also a careful study present the sacred and secular characteristics of the various dances. For example it is believed that without the performance of **Cheraw** dance the spirit of a dead child cannot go to the paradise. No **Khuangchawi** ceremonies is completed without the **Khualam** dance. When they success in their head hunting, the performance of **Sarlamkai** and **Sawlakai** is necessary to please the people and ensure the spirit of the fallen foe to be slave of the slayer in the next world.

Our study shows that due to the impact of modernization, westernization and christianity, the traditional festivals and dances of the Mizos are slowly disappearing. However, despite this breakdown, these traditional dances will not be totally ceased to exist from Mizo society. Most of the people interviewed hope that the younger generation will know the

importance of these traditional festivals and dances and will try to revive it in Mizo society. We also find out that most of the older people we interviewed strongly believe that christianity alone is responsible for the breaking down of Mizo traditional festivals and dances, while the younger respondents informed that both christianity and westernization contributed equally for this breakdown. Here some of our older respondents are less educated, and 'born again' christians and for them most of the changes taking place in Mizo society were generally caused by christianity.

Majority of the people think that the Mizo traditional festivals and dances can be modified on the line of modernization. Here we mean modernization as modern way of life, modern inventions etc. It is said that if one particular community try to improve its life style, standard of living etc., it has to imitate the life styles of the more advanced society. In such a process, sometimes the modification of its cultural system is involved. However, these modification of one cultural system or institution does not necessarily involved the losing of its originality. Though some people are afraid of losing it originality and significance, majority of the people assisted that traditional festivals and dances can and should be modified on the line of modernization in order to have a more advanced, modern and civilized Mizo society.

We also know that the styles and rhythm of various dances practiced by different Mizo community are differ from region

to region. It seems that the main causes/factors of this differences is geographical location. In the past Mizo village are independent. Their villages were built on safe mountain ridges and enclosed within strong stockades and usually their number was small. Thus they were usually far apart with wretchedly rough patches in between. Each village was self contained, self governing and had to be self sufficient. Power was centred in the chief who chose his own elders and administered through them.

It appears from the early history of the Mizos that they had no peaceful and cordial relation among the villages because of constant strifes and conflicts among them. As a result of that, and rugged and hilly terrains, there has no easy communication between the villages. Since they do not have a chance to communicate each other properly their practices of their various dances are also affected by this and the rhythm and styles too. However, other thinks that besides geographical location the existence of different sub-tribe in Mizo society play a crucial role in the difference of styles and rhythm of dances. As each and every sub-tribe have their own styles and rhythms of the dances. But when other sub-tribe try to perform it without consulting other sub-tribe who are familiar with the dance they forget the original styles and rhythm of the dance. This ultimately led to the difference in the styles and rhythm of various dances in Mizo society. Traditionally, Mizos are known as the drinkers of ZU

(rice beer) originally it played an important and significance role in their day to day life. Without **ZU** their traditional festivals and dances can not be done or performed. But most of the people interviewed think that the Mizo festivals and dances will not lose their originality and social significance without the consumption of **ZU** during these occasions. They suggest that **ZU** can be replaced by Tea.

Every body agree that dancing had played an important role in the education and socialization of children in Mizo society. Through dancing they obtain their first lesson of education, dancing teaches them the importance of discipline, how to behave and respect their elders. Again dancing socialized them and indeed, through dancing that he became an important responsible member of the Mizo society. With the introduction of Electronics Media like Tape Recorder, Cable TV, etc.; a number of Mizo traditional dances are gradually replace by modern dances like Disco, Break dance, rap, etc., among the younger generation in Mizo society. The bulk of our respondents feel that these are mainly due to the modernization and the impact of western culture among the younger generations in Mizo society. They equally blamed lack of fund and sponsorship as one of the main reason of the decline of traditional dances.

Through our study we can claim that most of the Mizos participate in traditional dances whenever they have a chance and whenever they perform it. They also would like to revive

it as they know that without these traditional festivals and dances the customs and culture of the Mizo can not be complete. In short, they feel a need to revive traditional festivals and dances that would help to preserve the culture and identity of the Mizo.

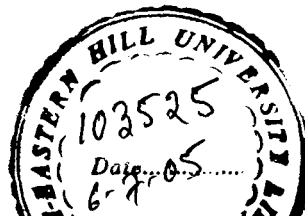
Except few of them think that traditional festivals is not a great hindrance to social progress and development in Mizo society. They say that these festivals promote a feeling of fellowship, bring solidarity and unity among the Mizos and this result in social progress and development in Mizo society. Again various dances does not divide the Mizo people on the line of sub-tribism as long as other factors like politicization of sub-tribes are not crepts in, in this institutions.

Here too, study indicates that for the unification of Mizo community as a whole, rather traditional festivals are more important than modern festivals. In the past festivals are meant for community participation. Everybody are expected to participate in this festivals. Since it involved the whole community participation it brings unity and social solidarity among the Mizo people and through this, co-operation and equality is achieved. Now a day, the Mizo people are divided on the line of denominations and cannot have a single way of celebrating as every denomination have their own way of celebrating festivals.

As far as today observance of festivals and dances are concerned it does not conflict with christianity. It is more of a cultural observances, a preserving of traditional heritage. There is no more drinking of ZU in public. Instead of drinking ZU different kind of competition events are included.

Regarding younger generation drinking ZU at Christmas and other modern festival times. Most of the people argue that this cannot be an indication of their tendency to revive traditional festivals but it is the result of the impact of western culture which brought social evils like alcoholism, drug addiction among the younger generation in Mizo society. But other claimed that the teaching of Christianity is very difficult for the younger generations and they are aware of their past festivals like Chapchar Kut, Mimkut, Pawlkut which involved merry making and drinking ZU. So this may be an indication of their tendency to revive their past festivals.

All of the people did not like the total elimination of the Mizo traditional festivals and dances. They also agree that the styles, items, symbols and instruments of Mizo festivals and dances are changing. These are mainly due to the modernization, westernization and Christianity. When the Mizo people become more and more civilized they slowly neglected their past values and practices. They do not know how to value their traditional dresses, instruments, etc. As a result when they try to perform their traditional dances they do not have



the original traditional costumes and instruments and they had to replace them by modern artificial dresses and symbols. Even they modified some of their traditional dances with modern dances. Again today's observances of festivals is different from the traditional way of observing festivals as drinking ZU is prohibited in modern festivals.

Like ZU in the past christianity had played an important part in the life of the Mizo at present. We can say that perhaps, Church is one of the most important and most powerful institutions in Mizoram. Even the most privilege and higher status in the society never try to break the command of the church and dare to oppose the teaching of the church. Because of this most of our respondents think that the Government of Mizoram try to revive traditional festivals will not be successful without the support of the church. However, some of them insisted that the church should not interfere in this regards.

They also believe that various dances does not bring disharmony and hatred among the Mizo community as long as every community are satisfied to be a part of the Mizo society. According to them Mizo festivals and dances are exclusively meant for the Mizos. They said that like every community of the world, the Mizo community has its own culture, tradition, ethnic identity, ethos, world views and religious beliefs. Likewise, the Mizo community has its own cultural festivals and dances. Since their economy is based on

agriculture, the Mizo people work very hard in their fields and during their festivals time, they only have free time and during these occasions they try to enjoy it as much as they can. These festivals and dances provide them with much needed holiday and rest day for the community. For them it is a kind of renewal. It is also a means of escape from the humdrum and dullness of their daily life. They find many fulfillment in their festivals and dances. The Mizos festivals and dances are deeply associated with each other. In fact, they cannot be separated from one another, whenever, any kind of festivals occurs dance is a must. We can say that Mizo festivals stand for some particular day to be celebrated with different kinds of dances. Regarding its origin, they argued that the Mizo festivals and dances are as old as the Mizo race itself. They are part and parcel of the Mizo cultural system and practices. They claimed that before they came to their present habitat, the Mizo already had developed some kind of festivals and dances. Moreover, they provide opportunities for the Mizos to realize their tensions and obtain emotional satisfaction in an atmosphere free from cares and anxiety. They also promote a feeling of fellowship among the members of the community. On these occasions, they forget their personal grievances and embrace each other in a spirit of mutual well-being.

Regarding the general opinions and attitudes of our respondents towards festivals and dances - the role they played in Mizo annual cycle of life, their social significance and their changing aspects. Our respondents emphasized that festivals and dances have played an important role for the unification of the entire Mizo community as a whole. They strengthen the association of different clans of the Mizos. The occasions of their festivals and dances bind the whole Mizo community together as it gives a chance to meet various groups, individuals etc. This is the period which is also noted for courtship and for the selection for the partners. At these occasions they eat their best food, and wear their best clothes. For them it is a means of escape from the humdrum and dullness of their daily life. At these occasions they forget their miseries, problems and worries. In fact, it plays a very important role to denote the co-operation and unity among the Mizo people.

Regarding their social significance, they claimed that the Mizo festivals and dances provides social celebration at communal level. They removed that drudgery and monotony of their every day life. They also provides extra-enthusiasm and vigour for life. Their sacred aspects provides the Mizo people an occasions to to satisfy their religious needs. Their other need like relaxation, pleasure, recreation, etc., is met by another secular aspects, which provides ample opportunities to them for eating, drinking, singing, merry-making etc. Through

the mutual visits of friends and relatives the idea of social solidarity is also expressed by the Mizo people in Mizoram.

They also reveals that the Mizos cultures have been exposed to the different agencies of changes. They emphasized that most of the styles, items and symbols of their festivals and dances have change due to the impact of Christianity, westernization and the process of modernization. They also express their regret about these changes and would like to revive it as they think that through these festivals and dances they can protect the cultural heritage and practices of the Mizos from the swept of these forces - Christianity, westernization and modernization.

We can conclude, therefore, that thus in feasting, dancing, drinking, singing, mutual visits, exchange of gifts, the idea of Mizos solidarity is expressed. The entire Mizo community, males and females, young and old, join in these manifestations of joy and exaltation. Each and every Mizo is aware of his fellowship with his community. He experiences and expresses his joy and exaltation not merely as an individual but as a member of a community. Hence festivals and dances of the Mizos played an important and significant role in their annual cycle of life. They provides a feeling of fellowship and belongingness among the members of the Mizos. Through this the idea of unity and solidarity is achieved in Mizo society.

Plate No. I



Plate No. II



Plate No. III



Plate No. V.



Plate No. VII



Plate No. VI



Plate No. VIII

Plate No. IX



BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ajitsingh, K. : **Tribal Festivals of Bihar**, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.
- Anderson, J. : **Dance**, Newsweek Books, New York.
- Carey, B. & Stuck, N. : **The Chin Hills, Vol. I and II**, Reprinted by Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, Mizoram.
- Festivals in Asia** : Asian Co-Publication Programme, Series Two, Sponsored by the Asia Cultural Center for UNESCO, 1975.
- Gnanambal, K. : **Festivals of India**, Anthropological Survey of India Publication, Calcutta, 1967.
- Kiautum, H. : **Pawi-Lakher**, Published by P.L. Regional Council.
- McCall, A. G. Major : **Lushai Chrysalis**, London, 1949.
- Mizoram Then Khaite** : Tribal Research Institute, Government of Mizoram.
- Farry, N. E. : **The Lakhers**, MacMillan, 1932.
- Reid, A. S. : **Chin - Lushai Land**, Calcutta, 1893.
- Singha, R. Emassayr : **Indian dances, Their Hstory and Growth**, Faber and Faber, London, 1967.

Statistical Handbook of Mizoram : Department of Economics and
Statistics, Government of Mizoram, 1992.

Vatsyayan, K. : **Traditions of Indian Folk Dance**, Indian Book
Company, 1976.

Vumson : **Zo-History**, Published by the Author, Aizawl, Mizoram.

Winick, C. : **Dictionary of Anthropology**, Philosophical
Library, New York, 1956.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary : Vol. I,
Encyclopedia Britannica Inc.

Zawla, K. : **Mizo Pipu Te Leh Anthlahte chanchin**, Gosen Press,
Aizawl, 5th edition, 1989.

GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

1. CHAWNGHNAWH: stuffing rice and meat to others' Mouth.
2. CHI CHHIAH: salt tax.
3. CHHINLUNG: mythical rock.
4. DARBU: a set of gongs.
5. FATHANG: a traditional paddy tax.
6. HNATLANG: social work.
7. HRILH: holiday.
8. KHUANGCHAWI: highest grade feast of merit. There are certain eligible rules to perform the ceremony.
9. KUT: festival.
10. LAL: village chief.
11. LUH: enter.
12. LUNG DAWH: a memorial stone platform.
13. MITTHI KHUA: abode of the dead.
14. PALAI: messenger.
15. PATHIAN: god.
16. PIALRAL: paradise.
17. PUANDUM: black cloth with red and green stripes.
18. RAMHUAI: demon.
19. RUN: the name of a river.
20. SACHHIAH: flesh tax.
21. SALAM: a fine given by the losing party in a case.
22. THANGLHHUAH. a name given to a person who had killed a number of animals or given a number of feasts.

23. THINGPUITAM, : flowering of one kind of bamboos, accompanied by multiplying rats which eat up grains resulting in famine.
24. TLAWMNGAIHNA to love less: self-sacrifice.
25. UPAS council of elders.
26. ZAWLBUK bachelor's dormitory.
27. ZU fermented grain; Mizo national drink.

NEHU LIBRARY 103525
 Acc. No.
 Acc. by
 Date..... 6-7-05
 Class by
 Sub. Heading by
 Enter by
 Transcribed by