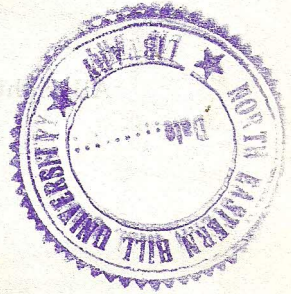




**The Life
and
Witness
of the
Churches
in
Mizoram**

REV. DR. C. L. HMINGA.

The Life And Witness Of The Churches In Mizoram



Rev. Dr. Chhangte Lal Hminga

**Literature Committee
Baptist Church of Mizoram**

Handwritten: New/oe/mt
JLB

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ABSTRACT

THE LIFE AND WITNESS OF THE CHURCHES IN MIZORAM

by

Chhangte Lal Hminga

This dissertation is an outcome of a historical and missiological research into how over three hundred thousand tribesmen in a territory called Mizoram in North-East India have left their animistic traditional religion and embraced Christianity as their religion. It is divided into three parts as follows:

Part One deals with the Background and the Beginnings with three topics. (1) The Land Mizoram which was known as the 'Lushai Hills' the official name of the territory during the British administration (1890-1947); its location, area, vegetation and animals. (2) In 1890 at the time of their conquest the people were referred to by various names like Kuki, Chin, Lusei, Lushai, Shendu. The British called them all 'Lushai', an Anglicised form of 'Lusei', the name of the principal tribe. They are now known as 'Mizo' which is a comprehensive name for all the sub-tribes. Chapter One describes their origin and culture before and after they became Christian. (3) How the Gospel of Jesus Christ reached the Mizo people first through the Baptist pioneer missionaries, then through the Welsh Presbyterian Mission and the British Baptist Mission.

Part Two deals with Seven Decades of Growth. Throughout the seventy years (1904-1974) the following four themes are developed. (1) The emergence of a Presbyterian Church in North Mizo and a Baptist Church in South Mizo, and how the two Churches were growing side by side influencing and helping each other. (2) The Coming

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of the Lakher Pioneer Mission in the extreme south and the emergence of a Lakher Church, very much like the Baptist and the Presbyterian Churches. (3) How the whole Mizo tribe(s) became Christians in sixty years time through sweeping people movements accelerated by waves of revivals; and how self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating 'Mission Churches' — The Presbyterian Church of Mizoram, the Baptist Church of Mizoram and the Mara Independent Evangelical Church — came into being. (4) How other denominations, Salvation Army, Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist and United Pentecostal Church, Christian sects and nativistic movements appeared on the scene in course of time.

Part Three deals with the Complex Growth Factors, the Transformation of Mizo Society and the Task Ahead. Chapter ten deals with seventeen growth factors. Chapter eleven describes the radical transformation of a society of warring, head-hunting peoples into one of the most advanced societies in India. Three dimensions — physical, intellectual and spiritual — were involved. Chapter twelve links up the present and future task of the Mizoram Church(es). This task is two-fold. Inside Mizoram it involves evangelizing the non-Christian segment of the population and new generations, and revitalizing the lives of the Christians with unflagging zeal. Outside Mizoram it involves discipling other tribes around Mizoram, North-East India and other parts of India. These tasks are heavy but Mizos should, by God's help, accomplish them.

Mentor: Donald McGavran

Preface

The very large Mizo tribe which lived in the Lushai Hills of southeast Assam has become almost entirely Christian. After independence when the area occupied by the tribes became separate states, the Lushai Hills was called Mizoram and forms today a distinct political entity. Nowhere in all India has there been a more effective or more nearly complete Christianization of a people or—to use the Greek word—an *ethnos*. The Great Commission (Matt. 28:10) commands that all the people (*ethne*) of the world be discipled—that is, enrolled in Christ's school, enlisted in Christ's army, or incorporated in His body, the church. In Hindi the Great Commission reads, "*Sab jatiyon ko chela karo.*" This is a much more exact translation of the original Greek than most English versions. The Mizos were a tribe, i.e., a *jati* (caste). That total people, now numbering nearly 500,000 souls, has become substantially, almost entirely, Christian.

This book tells the remarkable story of how this happened. Dr. Hminga recounts in exact, truthful detail how this great people (*ethnos*) turned from its hereditary faith to faith in Christ and obedience to the Bible. Christians all over India, ought to read this stimulating, exciting, and factual account. They ought to pray that other *jatiyan* (castes, tribes) will in the decades ahead also turn to Christ while preserving their unique identity. Mizos are proud of being Mizos. They marry chiefly, almost exclusively, within their own people. While they have become Christians, they are quick to point out that this does not in any way diminish the fact that they are also Mizos. Becoming a Christian has not pushed them out of the Mizo people into a new people call "the Christians." >

This pattern must prevail all over India and Bangladesh and Pakistan as people after people turn to Christ.

Humanity exists as a vast assemblage of different peoples. The Hebrews, so the Bible tells us, were quite distinct from the Moabites, Philistines, Egyptians, and Babylonians, and within the Hebrews, Judah was quite distinct from Dan and the other ten tribes.

Dr. Hminga's account also describes with exactitude and charm the many methods of effective evangelism which were used both by the missionaries and by the Mizo Christian leaders during the twentieth century to bring about this most significant discipling. While the methods which God blessed among the Mizos will be somewhat different from those which He blesses among the Brahmins or the Guptas, Christians all over India will read this volume with very great profit. They will understand more clearly what must be done if the thousands of segments of the population now found in India are to be won to Christian faith

Since in south India the Lingayats, the Kammass, the Lambadis, and others are showing a marked receptivity to the gospel, it is of the greatest importance that this book by Dr. Hminga be read most carefully by all those who intend to lead the peoples (*jatiyan*) of India to faith in Christ and eternal life. This book will encourage them, guide them, and instruct them into ways of effective evangelism. When they see the methods which God has blessed in Mizoram, they will be able to discern the methods which He is likely to bless in Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Assam, and Kashmir.

This important book should become a text in theological seminaries and other institutions where Christian ministers are trained. Dr. Hminga has made a notable contribution to the understanding of God's mighty works in the great nation of India.

July 1, 1985

Donald McGavran
School of World Mission
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Introduction

This book is the outcome of my extensive research and study of the growth of Churches in Mizoram. Its first appearance was in the form of a doctoral dissertation submitted to the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena U.S.A. My Professor, Dr. D.A. McGavran was very keen to have it published and he has enthusiastically written a foreward but ten years have passed before it can be published. A number of persons who have read it and who have heard about it were asking me when it is going to be published and I am very happy that the Literature Committee of the Baptist Church of Mizoram has undertaken the publication in cooperation with the Gospel Literature Service, Bombay.

Before the Manuscripts were given to the Press for printing I have gone through the text very carefully and made a few minor corrections. I have also written additional chapter to update my research so that accounts of another decade growth could be added to the original research.

I know that several persons have made use of the few copies available here and there and it was microfilmed by Fuller Theological School of World Mission. It is very likely that future research scholars and Missiological students will make use of the book. With this in mind I am incorporating part of the Introduction of the original dissertation written in 1976 as follows :—

Personal Background of the Study

The Scope of the Research

The Methodology

The Limitation

Notes on Terminology

PERSONAL BACKGROUND OF STUDY

I am a second generation Mizo Christian, born and brought up in a village pastor's home in S. Mizoram. I am also a product of the mission schools, in the village and at the mission station. After getting High School and Theological College training outside Mizoram, I have been working full time since 1955, first as a mission helper in Bible translation and Christian literature work, then as a church leader in different capacities. The idea of writing a history of the Church in Mizoram originated in my mind fourteen years ago when I was writing a thesis entitled "An Investigation into the Problem of Representing Basic Concepts of Christianity in the Language of the Lushai People". But I did not find the time and opportunity to do so.

Now, God has given me the opportunity I was looking for by bringing me to the School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth to do research in this very subject. I have had the privilege of knowing personally most of the missionaries who worked in Mizoram including the Welsh missionaries, except the earliest ones. I had the opportunity to work with some of them. I have also the privilege of fellowship and interaction with leaders of the Presbyterian and the Mara Churches on several occasions. So I have an intimate personal knowledge of the subject and previous research behind me.

THE SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

The scope of the research is to trace the origin and the growth of the Churches in Mizoram with a view to achieving the following objective:

1. It may help the Churches concerned to know their identity more fully and perform more effectively their task of evangelizing — (1) The new generations and nominal Christians in the community. (2) The unreached 13 per cent of the Mizoram population who are of different cultures. (3) The unreached in the neighbouring and other States of India, especially their fellow tribal people. (4) The unreached in other parts of the world.

2. It may inspire others to do further research and supplement what is lacking in my research, and bring up to date at some later time what I have developed till 1975.

3. It may make some small contribution towards the Church's understanding of her world-wide missionary task.

4. It may be found useful by some others in their work for the evangelization of the people of the world.

THE METHODOLOGY

I was following historical and missiological methodologies. Since 1962 I have been collecting materials in the hope that I may be able to write one day and my hope has now been realized better than I could imagine. I have gained new insights through the course work in missiology during my two years at Fuller Seminary. All the different courses I have taken helped me immensely in my thinking and writing which readers of this dissertation will notice. I was able to add more data to what I have previously collected by exploring the McAlister Library at Fuller Seminary and the U.C.L.A. Library.

My research trip during summer 1975 enabled me to get more additional data than I anticipated. It was a rare privilege to have access to the Welsh Presbyterian Church Mission Archive which is now in the custody of the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth; and the Baptist Missionary Society Archive at the Mission Headquarters in London. To study in these two mission archives, personal files of missionaries who had laboured in Mizoram, to read old mission reports, records and magazines was a real treat. I wished I had more time at my disposal. It was good to be able to interview eight retired missionaries (B.M.S. and Welsh Mission) and draw from their insights.

My six weeks intensive tour in Mizoram from the last week of July till the second week of September, 1975 was rewarding too. I found that I was almost too late because many of the first generation Christians have already passed away. Yet I was able to find many still living from whom I gained valuable information and new insights. My ori-

ginal intention was to write the history of only the Presbyterian and the Baptist Churches; but my research trip enabled me to collect data for other Churches and enlarge my perspective. With the help of friends and relatives, I was able to interview about a hundred persons including church leaders in the headquarters and in the villages, retired pastors and old people in the remote villages. The 14 main items in the questionnaire prepared under the supervision of Dr. McGavran served their purpose well.

In 1974 I sent out a questionnaire to seven missionaries in Britain who had 20 or more years of service in Mizoram and I got their answers back in 1975. Thus a good proportion of my sources are 'primary'. At the end of my research trip I was surprised to see the amount of printed materials I had collected during my trip alone.

To study my materials against my outline, make necessary changes in my outline and search for supplementary materials was a tremendous task.

THE LIMITATIONS

Since my first intention was to deal with the Presbyterian and the Baptist Churches only, I had very limited time for collecting data for the other denominations. The monsoon weather was against me and the time I had at my disposal was too short. It was not possible to make previous appointments with the leaders of small denominations because they are not on telephone and my visits to their offices also were not very successful. For example, I visited Salvation Army headquarters on two occasions and found all the officers away on tour both times. I have, however, the feeling that I have done what could be done in the limited time and condition. In spite of my long term research, available statistics in the Presbyterian and the Baptist Church offices are limited and statistics during the insurgency years may not be too reliable. Though I feel that I had tapped all the resources I know of, it is not possible to get a hundred percent success. The pioneer missionaries and the first Mizo leaders were no more, and I wished vainly for the opportunity of interviews with them. I hope that research into the growth of single denomina-

tions will be undertaken by others in the future and supplement what is lacking in the data I have collected.

As I was following historical and missiological methodology I had to leave out anthropological and other details which can be found in other writings. The fact that I am a Mizo church leader may be another limitation for I might have taken some things for granted which for non-Mizos are important to mention; and I have my biases as anybody else does.

NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

Different names and different forms of spelling are used by different writers for the same place, people or organization. I would like my readers to be aware of this. The following are the most prominent and I have tried to put them in the chronological order of their appearance in writings:

Bengalee — Bengali

Chukma — Tsakma — Takam (used by Mizos only) —
Chakma

Cuci — Cookie — Kukee — Kuki

Lakher Church — Lakher Independent Evangelical
Church — Mara Independent Evangelical Church

Lhoosai — Lusei — Lushei — Lushai — Mizo

Lushai Hills — Mizo District — Mizoram

Northern Church — Mizo Presbyterian Church —
Presbyterian Church of Mizo District — Presby-
terian Church of Mizoram

Reeang — Riang — Tuikuk (used by Mizos only)

Shendoo — Shendu — Lakher — Mara

Southern Church — S. Mizo Baptist Church — Baptist
Church of Mizo District — Baptist Church of
Mizoram.

The term 'Church' is used — (1) to include all Christians in Mizoram (2) for the Mission founded Churches (3) for one separate denomination. Though I tried to make clear what I meant, it may be a bit confusing at some places. The term 'church' is used for local church(es) and when it is an adjective.

Abbreviations

A.B.M.S.	Australian Baptist Missionary Society
A.B.M.U.	American Baptist Missionary Union
A.C.	Assam Christian Council
B.C.M.D.	Baptist Church of Mizo District
B.C.M.	Baptist Church of Mizoram
B.C.T.A.	Baptist Church Trust Association
B.M.S.	Baptist Missionary Society
B.W.A.	Baptist World Alliance
C.B.C.N.I.	Council of Baptist Churches in Northern India
C.B.C.N.E.I.	Council of Baptist Churches in North-East India
G.C.	Grouping Center
I.K.K.	Isua Krista Kohhran
I.S.S.U.	India Sunday School Union
L.I.E.C.	Lakher Independent Evangelical Church
M.I.E.C.	Mara Independent Evangelical Church
M.N.A.	Mizo National Army
M.N.F.	Mizo National Front
M.N.F.F.	Mizo National Famine Front
N.E.I.C.C.	North East India Christian Council
N.E.I.G.M.	North East India General Mission
N.C.C.I.	National Christian Council of India
N.Z.B.M.S.	New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society
P.C.A.	Presbyterian Church of Assam
P.C.M.D.	Presbyterian Church of Mizo District
P.C.M.	Presbyterian Church of Mizoram
R.C.	Roman Catholic
S.A.	Salvation Army
S.D.A.	Seventh Day Adventist
T.B.C.U.	Tripura Baptist Christian Union
U.P.C.	United Pentecostal Church
Z.B.M.	Zoram Baptist Mission

Acknowledgments

I would like to record here my grateful thanks to God who has given me the opportunity and privilege to write this book and His many agents who helped me in so many different ways in the writing and publication of the book. Though I cannot mention all by name, I would mention a few of them to whom I owe special thanks —

The Baptist Church of Mizoram, The Baptist Missionary Society, Fuller Seminary School of World Mission Faculty members especially my mentor Dr. D.A. McGavran, The Presbyterian Church of Wales, all the overseas missionaries and their national colleagues who dedicated and spent their lives for the evangelization of Mizoram.

To this last group, the missionaries and their national colleagues this book is dedicated.

What others say about this book

The Dean's Awards 1976 School of World Mission for the best Archival and Field Research and the most vivid and balanced portrayal of the rise of a great young Church.

Mr. Hminga studied the Baptist and Presbyterian Mission archives in London and Wales, interviewed scores of Church leaders in the hills of Mizoram, and read everything written on this talented tribe. He has sensitively and truly described the process by which more than 400,000 Mizos in North East India, over the last seventy years, have become Christian. He is specially commended for his judicial treatment of the data.

Dr. Arthur F. Glasser
Dean Emeritus, School of
World Mission, Fuller Seminary.

One of the best I have read of its kind and the shortest list of criticism I have made.

Dr. Peter Wagner
Professor of Church Growth
School of World Mission,
Fuller Seminary.

Dr. Hminga's book tells the remarkable story of how the Mizo tribe, living in North East India, has become almost entirely Christian.

The book also describes with exactitude and charm the many methods of effective evangelism which were used both by the missionaries and by the Mizo Christian leaders during the twentieth century to bring about this most significant discipling. Christians all over India will read this volume with very great profit. This book will encourage them, guide them, and instruct them into ways of effective evangelism.

This important book should become a text in Theological Seminaries and other institutions where Christian ministers are trained.

Dr. Donald McGavran

About the Author



The author Chhange Lal Hminga was born of first generation Christian in 1927. His late father was a village pastor and he owed his spiritual life to his parents who led him to the Saviour. He was trained by the Baptist Missionary Society for Bible Translation and Christian Literature work which he has been doing off and on since 1955. God had given him the opportunity of training and service for him. He earned

B.D. degree from Serampore University, M.A. degree from Manchester University in England and D.Miss degree from Fuller Theological Seminary in U.S.A.

He has been serving the Lord through the Baptist Church of Mizoram in various capacities including Bible Translator, Literature Secretary, Bible School Principal, Zoram Baptist Mission Secretary and General Secretary which office he is presently holding.

He was also holding important offices in other Christian organizations. He was President of the Council of Baptist Churches in Northern India for several terms. He was President of North East India Christian Council for one term. He has been on the General Council of the Baptist World Alliance till the present time.

This book is the outcome of his extensive research for his doctoral dissertation which had earned the Dean's Award 1976 School of World Mission for the best Archival and Field Research.