

**CHRISTIANITY, COLONIALISM AND CULTURE: A STUDY OF  
THE MIZO SPIRITUALS**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial  
fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of  
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY*

**CATHERINE LALHRUAITLUANGI CHHANGTE**



**CENTER OF LINGUISTICS AND ENGLISH  
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
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Certified that this dissertation entitled **Christianity, Colonialism and Culture: A Study of the Mizo Spirituals**, submitted by Catherine Lalhrualtuangi Chhange, Center of Linguistics and English, School of Language, Literature & Cultural Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy is her original work and has not been submitted, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of this or any other university/institution. This may, therefore, be placed before the Examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

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## DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

This dissertation entitled *Christianity, Colonialism and Culture: A Study of the Mizo Spirituals*, is submitted by me to the Center of Linguistics and English, School of Language, Literature and Cultural Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any university/university.



Catherine Lalhruaitluangi Chhangte  
New Delhi: 26<sup>th</sup> July 2004

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New Delhi 110067

... Mom and Dad

*the wings beneath my feet...*

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Known as a “singing tribe”, the Mizos<sup>1</sup> have had a rich body of songs since their pre-literate days. Over a period of time the themes and subjects of their songs have undergone changes that have come about because of evolutions in politics, culture and society and eventually the very consciousness of the people. However the significance of the musical culture has remained intact among them. So much so that a writer has pointed out that, “if the possession of a large number of songs is to be used as a criteria of measuring the civilization of the people, the Mizos without any dissent could be counted as one” (Khangte, *Introduction* 6). The Mizo oral tradition of the pre-literate culture has a rich variety of songs; lamentations and songs of mourning, songs on war and victory, songs of celebrations and festivities, songs for dancing, children’s songs and lullabies, songs of lovers, communal songs and so on. Different occasions call for different types of singing, and almost every aspect of the Mizo life had a song for it. In the oral tradition, songs were a convenient and creative means of expressing ones mind and experiences. The Mizo culture was therefore intricately linked with these songs which were composed and sung consistently for all occasions.

Then a change came about from 1894, which was a very significant year for all Mizos. This was the beginning of a tremendous change in the society and life of the Mizos, because Christianity penetrated into their lives, through the pioneer missionaries J.H Lorrain and F.W Savidge.<sup>2</sup> Christianity brought with it a host of religious themes and subjects, which were incorporated into songs. Besides, another drastic change of the Mizo culture came about; it was evolving from an oral culture to a literate one. The missionaries had reduced the Mizo language to a written form. This along with the conversion to Christianity wrought many changes. However, the songs of the oral tradition had not abruptly lost their position among the Mizos, because singing was an

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1. The Mizos are one of the tribes inhabiting certain areas of the North Eastern part of India, now called Mizoram, though there are Mizos spread out in other states like Manipur and Assam. The word Mizo Literally means, man or people of the hills, “Mi” meaning Man or people and “Zo” meaning Highlands or hills.

<sup>2</sup> For Historical details of the Mizos please see Lloyd, J Merion, “History of the Church in Mizoram”, Chhangte, C.L, “Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram” and Liangkhaia, Rev. “Mizo Chanchin”.



important element in their culture. Gradually, what I call the Mizo “spirituals” came to be one of the most popular, fastest growing and therefore a very significant body of work in the history of the Mizo literature. Even today, after a little more than a hundred years since the first Mizo Spirituals were sung, the number of compositions as well as their popularity is unmatched by any other literary and artistic endeavor in Mizo culture and society.

The Mizo spirituals are more popularly known as “hymns” or gospels”. I have consciously chosen to call this body of song “spirituals” because they are expressions of not only the religious nature of the Mizos, but expressions of many other cultural aspects as well. In calling this body of songs “Mizo Spirituals”, I believe it would be possible to include a wider body of songs and at the same time enable one to see them as something more than just a body of “religious songs”. The other names, “hymns” and “gospels” does not enable a perspective beyond that of being strictly religious. The essence of the Mizo oral tradition and culture present in the spirituals is best brought out in calling them “spirituals”

Spirituals are basically religious songs; in other words these are “spiritual songs”. The sense in which I have chosen to use the term “spirituals” come from the African-American oral tradition. The term was used as early as the sixteenth century in North America and it originally referred to formal hymns and had no reference to popular or folk songs, black or white (Lovell 72). Today the term has come to be understood to refer mostly to African-American songs, which emerged during their days of enslavement. Referring to the African-American spirituals, H.T Burleigh called the spirituals the “spontaneous outburst of intense religious fervour which had their origin chiefly in camp meetings, revivals and other religious exercises” (Coulander 26). However with time, the African-American spirituals became more than just songs of religious expression. Chronologically, the Mizo spirituals come much later than the African-American Spirituals, almost two hundred years later. Culturally, the two are also far apart from each other. The important role of their respective spirituals in each of their cultures is where their similarities begin and end. The major point of coincidence between two body of spirituals maybe just that they have emerged out of the influence of religious fervor, the Christian religion in particular. The African-American spirituals unlike the

Mizo spirituals adopted the English language, the language of their white masters. These songs varied in themes and contexts; many of them told stories of the Old Testament like the story of Moses leading the Israelites to freedom which is an allegory of their status as slaves hoping for freedom. Other songs dealt considerably with themes of salvation, faith, hope and Christian values. The themes and content of most of the spirituals were therefore a direct influence of their white masters; thus one may not be able to distinguish an African-American spiritual from that of the “white” or European tradition of spirituals. But what really identifies the African-American spirituals is the usage, the style and function. Needless to say, the African-American spirituals serve an important religious function. Yet more importantly, they also serve secular and social functions beyond the religious. Secular because though they were deeply embedded with moral queries, they were used not only as a means of expression and outlet of their predicament as slaves, but also as a means of communicating and sharing information as a form of resistance against their white masters. They were sung to teach, to criticise, and tell stories and as a tool in search of freedom. The spirituals also acted as a source of solace and hope and a reminder to the African-Americans of God- Jesus Christ, who had the power to free them from their extremely harsh lives as slaves. For the enslaved African-Americans, spirituals played a much more important role than a mere aesthetic or moral purpose. As far as the style is concerned, they also adopted the quality of being improvisational, a heritage of the African folk songs. The African-Americans spirituals therefore presented a perfect blend of aspects of the white culture and their black African cultural past; thus telling a story of the African-Americans often sidelined by history.

But the focus here is not a comparative study between the two bodies of spirituals rather to show why I have chosen to call the Mizo religious songs the ‘spirituals’. Even today, after a little more than a hundred years since the first Mizo Spirituals were sung, the number of compositions as well as their popularity is unmatched by any other literary and artistic endeavor in Mizo culture and society. As in the case of the African-American spirituals, though the songs were primarily religious in theme, content and nature, there is more to them than just this one aspect. The Mizo spirituals would include all those songs, which are “spiritual” and “religious” in nature, yet in a way free them from mere formal conceptions of religiousness and bring out the elements of folk and popular cultures in

them. The Mizo spiritual is something more than just a body of songs with only religious functions. Besides, in calling this body of songs “spirituals”, I believe that the other more secular elements i.e. the folk, the popular and the cultural elements of these songs would also come into focus. It would also include a wider variety of songs, not only those accepted by the major denominational churches but also those that are sung outside the church and also those that are sung by the minor denominations and even sects.

The Mizo spirituals today have come to play a major part in the Mizo society. The place that was once occupied by other forms of singing before Christianity has more or less been replaced by the spirituals. This does not mean that the other more secular songs have totally died. But that the most popular, those that are most widely sung and those that are most enjoyed and cherished are the spirituals. The spirituals of course can be easily heard within the sacred space of the churches and religious congregations. However, they are not confined to these sacred spaces alone. Most gatherings call for singing in the Mizo society in which the spirituals are most popularly sung, in weddings, funerals, celebrations of different kinds, public performances, commemoration of the dead and so on. And depending upon the style and form in which the spiritual is sung, it is often accompanied by a lot of dancing as well. With the rise of modern western pop culture the Mizo spirituals have also evolved in some ways. Not only has the style of singing been effected they have also become commercialized through television, radios, concerts, audio systems and so on. For some, like the spiritual singers and composers this enterprise provides them a means of livelihood. The popularity of the Mizo spirituals today is not confined only within the state of Mizoram of a few lakhs population but also to the neighboring states and country, Myanmar. The Mizo spirituals present a cross cultural link of the Mizos with their neighboring tribes and people.

A close study of the African-American spirituals reveals the very consciousness of the people, their lives and their culture as slaves. The African-American spirituals have been subjected to studies that do not identify them as primarily “hymnal”; in other words they have purely critical literary studies in the sense that the religious and “Christian” function it serves is prioritized over the cultural thus a more secular function. Detailed studies that have been so far done on the spirituals are mainly based on theological studies or a purely Christian perspective. On the other hand when it comes to the study of

Christianity in Mizoram, the relevance of the spirituals is often not given a significant position. This is the reason why they I have emphasized on calling these songs “spirituals” in this study, rather than the more known names “hymns” or “gospels”. At the same time, a study of the spirituals cannot dismiss the Christian tradition and theology because it is this tradition which has given birth to this body of songs, the spirituals. And often the theological is so intricately linked to the literary that one cannot separate the two. However my work will view this issue, the religious tradition not as the only force which identifies the Mizo culture, rather as one of the defining forces that has shaped the culture and consciousness of the Mizos.

The connection of the colonization of the Mizos culturally and socially with the spirituals is not a commonly explored issue despite its obvious presence. A study of colonialism and Christianity becomes imperative with the study of the Mizo spirituals because it was through the garb of Christianity that the Mizos were ‘colonized’, and again it was these forces which made the spirituals a possibility and a reality. Religion has often been used as a tool for colonization because it can penetrate deeply into the lives of the people without the use of force and violence. This has therefore caused much antagonism and suspicion toward missionaries elsewhere. The British intrusion into the Lushai Hills at first caused restlessness on the part of some chiefs. Some of the chiefs rose against the British for their imposition of tax and other tributes but were soon subdued (Sangkima 75). However, after the initial resistance the attitude of the Mizos towards the British was neither rebellious nor very antagonistic, although they were suspicious. The British colonizers did not directly interfere with the tribal polity, besides levying certain amount of taxes on the people. The British were clever to impose an indirect rule and legitimize the native authority of the Chief. Since the native Chief could continue to rule his people, they became the link between the colonizers and the people (Dena 42). Lianzela has observed that the British policy in the Lushai Hills approximated the policy of leaving the tribals alone (19). But the British rule gradually did away with many of the traditional rights of the chiefs for the chiefs had come to accept as their rulers (Nunthara 58). In many respects colonization did not change the lives of the common people. Thus it was not really perceived as a threatening force. “The main concern of the British officials from the very outset had been the provision of law and

order and a modicum of public utilities all backed by a policy of upholding the social customs of the people” (Dena 42). The white missionaries pacified the suspicion and skepticism that the Mizos did harbour of the white man. The missionaries unlike the colonial officials gradually became so accepted by the people that they came to be called “Zosap”, meaning “the white Mizo” or “the white man of the Mizos”.

Colonialism is often portrayed as a social formation related to modes of production and exploitation (Chandra 8). The case of the colonization of the Mizos is no exception. On the outset, it may seem that the British had no economic motivations in the colonization of the Mizos because of their tribal economy. Compared to the other parts of India or the world, the Mizo society was not as modernized in the sense of it having a modern political and economic system. They were self-sufficient in their communal and tribal way of life. But they posed a threat to the expanding economy of the colonizers when they began to attack the neighbouring tea-plantations of Assam. It was the unrestrained expansion of the tea-plantations on the foot-hills of the Lushai Hills which threatened the very existence of the Mizos that made them launch a number of raids on the area (Dena 41,42). Till, then the neighboring areas only knew the Mizos as some ‘wild head hunting’ tribes who invaded them once in a while. Matters came to a head when the Mizos abducted Mary Winchester, the daughter of James Winchester the manager of a tea garden (Lloyd 6).

The pervading sense of being or having been colonized was not really considered as a problematic issue among the Mizos. The “normal” definitions of colonization and the purpose of exploitation don’t seem to apply in this case. Generally speaking, it would not be wrong to say that the Mizos did not really feel exploited or suppressed by the force of colonialism. Whether the process of westernisation or modernization was what the people needed or not, colonization brought in many aspects of modernity within their reach. And most of these aspects proved highly beneficial for the Mizos. Colonialism acted as a weapon for tapping many potentials within their culture. Besides, it also solidified the Mizo sense of belonging to the Lushai Hills, the present Mizoram. Being nomadic in nature, the Mizos might have moved on to other areas, had colonization not reached them when it did. And the Mizos are fully aware of this. Unlike other parts of the country, most of the North Eastern region except perhaps

Assam was fairly unpenetrated. Colonialism also opened up the North East, including the Lushai Hills, to the rest of the British occupied land and the country.

Colonization has been widely and largely read as a negative force acting on the society. However, it would seem that to the Mizos, the positive aspects of the force outweigh the negative aspects inspite of the slight suspicion they harboured. Colonialism has brought the Mizos to a larger sense of identity and nationality, as Indians. Before the coming of the British, the Mizo community had a communal and tribal identity. The concept of a national identity came up with the opening of the gates to the different Indian societies through British colonialism. On the other hand, their traditional sense of identity and ethnicity were greatly effected by their newfound identity as Indians. Another positive result of colonialism can be seen in the field of the education. Because of this education, Mizos have since emerged from being a tribe of headhunters to one of the highest literate states in the country.

The spread of Christianity backed up the colonizers was used as a tool to influence the people and strengthen their hold on them. In most cases, missionary activity was often backed up by colonial power, missionary preaching obviously assumed political colour (Dena 2). The missionaries who came to the Lushai Hills did not really collaborate with the colonial power. They did not deliberately seek out to Christianize the Mizos with the intention of exploitation. Yet it was colonialism nonetheless. This cannot be pushed aside or ignored. The Mizo Spirituals can be seen as a living evidence of the underlying politics of colonialism beneath the work of spreading Christianity. The gift Christianity and education and modernity made the Mizos grateful to colonialism to a very large extent.

Yet it is now that the Mizos have begun to closely study the many problems brought in by colonialism brought in through education. The British administration of the Mizos also has its darker side. But this aspect has not been brought out much until recent times. Mizos have begun to critically study their predicament to find many loopholes where things seem to have been smooth and fine. Modern day economist Lianzela believe that colonialism has made the Mizos sidelined from the mainstream political culture of India. He also believes that the Christian missions who brought in western mode of living and foreign spectrum was ill suited to the people then. Besides he says that lack of

economic inputs by the British government has generated frustration in the people. He sums up the British policy as leaving the Mizos as a “restless people, uprooted from their traditional moorings and striving for social and economic equilibrium” (Lianzela 20). It seems inevitable that here should be a flipside to the colonization of the Lushai Hills.

In spite of many positive aspects of the colonization of the Mizos, it created problems in the sense of Mizo cultural identity at various levels. The process of modernization and westernization were inevitable when the Mizos became Christianized. Religion effected every aspect of the Mizo culture and society. Christianity now came to be seen as an over-arching marker of the religious identity for the people. It had far reaching effects on the culture of the society, where everything was defined and redefined. The Christianity that they received was synonymous with westernization. And this greatly influenced the Mizo perception of right or wrong and the godly and ungodly. Christianity became the yardstick for measuring right and wrong. And the wrong or the ungodly was seen with skepticism. Although there have been arguments and counter arguments in absolute terms as to what is “the Christian”, defining and redefining could not do away with either the pre-Christian or the Christian. Christianity and westernization threatened their sense of cultural identity. The Mizos needed to alter their identity in parallel with the obvious changes in the society. The new identity created by the Mizos because of colonization was moulded and effected by the past, the pre-Christian cultural past and their new Christian religion. Christianity no longer remained to be a religion of foreigners but the religion of the Mizos. Christianity slowly came to be shaped according to the needs of the people; in other words it has been ethnicized to create a unique Mizo Christian identity.

There are many issues that come up with Christianity and colonization in the Mizo society that the Mizo Spirituals reveal. A study of the history, the stylistics, the language, context and composers of the spirituals tell us that they are a complex embodiment of the pre-Christian culture and the Christian, all rolled into one. And through a study of these songs one can see how the pre-Christian pagan culture has shaped the modern Christian culture of the Mizos and the consciousness of the Mizo people. The African American Spirituals tells us a story of a nation. Beyond the aesthetic beauty that they are endowed with, the Spirituals have the potential of story telling, of

acting as a societal and cultural mirror. Through the study of the Mizo Spirituals, a story of the Mizos will be revealed.

In the subsequent chapters I shall be looking at how the Mizo Spirituals have come to be, its development historically and its connection with the British colonization. Besides I will also be looking at how the Spirituals have so far been classified. The classifications available so far are based on theological themes. The so far existing thematic classifications are limited to the songbooks. For the purpose of a literary study and an understanding of the complex process of the development of the Mizo Christian identity and the nature of the songs, I have tried classifying the songs using a chronological basis. In order to highlight the central role that the Mizo Spirituals play in the Mizo consciousness, I have analyzed a few selected Mizo Spirituals. Through such a study of the Mizo Spirituals I hope to be able to tell a story of the Mizo society. The songs will mirror various aspects of the “Mizo identity” and the underlying factors that has made the Mizo society what it is today.



## Chapter II

### A Historical Overview of the Mizo Spirituals

The history of the Mizo spirituals cannot be separated from the history of the church in Mizoram, because they are intricately linked to each other. Religion has often been used as a weapon to control people and their cultures, faith having the potential of being an effective force acting on the minds of people. Faith is a concern not only of the collective but also of the personal individual. The ability to control the religious faith of people gives one the power to control them in many other ways. Because this faith through religion, becomes so deeply embedded into the psyche of man and can thus act more powerful than any physical force. In other words, it can be maneuvered as a non-violent force. History tells us that religion; the faith of the people has often been manipulated to enforce political and colonial policy. Therefore when a land is conquered by a new alien culture, the religion of the conqueror is directly or indirectly imposed on the conquered subjects. This can be seen in the case of the Muslim invasion of India, and more recently the British colonial rule. When the British set up a colony in India, their primary target was not necessarily to spread their religion- Christianity. Yet it often came with them like a robe that they could not have left behind in their country. In most cases, the British missionaries had seen this conquests as a golden opportunity to spread their faith. However total collaboration between missionary movements and colonialism could be seen only in the case of Spain and Portugal, two countries of strong catholic faith. For these two countries, missionary work could hardly be disassociated with the interest of the state nor could the latter do without the faithful cooperation of missionisation (Dena 1). In others we can see a partial collaboration of the missions and colonialism. But this was not always the case, there were also controversial relationships between the two as in the case of the Anglican Missionaries in New Zealand who strongly opposed the imperial expansion (Dena 4).

Works of the western missionaries have been closely identified with western colonialism and imperialism. In many instances, it may closely be perceived as being so, but "to identify Christian missions in every instance with western colonialism is clearly an overgeneralization" (Pachau 146). Yet there are many levels of colonization, religion

being an important of one of these levels. In the case of the Mizos, the conversion of the people to Christianity was certainly not the primary aim in their occupation of the Lushai Hills. Economic motives, however indirect, were the sole interest of the British colonizers. There maybe three main reason for the British colonization of the Lushai Hills. The first is that they wanted to main law and order so that they did not the neighbouring areas. Secondly, the Mizos provided them with cheap labour. And lastly it was for acquiring taxes from the people. Nonetheless, the missionaries did come and conversion did take place. So much so that Christianity became the one of the important identifying forces of the Mizo culture.

The beginnings of what I call the Mizo spirituals come hand in hand with the coming of the Welsh missionaries in 1894, which also marks the beginning of a literate culture for the Mizos. The Mizos until this time were regarded as 'head- hunters', feared and disturbing for the people of the neighboring areas. The Mizos then were semi-nomadic tribes. Their origins are still vague and there are various theories trying to trace their origins. The land of the Mizos now called Mizoram was earlier called the Lushai Hills. The word "Lushai" is an anglicized version of "Lusei", the name of the dominant tribe among the Mizos. As mentioned earlier, the Lushai Hills succumbed to the onslaught of British Imperialism in 1890 as a result of the expansion of the tea plantations in the Assam Hills (Dena 41). In retaliation the Mizos attacked the neighboring tea estates, raided them and took human heads as prizes and proofs of valour (Lloyd 1). But this in turn caught the attention of the British colonizers and missionaries on the people living on the Lushai Hills. The British were in a way forced to add to their colony the Lushai Hills, so as to prevent the "wild" and "primitive" tribes of the Hills from attacking the neighbouring areas, which were important tea gardens and estates of the British. Even though there was no direct economic gain in occupying the Lushai Hills, the British had come to feel compelled to undertake two expeditions in 1871-72 and 1889, which eventually lead to the annexation of the Lushai Hills to the British Empire (Thanmawia 52). The British following an indirect means of rule, by legitimizing the native authority of the Chiefs, were mainly concerned with the keeping of peace. Peace so that they did not fight each other or the neighbouring areas. Also taxes were levied on the people, to establish the authority of the colonial power.

As in the case of many other places the colonizers looked at the missions coming to the Lushai Hills with mixed feelings; on the one hand they were aware of the good that they could do to the people and that they might help in the pacification of the people. On the other hand there was also the fear that they might help in doing away with the tribal customs and polity, and therefore bring about in losing control of the people (Dena 42). The coming of the missionaries did indeed work out really well for the colonizers to a large extent. Although the Mizos had never shown any violent resistance of the British power, they were suspicious of it. They saw that the missionaries were unarmed and did not use force on them. They were curious yet showed no antagonism. The missionaries did pacify the colonial rule.

The first missionary who penetrated the Lushai Hills was Rev William Williams; a Welsh missionary who had been working in the Khasi Hills had reached Aizawl on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1891. Unfortunately before he could begin his work he died of typhoid. After Williams, till 1893 it became impossible for anyone except for official government employees to enter the hills because of the administrative policies adopted by the colonial power. J.H Lorrain and F.W Savidge became the pioneering missionaries among the Mizos when they entered the Lushai Hills on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1894. These two missionaries were sent by the Indian Aborigines Mission, better known as the Arthington Mission, which was run by a Leeds millionaire, Mr. Arthington. He wanted to spread the gospel as fast and as wide spread as possible; he was a sternly evangelical person, eager to send the gospel to those who have never heard it and who had his own original ideas as to how to do it (Lloyd 35). His approach was to spread the Gospel all over the world as quickly as possible and move on from one place to another. Rather than having the missionaries settling down and trying to educate or modernize the newly converted Christians, he wanted them to move on once the seeds of Christianity had been sowed. The two missionaries Savidge and Lorrain had to endure a lot of hardships in their attempt to work in the Lushai Hills. They also had to wait for several months before they could finally be given permission from the colonial government. The natives gave the two missionaries Mizo names; Savidge was named Sap Upa and Lorrain, Pu Buanga. This shows that the Mizos had come to accept them, despite their obvious racial and cultural differences.

The first thing that Lorrain and Savidge did was study the language of the Mizos, and they realized that a written orthography as necessary for mission work as well as the development of the people. Earlier, since the British had first learnt of the existence of the Mizos, they had taken an interest in the Lushai language and made attempts to study their grammar and language. The first attempt of the study of the Mizo language was made by Capt. Thomas Herbert Lewin in 1869 and was continued by Sir George Campbell in 1877, G.H.Damant in 1880, Brajo Nath Saha and C.A.Soppit in 1887. Besides these, information on the Lushai people was made available by H.R.Br<sup>o</sup>wne, E.A.Gait and J.A.Baine, which proved to be very useful sources for Lorrain and Savidge (Thanmawia 53-54). The Mizos are grateful to the Gospel and the western missionaries for many reasons, that they were given a script and not letting their language die away is probably the most significant of them all. Just when the British government was making plans to impose the Bengali language on the Mizos, for their administrative convenience as a court language, the missionaries had come and given them a script (Hminga 49). Infact, they had begun this campaign of teaching them Bengali script to a few Mizo boys, but unsuccessfully abandoned it (Thanmawia 59). Had the government been successful, the language that we know today may have died away. Other than this, no attempt what so ever had been made in the education of the people till then. The two missionaries had been studying the language from the available sources and set up the task of reducing the language to a written form as soon as they settled down. On their giving the language a script, J.H Lorrain wrote, "For this purpose we chose the simple Roman script, with a phonetic form of spelling based on the well known Hunterian system, and this, with a few slight emendations adopted since, is still used throughout the tribe with eminently satisfactory result" (Lorrain v). Thus the Mizo alphabet "a aw b" was prepared and the first students, Pu Suaka and Pu Thangphunga had their first lessons on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1894 (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature* 90-91). The first written literature in the Mizo language was the Mizo primer, published by the Assam government in 1895 and translations of some of the books of the New Testament of the Bible (Lloyd 29). They stayed in Aizawl for four years during which they managed to open a school and write a 'Grammar and Dictionary' containing seven thousand words which was published by the Government in 1898 and became the foundation of all educational work in the Lushai

Hills (Hminga 50). Savidge in the annual Baptist Mission Report in 1904 wrote, "The people assured us they were like monkeys, and it was absurd of us to think that they could ever learn like other people. What a change ten years have wrought! Not only would any them read and write their own language, but some of them knew sufficient English to translate hymns and other books into their own tongue" (12). Thus their work among the people extending beyond mere religious endeavors made them gain the trust of the natives.

The first of what we may call the Mizo Spirituals were nothing but translations of English Hymns. Within the four years Savidge and Lorrain had translated seven major hymns into Mizo, realizing that singing was an integral part of the Mizo culture and therefore very effective in spreading the Gospel. The arrival of Rev D.E Jones of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission in Aizawl on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1897 (Hminga 52) proved quite beneficial for the history of the growth of the Mizo spirituals. Like Savidge and Lorrain, Jones was also given a name by the Mizos 'Zosaphluia'. Within a few months he translated eleven songs, thus in 1899 the first Mizo hymn book, the first Kristian Hla Bu or the Christian Song Book was published with eighteen songs, published by the Eureka Press in Calcutta (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature* 114). The first songbook that the Mizos had may have not been a very impressive in terms of number and effort, but it was a start of something that would gain prominence in the Mizo society. Among the early missionaries the most beneficial in terms of the development of the spirituals is Rev. Edwin Rowlands also of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission who arrived in Aizawl on the last day of 1898 (Hminga 52). Rowlands is best remembered for his gift of singing and composition. He was able to leave his mark though he remained in the Lushai Hills only till 1907. Within this period for he managed to compose and translate more than a hundred songs of which ninety of them is to be found in the latest edition of the Kristian Hla Bu still (Hminga 67).

In 1903 the second Kristian Hla Bu with 81 songs was published and printed by the Allahabad Mission press with as many as one thousand copies. The very next year i.e. in 1904 the second part of the songbook was again published adding another forty-four songs to the number. Again in 1908 the third part of the Kristian Hla Bu came out with another seventy songs (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature* 126). The 1908 edition of the

Kristian Hla Bu marks a very important turn in the history of the church in Mizoram. This was the beginning of the joint work between the church of the north- the Presbyterian Church and the church of the southern region- the Baptist Church (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature* 127). The following table clearly shows the increase in the number of the Mizo Spirituals, although this shows the increase in the Kristian Hla Bu, there were also songs that were not entered into the major hymnbook:

Year of Publication of KHB	Number of Spirituals
1899	18 (First Edition)
1903	81(Enlarged from the first edition)
1906	125(Enlarged from the second edition)
1908	273(Enlarged from third edition)
1910	322(Revised edition)
1913	401(Enlarged edition)
1915	450(Revised edition)
1919	558(Enlarged edition)
1922	480(Revised edition)
1928	480(Reprint)
1931	480(Reprint)
1935	480(Reprint)
1937	480(Reprint)
1940	480(Reprint)
1942	465(Revised edition)
1993	537(12 <sup>th</sup> edition, Centenary edition)

(Thanmawia 74)

The Kristian Hla Bu plays a very important role in the Christian life of the Mizos, and ever since it has always been a work of collaboration of the two major churches, the Baptist and the Presbyterian Churches of Mizoram. An important observation to be made at this point is that till this time most of the songs in the Kristian Hla Bu were translations of Welsh, English and other hymns. Pu Thanga, the first evangelist and one of the major translators of the songs during this period also composed some songs in Mizo. Pu Thanga may therefore be seen as the first native composer of the

Mizo spirituals. His work may have been included in these earlier songbooks but it still remains that the percentage of the translated songs far outweigh the original Mizo compositions at this point. Until the wave of the first revival that swept the Mizos in 1906 it can be safely said that there was no outburst, spiritually or creatively in the compositions of the Mizo spirituals. Though it definitely was a growing body, it more or less seemed to be a natural consequence of the efforts of the missionaries. In other words there was nothing spectacular about the history and development of the Mizo spirituals until 1906. But the real development can be witnessed with the second wave of revival that came in 1913.

During the period between 1900-1919 the number of translation of the spirituals was greatly increased. At the same time there came about songs composed by the natives. But these songs were sung to the tunes of the already existing western spirituals. This usage of the western tunes and style of singing reveals the attitude of the early Mizo Christians and missionaries towards the Mizo and western cultures. Christianity created a sort of departure from many aspects of the Mizo traditional culture and society. Many aspects of the traditional culture were seen as 'anti-Christian' and of the "devil" directly or indirectly, including the traditional oral-folk singing. Infact, it would seem that many elements of the traditional culture were perceived as lacking and insufficient. The spirituals embody this attitude; the form of stylistic expression had to be western. The missionaries' infiltration of Christianity in a deeply western perspective, whether with the best of intentions or the worst, has been reflected in the Mizo spirituals. Perhaps it is not only the missionaries who were responsible for this attitude. The early Mizo Christian converts were strongly motivated the conservative theology which made them have an extremely conservative outlook that saw anything that had to do with the old religion and culture as "Unchristian". The Singing of the spirituals in the western style and tune was perceived as essentially more 'Christian', more 'Godly'. Not only was the style of the folk singing condemned the rich poetic language of the Mizos was also rejected. Instead the prose language of every day speech was preferred and considered "Christian". The missionaries had translated the English and Welsh songs in the prose language, which was also followed by the earlier Mizo translators and composers. Pachuau has observed that "The wealth of poetical words and the beauty of traditional festivities were shunned

by the early Mizo Christians. This heritage was rejected as part of the 'old' paganistic tradition. Translated hymns with no poetical appeals were considered normative for Christian usage until the uncontrollable motion of the revival spirit helped to include these 'old' elements into the 'new' Christian singing" (132). It was considered that the folk tradition did not provide enough scope or space for songs composed with religious intent like the spirituals. Infact the Mizos had different styles in the oral- folk tradition based on the tunes, language, diction and rhythm; like the Lianchhiari Zai, Saikuti Zai, Chawngchen zai, Mangkaia Zai, Darpawngi Zai, Tuchhingpa Zai, Laltheri Zai, Pi Hmuaki Zai, Buizova Zai and so on (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Nun Hlui Hlate*, x-xv). The process of becoming Christians was therefore synonymous with the process of westernization. Singing as we've mentioned earlier played an integral part of the Mizo oral tradition. But there were many transitions that were simultaneously happening all at once within a sort span of time. The transition was from an oral culture to a literate culture, from traditional religion to Christianity, from tribal polity to the British colonization. In other words, the whole Mizo society was being evolved from a traditional society to a modern one. And these transitions had created confusion in their sense of cultural identity.

While the very core of the Mizo traditional society was undergoing change because of the fast spreading Christianity, the colonial government was also making attempts to be more involved in the politics of the chiefs. To further protect their interests in the Assam tea estates, the colonial government had vigorously carried on the disarmament policy, i.e., the disarming of the Mizo chiefs. On slight suspicion amounting to knowledge that the natives possessed guns, they were imprisoned and hundreds of them were arrested (Dena 45). This was not easy for the Mizos especially the chiefs because they were warrior as well as hunting tribes. Though agriculture and domestic farming played an important role as a part of the tribal economic and social structure, great values were placed on brave warriors and skillful hunters. At this time only a small part of the population had accepted the new religion, nevertheless the reign of the British colonialism stopped them from war and head- hunting. What was more difficult for them was that they were denied the pleasure of hunting too. Their culture seemed to be forced to be going through an evolution at a very fast pace. This naturally created suspicion and



wariness of the white officials while the missionaries were more trusted. John Shakespeare, the then Superintendent of the north Lushai Hills made efforts in creating a more cordial relationship with the missionaries. The missionaries were often put in rather awkward situations in having to choose between loyalty to their nation and that of Christ. This created tension in the cordial relationship between the officials and the missionaries, especially when the issue of the abolition of slavery came up (Dena 45). The pioneering missionaries Lorrain and Savidge who had earlier been called back by the Arthington Mission were also sent back by the Baptist Mission to work in the Southern Lushai Hills. Thus what has come to be the two major denominational churches in Mizoram had co-existed peacefully without problems. So much so that until a few years back if a northerner, i.e. a Presbyterian visited the south, he or she never had qualms about attending the other's church, the Baptist church or vice versa. Rather than two separate denominations the Baptist and they Presbyterians, they existed in harmony more like north and south churches. But after many other denominations and sects had also come into prominence things did not remain quite the same though there remained to be no big problems between the two major denominations, until much later.

The missionaries who had come to the Lushai Hills belonged to Churches, which were known for their Revival Movements. Revival Movements of Mizoram therefore owe their origins to the Welsh revivals of 1904-1905 (Pachauau 111). The Presbyterian (or Calvinistic Methodist) Church of Wales, the mother Church of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church, is a church that had been born, nurtured and fostered by revivals (Pachauau 112). Thus it would seem that these waves of revivals swept the Mizo Churches in the early 29<sup>th</sup> century, were a continuation of the revivals of the western Churches. Although owing its origin and influence from the western churches, the revivals among the Mizos was not entirely a process of westernization as it may seem to be. Revivals as seen in the case of the Churches in Mizoram are a "vehement upsurge of public excitement into religious into religious commitments, accompanied by diverse manifestations of emotional outbursts through songs, movements and action. It is basically a movement and transitory in nature although many of its features come to stay in the Church after the main wave subsides" (Lalsawma 7). The Revivals rather than taking over the tradition of the people, brought out the innate and suppressed consciousness in an attempt to define

their new culture from their traditional cultural perspective and worship their “new” God in an indigenous manner.

The story of the Mizo spirituals and Mizo Christianity has been greatly defined by the four waves of revival which had led to an incredible increase in the Christian population, literacy, literary body of works and of course an outburst in the composition of the spirituals. On the flip side, these revivals also led to discontentment with the Churches and increased the number of sects. Not only have these four waves of revival changed the course of the Mizo religion, it has touched the very core of the Mizo society in every aspect. The Spirituals reflects some of these aspects. The exact dates of the revivals can only be approximated, as they were movements that did not always come spontaneously, but were gradual and flowing through the different villages of the Lushai Hills. Historians have agreed upon four dates on which the revival waves came to Mizoram on a large scale during the first forty years of Christianity, which were- 1906, 1913, 1919 and 1929/ 1930 (Lalsawma 31). Of these the third revival in 1919 proved the most significant for the development of the Mizo Spirituals. The revivals have brought about the interweaving of the traditional or the indigenous with the Christian. Prior to the revivals, the religion and the society were moving towards a “purely” western tradition so much so that the western could be interchanged with the Christian. This interweaving of the two different cultures according to Pachuau, can be seen in three major elements, “the traditional drum, ‘Native’ Christian hymns sung to indigenous tunes and the revival dance”, these three elements emerging as the major distinctive marks of Mizo Christianity (131).

Each wave of revival carried its own message or theme upon which the songs and the sermons were centered. Rev. Lalsawma has made an extensive study of the revivals in his book “Revivals: The Mizo Way”, in which he brings out the theme and message of each of these waves of revival. The first wave in 1906 was based on the sense of **conviction of sin** requiring public confession and the resultant experience of **divine forgiveness** (37). During this period the number of the Christian community was still a minority and most of the Mizo chiefs had not yet converted to Christianity. Thus the small Christian community had to face a lot of hardships from the rest of the Mizo community. They were ridiculed and accused of abandoning their own culture with their

abandoning of their traditional religion. At the same time the sense of cultural “selfhood” and identity of the Mizos were threatened and shattered by the loss of their independence to colonialism. The theme of the first wave of the revival gave them solace in the fact that it created in their consciousness a certain amount detachment from the everyday world. Even the popularly sung spirituals during this wave of revival reflects this as we can see in following verse of the song ‘Remember Us’:

*Jesus, Jesus, only you can  
Forgive Sinners as we are,  
In your Kindness and Compassion  
Have purchased us by your blood  
Remember us, remember us  
O Jesus our Savior  
Strongest then the highest mountain  
O Human sin is your love  
Only you our nearest kinsman  
Have suffered our miseries  
Remember us...  
O Jesus by Your great mercy  
Help us to obey your will  
For we are weak needing your help  
Lead us through our life  
Remember us... (Lalsawma 54)*

One of the important phenomenas that occurred during the first revival was the outburst of a type of secular singing called the “Puma Zai”. The Puma Zai was a new song type of simple and catchy rhythm highly potent of emotional excitement (Pachau 117). It was a reminiscent of the folk culture yet modernized and fast spreading throughout the hills. The exact origin of the new style is rather obscure. Puma Zai, which later came to be, called *Tlanglam Zai*, meaning Song of Communal Dance or Song of Public Dance, played a significant role in the history of the development of the Mizo Spirituals. The themes of the Puma Zai songs mainly dealt with the relation between the two sexes, vigorously using the animals and birds and other objects of nature as

metaphors (Thanmawia 100). The Puma Zai was conceived as anti-Christian and a means of testing the limits of the Mizo Christians (Lloyd 108). Most Christians of the time even went to the extent of calling it the work of the Devil himself (Hminga 73, Lalsawma 48). Whatever the new style may have been considered to be turned the course of the Mizo Spirituals and the Mizo Christianity as a whole. The very phenomena was an expression of the lack of the then existing Mizo Spirituals, which were mainly translations or songs composed to the tunes of the English Spirituals. The early Mizo Christians had taken up a western conservative perspective toward their new religion. Perhaps this was an attempt to distinguish themselves from the rest of the non-Christian population. They made a crucial decision that removed them from their pre-Christian traditions in order to establish a new Mizo Christian tradition, however westernized it may be. They put up a ban on a number of the old practices, like the brewing and drinking of Zu or rice beer, participation in any sort of traditional feast and festivals, singing the native folk songs and tunes including the religious chants, dancing to the old songs and any other practice that was associated to the old religion (Pachau 119). In other words, their attempt was to entirely remove the old culture, religion and way of life that they had known with something new and different. While the missionaries have been blamed for such an approach, it is worthwhile to realize that not all the missionaries did not always expressed this attitude. Infact J.H Lorrain, one of the pioneering missionaries had expressed his sympathy that the Mizo links to the past was getting lost and that in Christianizing them they did not want to denationalize them (Pachau 120). Nevertheless the problem is that there was no clear-cut line between the "Christian" and the "Western". These elements were interpreted as one and the same, thus creating confusion in the Mizo consciousness and definition of Mizo Christianity.

The Mizo sense of identity was threatened by the Colonial power because it had taken away their sovereignty and a large part of their freedom. Thus the Puma Zai "signaled the emergence of a new cultural identity which reappropriated the changing world view of the time. Not only the upsurge bring in a new cultural identity it also revived cultural selfhood" (Pachau 121). Puma Zai also gave them a new form of entertainment, when they had been denied of many other things of their tradition. Besides being an expression of cultural instinct for entertainment, it also provided a means of

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release when their freedom and independence was curbed (Lalsawma 48). The phenomenon of the Puma Zai was therefore a clear indication that the Mizos needed something more out of their situation, something that could be entertaining and closer to their culture. That the then existing translated spirituals with their prosaic language was not enough to rekindle their cultural spirit. Besides it also accentuated the western style as western. They needed to be able to express themselves through songs in a style that was their own. It also showed that even though these translated spirituals had been instrumental in the spreading of Christianity, they were lacking in real appeal to the heart of the Mizo man. The need for something indigenous became stronger and this was fully realized by the third wave of Revival. This need took its form in the shape of a new style of singing the Mizo Spirituals called the Lengkhawm Zai.

The second wave of the revival in 1913 laid emphasis on the 'Second Coming of Jesus Christ' or more appropriately the 'Urgency of the kingdom of God' (Lalsawma 67). The importance of the second wave of revival and its message lies in that it is one of the defining phenomena of the Mizo Christian theology. The theme of the second revival reached out to all denominations and sects. The theme of eschatology, which has a prominent place in the body of the Mizo Spirituals, is one of the major issues that emerged out of the theme of the second revival. And it is this concern on the issue of eschatology in the Mizo Christian theology that effected the consciousness and attitude of all the Mizos for a long time. This importance laid on the Second Coming and eschatology directly led to the growing number of sects and denominations, and indirectly to the social life and economy of the people, as we shall later discuss in detail. Sects that were centered on the Second Coming came up in great numbers. The Second Coming was expected to occur so soon that some even refused to cultivate their fields (Pachau 122). One of the most significant and earliest of such a movement away from the major denominational Churches towards native sects came in the form of a new sect called Tlira Pawl, meaning Tlira's group. Tlira Pawl is but the first of many sects that was to crop up among the Mizos. It began with the extremist attitude on the issue of the Second Coming but it later branched out to several other doctrinal and theological differences. Like the first wave of the revival, there was a lot of singing and dancing to be seen in this second wave.

The second wave lasted for only two years but the next revival lasted for as long as five years. The third wave of revival- from 1919 to 1923, carried the message of the 'Cross of Christ', especially the redemptive sufferings of Jesus for men's salvation (Lalsawma 85). By the end of the third wave forty percent of the population of Mizoram had converted to Christianity, i.e. there were as many as 39,797 Christians out of the total 98,797 population (Kipgen 241). A significant feature of the Third Revival was a development in the singing and "physical expressions took a fresh turn in an ecstatic and compulsive way beginning with quaking of the body or part of it" and it was highly contagious (Lalsawma 85). The new style of singing, the Lengkhawm Zai caused the excitement to increase with the usage of the traditional drum. The tempo of the beating of the drum caused excitement to reach a high fevered pitch. It was in this revival that a larger part of the body of the Mizo Spirituals came to be composed. The three composers, Patea, Kamlala and C.Z Huala brought in a new era of Mizo Spirituals, which was essentially Mizo in nature in language and tune, unlike the songs that had been composed or translated so far.

There was also the fourth wave of revival in 1929-1930. But it is not considered as important as the first three waves with regards to the development of the spirituals. The fourth revival brought in new emotional experiences, which caused strong protests from the Churches. Some Churches had even gone to the extent of forbidding dancing inside the church (Nunthara 102). The Mizo spiritual does not exist in isolation. Just as the secular songs influenced the Spirituals, it in turn also effected and influenced the former. Thus during and around the Fourth Revival a new form of singing, a body of love songs called *Kaih-lek*<sup>3</sup>, which was Love Songs set to the tune of the popular revival songs and very popular much to the chagrin of the Church leaders (Lalsawma 169). Not only were the tunes of the Spirituals used in some of the *Kaihlek* songs, most of the words were retained but the focussing words would be replaced. Like in some songs the words "Jesus" or "Saviour" would be replaced by the name of a lover and so on. Thus in *Kaihlek* songs we see another representation of the struggle of the traditional religion and culture of the Mizos against Christianity (Thanmawia 102). However, the fourth wave

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<sup>3</sup> Lalsawma has explained the word as: *Kaihlek* literally means 'Twisted' so named because the tunes of the religious songs were twisted to fit into Love Songs. *Kaihlek* thus means a diversion or a deflection.

was calmer in nature than its predecessors. It had a “different theological emphasis and was less ecstatic in nature” but led to an increase in the Christian population up to four or five thousand (Kipgen 245). When there came to be a considerable amount of original Mizo Spirituals, the Hla Thar Bu or the Minor Hymnal was published for the first time in 1930. It contained 212 songs, out of which 170 were original Mizo compositions and acted as a supplement to the Kristian Hla Bu. The major themes of the four waves of the Revivals played a major role in the themes of the songs that were composed. Songs dealing with the Second Coming and eschatology occupied the larger portion of the songbook. Although the Hla Thar Bu since the time it was first published till today, does not occupy the central role in worship services within the Church although it plays an important role in other gatherings outside the Church. As the Mizos tend to sing in most occasions and gatherings, they were no less popularly sung than those in the Major Hymnal. Lalsawma has made a table of the 1939 edition of the Hla Thar Bu, which clearly shows which themes ran strongly in the endeavor of Spiritual composition (Lalsawma 133).

Hymns	Numbers	Translations	Originals
Experience of Conversion and fellowship with Christ	29	9	20
Second Coming and Longing for Heaven	95	12	83
The Cross and Redemption	35	4	31
Spiritual Conflict and Warfare	14	4	10
In Praise of God and Salvation	14	3	11
Christmas	11	1	10
Mission Outreach	6	3	3
Various Subjects	8	6	2

The four waves of the Revival that swept through Mizoram may have each have inclinations towards different themes and doctrinal issues, yet they converge at several points resulting in the creation of a unique Mizo Christian expression in the form of dance, drums and spirituals. “One outstanding result of the revivals was many new hymns were composed during the revival and those were lustily sung... The new hymns

were sung both in churches services and community singing, in homes and for a long time superseded the translated hymns... and most of these hymns were passion hymns and anticipation of heaven”(Hminga 117). Apart from the numerical growth in the number of spiritual compositions, one of the most significant results of the wave of revivals was the birth of a new style of singing called the *Lengkhawm Zai*. *Lengkhawm Zai* literally means, a style of singing that is sung together in groups; a form in which people meet and sing together. It possessed qualities of being participative rather than performative, which highlights the folk nature of this form of singing like the African-American spirituals. This was a form that became very popular from the revivals. This is because though the newly converted Mizos readily accepted the formal western forms of singing, it was something that came from an entirely different culture and therefore not particularly well matched to the needs of the people. To put it simply, the formal hymnal tunes did not have the fire or spirit of folk songs to touch the very heart and meet the spiritual demands of the spirited tribal Mizos. The formal hymnal tunes are restrictive they do not give the body freedom of movement. While on the other hand, the beat of the form of the *Lengkhawm Zai* is easily matched to the movements of the body and to the beat of the drum. Dancing was one of the popular forms of entertainment for the Mizos. Thus even when Christianity became a part of their culture, the need for such a physical expression did not die away but sought to be expressed in a new way to new songs.

The *Lengkhawm Zai* has close affinity to the *Puma Zai* style, although the resemblance has not really been given importance because of the Church’s vehement objection to what it believed to be the old “pagan” practices (Pachau 134). The *Lengkhawm Zai* is not purely folk in nature either. It is a kind of synthesis of the western and the tribal, based on the tunes of the English hymns but softened to the beat of the Mizo folk songs. Malsawma, a literary critic and musician believes that the tunes are not precisely traditional folk Mizo tunes, and the words are neither poetical nor the daily language; they are Mizo in that they are comfortable and touching in flow like the folk songs (Pachau 135). Composition of songs until the Third Revival had been considered purely a doctrinal art (Thanmawia 78) and nothing more. Also since the every day prose language was considered more “Christian” while the use of the poetic language a “pagan”



act, many of the songs composed by the natives at the early stages were rejected by the other Christians for their poetic diction.

One of the striking features of most of the Mizo spirituals was that most of the songs could be sung in two ways. One is in the formal western style with the proper notes of the solfa in place and the four parts the soprano, contralto, tenor and the bass sung in perfect harmony. And the other is in the form of the Lengkhawm Zai, which are unrestrictive and very folk in its very essence. The softened tune made it easy to be sung and was a powerful means of releasing emotion (Pachauau 133). Another significant feature of the Lengkhawm Zai was that the songs would be sung repeatedly which has come to be considered “the hallmark of the revival” (Lalsawma 127). At times during the heights of revival meetings a song can be sung over and over again without a gap for hours. The indigenous style of the Lengkhawm Zai was not something that the composers deliberately set out to establish. “Rather the tune emerged from the community’s heart and expressed its deepest feeling...for it was not the writers who were involved in devising the new tune, but also the people who sang the songs” (Pachauau 133). Infact when the Mizo themselves composed the songs, they did not set out to make it sung in the Lengkhawm Zai style, infact the solfa note always came with the compositions. It was not only the original indigenous songs that came to be sung in the Lengkhawm Zai style, but the translated spirituals were also softened and sung in the indigenous style. Thus the Lengkhawm Zai evolved to meet a need that was within the very core of the spiritual needs of the people. It reached them as no western Spiritual could for they could identify with it. Looking from this perspective, I think we can safely say that the birth of the Lengkhawm Zai became one of the biggest instruments in the rapid spread of Christianity among the Mizos. The reactions of the missionaries to this new style are rather interesting. Although they did not openly oppose it, one can hardly find positive comments about it (Pachauau 136). The fact that they chose to collect a majority in the supplementary songbook, the Hla Thar Bu rather than the Kristian Hla Bu itself tells a story of its own.

The central role that the drum now plays in the church makes it an active part of the history of the development of the Mizo spirituals. The story of the drum is similar to that of the Spirituals in many ways. The use of the traditional drum was abandoned with

many other aspects of the pre-Christian society, as they were associated with their 'pagan' past. In the Mizo culture and saying, dancing without singing and singing without drumming and drumming without drinking was an impossibility (Lalsawma 79). Like all other things that were perceived to be connected to their old religion and culture, the usage of the drum was vehemently opposed at first, especially after the Puma Zai made the use of the drum popular again among the non-Christians. And drinking was greatly condemned by their new faith and the drum was associated to it. Infact the drum was associated with all worldly festivities. But with third revival and the growing popularity of the Lengkhawm Zai, singing without a drum became quite impossible. For the first time the church of Nisapui, a village in Mizoram, the drum was taken into the sacred space of the church in 1919 (Vanlalchhuanga 32). It seems that the drum been used earlier but sparingly, it had become popular only from the third wave of revival (Lalsawma 78). At first it was not approved by some, especially the church leaders who could not help but deem it as purely worldly and un-Christian. Though Christianity became a process of westernization, several aspects of the past had to be revived to express themselves, one of them being the usage of the drum. However, the missionaries had shown disapproval of the usage of the drum even after the Mizo Church leaders had come to accept it (Pachauau 137). The attitude of the missionaries can be seen in the words of Lloyd: "Whether the uncontrolled use of the drum at this time was an advantage or not is still a moot and arguable point, particularly as the use of it was often in very unreliable hands. The drummer was as a rule self-appointed, but controlled a very potent instrument. The presence of the drum affected meetings profoundly and had a mesmeric influence on many. It induced and controlled the church service in 1919 more than in any previous revival. The repetitive singing of the same hymn was largely though not altogether due to the use of the drum. This troubled many for they feared that hymn-singing was ousting praying, Scripture reading and preaching, or atleast pushing them into the background. The drum appeared to dictate the congregation and even the Holy Spirit!" (192). Churches like the Mission Veng Church and Serkawn Church chose to use other musical instruments other than the drum for many years, but they too finally gave way to the traditional drum "because drum beating came easier and more natural to Mizo spirituality" (Lalsawma 79). The drum and the Lengkhawm Zai may therefore symbolize

the attempt of the Mizos to blend their indigenous tradition with the western, an assertion of their traditional culture amidst the strong currents of modernization and westernization washing over them.

Today irrespective of denomination, the drum plays a central role in the Mizo churches. Even in the physical sense, the drum occupies the very hearth of the church, leading the congregation in all types of singing. The drums and the drummers are seated in front of the altar-pulpit unlike many other churches across the world because elsewhere the musicians usually occupy the side of the altar-pulpit. But the place of the drum is not limited to the church alone; almost all Mizo singing as well as dancing is lead by the beating of the drum or drums. In 1994, when churches of Mizoram celebrated its Gospel Centenary, what has been conceived to be the world's biggest drum was built to commemorate the event. The Gospel Centenary drum is slightly oval in shape and measures six feet eight inches and seven feet nine inches in diameter (Vanlalchhuanga 51). One of the major theologians among the Mizos Dr. Zairema has claimed that, "The drum is the symbol of Mizo Christians to praise the Lord with all that is in them" (Pachauu 139). This symbolises the central role that the drum plays amongst the Mizo Christians, that the Christian population is what it is today largely because of the drum and all that it has come to represent.

Traditionally the Mizos have several kinds of drums of different sizes. In the churches there are always two drums, one big and the other slightly smaller. The bigger drum usually has a diameter of approximately 20 inches while the smaller drum has a diameter of approximately 10-12 inches. When songs are sung in the form of Lengkhawm Zai then the two drums are used simultaneously. The smaller drum with the faster tempo leads the song. But if songs are sung using the proper notes and keys of the solfa, the western style then only the bigger drum is utilized. In informal house fellowships unrevivalistic gatherings for friends or family, the native Christian composition are sung in low key chromatic beats of a single drum (Lalsawma 80). Today when the development of sound technology has entered the sphere of the church, most churches in Mizoram are equipped with keyboards, electric guitars, hollow guitars and so on. Nevertheless the native drum remains to be the center and take the lead of the musical on goings of the church.

What came along with Lengkhawm Zai and the drum was naturally the revival dance and the Charismatic movement. These three are so intricately linked that they are difficult to separate one from the other. The Mizo in their pre-Christian dance were always fond of singing and dancing. Festivals and other celebrations were incomplete without singing and dancing to the beat of the drum. But when they converted to Christianity, they were denied of such traditional celebrations and expressions. In a way these dances that came out of the revivals compensated for their loss on the other field. In the first revival, they started out by stamping on their feet and in the second revival they began to wave their hands while swaying their bodies (Pachau 140). But in the third wave they began to move out of their seats to the space in front of the pulpit, dancing in groups. This form of dancing still lives today. Infact, it is for this purpose that in the Mizo churches there is always a wide space in front of the alter-pulpit. Sometimes the dancers dance in their own direction, but in revival meetings or larger gatherings they tend to form a kind of circle moving around the given space. In recent years, this form of dancing which had been borne out of the revivals has been connected to the *Tlanglam Dance*, which emerged from the *Tlanglam Zai*. Because of the intense encounter between the Christians and the Non-Christians, any possible connection had not been considered in the past (Pachau 134). There was also the extreme form of dancing when the singing warmed up, a person would begin to quake involuntarily which may increase with the tempo of the beat of the drum and the song (Lalsawma 85).

Ever since the revivals there has been no looking back in the growth of the Mizo Spirituals. Many composers became well-known not only in the Mizo community but also in other neighboring communities in Myanmar, Manipur and Tripura. Some of the most popular composers included names like Patea, Kamlala, C.Z. Huala, Saihnuna, Suakliana, Lalthangpuia, Siamliana, Lalruali, Hrawva, Rokunga and so on. The latest edition of the *Kristian Hla Bu* is the 1989 edition with 537 songs and has classified the songs into eleven major categories, which will be further discussed in detail in the next chapter. This book is utilized by almost all the denominations in Mizoram today. Although more Mizo original compositions have been added to each new edition of the songbook, the number is still much lower than the translations. Somehow it seems like these translations are given prior importance when they are included in the major

songbook, while most of the original compositions have to be satisfied with the other alternative songbooks. Presently, the Baptist church and the Presbyterian are working on a new edition of the Kristian Hla Bu. This promises to include a greater number of songs with more of the original Mizo compositions.

Choirs reveal the development of the spirituals. According to Dr. Laltluangliana, choirs have existed in one form or the other since 1912. And the first officially formed choir was established in 1913 (Tlanghmingthanga 63,64). Today there are numerous choirs with both temporary and permanent members. The popularly known permanent choirs are the Synod Choir, Besy Choir, Leprosy Mission Choir, ZEF zaipawl, SAY Choirs, David Singers and so on. However, the members are reselected every two years or so depending upon the terms set. Then there are the Pastorate choirs; every pastorate having a choir each and each church having its own choir as well. There may be several sub-choirs in a church as well. These major choirs are invited to different parts of the country as well as the world to perform. Perhaps it would not be far fetched to say that the biggest development that the Mizos have made since 1894 is in the field of singing, compositions and music, especially in choir performance. These choirs play a very important role in popularizing newly composed spirituals or in dictating the standards of notes and style.

After the outburst in the compositions of the spirituals during the revival movements, there have been no such outbursts of that sort again. But there however has been no real lapse either. The past ten years or so has seen a new development of the Mizo spirituals, prompted by the popularization and commercialization of music both sacred and secular. The influence of the western tradition, especially the popular culture of the west is now a prominent feature of the Mizo culture and the contemporary spirituals. Thus we see that the genre of the Mizo spirituals is a growing entity, very alive and its popularity unwavering.

### Chapter III

#### The Classification of the Mizo Spirituals

The Mizo Spirituals so far have been mainly classified thematically; which are largely based on theological studies and perspectives. The thematic classification of the spirituals in the Kristian Hla Bu on its compilation followed the classification of some of the major hymnbooks of the west, from which many songs had been translated into the Mizo language. Such a classification however has its shortcomings. This is because in most cases the Spirituals do not deal with only one theme. Often there are many themes within a song. While a song may be classified as one of 'God- Praise', it can also be an expression of many things at the same instant, like that of a longing for the after life, eagerness in awaiting the second coming and so on. Though sometimes there is a major stream of consciousness that runs through a song, and this being used as the basis of the classification, there can also be several instances where in there are several streams of consciousness intermingling. Yet they have been put under certain categories to create a pattern of uniformity in the making of a standard hymnbook, as in the case of the KHB. Thus the classification of the Mizo spirituals can only be loose categorizations. This can be seen from an example of one of the most popular spiritual composed by Patea, one of the earliest composers. The song "Aw Lalpa, Davida leh a Thlah Arsi" has been translated by Rev. J.M Lloyd as "O Bright Star of David and of all His Race" (Khangte, *Mizo Songs and Folk Tales*, 18). The following is the fifth and sixth stanzas of the said song.

*"Emmanuel, where is that Heavenly place,  
Where I shall forever look upon Thy face,  
I kneel and pray now like Daniel of old,  
In sorrow I long for that city of gold.  
  
I am yearning to walk in the streets above,  
Of the city Thou hast created in love;  
And dear ones clothed all in glorious array,  
Whom long have I lost I shall see them that day".*

In the KHB this song has been grouped in the category of 'God the Father', and sub-categorized 'Praise of God'. Patea in this song praises God for the salvation that he receives. In the first stanza of the song he says, "The joy in my heart now expands like the sea, Someday beyond Jordan I'll magnify Thee". The song is therefore definitely one of praise as it starts out, but as it proceeds the theme also expands. This in the two given stanzas show that it is more than just one of praise and worship. It shows what kind of praise is given therefore making the existing categorization quite inaccurate. The given stanzas clearly reveal a longing for the after life and thus the theme of eschatology becomes another prominent theme. They also reveal the pervading Mizo concept of Heaven and the after life in the Mizo Spirituals and Christianity. This is just one of the many songs with multiple themes. And this song is like many of the spirituals that start out with a particular theme, then passes on to another and then another. A song whether pertaining to the secular or the religious, as an expression of the cultural experience, like other cultural endeavors are potent with a number of issues and experiences. The Mizo Spirituals seem to be no exception to this.

The song "Thu mak ka sawi nin theih loh chu" or "Wondrous Words" (Khangte, *Mizo Songs* 14) by Rev. Liangkhaia, has been classified under "Jesus Christ" and sub-categorized as "His Sufferings", which would be quite acceptable for the song focuses on "Calvary". Calvary for a Christian symbolises the ultimate sufferings and sacrifice of Jesus Christ according to the faith of Christians. But a closer look at the words of the song reveal that it may be more than just a song that deals with the sufferings of Christ. It is very much a song of Praise using the symbol of Christ's sufferings. The last stanza of the song pronounces the under current theme that runs beneath the theme of suffering:

"All of you people here bow down at his feet,  
All ye people of great and small,  
Praise Him all the time..." (Trans. Khangte)

As we shall later see this phenomenon becomes more common among the native compositions rather than the translations. In the introduction to the Hla Thar Bu it is mentioned that there are songs, which does not have any particular theme making the classification difficult and inaccurate at times. This in itself brings out the limitations of such a classification. Rev Lalsawma also mentions in his book *Revivals: The Mizo Way*

The classification of hymns according to the themes can not always be clear cut for the reason that any one hymn may contain several topics linked together (132). Nevertheless this aspect of limitation can be understandable because there may not be a clear cut lines in the differentiation of the themes itself. Themes like “Praise” and “Glory” are very closely related. And so are themes like “Love”, “Blessings” and “Guidance” or “Eschatology” and the “Second Coming”. In many ways they may represent almost the same songs. The problem with thematic classification is that there is continuity and also a melting of the boundaries of the different issues in each of these ‘classifications’. Many of these themes are so difficult to separate one from the other. Like the ‘Cross’ or ‘Calvary’ from the Christian perspective symbolises the ultimate triumph of Christ over the embodiment of the evil ‘Satan’, which brings in two prominent paradoxical streams of emotions. One would be the pathos of the sufferings of Christ. The other is the joy of the triumph. Both these streams of emotions are closely related to ‘praise’. Also the ‘Cross’ paves the way to the theme of eschatology, the possibilities opened because of the death on the cross. There is no end to the chain of experiences and thus the themes, one following the other and often overlapping each other. It seems like an enormous chain where in drawing the lines becomes forced and thus inaccurate.

The latest edition of the Kristian Hla Bu that is the 1993 edition with 537 songs in all, has been classified into eleven major groups and thirty-nine sub groups<sup>4</sup>. The second songbook, which is also very important is the Hla Thar Bu<sup>5</sup> and contains 284 songs. The Hla Thar Bu was compiled as consequence to the enormous amount of songs that suddenly came about as a result of the revivals, especially the third revival. Thus they were primarily original Mizo composition. And most of them were sung to the style of the Lengkhawm Zai rather than the western Solfa style. While majority of the songs of the KHB are sung to the proper notes of the solfa. In this book the songs have not been as elaborately classified as in the KHB. They have made fourteen classifications but with few sub categorization.

One of the ways in which the Mizo Spirituals have also been classified is by creating a kind a hierarchy; a higher standard of songs and lower standard songs called

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix A for the classification of the Mizo Spirituals in the KHB.

<sup>5</sup> Hla Thar Bu means ‘The book of new songs’. This book was compiled soon after the Kristian Hla Bu and contains most of the original Mizo compositions.



the “Major Hymnal” and the “Lower Hymnal”. While the KHB is considered to be the Major Hymnal, the Hla Thar Bu is still the Minor Hymnal. All those various songbooks and hymnals other than the KHB are more or less considered to be the Minor Hymnal. It is important to note here that while the KHB has been standardized as “the” hymnbook the majority of its contents are translations or most of the native Mizo compositions are very English in their style. The percentage of original native compositions with the native tune is much lesser than these translations or westernized tunes. The Hla Thar Bu is not only an addition to the existing body of songs but a supplementary body of work. The Hla Thar Bu was compiled because the mainstream or the standard hymnal did not give much space for the original compositions. Infact in the early editions of the KHB the number original compositions were indeed very small. It was only in the 1985 edition that more of the Mizo original compositions were entered into the mainstream. Despite the fact that the Hla Thar Bu boasts of being mainly a book of original native Mizo compositions, yet it remains to be the secondary to the KHB. The reason for this is both historical and social. There was a burst of original compositions with the second and third revival movements. By then the KHB had already been well established and considered to be the standard songbook. At the same time the view that what “western” was quite synonymous with what was “christian” permeated many aspect of the Mizo consciousness, songs included. When the Hla Thar Bu was first published in 1930, the then Moderator and Chairman of the Synod Music Committee, Mr. E.L Mendus had clearly pointed out in the preface that, ‘...this new Hymn Book is introduced for use, not as a substitute for the previous Hymn Book, but as a supplement to it’(Lalsawma 131). This goes a long way in telling us in how the ‘native’ was placed against the ‘western’. Even if the original native compositions were equally or more popularly sung than the western translated songs in the revival meetings and outside it, the Church authorities created the hierarchy based on principles other than the cultural relevance and actual usage of the songs.

Translations form an important part of the body of the Mizo Spirituals, because as mentioned earliest Mizo Spirituals began with these translations. Translation of songs are not limited to the early years of Christianity alone, it remains to be an ongoing process till today. When the missionaries first translated the western hymns they had taken them

from different songbooks. The Hymnaries and songbooks that have been used in these works of translations are the *Alexander, At Worship, Baptist Church Hymnary, Baptist Hymn Book, Crowning Glory Hymnary, Church Hymnary, Children's Hymns, Celestial Songs, Christian Worship, Golden Bells, Great Hymn of the Faith, Khasi Tune Book, Men's Hymn Book, Old Sankey's Sacred Songs and Solos, Presbyterian Hymn Book, Redemption Songs, Salvation Army Book, Sylhet Children's Hymns, Sankey's Sacred Songs and Solos and The Welsh Tune Book* (KHB 630). It is not only the songs that have been translated in the process but also the mode of classification. Though they are not entirely similar, the main framework of the basis of their classification definitely follows a similar pattern. One of the major hymnbooks from which songs have been translated, the *Sacred Songs and Solos*<sup>6</sup>, was compiled by Ira D. Sankey and has twelve hundred pieces<sup>7</sup> has perhaps been the model for the classification of spirituals in the KHB.

A micro study of these classifications may reveal them to be more theological than their first appearances. The first similarity with Sankey's *Sacred Songs and Solos* and the other songbooks with the KHB and the Hla Thar Bu is in the first three basis of classification, where the concept of the Trinity evidently becomes the defining ground. The Salvation Army songbook, "Chhandamna Sipai Pawl Hla Bu", follows almost the same pattern of classification, especially the first three. The other classifications in the Salvation Army songbook may at first seem quite different because of the usage of the denominational lingo like "army", but is actually quite similar to the KHB. The doctrine of the Trinity imbibed into the classification of songs can be seen in most of the major hymnals of the west that believe in the trinity. The majority of the Mizo populations are Protestants, the others too coming in only much later. Like for example the United Pentecostal Church do not believe in this theological concept of the Holy Trinity; being a Unitarian church. Incidentally, in the United Pentecostal Church song book "Kohhran Hla Bu", no classifications of the songs have been made. But most of the other churches and sects that have come up like the Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Salvation Army, the Roman Catholics, the Methodists, the Assembly of God, Lakher Pioneer Mission believe in the concept of the Trinity. Whatever the denomination, most of these Mizo

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix for the classification of songs in the *Sacred Songs and Solos*.

<sup>7</sup> Courtesy to the Aizawl Theological Library.

spirituals are sung by all denomination. Though in some cases they may add to their Hymnal some songs which are denotative of their doctrine and denomination. The category of songs classified as the "Church" lays out the importance that is given to the church, which again is a very theological perspective. For symbolically the Church is a body while Christ is the head. Or even the category of "Baptism" which is considered to be a very important ritual in most of the Churches. However the manner in which Baptism is practiced does differ from church to church. Baptism in itself lays out one of the cornerstone basis of doctrine in many churches among the Mizos and outside it as well. Infact almost all the doctrines of the Presbyterian and the Baptist Church are similar excepting the part on Baptism. The death, resurrection and Second Coming of Jesus Christ are also actually theological as a means of classification. The occasion in themselves are based on the doctrines of Christianity. The conflict over the doctrines based on the second coming and eschatology in particular have lead to the split of churches and the rise of new denominations and sects everywhere in the world. The concept of song for special occasions can also be rather problematic, as it may not serve all denominations. Or rather to consider 'Sunday' as the day of the Sabbath or the holy day for churches like the Seventh Day Adventist or the Mizo Church of Israel and so on consecrate Saturday rather Sunday. Spreading and preaching the Gospel or 'Mission Outreach' is not only a practical characteristic of most churches but a doctrine as well. Thus, when themes based on the theological perspective are imposed on the Spirituals, they are made restrictive and rigid. The fluidity of its possible interpretations and meanings are lost. Our understandings of the songs are confined to a narrow space outlined by doctrines and theology. However despite doctrinal differences the entire Mizo population commonly sings most of the songs in the KHB and the Hla Thar Bu. How the spirituals are chosen to be classified may not always be the same in many cases. These songs serve as a meeting point for all the different doctrines, a kind of no man's songs, whoever or whatever the composer. Another observation that emerges out of looking at these classifications is that to a large extent, Christianity among the Mizos has been moulded in the Western tradition.

Despite the fact that the Mizo spirituals have been classified theologically, the songs in themselves move beyond rigid definitions of a single doctrine. Thus the inability

to create an accurate classification thematically. Nevertheless the existing classification can be helpful for the purpose of a literary study like this with all its limitations. For the purpose of a better understanding of the Mizo spirituals, the story behind them and the Mizo culture as it has been developing in past few decades; a chronological classification would be very helpful. As far as my knowledge, no proper chronological classification as such is available yet. The history of Mizo literature has however been classified chronologically by Khiangte. The classification of Mizo literature is as follows:

1. The period of our forefathers: the very beginning (00-1870)
2. The period of the white men: a new beginning (1870-1920)
3. The period of the pioneers: the middle (1920-1970)
4. The contemporary period: the new generation (1970-1994)<sup>8</sup> (*Thuhlaril*, 93-99)

Although this may also serve as basis for the chronological classification of the spirituals, there are details it entails that may prove it unsuitable. This is because such a classification begins prior to the birth of the Mizo spirituals as it begins in the oral pre-Christian tradition. However since it has been a span of a little more than a century, the two classifications may not be so different. Infact, Khiangte's classification of the history of Mizo literature has helped in the chronological classification of the Mizo spirituals. A chronological classification would be inclusive the thematic classification as well. Thus we will be able to study why a particular theme or style of singing had come up a certain point in history. The changing and evolutionary culture of the Mizos would then be more comprehensible. The only problem of such classification is that often the exact records of the date of the composition of some songs are not available.

Classifying and studying the songs based on the musical components, is another possibility, but may not altogether serve the required purpose of a literary analysis. Besides an insightful knowledge of music would be a necessary requirement. However, the advantage of a musical classification and study would be able to bring up important questions on issues like the originality of the Mizo spirituals; how much of the western and how much of the indigenous. Therefore the musical components will be embedded in the study of the spirituals. Another mode of classification that would be enlightening to help see the very consciousness of the Mizo people would be to differentiate and classify

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<sup>8</sup> Own translation from the Mizo Language.

the translations from the original compositions. And further classify the original composition into two that which has adapted tunes of the western spirituals and those that are original in tune as well. Thus we will be able to have an idea of the characteristics of the Mizo spirituals. And in the process the Mizo society as well. How much of the western culture has been imbibed into their lives and how much of their 'pagan' past has been carried on may be reflected through a study of such a classification.

A Chronological classification of the Mizo spirituals:

1. **The Translations (1894-1905).**

As already mentioned the beginnings of what I call the Mizo spirituals were but translations from the language of the missionaries. Realizing the pivotal role that songs played in the pre-Christian oral culture of the Mizos, the missionaries made translations of song one of their first priorities in their mission work. The pioneering missionaries J.H Lorrain and F.W Savidge translated the first Mizo spiritual "Isua Vanah a awm a" from the song "Jesus is in Heaven", which is song number 104 in the latest edition of the KHB. During their first four years of staying in the Lushai Hills, the two missionaries had translated seven songs into Mizo, which were:

- a. Isua vanah a awm a
- b. Khawvela ka awm chhung zawng
- c. Tuna ka awi ang, ka awi ang e
- d. Enge sual tifa thei ang?
- e. Thawnthu hlui chu min hrih rawh
- f. Isua! Beram Vengtu angin
- g. Isu tidamtu khawvelah a haw<sup>9</sup> (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature* 114)

All the songs except "Khawvela ka awm chhung zawng" have remained to be included in the KHB. The first songbook, which was printed in 1899, had eighteen songs in it, which were all translations. When Rev. D.E Jones came to the Lushai Hills, he translated four songs and another missionary from the Khasi Hills Raibhajor contributed seven songs. The translated spirituals became an important tool for the

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<sup>9</sup> The words have been spelled in the modern Mizo language usage, not as they had been translated for a better understanding. E.g. 'awm' was written as 'om'.

spread of the gospel among the natives. It was an entertaining and an enjoyable means of getting the message through. These songs imparted the Gospel in a sort of guise, for beneath their simple ability to entertain they carried the basic principles of Christianity. Apart from the above eighteen songs, the other eleven songs in first printed songbook were:

- a. Tunlai setanan min thlem fovang
- b. Ka naupang hoteu englo ru suh u
- c. Pathian thu hril tur
- d. Engatinge Isua
- e. Ram pakhat nuam tak a awm e
- f. Isua khawvel entu
- g. Isua krista tidamtu
- h. Aw Pathian! Nang lalber I ni
- i. Isua Hnenah I awm ang u
- j. Isu! Isu! Nangmah chauhin
- k. Tlang thim chhak lam kei ka en ang

Now, in the latest edition of the KHB only ten songs of these first eighteen spirituals are still included. The first of the spirituals, especially the first eight are very important. The missionaries had obviously chosen them with care because these were songs with words that carried important aspects of the Gospel in them. The song 'Isua vana a awm a' summarizes the story of Jesus, his coming to the world as man and saviour of man, the miracles that he performed, his death, his resurrection, the need to obey his words and the inevitable punishment that follows if we don't. The song therefore more or less carried everything of what they had come to preach. The core of the Christian doctrine, Jesus as the saviour, the one who can clean man of the sin he carries in his very soul is the main theme of the song "Enge sual tifaí thei ang?" Apart from these themes and messages the songs also emphasize on the trials and temptations that man face and that Jesus can be the redeemer ang saviour in such situations. And the song "Tunah ka awih, ka awih ang e" is a single versed song that represents the final submission to the will of Jesus, the acceptance of his word.

An important characteristic of these songs, which had been translated by the white missionaries, is the diction and sentence structure of these songs. They had just learnt the Mizo language, though obviously keen and fast learners they had not mastered the language. They had not become 'bilinguals' in the true sense of the word. Besides, they did not, at this point know that the Mizos had a poetical language. But as time wore on the poetical language of the Mizos was seen as essentially pagan and therefore inappropriate for Christian songs. Thus in many cases the sentence structure is neither poetic nor similar to the spoken language. And at times they become rather obscure. The poetical language of the Mizo language is thus revealed to be rather different from that of the English, which the white missionaries had tried to use in these translations. Like in English poetry they inserted rhyme schemes in their songs. But the Mizo poetry does not have rhyme schemes. Infact, the beauty of a composition, either poetry or song in Mizo is not in rhyme schemes or rhythmic arrangement of words but in the intonation of sounds in successive words and phrases, the tonal pitch and toss of sounds throughout the lines (Lalsawma 125). An example of such an attempt can be seen in the first translated song itself:

*Isua Vanah a awm a,  
 Khawvelah zuk lo kal a!  
 Mihring angin a lo awm  
 Keimah min chhandam turin;  
 Baibulah ka hmu thei e,  
 A va tha kher em ve le!*

This is the first stanza of the song. In the making of a patterned rhyme scheme, there is no rhythm in the sounds, thus even when the songs are sung, they do not flow freely out in melody and harmony. Notice the second line, "Khawvelah lo zuk kal a", which in itself is grammatically wrong. The grammatically correct form would be "Khawvelah alo zuk kal". But the line has to end with an "a" to make the lines rhyme, in the process bending the grammar. Thus when in the Mizo songs, the missionary translators used the western rhythm of poetry, the language may at times become distorted, all poetry gone. In spite of their shortcomings, the first of these Mizo spirituals are very important for the development of the spirituals as well as the Mizo society as a

whole because it laid down the foundations of what was to become one of the most important aspects of the Mizo culture.

## 2. **The Anglicized Mizo Spirituals (1906-1918).**

This period marks the beginnings of indigenous compositions and translations of songs in the Mizo language. By this time, the work of the missionaries began to reap its results. One of the most important being that of an education and giving a written form to the Mizo language. There are now few educated men who could compose songs and translate from English into Mizo. It is very important that the first wave of revival broke out in 1906 and the second wave in 1913. These waves of revival had played a pivotal role in shaping the destiny of the Mizo spirituals in several ways. It was through these spirituals that the revivals worked and the revivals themselves resulted in more bodies of spirituals being produced, either through translations or compositions.

Among the natives Pu Thanga was the first to translate a spiritual into Mizo. Besides him the other two first Mizo translators who managed to translate quite a few songs were Dala and Vanchhunga (Tlanghmingthanga 23). The two missionaries, who came after J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge, Rev. D.E Jones in 1897 and Rev. Edwin Rowlands in 1898, made great contributions to the translations of the spirituals. Edwin Rowlands or Zosaphara<sup>10</sup> translated as many as sixty-four songs, many of which are still in the KHB and popularly sung inside and outside the Church.

Edwin Rowlands also composed songs in Mizo, which are even more secular in nature. Apart from this he also composed a song in the Mizo language, "Thlalera vak ka lo nih hi" (KHB song no. 277). In spite of the improvement in language from the earlier translations, the western style of rhyming, quite alien to the Mizo poetry was still not abandoned by the missionary translators. At the same time, in this period we see a number of the natives themselves composing songs and translating songs. Some of the

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<sup>10</sup> Zosaphara means "new white missionary of the Mizos". The Mizos called the white missionaries "Zosap". The Mizos usually gave names to the missionaries. J.H Lorrain was called Pu Buanga, "Buang" accentuating the fairness of his complexion. F.W Savidge was called Sap Upa meaning, a "white elder".



earliest composers among the Mizos were Rev. Liangkhaia, who also translated a number of songs, Upa Thanga, Rev Laldala, Pasena, Hrawva, Taisena and Laibata.

The language of these new compositions was more “Mizo” in style and rhythm, but the tune was taken from the Welsh and English spirituals. But the poetical language of the oral culture was still considered ‘pagan’ and not ‘Christian’ enough. This shows that the general concept of what was “Christian” and “Godly” was still synonymous with what was “western”. All aspects of the old pagan tradition were abandoned along with the style of singing, poetic language, the drum and other forms of entertainment. If the native styles of singing and music were totally abandoned, using the western styles and tunes was but the only option. Although, it may appear that it was only the musical or poetical components of the culture that were being pushed aside, it represented many aspects of the Mizo culture that was being left behind in the name of Christianity. The Revivals during this period had greatly increased the Christian population. And the Church was able to put a ban on drinking, participation in worldly feasts and festivals, on traditional native tunes and religious chants of any kind, on fornication and adultery and any other practice which had association with the pagan past (Lalsawma 38). Thus the first of the original compositions were actually anglicised Mizo spirituals in their tunes but not necessarily in their contents. An analysis of these songs as we shall later may be able to reveal the cultural significance that these spirituals hold.

The first and the second waves of the revival that swept through the Hills fall within this period. Therefore it seems inevitable that the themes of the songs translated and composed during this period had strong leanings toward the themes of “Conviction of Sins” of the first revival and the “Urgency of the Kingdom of God” or the Second Coming of the second wave of revival. During the second wave, hasty hymns like *Ho! My Comrades See the Banner, Lo! He Comes With Clouds Surrounding* and *Be Ready When He Comes* were translated and popularised in tunes and inflections which the English composers would find difficult to understand (Lalsawma 67). At the same time the songs that were composed seem like a preparation for the next step of the Mizo Spirituals. There were songs composed during this period that came to be the most popularly sung in the third wave of revival. The best of the Mizo spirituals were not sudden outburst that came in isolation. It is the translations and the anglicized spirituals

that made it come about. Like *O Lord Most Supreme* composed by Upa Thanga in 1910 (Tlanghmingthanga 26) and the songs composed by Rev Liangkhaia, *Precious Blood* and *Wondrous Words*, which were composed in 1913 (Khangte, *Liangkhaia Lungphun* 103, 104), came to play very important roles than when first composed. These songs serve as fine examples of the nature of the songs composed during this period. The language of the songs were not poetic in the Mizo sense, they were more prosaic yet not exactly the spoken language. Neither were they poetic in the western sense. The tunes for these songs were taken from already establish hymns. The tune for *O Lord Most Supreme* was taken from Redemption Songs. For the song *Precious Blood*, two tunes from the Welsh Tune Book, Rhosymedre and Dewisant (KHB No 141) were adapted. And for *Wondrous Words* the tune by Ira D Sankey's *Sacred Songs and Solos* (KHB No 171) was adapted.

Inspite of the growing number of songs, in either translations or indigenous compositions, the thirst for songs among the Mizos was not quenched. These two forms of the spirituals was not sufficient to express their cultural instincts and this was clearly seen with the sudden popularity of the *Puma Zai* which later under modifications came to be known as *Tlanglam Zai*. The *Puma Zai* had spread through the Hills like 'blazing bits of cotton' (Lloyd 108). Besides the other elements of the traditional culture attached to the phenomenon of the *Puma Zai*, it became a clear indication of the deep longing of the Mizo consciousness to hold on to something of his roots and traditional culture. Amidst the fast pace with which everything else was changing, the assertion of their culture became necessary and the Spirituals paved the way for such possibility.

**3. Mizo Spirituals Renaissance (1919- 1940):** This period is marked by the biggest wave of revival, the third revival in 1919, and the smaller but also important fourth wave of revival which started around in 1929/1930. Why the 'renaissance'? Because it was in this period that the bulk and also the most popular Mizo Spirituals were composed. And these songs serve as a way of establishing their ethnic cultural identity, which was being threatened by the quick pace of change brought about by the colonial rule and the mission work. Songs were being composed simultaneously in different parts of the land. The new form of singing called the *Lengkhawm Zai*, which was created in this period, was a way of reviving their cultural identity and balancing out the western with tradition. Besides

the usage of the traditional drum, the *khuang* was revived. For without the drum *Lengkhawm Zai* was incomplete. Thus the drum was first taken inside the church in 1919 (Vanlalchhuanga 32). The western tradition in many ways did not suffice the needs and desires of the Mizo consciousness. Thus the need to have something that they could identify with and understand from their culture. Though the Mizos may not have any standard 'classic' to turn back to as in the western tradition, this period marked the attempts to return to origins and traditional culture of the Mizos. It was not only in the diction of the composed spirituals, but also in the style of singing and the usage of the Mizo traditional drum. Like all other forms of entertainment the use of *khuang* or drum had been banned as being pagan. The usage of the drum was associated with non-Christian activities like festivals and drinking. But it was revived to enrich what it was supposed to have opposed.

The songs of this period are sung primarily in the *Lengkhawm Zai* style. The *Lengkhawm Zai* is a kind of folkloristic hybrid of the traditional folk tune and the western tunes. But they could also be sung in the western tunes with the proper notes. At the same time the earlier songs, which were translations from the English and Welsh spirituals also began to be sung in the style of the *Lengkhawm Zai*. The songs carried the basic tune of the musical notes but they were softened with lower tunes and sung with the drum, which also made dancing more naturally in tune as in the traditional songs. The *Lengkhawm Zai* and the revival of the traditional drum represented the attempts made to worship and entertain from ones own culture; that it is possible to be a Christian and a Mizo simultaneously. Thus one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Mizo Spirituals was born- that they could be sung in two completely different styles.

Some of the popular spiritual composers like Patea, C. Z Huala, R.L Kamlala, Laithangpuia and so on composed during this period. And from their songs many biblical metaphors and symbols that have become typical to the Mizo society came up, which will be discussed in the analysis of their songs. Beginning with R.L Kamlala, the biblical metaphors of the 'cross', 'Jerusalem', 'Canaan', 'Bethlehem', 'Calvary', 'Salem', 'the promised land', 'Egypt', 'slavery', 'Israel' and so on became characteristics of the Mizo spirituals and their daily lives. Other metaphors that are exclusive to the traditional Mizo culture also started to be incorporated into the spirituals, making them more "Mizo". As

the main theme of the third revival was the “Cross of Christ” (Hminga 117), many songs along this line were composed. And the songs of anticipation of heaven, the theme of eschatology was the main theme of the spirituals that were composed during this period. It was a result of the enormous body of songs that were composed during this period that the Hla Thar Bu or the New SongBook was compiled.

#### **4. The Aftermath of the Revivals till the early 1960’s:**

After the fourth wave of revival, the entire Lushai Hills were virtually converted to Christianity. Education with other aspects of modernity, with all its positive and negative aspects, was also fast spreading. The fourth revival had brought with it charismatic movements which in its extremities eventually created frictions among the Christians. Shortly after, we see a number of sects emerging as well as new denominations as result of such discontent among some of those involved in the charismatic movement. The extremities made these people emphasize and give due importance to the charismatic dance, preferring only the *Lengkhawm Zai* to the *Solfa Zai*<sup>11</sup>, because the western style of singing was less suitable for the rhythmic dancing that the people enjoyed and knew. While one could easily dance to the beat of the two drums in the *Lengkhawm Zai*. Besides most of these upcoming sects were nativistic movements that wanted to be able to worship in a purely Mizo traditional manner. And this mode of worship included the style of singing, infact the style of the song played a very important role. In the song of one of these groups called Tlira pawl their song goes like this:

*“We are no at home with Bookroom songs,  
Instead we sing New Canaan with Tlanglam Zai,  
Let them speak ill of us far and wide”*. (Lalsawma 188)

The ‘bookroom songs’ indicating the formal songs of the institutionalized Churches and the ‘Tlanglam Zai’ is placed against it, indicating the cultural roots. Because of these problems that started emerging there was more encouragement for the *Solfa Zai* style of singing in the major denominational Churches like the Presbyterian and the Baptist. This

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<sup>11</sup> The western style of singing has come to known as the *Solfa Zai* among the Mizos. The Tonic *Solfa* had been employed by the missionaries to teach and compose songs, the tradition being carried on till today. The Tonic *Solfa* was used over the Staffed Notation, which needs instruments to create sounds. But as the

shows the importance of the Spirituals to the very essence of the Mizo Church. The style of singing rather than the contents could become the basis of controversy. Till today many of the nativistic sects refuse to sing in the Solfa Zai style, seeing it as opposed to Mizo culture and spirituality. Although, these movements had positive effects in the preservation of the culture, they were also carried away by extremism bordering on Gnosticism and placing too much of significance on the 'Mizo' and spirituality above all else. Therefore though the revivals had positive effects on the growth of the Church and the Spirituals, it also started the inner turmoil which eventually led to the rise of many minor and major sects, as well as denominations.

Amidst this turmoil, the composition of the Mizo Spirituals had not died, though it was not as fast or fervent as the earlier period. During and after the fourth wave of revival, many songs were composed in the native language. Apart from the Lengkhawm Zai, a different type of song based solely on the Solfa Zai came to be more popularly composed, which is called the "Hlapui". Although the Hlapui had been composed even in the very beginning of the century, the majority of them and the most popular of them came to be composed during this period. With the encouragement of the Church coupled with the people's own innate desire for music, musical skills became honed and highly developed. And the rise of the genre of the *Hlapui* is a clear indication of this. These *Hlapui* or what we may call Choruses were not ordinary compositions, in the sense that one needed to have high skills in music to compose and even to sing them. In the west perhaps the most famous of these choruses were that of George Frederick Handel's, who composed the famous, beautiful and artistic *Hallelujah Chorus* sung all over the world in different languages today. Other Choruses of Handel like *Worth is the Lamb* and the *Hallelujah Chorus* had been translated in the early years of Christianity. Infact they were already quite popular inspite of their difficulty. A *Hlapui* is different from the ordinary song. A song to be considered a Hlapui had to serve certain criterion. A *Hlapui* does not have the partition of its songs into either stanzas or chorus. It had to have a certain number beats between the main bars, and the lowest and the highest notes of the song had to be separated by atleast two whole octaves (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature* 354). The

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Mizos did not have appropriate instruments to make use of the Staff Notation, the Tonic Solfa, which is mainly for vocal music was preferred.

harmony between the different parts- the soprano, contralto, tenor and the bass is much more complicated than other songs. The *Hlapui* may be considered as the ultimate in the composition of the Spirituals in terms of its musical aspects, not necessarily the lyrics, for all its grandeur, complexity and beauty. A *Hlapui* may go on for several pages. The *Hlapui* or Grand Choruses in the west is usually sung with much pomp and grandeur, for it is usually sung by a large choir with the accompaniment of the orchestra. Though the concept of the *Hlapui* has come from the west, like the entire tradition of the Mizo Spirituals they have been moulded and made a part of the Mizo culture. Today, the entire Major choruses of the west, especially that of Handel is sung and studied by all choirs.

The first *Hlapui* in Mizo was believed to be composed around 1924 by Lama (Tlanghmingthanga 139). The composers of some of these first compositions and their dates are not known. This is because until recently, the authorship and the details like the time and dates were not given much importance. Hence, records are not always available. The first of these *Hlapui* are songs like- “Van Zaipawl”<sup>12</sup> by Pu Papuaia, “Lalberte Lalber”<sup>13</sup> by Lama, “Mosia Tuipui kan Hla”<sup>14</sup> by Saidailova and “Van Indona”<sup>15</sup> whose composer is unknown (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature* 354). Other composers of the *Hlapui* during and before this period were Rokunga, D.P Thanbuka, Saitawna, Vanmawia and Lalpana. Vanmawia has composed as many as nineteen *Hlapui*, which are still being sung. He has composed the largest number of *Hlapui*. By 1965, there were as many as 41 *Hlapui* originally composed by the Mizos (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature* 355). Most of these *Hlapui* though serving the criterion of being ‘*Hlapui*’, are very Mizo in their rhythm, language, diction, and tune. Taking for example the famous *Hlapui* by Vanmawia- “Ram Engmawi Tak Chu A Awm”<sup>16</sup> which thematically deals with eschatology, the life after death and the heaven. This theme as we shall see is very central to the Mizos in the sense that, the larger part of the body of the Mizo Spirituals deal with this theme, directly or indirectly. On listening to the song one can feel the quality of ‘Mizo-ness’ in both tunes and words. The language employed for this song is much more poetic than many other Spirituals. It is softer in beat and rhythm than the western Chorus.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Van Zaipawl’ mean Heavenly Choir.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Lalberte Lalber’ means King of Kings.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Mosia Tuipui kan Hla’ would mean The Song of Moses Crossing the Sea.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Van Indona’ means Heavenly War.

And the title of the song itself “Ram Engmawi Tak Chu A Awm” brings out poetically one of the Mizo names for heaven- “Ram engmawi”.

Though the composition of the spirituals did not fade away, it was much less than what it had been earlier. This was also the period when the Mizo young men had come back from the Second World War, with broader and different world-views. The secular songs had begun to come up again, which for a long time was dominated and over-shadowed by the spirituals. The popular western music of the western tradition had gained a lot of popularity especially in the purely secular genre. This along with the insurgency that prevailed for twenty years (1966-1986) changed several aspects of the society and the perspective of the Mizo man in general. And secular songs, especially those of love songs, were the larger body of work produced during this period. Infact records of songs composed during this period seem to be few and rare comparatively to other periods.

#### **5. The Modern or Contemporary Spirituals (The 1960's to the present day):**

There then came the fifth revival sometime in the early sixties, which in a way revived the composition of the spirituals. However this revival was unlike the earlier ones, because it did not cover the entire Mizoram like before. It was more subtle and subdued. The main theme of this revival was "realization of salvation". But these songs of the modern period are a mixture of all the types and themes, having no clear-cut definition. The modern spiritual is comprised of an eclectic mix of translation and original compositions too. A large body of the modern spirituals is termed as “Thalai Hla”, which means “Songs of the Youth”. This is because the most of these songs were published in small songbooks for the annual KTP<sup>17</sup> Conference. Though published in this manner, they are nevertheless sung by all. Often they are not sung by Church congregations i.e. within the sacred space of the Church, but are most popular in revival meetings, conferences and camp meetings.

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Ram engmawi tak chu a awm’ means ‘There is a bright and beautiful land’.

<sup>17</sup> KTP is the abbreviated form of Kristian Thalai Pawl, meaning the Christian Youth Fellowship. The KTP is the youth fellowship of the Presbyterian Church, while the youth of the Baptist is called the TKP or Thalai Kristian Pawl. And the youth fellowship of the Salvation Army Church is the Salvation Army Youth.

The tunes of the modern spirituals are quite evolved from the earliest compositions discussed earlier. Though structurally having the proper notations of the solfa, with all four parts of the vocal music in line, they sounded closer to the Lengkhawm Zai. As mentioned earlier, the songs with the tonic solfa notes did not encourage free body movements and the drum in this case was merely to maintain the beat of the song. On the other hand when songs are sung in the Lengkhawm Zai, it is usually accompanied by a lot

of dancing and the two drums, though it is structurally a solfa style. Likewise most of the new spirituals encourage body movements through its rhythm and beat. Often there is a small controversy over preferences of the styles of singing, while the older generation usually prefer the Lengkhawm Zai the younger generation prefer the solfa Zai style especially the *Thalai Hla*. When sung in revival meetings or such conferences of the youths, the modern spirituals are bested over the earlier ones, mainly because, while one is able to sing any of the four parts in proper manner, one can also be more actively involved in the bodily rhythm and dance to it.

With the fifth wave of revival, many songs with salvation as its main theme came out. While the theme of eschatology still remains to be central to many spirituals, the modern spirituals deal a lot more with the theme of practical Christian life, than the earlier ones. Alcoholism, drug abuse, corruption and so on have plagued Mizoram in the modern age i.e. the past three decades. Besides these there are all the social problems both big and small, nevertheless effective, that plagues the modern society. The after effects of modernity with all its trappings have made radical changes in the society. The sudden acceleration of westernization and modernization has left its mark in the society. Priorities have changed, and people have become more self-involved than ever before in the Mizo society. The definition of cultural selfhood has never seemed to be more confused. The Church on the other hand has also been making attempts to reform the society in its own way. But mere talk and preaching is not always as effective as desired. The youth specially get bored of sermons, and singing holds their interest much more. This perhaps aroused the social concern of the composers. Through their songs, they are making attempts to create a better society by showing a moral 'christian' path. Many of



the spirituals are songs, which encourages strength to the human spirit, to follow the correct path however difficult it may be. The character of Jesus Christ is placed on the pedestal as the role model of a Christian life. If the earlier compositions had portrayed the world as one of sorrows, struggle and temptations, the new spirituals would seem to following the same path. But variations are nevertheless there. The struggle is more personal and the world is not such a bleak place anymore.

Another type of classification, which would be useful for the study of the spirituals, is to identify the translations from the original compositions. Sometimes it happens that a translated song cannot be identified as a translation because the language employed is very well thought out and the song appears to be as indigenous as any other original composition. Besides, the KHB does not indicate which are the translations and which ones are the original compositions. The translators and the composers have all been put under the same category. One may know some of the more popular composers, but often a translation is mistaken for an original composition. At the same time, because many of the Spirituals had taken on the tune of the English spirituals they are also mistaken as translations. This makes such a classification even more imperatives. Such a classification may be done as follows:

1. Original Compositions-
  - i. With Adapted Tunes from the English Spirituals
  - ii. With Original Tunes
2. Translations-
  - i. Translation by the missionaries
    - a. Can be sung both in Lengkhawm Zai and Solfa Zai
    - b. Can be sung only in the Solfa Zai
  - ii. Translation by the Natives

This classification will perhaps reveal to us the difference in languages. And perhaps one may find out if it is the language or the theme or the tune determines the popularity of a spiritual. And which of these factors is given importance in the Mizo society. The chronological classification of the Mizo spirituals encompasses both the thematic as well as the historical aspects of the songs. However, the unavailability of exact dates of composition may at times prove cumbersome for the study. Through this study, I believe that a very important of the Mizo spirituals become evident. That the Mizo spirituals from the very first time it originated has not undergone total changes.

This means that it is an absorbing body, that give space to new forms and styles while never totally abandoning the older. This can be seen in the first aspects, the translation. Songs are still being translated today. The work of translating has never been a dead activity. But songs are also being composed in big numbers at the same time. Thus the body of the spirituals has in its very variant qualities of different stylistics and forms like the very nature of the Mizo culture. The coming of new forms does not replace the older, rather enriches the entire body of work.

## Chapter IV

### Detailed Analysis of the Mizo Spirituals

The detailed study of the Mizo spirituals will be focused on a few selected spirituals. However, in the process of the study of these spirituals an attempt will also be made to connect the other spirituals, so as to understand the whole body of work. On reading or singing the songs, one may not always be able to grasp exactly what are qualities of “the Mizo” in the Mizo spirituals. Often they are seen as mere imitations or sequels of the western hymns. The Mizo spirituals may also be dismissed as being just Christian songs, with theological relevance but no real cultural or literary significance. So the study will be based on questions and explorations on what really characterizes the Mizo spirituals. Do the Mizo spirituals have any cultural significance besides the fact that they tell us the religious nature of the people? Is there a cultural story of the Mizos behind the story of the Mizo spirituals as there is in the case of the African-American spirituals? We are already aware that the Mizo spirituals did start out with entirely western styles, themes and concepts, but as time wore on, they also underwent certain changes that are but an echo of the changes in the Mizo society itself. It may be that a deeper literary analysis has potentials to bring out the underlying cultural qualities that may not be clearly visible on the surface of the spirituals. Besides, the influence of the western culture through colonialism and Christianity would at the sametime inevitably come into consideration. Thus, the hopeful outcome of the study would be an understanding of the influence of the western culture on the Mizo culture and the extent to which the traditional pre-Christian culture has been retained in the present Mizo culture and identity. The perceived definition of the Mizo cultural identity has evolved from the Pre-Christian days. The modern definition has become much more confusing and complex. And Christianity has come play to play a significant role in the formation of this complex Mizo identity. This study may therefore throw a light on the extend to which the Mizo Christian theology has effected the cultural ethos as a whole. The history and theological context, the content and the author-composer will be the main tools of analysis. The following is a list of the spirituals that shall be focussed on, with the songbooks to which they have been entered, that shall be the focus of analysis:

1. For God So Loved the World- Composed by Rokunga
2. He Gave His Life- Composed by Rokunga (Hla Thar Bu 34)
3. I Dare Not Lay My Armour By- Composed by Thanghuta (KHB 381)
4. Lord, Lover of Mizoram- Composed by Lianmanga (KTP Hla Bu 221)
5. Lover's Suffering- Composed by Dr. Ramdinthara (KTP Hla Bu 165)
6. O Bright Star of David- Composed by Patea (KHB 7)
7. O, Hallelujah! Most Glorious Lord! - Composed by R.L Kamlala (KHB 8)
8. Oh Lord Most Supreme- Composed by Upa Thanga (KHB 402)
9. 10. O, Most Glorious, Hallelujah! - Composed by R. L Kamlala (KHB 72)
10. Perfect Peace- Composed by R.L Kamlala (Hla Thar Bu 230)
11. Precious Blood- Composed by Rev. Liangkhaia (KHB 141)
12. Sojourner's Song- Composed by T Romama (KTP Hla Bu 299)
13. Thou Art My All in All- Composed by Ziakkawia (Hla Thar Bu 164)
13. Thou Guide Me On, Hold Unto Me- Composed by Lalruali (KTP Hla Bu 391)
15. We Shall Win- Composed by Dr. Ramdinthara (KTP Hla Bu 228)
16. With Joy We Shall Meet- Composed by Ziakkawia (KHB 422)
17. Wondrous Words- Composed by Rev. Liangkhaia (KHB no. 171)<sup>18</sup>

In considering a study of the Mizo Spirituals as windows to the Mizo culture, society and consciousness, there are major and minor issues that emerges. I have chosen seven points for the discussion of some of the Mizo Spirituals. These points will be used as tools for the exploration of the complex definition of Mizo identity, that has been shaped by the interaction of the pre-Christian with the Christian, tradition with modernity, the indigenous with the western, the colonial with the native at different levels. And each of these interacting forces often clash and sometimes they find a way of becoming balanced. Eventually, the Mizos are a strange mixture of the past and present (Lianzela 10). All these may be revealed through a close analysis of the spirituals. The points with which the analysis of the selected Mizo Spirituals will be discussed are as follows:

1. The theme of eschatology and the pre-Christian religion.
2. The usage of indigenous and Biblical metaphors and imageries in the spirituals

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<sup>18</sup> See Appendix B for the songs in the original and translations

3. The spirituals as a social critique.
4. Church hegemony in the fate of the Mizo spirituals
5. Nationalism as an emerging theme in the spirituals
6. Christmas festivities as an amalgamation of the Pre-Christian and Christian festivities.
7. Mizo women and the spirituals

**1. The theme of eschatology and the pre-Christian religion:**

One of the most commonly occurring theme in the Mizo Spirituals is that of eschatology i.e. the conception of death and life after it. Among all themes that are expressed in the Mizo Spirituals the metaphorical theme of death and life after it stands out among all others, not only because of its number but the passion with which they have been expressed. Infact, it was even more popular with the earlier composers than with the contemporary composers. Most songs that have been classified otherwise also often inevitably lead to this theme.

The central aim of religious faiths is mostly related to the day to day life and also extends to conceptions beyond life to the life after death. In most religions the ultimate aim is salvation, in life or in life after death. However, how this salvation is achieved may not always be the same. In the case of Mizo Christianity, the salvation of man because of Christ's death, which enables him a life after death has been greatly stressed. The manner in which this theme of eschatology has been used in the Mizo spirituals may be perceived as purely a result of the eschatological concepts of Christianity. But I believe that the reason for this passion, bordering on what seems to almost be an obsession, is not just an outcome of Christianity alone. But that it is deeply embedded in the culture of the Mizos, starting all the way from the pre-Christian to the conversion to Christianity.

One of the most popular spiritual composers among the Mizos is R.L Kamlala (1902-1965). He has composed many songs dealing with the subject of life after death. He was the third composer of the Mizo spirituals using Mizo poetic language, after Patea and C.Z Huala. All three had composed many songs that dealt with this theme. His songs

are highly regarded among the Mizos so much so that, critics like Siamkima have compared him to the English poet John Milton (Siamkima, *Zalenna Ram* 82). Kamlala had composed as many as 62 Mizo spirituals and 12 other more secular songs (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature* 159), making him one of the earliest major composers among the Mizos. According to critics who have studied his works, like R.L. Thanmawia, Kamlala started composing in 1921 (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Hla leh a Phuahtute* 159). Most of his songs were composed during the period 1921-1930, and continued doing so, but not as much as before till 1950 (Siamkima, *R.L Kamlala Kutchhuak*, vi). The three songs that I have brought out fall under different classifications in the songbooks to which they have been entered. *O, Hallelujah! Most Glorious Lord* has been classified under the category of God as "Praise". And *O Most Glorious Hallelujah* has been classified under "Jesus Christ", also as "Praise". *Perfect Peace* has been identified as a song on the theme of death and life after death, or eschatology.

Kamlala was one of the first Mizo composers to compose songs that were really "Mizo" in nature. In the sense that the language he used was close to the Mizo poetic language. Thus they had the quality of 'Mizoneess', that the people could easily identify with. Besides, as already mentioned earlier, the synthesis of the western and traditional Mizo style of singing and music in the form of the Lengkhawm Zai had become a prominent feature of Christianity in the Lushai Hills with the third wave of revival in 1919. Kamlala's songs had the strong essence of the Mizo tradition not only because of his use of the Mizo poetical language and imagery but also because of the fact that his songs were well suited to the Lengkhawm Zai style of singing. He was also one of the first to express this longing and passion beyond life in the world through his songs. This combination made his songs powerful and very popular.

An interesting character of the spirituals composed by Kamlala is that they combine sentiments of optimism and pessimism in a complex manner, though the latter maybe identified as the more prominent sentiment. In his songs we see a "place where flowers are faded away and where flowers are bloomed everlasting; happiness and groaning; pleasure and misery; darkness of cloud and cloud that led him; desert and river of life; a place of separation and a place of no separation; light and darkness" (Thanmawia 88). His life was rather bleak, being considered insane and imprisoned for

his deep involvement in the charismatic movement. His later life was spent in poverty. He later went back to cultivation from his job as a teacher. Most of his songs deal with issues and themes relating to death and life after death, in heaven. Thus there is a common conception that his unhappiness in the world made him long for a haven in heaven where he would be past the sorrows of his life on earth. There are thirty-eight direct references to sorrow in his sixty-one songs (Siamkima, *Zalenna Ram* 78). According to Siamkima, happiness was an element in Kamlala's life that came infrequently and for very short periods (*Zalenna Ram* 81), which has made him write his experience in the words:

“ Thy presence solace mind's heart,  
Don't go away, dear happiness,  
I'll sing all the sweet songs for you,  
Stay, I hold you by my arms,  
Happiness, my dear happiness,  
I'll call you always”. (Thanmawia, 86)

Personifying happiness, he wants to hold on to it, but he believes that such emotions are but transient as long as one is in this world. The worldly unhappiness or rather the transient nature of worldly happiness made him long for the eternal happiness that is promised in the after life in the abode of heaven, as believed in the Judeo-Christian faiths. Thus it is no surprise then that most of Kamlala's songs dwell on aspects of the after life or eschatology. Because of his sufferings, his songs are quite remarkable in their representation of “sufferings and the hope for the triumph over sorrow and darkness”(Thanmawia 86). But at the same time, he also prolifically uses the word “lawm” meaning “joy” and “happiness”, as many as a hundred and ten times in his songs (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature* 193). Other words that he commonly used in his songs, often forming the very essence of his songs are words like “peace” and “love”. *O Hallelujah! Most Glorious Lord* and *O Most Glorious Hallelujah*, nevertheless portray an inner sense of peace and joy, that comes from a sense of hope, more than all his other songs. His songs reflect his hope and faith, that he saw God as the giver of peace and joy, despite all the sufferings and problems that he has had to face as a human being, travelling through the world.

Another well-known composer, who prolifically wrote on eschatology, was Patea (1894-1950). As mentioned earlier, he is also one of the major one of the earliest and major composers of the Mizo spirituals. He has composed as many as fifty-five songs, three of which are now lost (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Literature* 173). Like Kamlala many of songs also deal with the theme of eschatology. Although the song *O Bright Star of David* or *Aw Lalpa, Davida leh a Thlah Arsi* has been categorised as a song of 'Praise of God' it actually moves beyond the category as it encompasses so much more. This song also a song that looks beyond life. It is actually an expression of a longing for the land that is promised to true Christians. The Jordan that Patea mentions in his song, has become a common metaphor in the Mizo spirituals. In Mizo Christian spirituality, 'Jordan' refers to death, and the Promised Land refers to 'heaven'. There are many spirituals, which talk of crossing the river Jordan, which means crossing death to the 'Promised Land'. Here in this song Patea, also calls heaven 'city of Gold'. The song can be seen as another example of how the Mizo consciousness creates the images of death and life after in his mind.

The song *O Bright Star of David* may seem paradoxical because it expresses both sentiments of joy and sorrow within it. He says that 'the joy in my heart expands like the sea' and at the same time also says 'In sorrow I long for the city of gold'. Actually Patea is delighted to join in the singing of praise of the saviour who has brought great salvation for the human life. The very fact that he believes in having attained salvation through faith makes him long for the abode of him, to which he has become entitled. And still being a part of the world, which he feels, is full of troubles makes him sorrowful which he expresses in the song. This sense of isolation from the world may be traced into his life as in the case of Kamlala. It is believed that Patea's songs are quite different from his contemporaries, because his early life was one of poverty and hardships. The poverty of his family made him fall to the mercy of his village Chief and his life was thus shadowed with the feelings of humiliation of being looked down upon by the people of his village (Lalbiaknema 74). Patea's songs therefore reveal a fervent desire away from such a world of poverty, humiliation and misery; a longing for the 'city of gold' that he talks about in his songs, where he would be equal to others. His songs suggests that he could not be at peace with the world in which he lived, a world he felt



that did not want him. More than his contemporaries, Patea's songs have strong lineage towards death and the heavenly abode. He wants to be led out of 'Egypt', signifying the world with all the darkness that it includes and proceed towards 'Canaan' where his miseries will come to an end.

Patea's song is one of the first songs that had not been harmonized to the tunes of the English spirituals. But his songs are more popularly sung in the Lengkhawm Zai style. Perhaps this is because, along with Kamlala and C.Z Huala, the language used in their songs was poetic. Thus more suitable to the Lengkhawm Zai style.

Rokunga (1914-1969) is perhaps one of the most well known spiritual composers. He has composed as many as 126 songs (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Hla leh a Phuahtute* 391). He comes a generation after composers like Patea and Kamlala. Although the age gap may not be very wide, Rokunga's songs reflect the changing attitude towards the subject of eschatology. Eschatological issues do not reign as the major issue in his songs. Rather his songs deal with a wider variety of themes. Rokunga also composed songs on eschatology and the sufferings of Christ but he deals with them in a different manner from his predecessors. While the earlier composers seemed to beg for death and heaven because their world was bleak and dark, Rokunga also deals with life after death but neither does he seem desperate for death nor is his portrayal of the world is not as bleak or unhappy. In his song *For God so Loved the World* he tells the story of the death of Christ on the Cross and the salvation that he has received because of it. The language is simple and so are his usages of imageries and metaphors. Besides, the world that he presents is more optimistic, happier and much brighter. The song is a cry of joy for the salvation that he has received and the love that God has for him. Rokunga's songs therefore create a departure from the older spirituals, the first Mizo Christians composers who had no joy and optimism in living in a 'cursed' world. Rokunga establishes a new trend in the treatment of the world and death through his songs.

Ziakkawia's two songs, *Thou Art My All in All* and *With Joy We Shall Meet*, are continuations the tradition of Mizo spirituality of looking towards the after life in heaven as a means of being able to go through in this world. Ziakkawia obviously belongs to the older school of the earliest composers of Patea and Kamlala. This can be seen in his presentation of the world. The world that he portrays is one that makes him 'weak',

'desolate', 'dreary', 'weary' and 'helpless'. The only real joy that he finds in such a world is his God the "redeemer" who gives him pleasures that are "true". All other pleasures of the world are transient and soon fade away. Thus he longs for the heaven which he calls the "holy city". In *Thou Art My All in All* envisions this city that he hopes to dwell in someday because he has been saved by Jesus. Ziakkawia's vision of heaven is indeed splendid. It is a place "where all nations dwell in union"; a place where he shall be united with his loved ones. He says, "with joy we shall meet in His presence". And it is also a place where "sorrow and sadness are all transfigured" with "nothing but joy". The flowers that Ziakkawia talks about are the flowers of happiness that he would have from the heavens, because he would be with his Lord and God. The fragrance that he senses are those of the flower of happiness that can come only from the union with his Lord. The heaven represents the element of freedom from all worldly sorrows as he says, "But earthly sorrows and joys will vanish, When I shall meet him". He pictures Jesus on the throne surrounded by the heavenly angels. The last stanza of the song establishes the Christian belief that God would rule heaven. Both of Ziakkawia's songs are truly eschatological songs and are popularly sung in funerals.

2 Rev. Liangkhaia (1884-1979) the composer and translator of fifty spirituals. Of which thirteen have been entered into the Kristian Hla Bu (Khangte, *Liangkhaia Lungphun* 93). Unlike most of his contemporaries his songs did not have explicit reference to the subject of eschatology. Nevertheless connections to the theme is present although the reference may be quite indirect at times. Ofcourse the whole scenario of the suffering, the cross and Calvary are the elements that pave the way to the 'gates of heaven' for the believers in Christ, according to the Christian faith. Besides, like his contemporaries his songs also have that element of portraying the world in all its bleakness and darkness. His dealings with the concept of life after death in other words are less direct. For when he exults over the death, he exults in the possibility of being a part of the heavenly population.

Upa T. Romama (1953- ), the composer of *Sojourner's Song* is an example of a modern spiritual composer conception of on the theme of eschatology. *Sojourner's Song* mirrors that although there have been many changes in the Mizo society since the first songs were composed, many themes like eschatology are written about again and again.

As already mentioned the intensity and the passion with which the heavens were written about many have decreased to a certain extent. But the fact that it remains to be an abode of God, a place of solace and comfort for the Mizo Christians is mirrored in the spirituals. Through the ages, there were times when the issue of eschatology was not such an issue, that the major composers chose to dwell on other aspects of Christianity. Yet the importance of this theme in the Mizo consciousness is portrayed in the revival of the theme over and over again.

*Sojourner's Song*, is a reminder for the Christian soul of his temporary nature of the world and that man is but a sojourner. This concept is very important, for it leads to many issues directly connected to the nature of the Mizo society. It shows how the Mizos see the world and their role in it. At times it would seem that their concern of the afterlife often shadowed the practical aspects of daily living. "It may be one of the reasons why they were poor in world affirming spirituality"(Lalrinsanga 70). The sense of the surreal nature of the world was much stronger with the earlier Christians. But the rise of modernity in the Mizo society created a dichotomy between the spiritual faith and the material culture of the people.

One may argue that such sentiments on death and heaven are but sentiments of Christianity itself, not necessarily of the Mizo culture. In a way, such an argument is justified because these sentiments expressed in the spirituals are rooted in the Christian faith of the Mizos. But the real question why this theme has been repeated again and again in the spirituals as seen through the various songs that have been analysed. There are many communities that have been converted to Christianity, but this passion on the issue of eschatology seems to be a striking feature of Mizo Christianity alone. The reason for this can perhaps be found not only in the nature of Mizo Christianity but also in the pre-Christian culture which is their real root, that comes much earlier than Christianity.

The Mizos, even in their pre-Christian days, always had a strong sense of the continuation of life after death, and a deep longing for it in a certain sense. The traditional religion of the Mizos is sometimes termed as 'animism' or sometimes even suggested that they did not have a religion at all (Kipgen 106). Nevertheless, there was a notion of a 'god', of spirits both good and bad, to which they offered sacrifices. Their faith may not be what is considered to be that of an institutionalized religion like Christianity, with a

theology and a doctrine. But to suggest that they did not have a religion at all would be incorrect. They also believed in life after death. The Judeo-Christian concept of 'heaven' is infact quite similar to the traditional Mizo concept of 'Pialral', a land of eternal paradise. The Mizos believed that after death, the soul would go to a place called 'Mitthikhua', which means 'the village of the dead'. But the real paradise or the heaven was the Pialral. But unlike the Judeo-Christian belief of the concept of 'heaven' for a reward and a 'hell' for a punishment, there was no conception of 'hell' in the pre-Christian faith. Thus we can see that there was no concept of "sin" in the old faith. Everyone was entitled to the Mitthikhua, but not Pialral, which was for the specially deserving. Only the souls of the rich, the skillful and the mighty could go to Pialral (Kipgen 118). The passage to enter Pialral was something that had to earned and achieved, not with faith but with practical deeds. Besides those with some highly regarded achievements, the others who were entitled to the Pialral were the *hlamzuih*<sup>19</sup>. And Pialral being the conception of the ultimate paradise in the traditional Mizo consciousness was looked forward to with a deep longing. The high of Pialral was that it was a place where one did not have to work and toil for food; infact there would be unlimited supply of food with "Zu"<sup>20</sup>. Being a culture that depended directly on their day to day labours in their jhums and hunting, the prospect of freedom from this daily labour would have been indeed inviting. This longing for Pialral and the need for achievement in the after life has in many ways been translated to the new religion. Which has in turn been reflected in the culture and eventually the spirituals.

The mass conversion of the Mizos into Christianity has been explained by the study of "animism", which believes that animistic people are receptive to the Christian Gospel because they have one thing in common. That they accept the spiritual view of life and they do not need to convince of the existence of the supernatural, opening many ways for dialogue (Hminga 268). "Boulders, streams and thick jungles and infact anything beyond everyday experiences were believed to have evil spirits called *huai* (Nunthara 95). In the course of time, because of Christianity, belief in Pathian<sup>21</sup>, a

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<sup>19</sup> Hlamzuih are those stillborn and those who die within a year of their birth.

<sup>20</sup> Zu is the traditional Mizo drink for every occasion, alcoholic in nature and usually made from rice.

<sup>21</sup> Pathian was a supreme creator and a beneficent being. The word 'Pathian' came to be used even after Christianity to refer to the supreme God.

Supreme Being and especially the dominant spirits named Ramhuai<sup>22</sup> and Khuavang<sup>23</sup> became discarded. These spirits had been appeased or propitiated for years. The place of the Puithiam<sup>24</sup> or the priest was taken over by a pastor. The concept of eternal paradise worked among the newly converted Christians, for it bore many similarities with their understandings of life after death. And with the progress that was made with the conversion of the 'pagan' Mizos, many of the ancient belief, fertility and sacrificial rites became less and less restrained. 'Pialral' was a retreat from the toiling and life, making the prospect of death easier for the traditional Mizos. Many have become forgotten, especially the faith and the rituals, nevertheless the deeper consciousness has not died away completely. Though curtailed in many ways, unknown to many, it is still there. Thus many of the Mizo Spirituals and Christianity itself have become concerned with a longing for Heaven or Vanram<sup>25</sup>. The composers of the Spirituals have a depth of consciousness, their experience of loneliness and finiteness of worldly experience is strong and deep. Looking at the numbers of the songs that deal with the theme with life after death and heaven in contrast to the other themes, one gets the feeling that the understanding of the world in the Mizo consciousness is full of sorrows, anxiety, dangers and suffering. They stress on the joy and expected ecstasy of the heaven, after life on earth rather than in the realization of the "experience of the Kingdom of God in this world"(Lalrinsanga 70). And this may be the key to answering many of the social problems prevalent in the Mizo society today.

The nature of Christianity and how the theme of eschatology has been dealt with by the Mizos has become a crucial issue for many social and political critiques like M. Lalmanzuala. Many like him believe that the problems that the Mizos face today politically, socially and economically are embedded in the ethos of the Mizo Christianity. Many social and political critiques relate the problems disturbing the Mizo society today

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<sup>22</sup> Ramhuai refers to the evil spirits that the Mizos feared and tried to appease more than other spirits. They believed that there were several kinds of Ramhuai. The word is still used in Christianity to mean evil spirits.

<sup>23</sup> Khuavang was another good spirit but not as powerful as the Pathian.

<sup>24</sup> The pre-Christian Mizos had two kinds of Puithiam or priests, the Sadawt who sacrificed offerings to ask for blessings and the Bawlpu who made sacrifices to the Ramhuai to appease them.

<sup>25</sup> Vanram was coined by Mizo Christians to translate 'heaven'. The word Pialral was felt to be too Pre-Christian. 'Van' literally means the sky or the universe. 'Ram' literally means land.

to the Insurgency that lasted for twenty years (1966-1986) or the Mautam Famines<sup>26</sup> or the transition of the Lushai Hills to Mizoram, a Union Territory. This is because prior to these important moments for the Mizos, they had always managed to be more or less self-sufficient, without much need for others. They produced what they needed, but what they could not produce was bartered for what they produced with the people of the neighbouring areas. The present status of stagnant economy and insufficiency has been attributed to these natural calamities and political changes. But Lalmanzuala believes that the root is much deeper than the political, that it begins with the very nature of the Mizo Christian theology which he calls "Thatchhe Theology", meaning the "Theology of Laziness"(Lalmanzuala 7). The traditional Mizo society was one based on hard work and accomplishments. To be able to go to Pialral, one really had to work hard, it was not an easy task that an ordinary-willed man could achieve. One had to be it was considered a shame to be poor on the excuse of laziness. But poverty due to death or unavoidable circumstances was sympathized with, and the whole community helped them in most cases. Lalmanzuala suggests that while in the old religion one had to make many achievements to acquire eternal bliss after death, it became very easy in the new religion, Christianity (7,8). In the old religion, the way of attaining the path to Pialral was by becoming "Thangchhuah"<sup>27</sup> either "In lama Thangchhuah" or "Ram lama Thangchhuah". *In lama Thangchhuah* was more difficult to achieve than the latter, for one had to give five types of public feasts<sup>28</sup> involving the whole village and relatives. The feasts had to on for several days and involved various ceremonies that most could not afford to perform. It required persistence, wealth and a lot of hard work. This was possible only for those who possessed wealth in the form of livestock and crops. The second, *Ram lama Thangchhuah* could be achieved by killing atleast one of each of the following species of

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<sup>26</sup> Mautam Famines occur approximately every 25 years due to the flowering of bamboos. These flowering bamboos when eaten by rats make them fertile and increase in number at an unbalanced rate. This increase in rats leads to famines as they devour all available crops.

<sup>27</sup> Thangchhuah was the most honorable title given to the men or women who had distinguished himself or herself by killing a certain number of animals in the chase, performing ceremonies to kill each of them or by giving a certain number of public feasts. The Thangchhuahs were entitled to a number of privileges and were very respected and honoured in the Mizo society. The respect that they earned during their lifetime was continued even after their death because this was an achievement that most could not attain.

<sup>28</sup> The five types of public feasts that had to be given in a series were-1. Chawng 2. Sechhun 3. Mitthirawplam 4. Sechhun and 5. Khuangchawi. For each of these feasts there were certain specific menus that had to be followed. Thus, it was very expensive and involved a lot of work.

animal- barking deer, sambhur, bear, wild boar, wild mithun and elephant and perhaps even a man (Kipgen 120, 121). On top of this, one had to perform certain ceremonies for each of the animals that were killed. Thus to be a *Ram lama Thangchhuah* one had to be a very skillful hunter as well as a persistent one. Being a *Thangchhuah* is therefore neither really individualistic nor wholly other worldly though it may seem so at a first glance. It effected the entire community and not only the *Thangchhuah* benefited from it. Once they became a *Thangchhuah* they adorned themselves with a particular puan<sup>29</sup> called *Thangchhuah Puan* that indicated that they were Thangchhuah and they were highly respected and honoured by everyone.

Many of the first converts among the Mizos had been poor. Lalmanzuala has suggested that the reason for their easy conversion would perhaps be because their condition was not one that could help them achieve the title of being Thangchhuah (6). Their new religion offered them a path to Pialral or paradise only through faith, with no hard work involved unlike their old religion. In their new religion, they could become *Thangchhuah* not by sheer physical labour but by faith, by simply believing in Jesus Christ. Perhaps this is why Christianity had so much appeal to the people. But even after their conversion their worldly status of poverty and being outcastes from the rest of the society did not come to an end. Their new faith did not really give them joy with the world either. This increased their longing for the heaven- the life after death that awaited them. Thus many of the early converts had come about simply because the new religion- Christianity suited their lifestyle and because it gave them a sense of longing for Pialral which they could never have achieved in their 'pagan' religion (Lalmanzuala 7). When spiritual *Thangchhuah* was so close within grasp through their new faith and so difficult in their old faith, it would seem quite natural why so many were so inclined to the new religion. This however does not include all converts, only a certain percentage of the new converts. However, this gives us a better insight into the Mizo consciousness, and the longing for the life after death so often expressed in their songs. Thus the first group of spirituals composed by the Mizos dwelled mainly on the theme of eschatology; the miseries of the world, the transient nature of all worldly experience both good and bad,

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<sup>29</sup> Puan literally translated means cloth. The Mizo traditional dress comprises of different kinds of puan that was worn by both men and women. But now it is only the women who have continued to wear the puan.

the fact that all are infact just sojourner in this world, the cursed nature of the world and so on.

The "Thatchhe Theology" of many of Early Mizo Christians as termed by Lalmanzuala, has other far reaching effects- the dispute within the Churches and the eventual birth of many other denominations, sects and cults is just one of the few. Though the theology on eschatology is not the only factor for the rise of these numerous sects and cults, it was nevertheless a major one. Today the number of these small sects and cults are in a constant flux. Some of the more popular sects are: Tlira Pawl<sup>30</sup>, Thiangzau Pawl, Biakmawia Pawl<sup>31</sup>, Khuangtuaha Pawl<sup>32</sup>, Zakaia Pawl, Mizo Israel, Ephraim ho, Vanawia Pawl, Mizo Kohhran, Jerusalem Thar and so on. These sects and cults started to be formed after the fourth wave of revival around the 1940's. They have been regarded as 'nativistic movement' (Hminga 199) because they had extremist tendencies in the revival of pre-Christian culture and attempting to synthesis the 'pagan' past with the new Christian culture. Like for example the sect called Zakaia Pawl discarded the Bible saying that they had fulfilled the law in Christ and were being indwelt by the Holy Spirit and needed nothing more. Their distinctive mark was that they revived the pagan Puma Zai style of singing which had been banned by the church because of its effect on the newly converts.

The Church had condemned almost all the secular forms of entertainment including secular songs, believing that they were anti-Christian. This orthodox nature of the Church policy had perhaps adversely stifled the cultural and natural instincts of the people, and indirectly encouraged the birth of these new sects. Besides they also revives the pre-Christian festivals with the drinking of Zu and dancing on the plea that God did not condemn any culture, but accepted the praise and worship of people in and through their own culture (Hminga 200).

Most of these sects were deeply touched by the charismatic movement; thus they gave a lot importance to dancing and singing. Thus they rejected the western restrictive form of singing, the solfa Zai which had been given to the people by the western

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<sup>30</sup> Pawl means group. Most of these sects have adopted the names of their leader or the founder of the group. Tlira Pawl would then mean that the leader and founder are Tlira.

<sup>31</sup> Biakmawia Pawl is also called the Kohhran Thianghlim, which means the Holy Church.

<sup>32</sup> Khuangtuaha Pawl has now come to be called Chana Pawl after the death of their founder, Khuangtuaha.



missionaries. Instead they adopted the Lengkhawm Zai with passion. They however did not reject the spirituals that had already been composed, but in fact added to it with more spirituals that were in tune to their own theology. The major denominational Churches did not abscond dancing and singing. But a balance between Solfa Zai and Lengkhawm Zai was attempted to be maintained. Rather than the charismatic singing and dancing itself, it was the certain elements that emerged out of it that led to the rise of these numerous sects. There came about notions that those who were ardent revivalist dancers with charismatic powers or those who had glossolalia<sup>33</sup> were more 'spiritual', and began to be held in high regard. Those that claimed to have had trances or visions became prophetic and people began to have faith in them rather than the word of God or the Bible itself. Apart from the songs, one of the major concerns of these sects and cults was the issue of eschatology as already mentioned. Often they believed the Kingdom of Heaven to be approaching very near and soon. Like Sangbera who happened to have a number of followers had predicted that the Second Coming of Christ was to come in "exactly ten days" from the day of his prediction (Lalsawma 182). People who believed in him left their work in the fields and other offices in awaiting the Second Coming. But since it did not come when they expected it to, they succumbed to poverty and jobless lives. Or the cult called Khuangtuaha Pawl, now called Chana Pawl who are an eschatological community looking forward to the physical inauguration of the Millennial Reign of Christ<sup>34</sup>, of which they believed themselves to be the first fruits, claiming to be the new 'Kingdom of God' (Lalsawma 187). Because of these and the fact that they still live as a community today in a town called Baktawng in Mizoram awaiting the Second Coming Lalsawma has called them *The Mormons*<sup>35</sup> of Mizoram (183). This is just an example of a sect or two. There are also others who have their own theories on how and when the kingdom of Heaven would come about. People leave their jobs, their families, their homes with the hope of attaining salvation and being the first to experience the Second

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<sup>33</sup> Glossolalia was the ability or the gift to speak in tongues without any conscious effort. It is a common feature in most revival meetings the world over as it still is in Mizoram.

<sup>34</sup> According to popular beliefs among the Christian based on the book of Revelations of the New Testament, before the real end of the world there would be a Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ. Those who have been faithful to Him and the faith would help Him in this reign. While all the non-believers, even those dead were to be the subjects of the reign. The dead would rise from their graves.

<sup>35</sup> The Mormons are a religious cult; their church is called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which had originated in the US in the 1830's.

Coming; believing firmly that the day is just at hand. Although a larger percentage of the population do not fall under such sects and prophecy, the fact that there are constantly groups of people who are so troubled by their conceptions of eschatology gives us an inner insight of how the Mizo culture has become absorbed by their new religion. The major denominations became insufficient to hold up the beliefs of all its church members. It would therefore not be incorrect to assume that the Mizos have been pulled down with the feelings of being merely travelers in this transient world because the Mizo Christian theology had strong foundations on the notions of death and Heaven rather than practical aspects of everyday Christian life. Many of these numerous sects do not believe to need to focus on their day to day life but instead spend their days concentrating on the 'Promised Land'. As a result they see no point in educating their children or in spending their life in any sort of for worldly glories or activities. Infact pursuit of wealth and materials are often considered sinful displaying a lack of faith in God. This has adversely effected all aspects of their life and culture, even to the very economics and mode of production. This has come about from culmination of two important factors: the very beginnings of their conversion a little more than a hundred years ago and the influence of the pre-Christian culture.

## **2. Usage of indigenous and Biblical metaphors and images in the spirituals:**

The first impression that the Mizo spirituals give of its metaphorical nature is that it is mainly concerned with Biblical metaphors. That they are essentially concerned with life in heaven has already been discussed. The Mizo Spirituals are incorporated with other metaphors and images that have been inculcated from different sources although the primary source of inspiration the Bible, and at the same time there are also those that have sprung from the pre-Christian traditional culture. Apart from this there are also those that are purely western and 'foreign' in concepts, which can be identified as a direct influence of the western culture. A study of the metaphors and images used in the Mizo spirituals can perhaps be seen as a window to what has come to be the Mizo sense of identity and cultural ethos. What can be clearly seen through the metaphors and imageries used in the spirituals, is the western, the Christian and the remnants of pre-Christianity

presenting an eclectic mix. This attempt to use native elements in the songs marks the conscious or unconscious attempt of self-definition through the traditional culture.

Some of the most commonly occurring physical metaphors imbibed from the Bible are, Jordan, the Promised Land, Canaan, the Cross, Calvary, Jerusalem, Salem, the manger, the star of David and so on. The river Jordan now in the country of Palestine is often mentioned in the Bible in both the physical and the metaphorical sense. The river Jordan has played an important role in the Bible even in the Old Testament. For the Israelites in the Old Testament, the river Jordan itself was not the destination, but the barrier that had to be crossed. For the land beyond it was, the promised land- the land of milk and honey. Thus in the Mizo spirituals 'Jordan' has become a metaphor of death, and the Promised Land has come stand for 'heaven'. Death is the path to the Promised Land. There are many spirituals, which talk of crossing the river Jordan, which means crossing death to the 'Promised Land'. In other spirituals it is also called 'Canaan', which is the present Israel geographically. In the Mizo spirituals, this also signifies heaven, which is promised to those who believe in Jesus Christ. Here in this song Patea, also calls heaven 'city of Gold'.

The image death on the cross, the symbolic defeat of the Devil, is greatly dealt with in the Mizo spirituals. Although, major composer Liangkhaia's songs did not focus mainly on the eschatological issues, his songs dealt in large numbers with the crucifixion and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and the salvation of man because of it. In this sense, his songs are more focused on the hard core doctrinal theology of Protestant Christianity. The two of the three songs that I have chosen for analysis, *Wondrous Words* and *Precious Blood* have been classified as Sufferings under 'Jesus Christ'. The third song, *Precious Words of God*, deals with a different theme and has been put under the category of Precious Words of God. His songs on the sufferings of Christ and the cross were highly popularised in the third wave of the revival, as the main theme of this revival was the redemptive sufferings of Christ for man's salvation. It is said that on one of the singing sessions during the third wave of the revival in 1919, the song *Wondrous Words* moved over the congregation to the extent that they could not stop singing the song, the song was sung over and over again. Everyone was in tears and they had started the song at around 3:00pm and continued singing till 10:00pm, which was for seven hours

(Khangte, *Liangkhaia Lungphun* 103-104). Since then they have remained to be a part of the most popularly sung Mizo spirituals. People sing them with tears and emotion, identifying their sins on the Cross.

The image of suffering, the suffering of the human soul, the life and in this context is another theme that has become deeply embedded in the Mizo consciousness. The sufferings of Christ play a very important role doctrinally for all Christians because it forms the center, the very essence of salvation. According to this doctrine, one has to believe in this salvation to attain it. These songs re-live the death and the blood that had been spilt; the image of Calvary has been brought out. Rev. Liangkhaia's songs therefore are not the mourning of the death on the cross or only an expression of horror of the blood that has been spilt. It is infact rejoicing and a celebration of that suffering which has made him atone for his sins. And eventually it was this death which has opened up the gates of heaven for him. Without this death, this suffering, salvation would not be there and the gates of heaven would have remained closed for him as well as others. On the other hand, though the song celebrates the sufferings of Christ on the cross, the sentiment of the pain of his sufferings makes the theme even more seductive and compelling to the Mizo consciousness. It only affirms to their notions of the world being a place full of injustice, darkness and misery. Thus the image of Christ's sufferings offers scope for identification of their own worldly sufferings with his, highlighting the pathos of Calvary.

Looking at the pre-Christian culture one may also find answers to the queries on the importance of the metaphor and image of the cross. The Mizo society has been since the pre-Christian times, governed by an ethical code of conduct called the *Tlawmngaihna*. Lorrain in his dictionary has tried to explain the meaning and ethos of the word:

1. to be self-sacrificing, unselfish, self-denying, persevering, stoical, stout hearted, plucky, brave, firm, independent (refusing help)
2. to put one's own inclination on one side and do a thing which one would rather not do, with the object either of keeping up one's prestige, etc., or of helping another, or of not disappointing another, etc.
3. to do whatever the occasion demands no matter how distasteful or inconvenient it may be to oneself or to one's own inclination. (513)

There seems to be no single English word to bring out the ethos of *Tlawmngaihna*. This code of conduct still lives in the Mizo society. Even the British had been very impressed by such a highly developed code of conduct existing and practiced by the Mizos. It could be exhibited in the collective as well as individually. A hero or a *pasal tha* was one who had shown his integrity of character by deeds of *Tlawmngaihna*. A person who possesses such qualities of *Tlawmngaihna* is most highly regarded and respected in the society till today. Jesus by suffering and dying on the cross exhibited the ultimate act of *Tlawmngaihna*. The very fact as the Bible tells us, that he was born in a manger rather than a palace, made him begin his life with the most endearing quality to the Mizo consciousness. Infact the essence of *Tlawmngaihna* is seen in the life of Jesus throughout his life. He never shied away from serving others and thus lowering himself to others. All these qualities could be identified with *Tlawmngaihna*, which the Mizos thus admired and respected. Thus when the spirituals voice the experience of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, it is not only the salvation it entails but also the *Tlawmngaihna* behind the act that they see and touches them.

In *Precious Words of God* when Liangkhaia calls the world a 'bare desert', the world according to him is one of confusion, a 'vast whirling sea', which may only create doubt in the minds of man. The world offers temptations harmful to the soul, thus the world in all its glory is but a foe that leads to the downfall of the Christian soul. This dark and bleak world portrayal of the world only highlights the beauty and wonder of the place that he expects after his life is over- the heaven. Infact the desert remains to be one of the commonly used metaphors in the Mizo Christian tradition. To express the bleakness, the loneliness and sufferings of the world the image of '*thlaler*' or the 'desert' is one of the most commonly used. The major and minor spiritual composers right from Patea, Kamlala, Liangkhaia, C.Z Huala to Ziakkawia and so on use the image of the desert to express their feelings of the status of the world. Liangkhaia in his song says, "Just to pass the bare *desert* here, Let thine words be our Guide". Infact Kamlala and Patea are the most prolific users of the imagery of the desert or *thlaler*. Ziakkawia in his song *Thou Art My All in All* uses the word '*thlaler*' twice. However, the translation of their songs the word 'desert' is not always used. In *Perfect peace*, Kamlala says, "Ka lenna ram *thlaler* ani", but the word *thlaler* is not used in the translation although the essence of the

experience still remains. What is to be noted is that Mizoram is a land of thick monsoon forests with heavy monsoon rains blessing the land for a major part of the year. There are no deserts and there are no places, which even closely resemble the desert. Yet, the word has been used over and over again. Reading the lyrics of the Mizo spirituals one may be misled to think that there are deserts or similar topographies in the land inhabited by the Mizos because the word occurs again and again. Apart from the desert, spiritual composers have given the world other metaphorical names like *Rumna ram* or the land of groaning, *Lungngaihna ram* or the land of sorrow, *lungngaihna zan thim* or the dark night of sorrow and *Aigupta* or Egypt (Thanmawia 149). Egypt being the land of slavery portrays the world to be a place of suffering.

The image of the 'sea' is another popular image that we see in the Mizo spirituals. The sea however may represent different images depending on how the composer chooses to use them. Sometimes the sea represents the turmoil of the Christian life. Or as in Patea's song *O Bright Star of David* it may express 'joy' in his heart, where he says that his joy 'expands like the sea'. It may also *represent* the image of the troubled and doubt filled world as Liangkhaia says, 'In the vast whirling sea of this world'. Again the sea was not a common image used in Mizo literature prior to Christianity because there are no seas or oceans around the land that they inhabit. The sea is a more or less alien entity and its nature and image to the Mizos was new, brought to them through their new religion and the western culture.

The images of flowers are one of the most striking features in the Mizo spirituals. These flowers are usually used to describe Jesus. In Patea's songs we see forty different types of usages of the image of *flowers*: flower of happiness, flower of Bethlehem, flower of Calvary, flower of the King, flower of Eden, Sharon flower, flower of Canaan, lily flower of Zion, lily flower, flower of new year, flower of the birth of Christ, flower of Zion, flower of life and so on (Siamkima, *Zalenna Ram* 87). These are all imageries created to describe Jesus Christ at different levels and phases. The 'real' flowers here, the lily and the Sharon are flowers that are not naturally a part of the flora culture of the land. Kamlala in one of his songs says, "Lily par mawi Lal Isua ka nei", which means, "I have Jesus, the beautiful Lily". However, now they have been imported

and all know what a lily or a Sharon looks like. But at the time when the song was composed it is doubtful whether they had any idea what a lily or a Sharon looked like.

There are also other flowers not based on the Bible or western imageries but which have emerged from the pre-Christian Mizo culture. This 'flower' has also been used to describe Jesus Christ. The flower, "Hawilo Par" is an abstract flower, which has been used by Romama in his song *Sojourner's Song*. Although the translation refers to it as 'forever flower', it's literal meaning is actually a 'flower of no turning back'. According to the Mizo pre-Christian faith, as the soul proceeds towards the village of the dead or Mitthikhua, he reaches a place called "Hringlang Tlang". Filled with memories of the world, he looks around and sees the Hawilo Par. And once they pluck the flower, they no longer turn back, but proceed towards their destination (Lalthangliana, *Ka Lungkham* 35). And once the soul drinks the waters of "Lungloh Tui" or "the water of disremembering", they forget all worldly life. The pre-Christian metaphorical flower and water has therefore been imbibed into the body Mizo Christian metaphor. One symbolises a Christian's choice of Christ over the world. He makes a choice never to turn back to the world and all that it represents. The Christian thus becomes detached from all worldly elements with the water. Pialral, as already discussed is another pre-Christian element that has become a Christian metaphor in the Mizo spirituals.

*Precious Words of God* also has another dimension to it. For it emerges from a direct inspiration from the book of Psalms of the Old Testament, which says, "Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, A light unto my path". The importance of the word of God is the central focus. It is represented by the images of the 'lamp' and the 'light'. This comes from the firm belief that God speaks through the Bible and Bible can be the guide for man that he does not fall. I should say that the Mizos take this very seriously. Among the Mizos knowledge of the Bible literally and otherwise is not uncommon. Debates based on the Bible are common. Rather than a battle of wits, it is often the detailed knowledge of the Bible that is taken into account. In public gatherings or daily talk the ability to quote from the Bible from memory is held in high regard. Apart from personal pursuit to know the Bible, I believe that this can be attributed to the Sunday school systems followed by all major denominational churches in Mizoram. The system of Sunday Schools however is another legacy given by the English and Welsh missionaries, as they are practices held

even in the western churches. For example, in the Presbyterian Church the Sunday school takes place every Sunday morning from 10:00am. The school is broadly divided into two- the adults and the children. The children are further divided into five departments depending on their age groups- the beginners department, the primary department, the junior department, the intermediate department and the senior department. There is a prescribed syllabus for all including the adults department. Apart from the syllabus, all the different children's departments prepare annually for competitions on verses of the Bible and songs within every pastorate. Thus there is a thorough grooming when it comes to the knowledge of the Bible.

One of the experiences that the Mizos can identify with, is the symbolic experience of being a soldier, of constantly being in a battlefield. This has been brought out in Thanghuta's *I Dare Not Lay My Armour Down*. Thanghuta (1894-1954) is an example of the minor Mizo spiritual composers of the same period as Kamlala and Patea, another being Ziakkawia. Despite their songs being along the same lines as Patea and Kamlala's songs there is a difference. The difference in Thanghuta is that, unlike many other spiritual composers was a chief, the chief of Zotlang village. Perhaps this detail of his life can explain the difference in his use of images. But like his contemporaries, the world that he portrays through his songs, is one, which is filled with troubles and foes. The longing for the life after death is not as strong and prominent but is nevertheless there. In *I Dare Not Lay My Armour Down*, Thanghuta likens the Christian to a soldier and the world to a battle field. He constantly needs to fight the in this battle field because his 'foes' are everywhere. By likening the world to a battlefield, Thanghuta reveals the understanding of the Mizo mind of battles and war. For, traditionally the Mizos are a warrior tribe, constantly battling and conquering eachothers village and tribes. The raids, they conducted were considered by the people as wars and successful raids elevated the prestige and position of the chiefs (Chatterjee 4). Great honour was bestowed on the brave and valour. Being a chief and belonging to a warrior family, his understanding of the world comes as a Christian who is a warrior having to fight battles daily to get to the land of peace. The 'foes' that he encounters in the world are the sins constantly tempts him. The armour is the Holy Spirit, which would give him the strength to fight against these temptations. The sins that Thanghuta talks about would be those that were



connected to the traditional culture and religion as well. For, most of the things connected to the past were considered 'pagan', thus sinful. Like Patea and Kamlala's world, the world of Thanghuta is unsafe and unfit to live in. And this consciousness of a dirty and unsafe world was what dominated the Mizo Christians at this time.

Thus we can see that the pre-Christian influence on the Church and the Mizo society is disguised but nevertheless present. But the western influence is more visible and apparent. The spirituals are an embodiment of both these elements. Though there have been many evolutions in the nature, the language and the style of the Mizo spirituals towards indigenisation from the time they first came into existence. Yet, the elements of westernisation in the very usage of words, imageries and metaphors are still very strong. Metaphors and symbolism based on the western culture and the Bible are mixed and have become a part of the literary Mizo metaphor and symbolism. There are so many images and metaphors that have become so much a part of the body of Mizo spirituals and the Mizo culture; so much so that one does not question how and when they had come to be so deeply into the culture.

The mixture of metaphorical presentation and imageries from the pre-Christian, the Bible and the western can be seen as a reflection of the nature culture and society. Though many western elements were imbibed, it was but natural that they drew many metaphorical symbols from their tradition. Their understanding of the world and the life after death is deeply embedded in their cultural past. The earliest composers chose not to use these pre-Christian symbols because they felt it was inappropriate for expressing their Christian sentiments. But as the style of singing and language became closer to their cultural traditions, they began to feel free to use symbols and metaphors from their past.

The Mizos look for metaphors to identify with their cultural sense of identity in various ways. Although the western cultural influence is strong, they also look at their traditional pagan religion in search of such metaphors. The Bible is perhaps one of the strongest influences of all these. It is interesting to note that that what had been incorporated as metaphors for the Mizo spirituals became in itself metaphors for the Mizo culture. The inseparability of the Mizo religion, the state and the society and the strong influence of Christianity would be the major factor for this. As discussed earlier the river Jordan has come to mean death. It is like as if the river Jordan flows not a thousand miles

away from the land of the Mizos, but within their very own land. Geographical locations like Bethlehem, Eden, Calvary, Canaan and so on play an important role as symbols in the Mizo spirituals. Bethlehem symbolises the birth of Jesus Christ. Canaan symbolises the Promised Land. Eden or New Eden symbolises the heaven. Calvary symbolises the death and sufferings. Besides this there are numerous symbols and metaphors that have been derived from the Bible. The 'star', the 'lamb', the 'bride', the bridegroom' and so on. And these are prolifically used in the Mizo spirituals, sermons extending to the everyday lives as well. Most composers derive their own symbols and metaphors and each have their own peculiarities.

A striking feature is that, these symbols and metaphors used in the spirituals have emerged out of an entirely different culture have become solidified into the Mizo culture, so much so that they can no longer be merely or only Biblical metaphors but the metaphors of the Mizo culture itself. Though geographically distanced from Israel, the Mizos have metaphorically created their own Israel in Mizoram. There are actually sects who believe themselves to Israelites, through Judaism. Some believe that they are descendants of the lost tribe of Manase<sup>36</sup> while some say that they are descendants of Ephraim<sup>37</sup>. The primary aim of Judaism is to move to the Promised Land, the present Israel. They tried to prove their theories through ethnographic studies. This hypothesis had emerged among the Mizos some forty years back (Chuaathuama 1). However, it remains to be on going debate. According to the Christian theology, one can be an Israelite by faith, a venue that was opened by the coming of Jesus Christ. Being an 'Israelite' symbolises a privilege of being the 'chosen nation' as were the Israelites according to the Old Testament. By faith Christians become 'Israelites' and so have the Mizos believe themselves to be. Unlike many other places, in Mizoram there are localities named after these Biblical names; there are places called Canaan, Salem, Bethlehem, Penial, Zion Street, Eden Thar and so on. These metaphors have also been incorporated into the Mizo names.

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<sup>36</sup> Manase is one of the twelve tribes of the Jews or the Israelites. The twelve tribes consist of the ten sons and two grandsons of Jacob who was later given the name 'Israel'. The land, the present Israel was divided between these twelve tribes. But later the tribe of Manase was believed to be lost.

<sup>37</sup> Ephraim is again one of the twelve tribes of the Israelites.

### 3. The Spirituals as a social critique:

Songs have been used for various purposes, like other literary works. They can be used to express various sentiments, to scold, to teach, to preach or to pass on messages, as did the African-American Spirituals. Or they can be an expression to make social statements. The Mizo spirituals have been used for many such purposes, but the reference is often indirect. Through religious emphasis, many problems that the Mizo society faces have been critiqued. The pioneering missionaries had successfully spread the new religion using songs as a powerful weapon. The power of songs has been realized by the Mizos and thus through it many issues have been raised. Through the spirituals the Mizos have created their own peculiar way of addressing to the problems that plague the Mizo society.

Modern spiritual composers like Dr Ramdinthara are one of the strongest voices in the society because of the social relevance of their songs. A medical doctor by profession, Ramdinthara is perhaps the most popular modern contemporary Mizo spiritual composer. His songs are very popular among the youth and the older generation alike. His songs are characteristics of most contemporary Mizo spirituals, which aim at encouraging the youth to follow in the path, laid down by Jesus despite all hardships and temptations that may come their way because of his love. In other words, the contemporary Mizo spirituals usually deal with the theme of *Love* and *Perseverance*. His two songs *Lover's Sufferings* and *We Shall Win* deal with aspects of these themes. *Lover's Sufferings* is the portrayal of Jesus' love, and the sufferings that he had to endure because of this love for mankind. The suffering of Christ here takes on a new light. It is not only the sufferings on the cross, but also his sufferings when a loved a Christian soul chooses to walk away from the Christian path. *We Shall Win* is a song that encourages the youth to defeat the evils of the world. For evil, as the song tells us, is everywhere, tempting and killing the young Christians. In reading these songs one may feel that the world it portrays is one that is just as sad, dark and bleak as the world of Patea and especially Kamlala. But the evil that Ramdinthara talks about is not bleak and dark. He does not seek the heavens to escape them. He does not look beyond life, to Pialral to overcome the problems of the world. It is an evil that can be defeated right here and now, during a lifetime. Nevertheless, to a Christian the heaven is still a very important aspect

of his faith. But it is not in heavens that he seeks solace but in the strength of his God, which can help him overcome this evil. He says, "See around our land (Mizoram) sorrow is the note, Evil forces sprang out everywhere". The word 'land' in the original is actually "Zoram", meaning Mizoram. The sorrow that Ramdinthara emphasizes is not the same sorrow that Kamlala talks about. While the sorrow of Kamlala was in the very nature of the world itself, Ramdinthara talks of the sorrows that have emerged out the visible social evils that plagues the Mizo society today. Besides, the youth of today are not as keen on Christian ethics and following the path that has been laid down by Christ as did the older generations. The ethos of Christian life has lost its appeal to many youth. Many have wandered away from God and the Church. And to most Mizo Christians, the Church is as important as God himself is. Even those who attend the services and are in service have become in service of the Church, the institution rather than God. His songs are a cry to bring them back to the "feet of Christ".

Ramdinthara's songs seem to be prompted by the social evils that plague the modern Mizo society. Excessive materialism, drug abuse, alcoholism, corruption of different offices, sexual promiscuity and so on. These are the evils and these are what need to be defeated. The sorrows of the society are the results of these evils; the deaths, the broken families, the diseases, the hypocrisy, the parentless children, loss of self-respect are what he refers to when he says the "foes of the world". Government policies and efforts of many NGOs have failed to achieve any real good; these problems only seem to be on the rise. The Total Prohibition Act (1997) on alcohol, passed by the government only worsened the condition by increasing the number of drug abusers. Thus, he is actually trying to reform a society that has fallen into the hands of many social evils that plagues most modern societies. He believes that the Mizo youth can win over these social evils "If we follow in his foot steps", the footsteps of Jesus Christ. He hopes that what the government and other forces could not suppress would be defeated through following in the footsteps of Christ. Heaven is not the ultimate goal in his songs. It is for well being of the Mizo society and for the love of God.

Upa Thanga is perhaps the first to address a social issue through his songs. The song "O Lord Most Supreme" or "Aw Lalpa Chungnungber Kan Fak Hle a Che" in Mizo has been classified under the category of 'Christian Life' and sub- categorised as 'Peace'.

This song has often been called 'the song of freeing slaves'. Although the song harbours some of the aspects of Christian Life and peace, it is also a song that expresses praise and gratitude to god. Those who have studied Upa Thanga's songs like Vanlallawma tell us that the composer Upa Thanga had composed the song on 'inspiration' on a very special occasion for the Mizos, in December 1910 (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Hla leh a Phuahtute*, 29). He also says that as a student in Shillong High School, he had received a letter where he learnt that the "bawih" system<sup>38</sup> or indentured labour system had been abolished in Mizoram (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Hla leh a Phuahtute*, 27). The Bawih system was not a very common practice in the Lushai Hills. Infact, it was practiced largely by the powerful chiefs. These slaves were the sole property of the chiefs and were usually prisoners taken in war. There were four kinds of bawih in the traditional Mizo culture: the *Inpuichhung* bawih, *Chemsen* bawih, *Tuklut* bawih and the *Sal* (Shakespeare 45-47).

- A. The *Inpuichhung* bawih were the extremely poor, usually comprised of the widows, orphans and others who were driven to take refuge in the chief's house because of poverty. They would become a part of the chief's household. When a male bawih reached a marriageable age, the chief would buy him a wife, he would then set up his own household but remained to be a bawih. Then he became an *Inhrang*<sup>39</sup> bawih. In the case of the female bawih, the chief took the bride price.
- B. The *Tuklut* bawih were those who during war, desert their chief if they were on the losing side. They would join the victor's side. And they along with their descendents would become the bawih of that chief.
- C. The *Chemsen* bawih were the criminals seeking the protection of their lives and in return for their lives they would become the bawih of the village chiefs. This type of bawih also included debtors who were unable to pay their creditors. The chief released them on the condition that they and their children become his bawih.
- D. The *Sal* were those who were captured in raids. Though their work was the same as the bawih and their children became bawih, they themselves were not called bawih.

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<sup>38</sup> The 'Bawih' system has often been translated as slavery, however the practice of slavery in the Lushai Hills was quite different from that which is called 'slavery' in the western terms. That is why I have chosen to call it the system of 'indentured labour' instead. All 'bawih' were not sold and marketed, as in other societies; they were the sole property of the chiefs.

<sup>39</sup> *Inhrang* suggests the position of the slave that he is no longer a part of the chief's household. He has a household of his own though still a bawih.

The *Sal* constituted a permanent labour force for the chief and ensured him not only economic prosperity but perpetual service in the after life, in Pialrai (Kipgen 75).

The treatment of the bawis varied from chief to chief. While some bawis were well treated some were oppressed. Their freedom could be bought with the payment one mithun or its equivalent value. However, usually the bawis themselves never had the means the way to buy their freedom. The early missionaries did not criticise the system for felt that there was a charitable dimension to it. Yet it the institution of the bawi system was perceived by many as an oppressive one.

Dr. Fraser plays an important role in the abolition of the bawi system. Dr Fraser, a senior medical officer of North Wales and his wife had come to the Lushai hills in 1909 (Lloyd 124). Apart from being a missionary and his work as a medical practitioner and healing many, he was also involved in a major controversy dealing with the bawi system. The British rulers had allowed the missionaries to work in the Lushai Hills with the understanding that they would not interfere with the politics (Lloyd 154). When Dr. Fraser came to the Lushai Hills, he was appalled to see the bawi system, feeling that it was highly un-Christian and set out to free many of them. He began to make an appeal to the Governor to abolish the system (Lalbiaknema 176). But the British government was unwilling to do so for the fear of displeasing the Chiefs who were paying them taxes regularly. The other missionaries surprisingly did not see any problems with the bawi system, and did not side with Dr. Fraser in the controversy. Even though some of the senior missionaries were aware of the problems and the flaws of such a system, they did not see the need to abolish it. As Lloyd has pointed out "Cole was convinced that the bawi were not slaves but the equivalent of the Chief's hired servants and that the arrangement acted as a kind of welfare system. Fraser regarded it as a blatant undisguised slavery, which should be destroyed root and branch" (Lalbiaknema 156). Dr. Fraser threatened to take the matter into the hands of the British Parliament, but was finally resolved by the Indian Government and the Assam Government. And the consequence was that the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills Lt. Cole and Dr. Fraser had to leave the land, but the Bawi system was put to an end.

Upa Thanga was a friend was Dr. Fraser and one of those who fought against the Bawih system. He obviously felt very strongly against the system to have been inspired

to write such a powerful song, one of the most popular and widely sung spirituals among the Mizos. The abolition of the inhuman treatment of a fellow human being has made him realise in God, a “friend of the oppressed, the poor, slaves and sinners” and also a “Lord, father and God to orphans and the needy”. It was a prayer that had at long last been answered. He sees this once impossible abolition a possibility because of the Omnipotence of God, making him sing praises to Him. The song is therefore a praise to a supreme God, who has answered his heart’s deepest desires, and perhaps that of a whole nation. At another level, Upa Thanga is a social reformer. When one is not a slave and not the outcast of the society, but at the same time feeling so deeply with doing away with those social institutions that creates inequality, is the stance that Upa Thanga has taken up, in other words essentially that of a social reformer. The song though a resultant of the social evils of the time, can be transferred to many other contexts. The essence of the song is universal. Depending upon the perspective that one chooses, the secularity of the song can also be seen. The God that has been addressed here is one who is a friend to the poor, orphans, slaves, outcasts and sinners, which is not a perspective of “god” only to the Christian consciousness alone, but extends to all other religions. The song therefore emphasizes on an almighty God, who as believed in the Judeo-Christian tradition is that creator of all things: the world and beyond. The song becomes a confession of faith in God as an almighty ruler, which is further elucidated by the addition of an express reference to the creation and events of the world, from a macro view, and the world of the Mizos from a micro view point.

#### **4. Church Hegemony in the fate of the Spirituals:**

The Church in Mizoram plays an integral role in shaping different aspects of the Mizo society. Infact, it perhaps the strongest non Governmental institution working in the state, so much that it often dictates the direction of the state as well. It also directly effects the economy of the Mizos. The Mizos strongly believed in the blessedness of giving willingly to God. Even in times of famine they never failed in giving one tenth of the little that they managed to earn. In 1912 due to the flowering of the bamboos there was a famine and Lorrain had written, “The famine has naturally made a great difference to the free will offerings of the Christians. It is usual for them to give a tenth of their crops to

God. Last harvest there were practically no crops to reap. In spite of this, the sum of Rs. 258-8-10 has been handed in..." (Report of Baptist Mission Society 82). Most of the population being active members of their respective Churches or denomination and thus pay their tithe to the Church and other number of fund raising projects. Therefore every year the money accounts from the various fund raising sources accumulate to millions of rupees (Vanlalhluna 42). At this point, it would be important to note that many had begun to rebel against this economic power of the Church and chose to join other sects. However even in these smaller sects, they could not completely remove themselves from contributing to the working of their group and faith. This economic link is one of the factors that strengthen the hold of the Church. Through faith and the prestige that the Church can give like no other, it weaves a powerful wand of influence that directly or indirectly touches upon all major and minor aspects of the culture.

From the very beginning of the birth of the Mizo Spirituals, the direction of the spirituals can be seen to be driven by the authority of the Church. What the Church discouraged or encouraged had far reaching effects. Whether it was the drum or the language employed in the spirituals, the voice of the Church was very loud indeed. This powerful role of the Church in the fate of the spirituals may be seen in the case of two spiritual composers, Rokunga and Biakdika. Rokunga is perhaps one of the best and well-known composers among the Mizos. He has composed as many as at least 126 songs. Besides he has composed both religious and secular songs. His songs however have not been included as a part of the Major Hymnal or the Kristian Hla Bu, although they have been included in the Minor Hymnal or the Hla Thar Bu. A song to be incorporated in the Major Hymnal is not only considered a great honour but also establishes the status of the composer as a major and prominent spiritual composer. They have also been incorporated in the youth songbooks or the KTP Hla Bu. This is not because his songs were theologically unsound or simply not good enough. There seem to be no problems with his use of the language either. The position that his songs hold today is not as high as they could have been because of the dispute between the Music Committee in charge of the Kristian Hla Bu and his family. It is said that after his death, the Music Committee had planned to make his songs a part of the new edition of the Major Hymnal. But his children had objected to it saying that they had not asked their permission or copyright



for publishing his songs in the *Kristian Hla Bu*, the major and primary book of the Mizo spirituals. The Music Committee had been greatly displeased by this objection believing that in incorporating Rokunga's songs in the Major Hymnal, they were doing him and his songs a great honour. However, I believe that his songs will be included in the new edition of the *Kristian Hla Bu*, which is expected to be published by 2006<sup>40</sup>. This brings us to two important issues on the fate of the Mizo spirituals. One is that, the fate of a song no matter how popular or good it may be lies in the hand of the Church, especially the major denominational churches. It decides what should be served as examples for the church and whether they may be considered major or minors. Even if a song is highly popularised by modern means of communication and the media, the Church gives its real status. A song may therefore be sidelined because of the politics of the church.

Another example can be seen from a modern spiritual composer, Biakdika (1974-), more popularly known as BDa. Being a young composer, his songs had become very popular around 2000-2002. His many songs filled the pages of the annually published KTP songbooks. They were to be heard in church and public performances. He won awards for being best song composer in the local awards like the Rimawi Khawvel Music Award in 2000 and Lelte Music Award 2001 (Lalbiaknema 7). However, when he changed his life style and became more 'worldly', having taken up drinking alcohol, his songs lost their popularity. They were no longer included in the 2003 and 2004 editions of the KTP Hla Bu. This also goes to show that the fate of the spirituals in away depends on the life and character of its composers. If one does not lead an exemplary life, then his songs also lose whatever status may have attained, where the spirituals are concerned. The second issue that arises is that spirituals are considered public property, or rather the property of the Church and its members. Copyright issues are not given importance especially when it comes to public performances.

##### **5. Nationalism as an emerging theme in the Spirituals:**

*Patriotism and sense of nationality are not issues that the Mizo spirituals directly address. Perhaps because the Mizo sense of cultural identity is so deeply embedded in the*

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<sup>40</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Rinsanga, a member of the Music Committee in-charge of the new edition of the KHB (June 29<sup>th</sup> 2003)

Christian religion. There are very few songs like *Lord, Lover of Mizoram* composed by Lianmanga, which by its very title indicates that it encompasses strong sense of Mizo nationality. Yet, the song reflects that the Mizo national identity can hardly be separated from the religious. Infact even these indirect references to nationality were not to be seen in the earlier spirituals. The song brings out a crucial issue of the Mizo identity, as the song does not differentiate between the Christians and the Mizos. All Mizos are Christians by religion except for the very small group of people who are convinced to be the lost tribe of the Jews and are Jewish by faith. Perhaps we can see how the Mizo consciousness places itself in the realm of the world, of being a Christian and a Mizo. What comes first? The sense of being a Mizo or that of being a Christian? It has not become an easy task to separate the Christian from the Mizo nor is it possible to place one over the other. One of the questions that often troubles a Mizo is a question that has often been debated on, is this very question. Whether to place the Mizo in him or the Christian in him on top. This problematic intermingling of the two identities was one of the questions that the Insurgency brought out. While the Insurgency had set out to defend the Mizo culture and religion, they had to resort to un-Christian violence to voice their demands. Besides after, being included as a part of a larger national identity, the Mizos have come to feel the need to address their stronger sense of identity as Christians and Mizos rather than 'Indians'. "The national majority's assumption that all minority cultural and religious groups should be subsumed within the mainstream Indic culture threatened the culturally distinct Northeast" (Pachau 174), the Mizos included. Like other minority culture and religious groups, the Mizos have the fear of losing their own cultural identity to the larger identity.

The mizos place a tremendous importance on their land. The land that is often referred to in the spirituals, as in *Lord, Lover of Mizoram* has dual meanings, one referring to the geographical land of Mizoram, the other the spiritual land of the 'kingdom of God'. This is also a song of encouragement and an attempt at bringing out the patriotic sentiments of the Mizo culture. A striking feature here is that the kind of encouragement that we witness in this song is quite different from the earlier spirituals. While encouragement here is grounded on very nationalistic sentiments based on Christianity. In the earlier spirituals the sense of disengagement from the world had been

much stronger. And the encouragement present was spiritual, in the sense that they were encouragement to face the bleakness and sinfulness of the world.

The song also deals with the theme of Mission Outreach. There is a sense that the achievement as a Christian is also an achievement as the Mizo nation. Thus, the coming of the white missionaries to an obscure part of India, to the people called the Mizos, to westernize, 'civilize' and Christianize them is a blessing and an experience not only on the personal spiritual level but also at the level of the community as a whole. The sense of love and discovery from God is very strong as portrayed in this song. They want to give out what they belief was gifted to them freely.

This song, *Lord Lover of Mizoram* is an indicator of Church's activities towards the spreading of Christianity and the importance that mission outreach is given by the people. Through Mission outreach the Mizos have found a new way forming an identity based on Christian sentiments. The Mizo churches are basically missionary churches, in the sense that there is a strong missionary zeal in most denominations. I believe that this may be attributed to two main factors. The coming of the western missionaries had changed the entire Mizo society, consciousness and life in every perceivable aspect. And this was just a little more than a hundred years ago. The people still remember how this changed had come about. There is also the strong realization that the modernization that the present society enjoys can all be traced back to the missionaries. Thus in 1994, Mizoram had grandly celebrated its Gospel Centenary which shows the gratitude that the people harbour on the gospel and the blessings that came with it. The people genuinely believe that the gospel can change a culture for the better though it may also mean losing out on other things, like the beauty of the traditional culture. The other reason why the Mizos give so much importance to Mission Outreach is perhaps because it is a part of their theology and doctrine. This has been based on Jesus' words as seen in the Bible, in the Gospel of Matthew: "go and make disciples in all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and then teach these new disciples to obey all the commands..."(*The Living Bible*, 777). The Mizos take it as duty that they have to fulfill with belief that the Gospel has come to them with a purpose, to broaden the 'Kingdom of God'. Thus Lianmanga says, "Our duty to preach the Gospel, To give it out freely; till the world becomes the Kingdom of the Lord". Missionary work is given a lot

of importance. Missionaries are highly respected in the Mizo community. And the youth are encouraged towards this work, to go out and preach the gospel. However, even those who aren't able to move out into these missions are encouraged to spread the gospel from their homes through prayers and donations in support of their work. There are annual Missionary Challenge Meets to encourage missionary work in whatever possible way. And in every church there are special committees called the "Ramthar Committee", meaning committee for outreach missions, which work on these lines. The Church aims to support as many missionaries as possible, and so do individuals whom are capable of it.

#### **6. Christmas as an amalgamation of the pre-Christian and Christian festivities:**

When Christianity became the religion of the Mizos and the Church and the missionaries condemned all pagan way of life, their festivities were also abandoned along with many aspects of their traditional life. The Mizos had three main festivals, the Chapchar Kût, Mim Kût and the Pawl Kût (Lianthanga 109-123). Of the three, Chapchar Kût<sup>41</sup> was the greatest festival. It was a festival that the entire community looked forward to and prepared for the whole year round. It involved drinking of Zu with feasting. While on the other hand Mim Kût was especially for the dead, a day to remember and commemorate the dead loved ones. And Pawl Kût was a festival for the children. These festivals were completely put to a halt for they were considered unsuitable to the new religion of the people. Of the three, Chapchar Kût was later revived as an important cultural festival. In Mizoram the day is a state holiday. However the real essence of the festival, which is directly related to the agrarian lifestyle and pre-Christian religion has been lost. The festival as it is celebrated today remains to be only a reminder of the traditional culture. Infact the program of the celebration of the festival as organised by the Art and Culture Department of the state and the YMA<sup>42</sup>, begins with a prayer as Christians. The Christian festivals have replaced the place of celebration that was once occupied by these three Kût. All the pomp and glory that these three festivals had been attached to has been transferred to Christmas, Easter, Good Friday and New Year celebration. And of these,

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<sup>41</sup> Kût means a festival.

<sup>42</sup> YMA stands for Young Mizo Association. It was established in 1935. It is a social organisation that works for the whole Mizo community by imbibing Christian values and Tlawmngaihna.

Christmas occupies the most important place. This has once again been reflected in the Mizo Spirituals. The number of Christmas songs that the Mizos have is quite big, reflecting the place that the occasion plays in their present culture. In a way it also reflects the westernisation of their festivities. Thus Christmas to the Mizos is not only a religious festivity but also an expression of their festive nature. Perhaps this is why their celebration of the event is so peculiar to their culture.

There are many composers who have composed Christmas spirituals. Rokunga was not the first Mizo composer to compose Christmas spirituals, though in the field of the Mizo spirituals, he is best known for his Christmas spirituals. It had begun with Patea's composition of one of the songs that has been brought out for analysis, "For God so Loved the World", is a Christmas song. Rokunga has composed as many as twenty Christmas songs (Lalthangliana, *Hla leh a Phuahtute* 395), which are popularly sung even today. Because his songs have not been included in the Major Hymnal, his songs are hardly sung within the church, but are the most popular ones in Christmas carols, performances and Christmas fellowship singing sessions. His language and lyrics of his songs are simple and the tunes catchy. In his simple language his Christmas songs capture the entire essence of the Christmas festivity. Through his songs one can easily understand all aspects of Christmas without having to read the Bible to know it all. The reason why there is a Christmas; the lowly birth of Jesus in the manger, the shepherds, the wise men, the angels singing, the star of Bethlehem, the political atmosphere of Israel during the birth of Jesus, the social scenario of the land of Judas and the mind set of the Roman rulers are all clearly portrayed in his different Christmas songs (Siamkima, *Zalenna Ram* 138). The reason why his Christmas songs are so celebrated is because of the importance that the Mizos give to the festival of Christmas itself. When the Mizos had to leave behind almost all aspects of their traditional lives including their traditional festivals, Christmas became the one festival that they focussed on. The revival of Chapchar Kût could not take away the importance that the Christmas festival had come occupy had become too big to be overtaken. Christmas is the one festival among the Mizos that is looked forward to the year round; everything is centered on this season. Today, Christmas has become very commercial and more westernized. But it is no longer just a festival of Christianity but the festivals of the Mizos in every aspect. The

celebration of Christmas I think is unique among the Mizos. Taking from their tradition of old, it includes a lot of feasting with different kinds of non-vegetarian menu organised by the Church, dancing and singing. The singing sessions are usually held not within the main space of the Church, but the hall of the Churches or places available. In many Churches separate singing sessions are held for singing in the Lengkhawm Zai style and the Solfa Zai. Besides for almost every mass congregation through the celebration of Christmas and New Year, the Church Choirs make it a point to present with a song. The preparation of the Choir starts all the way from the beginning of the December or sometimes even in November. Such is the importance placed on the occasion. The celebration goes on for a week or so in continuation with the New Year festival, somewhat like the traditional Thangchhuah feasts. The preparation of the feast is usually put in the responsibility of the young men and women. Commercial catering is completely unknown. It is the people who prepare and eat. Until a few years back, the system of Christmas feast was still closer to the tradition. Everyone ate from leaves and sat down on floors. Although this is still practiced in the villages, it is slowly but surely dying away. It seems like the reason for their celebration and the venue have changed but the real ethos of the festivities in the Pre-Christian culture has also been incorporated into their new religion in the celebration of Christmas.

#### **7. Mizo Women as seen through the Spirituals:**

When it comes to a study of the Mizo culture and the spirituals, there are many names that come up over and over and over again. But the names of women are far apart and few in numbers. The spirituals, as we have seen, has reflected various aspects of the Mizo society. The status of the women in the society can perhaps be revealed to us through a study of the spirituals as well. The women or rather the absence of women, I believe speak very loudly on their status.

One of the few women composers of the Mizo spiritual is Lalruali (1924- 2001). She is a special Mizo spiritual composer for the simple reason that she is the only Mizo woman song composer whose work has become a part of the Mizo Major Hymnal. Her song *Ka Chenna Ram Thlaler qni Lalpa* is the first song that she composed and was added to the Kristian Hla Bu at number 256. Apart from her, the only other women that

we come across in the Kristian Hla Bu or the Major Hymnal of the Mizos are Mrs. M.J Sandy and Mrs. K.E Jones, white missionaries who had translated three songs in all, one by the former and two by the latter. Lalruali has composed as many as fifty-two spirituals, besides which she has also composed a few poems. Her songs are imbued with a number of themes. Christian sentiments are mixed with patriotic and experiential sentiments. Her songs are so rich in content that they may be served as examples of the definition of Mizo spirituals. It is very difficult to separate the purely secular and purely religious in her songs. What seems like a secular song when studied closely emerges with underlying currents of religious spirituality. Like other Mizo spiritual composers, Lalruali's songs have no particular theme; strains of different and varying themes run in a song (Khangte, *Thlaler Nula* 30). Having suffered from Osteomyelitis since she was twelve years of age, she has been unable to live a normal life in many ways (Sailo 71). Her life has been confined to her crutches and wheelchair. Thus her songs also carry that quality of the Mizo spirituals, which portrays the world as a 'desert', with temptations, sorrows and tears. In some of her songs she also cries out in longing for the other world which she hopes to go to after her life on earth, where she will be re-united with her loved ones.

Most of Lalruali's songs including *Thou Guide Me On, Hold Unto Me* are in prayer like forms, asking her God for strength and guidance as she lives her life. The song *Thou Guide Me On, Hold Unto Me* is personal prayer to God, she personally addresses God asking for help and strength. The song has been entered in the youth songbooks and is highly popular especially after it was aired on AIR a few years back. This song was composed on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1993. It has come about when the Bible, the book of Isaiah, and the first verse of chapter fifty-one inspired the composer (Khangte, *Thlaler Nula* 97,98). The said biblical verse reads as: "Listen to me, all who hope for deliverance, who seek the Lord! Consider the quarry from which you were mined, the rock from which you were cut" (*The Living Bible*, 576). The insignificance of man in comparison to the mightiness of its creator is apparent. Although the song does not derive words directly from this verse, it also exhibits the insignificance of man and the belief that man is powerless and is in constant need of guidance and help from God, its creator. At one level the song is a prayer for help and strength to be able to go through life's

troubles and temptations. At another level it establishes the 'sinfulness' of man. And it is this conception of 'sin' that forms the real core of all Protestant Christian theologies. It is because of this 'sin' that man needs to be 'saved' and it is because of this that Jesus had to die on the cross. The symbolic death of all sins of mankind is on this death on the cross. And with faith in this death, one can attain salvation. The composer is aware of this 'sin'. For sins are not actually what a man does, rather a man is born sinful ever since he fell into temptation in the Garden of Eden. It is this inherent sinful nature that makes him do what he does. The composer is not asking for physical deliverance and strength, but the spiritual to help her overcome her 'inherent sinfulness'. As can be seen in the last line of the fourth stanza of this song, she totally submits to her God so that she may be guided and strengthened. "Submission" is an important aspect of the Mizo Christian theology. To be saved, one need to submit oneself to God, and this would lead to spiritual re-birth. Thus Lalruali's songs do not have the bleakness and pessimism of Kamlala. Nor does she see the world as an evil and sinful entity, but sees it within herself. Her song therefore does not aim at acting as the voice of encouraging the mass Christian spirit; rather they are personal pleas and experiences.

When we come to Lalruali and her songs, one cannot help but question where the other women composers are. As mentioned earlier, she is the only woman Mizo composer whose song has been entered into the major hymnbook of the Mizos. So are there no other woman spiritual composer? Fact is, there are women composers, though their number is very less in comparison to the men. In the Hla Thar Bu or the Minor Hymnal there are nine songs out of the total two hundred eighty four song, which are works of women. One is another translation of the white missionary Mrs. M.J Sandy. The other eight are the compositions of Chali, J.Lawmchhungi, Thangvungi, Zumi, Darchangpuii and Lalsangzuali Sailo. Their number is very little in comparison to the male composers. And this I believe can lend an insight to another aspect of the Mizo society.

Looking at the pre-Christian folk literature of the Mizos women had played an important part. In the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, women had more or less dominated the oral folk singing genre, so much so that they had not only composed a number of songs but also that they had their own styles of singing named after them



(Sailo 134). Pi Hmuaki, Saikuti, Laltheri, Lianchhiari, Darmani, Darpawngi, Darlenglehi are some of the folk styles bearing the names of famous composers (Lalthangliana, *Mizo Nun Hlui Hlate* 48-81). It is believed that women composed some of the most popular songs in the oral tradition. Perhaps the most famous among the song composers in the oral tradition was Pi Hmuaki who lived around 1780 AD (Sailo 3). Composing songs to her was as natural as breathing. She was buried alive by her village men for fear that the younger generation would no longer have songs to compose for she kept on composing them. Thus women did play an important role in the oral culture.

The Mizo society even during the pre-Christian era has always been very patriarchal. There are some common sayings that reveal the general male attitude towards women- "Women and old fences can be changed anytime" or "The wisdom of women does not go beyond the village well". The very name for women in Mizo has been a constant issue of controversy created by feminists. "Hmeichhia" they say is a derogatory term, for 'hmei' literally means a mistress or a concubine and 'chhia' stands for something bad and therefore has negative connotations. In the pre-Christian culture women physically laboured harder than their male counterparts although the division of labour between the men and the women was clearly defined. At the same time they easily lost their respectability while it was almost impossible for men to lose theirs. Once a woman lost her honour, it was considered impossible to regain it. A woman had no right to inheritance. Nor did she have the right to court the man she loved; it was the duty of the men to do the courting. There was no dowry system, infact the bridegroom had to pay bride price in the form of animals. The father is the head of the family. A Mizo woman may bear all the responsibilities of running the family and make major contributions in the economic pursuits of the household, yet they had no property rights nor could they have a substantial share in important family decisions. Nor did they have any place in the religious rites or the village administration (*Mizo Women Today* 7). However in the creative space, women had the freedom to express themselves, whether it was in literature or in art. In many ways the position of women has been radically uplifted after Christianity was embraced. But there are many limitations to this upliftment. Whether it is in the political arena, the church, or social organisations, women's voice are hardly heard. As almost the entire population of the state are Christians, every aspect of the

Mizo society is dominated by the Church including the political scenario. And the Church in turn is dominated and ruled by pastors, ministers and Church elders or as in the case of the Catholics- the priest. In the largest Church of Mizoram, the Presbyterian Church women can neither be ordained as ministers nor can they be voted as Church elders. The Catholics do not allow women priests. There is a slight improvement in the Baptist Church where women can be elected as Church elders but can not be ordained as ministers. However, even here very few women are actually elected because they are perceived to be unfit or incapable by the people. In the salvation Army Church they can become the leaders of the Church officially if their husbands are the leaders. In reality, the patriarchal system of the pre-Christian society has only been replaced by another type of patriarchal system, Christianity. This is because when it comes to the real and highest powers controlling the Mizo society, the women's condition is still not very different.

Coming back to the composition of the spirituals, it is amazing that a new culture, which is considered to have radically uplifted the position of women and places such an importance on the genre of songs, has produced so few woman spiritual composers. The number of women composers is so small and there is only one Mizo woman in the Major Hymnal. The numbers in the Hla Thar Bu, as mentioned earlier is an improvement but certainly not very impressive. Can this be blamed on the patriarchal system of the Mizos alone? But the pre-Christian Mizo society was also patriarchal was also as patriarchal, yet women were very active the oral literary field. In the past hundred years or so, it is not only in the field of songs that women are quiet but also other fields of literature, be it the novel, essay, drama, poetry and so on the names of women are rare and far between. The few women that we know of are, Nuchhungi, Khawlkungi and Lalsangzuali Sailo in these other literary fields. But the common notion is that women have gained the most from Christianization because it is their position that they believe has undergone the most change. Rev. Dr. C.L Hminga has commented, "Mizo women have been liberated by Christianity. They have been allowed all educational facilities open to boys. Many are now in professions, business and some in political administration" (Hminga 298). Initially the people had been against women's education saying that it was a waste of time as women were so useful in the households. But as education became more open, women have come up in the working spheres but their minds are still not free. Women

did receive education much after the men, which is probably one of the main reasons that in the initial years of Christianity there were no Mizo spiritual composers. But now both the sexes receive the same education, yet they are still not composing or writing, i.e. they are still not as participative as the men in literary endeavors.

A walk through the markets of Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram or the offices reveals a lot about the status and role of women outside her home. One may come across more women working than men. There are more office clerks and lower ranking official women than men, but the higher levels are usually taken up more by men than women. But this does not signify that the women have left the threshold of the house to hands of the men. They manage both spheres of life in the Mizo society. Often it would seem that women have become too occupied with the management of these two aspects that they have no time to cultivate their creative skills. At the same time the concept of men being superior to woman both physically and mentally has been too long established in the Mizo culture. The western missionaries believed in the upliftment of women, but did so only to a certain extent. The upliftment of women was carried forth only so that they maybe good mothers, daughters and wives. The development of women never reached the same level as the men. Perhaps this was because they saw the patriarchal system and believed that converting the men and education them was therefore more important to change the whole society. And since the women were quite voiceless, they were secondary. As a substitute for being unable to wield any real power where it matters, which is the Church, they have set up a women's committee. This committee looks into some matters like the rice collection<sup>43</sup>, the building up of Christian families, educating the women on their role in the family and so on. I call this a substitute because women cannot take place in the highest level committee of the Church, which comprises of the Church elders and ministers, which in the Presbyterian Church are all men. In the Baptist Church, however, there is a slight improvement because women can participate in this committee, because they can be elected as Church elders. However, the public often chooses to vote for a man rather than a woman. Even if the women are voted, it is usually

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<sup>43</sup> The rice collection tradition was started during the time of the missionaries. It was based on a "handful of rice" that was kept separately every time a woman cooked rice for her family. It symbolised the presence of Christ in the family. The rice is then collected by the women's committee and sold of at cheap prices for those in need. The money was in turn used for anything necessary in the process of evangelization.

because of a lack of choice or when the woman is much more powerful and capable than the men are. Even in the Presbyterian Church there is no written rule which stops women from being Church elders. Infact, a few years back, in Mission Veng Church it happened that a very capable woman, Mrs. Saptawni to the surprise of the Church Committee was elected as an elder. The Committee considered this unacceptable, but it was soon realized that they had no rule or doctrine to fall back to that could stop her from taking up the office. This only reveals how the traditional culture has shaped the ethos of the Mizo Church. And also that the Church issues many unwritten laws based on tradition both the pre-Christian and doctrinal. In Presbyterian Churches in the west, women are ordained as ministers and Church elders today. According to the tradition it was unthinkable to have a women in the highest office of the Church. Eventually the tradition won over and Pi Saptawni did not become a Church elder. It is not only the men who believes that it is not the duty of a woman to lead, but the women themselves who are convinced of their inferior and complacent roles in the Church and the society. Men, believing themselves to be superior is as bad as women believing and accepting it. Even in other spheres, like politics for example, there are very few women politicians. Besides there are a certain pervading sense of strangeness and animosity for such women rather than admiration.

A large percentage of the writers in Mizoram are men. Thus the issue of women's empowerment is hardly an issue. If at all it is an issue, then it does not come to the forefront of the Mizo Christian theology. Mizo theologians like Lianhnuni have propounded feminist theology. She has tried to show that the Bible itself has been written from a male perspective. And since the Mizos have come to use it as a yardstick for many measuring wrong or right and Christian or un-Christian, the establishment of a feminist theology in the Mizo society becomes very problematic (Vanlalauya 84). However, there is a growing awareness among the women and the issue has come to important women's organisations like the MHIP<sup>44</sup> which is the organisation of Mizo women and the Hmeichhe Tangrual Pawl. They have tried to change the customary laws of the Mizos so that they may be economically empowered. These organisations are working towards the empowerment of women in small but significant ways. These efforts yet to be fully

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<sup>44</sup> MHIP is the abbreviated form of Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl, an organization for the upliftment and empowerment of women.

realized as the Church is still more powerful and commands the minds of the people. The Mizo women today are making progress slowly; there is a growing awareness of their mental oppression. They have begun to question why their role is defined by the opposite sex. They have managed to move out physically, but their minds are still in chains. Perhaps it is only when they are freed of these chains that, women would be able to produce spirituals in greater numbers. Gender in itself can not be cause of this lack; it is the hierarchy of genders produced by the Mizo society and the Church that has caused it.

The Mizo spirituals are essentially religious in nature. They express the strong religious sentiments of the people. The spirituals have opened up an avenue for entertainment for the people by participation and by performance. It has provided a means a means of worship, which is both vibrant and exciting. An unbroken yet remarkable tradition of worship music has been created. The study of this expression through various perspectives and contexts do tell us many aspects of the Mizo culture and society.

## Chapter V

### Conclusion

I have grown up singing and listening to the Mizo spirituals. The lullabies sung to me as a child many years back were none other than the songs that I have chosen to work on for my research. The first songs that I knew were all from the Kristian Hla Bu. I had learnt to sing the spirituals long before I learnt nursery rhymes. And the first songs that I ever danced to were the spirituals. I have enjoyed them, in being both the auditor as well as the participant. Having myself been an active member of my Church choir and having attended many revival meetings, I have come to understand the effect of the vibrant music of the spirituals, for I have seen and felt them. Not only do the senses feel the fulfillment that good music gives, there is also a feeling of deep spirituality that is not just religious in nature but one that emerges from an understanding that I am within and amidst my own culture. But when I first learnt to sing the spirituals, little did I know of its theological and doctrinal aspects. Nor was I aware of its cultural relevance. All I knew was that they were songs that the people I knew and I myself enjoyed. It was a means of family entertainment that brought my family much closer. In the evenings my father would pick up his guitar or the drum, start singing and all of us would automatically join him. It was an entertainment that lent excitement to the daily chores.

Working on something that is so much a part me, my growing up years and my roots was a very different experience. I have had to detach myself from many things I held dear and close. Being geographically distanced from my land and my people made me question many things that never crossed my mind as something to be questioned. I never questioned the theology that I grew up to believe. It is in trying to explore the true nature of the spirituals that I have come to question many things. Thus I believe that the understanding of the Mizo spirituals calls for an understanding of its development historically and culturally, theologically and doctrinally. Many of these have been explored earlier.

From the history and cultural interaction that has been studied so far we know that the Mizo spirituals have come to be what they are today through the west, in the form of colonialism and mission work. The doctrinal basis of the theological tradition that was

brought to the Mizos has become central in the shaping of the Mizo society and the spirituals. The numerous theological traditions that prevails among the Christians can be broadly classified into two major theological traditions: the Liberal or the Ecumenical tradition on one hand and the Conservative or Evangelical tradition on the other (Vanlalauva 22). The theological tradition that was brought to the Mizos by the missionaries was the Conservative or the Evangelical theologies, which still remains to be the leading theological tradition followed by the Mizos today. Of the varying kinds of Evangelical theology, the particular type of theology that had been incorporated by the missionaries was the Reformation theology, which had become prominent in the British Isles from the Reformation period (Vanlalauva 25). The reformation theologies include the Calvinistic and Lutheran theological tradition, and were passed on to the Mizos by the missionaries who were the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Missionaries and London Baptist Missionary Society. The traces of the hold of Conservative theology can be seen from the very beginning of the history of Christianity in Mizoram. The conservative approach that had been adopted had made the Mizos believe that they could be 'Christian' only in abandoning all that reminded or represented their pre-Christian religion. Leaving behind a culture they had created and known for a long time, they were swept away by the conservative Christian theology. Supreme authority was given to the Bible, even when it least suited their daily lives. More importance was placed on the spiritual life and the conception of heaven- their life after death rather than the practical aspects of their lives in the world.

Important questions and queries thus arise. Is there something called the Mizo Christian Theology? Is it not just a tradition that has been adopted and imitated from their white missionaries? If the basis of the Mizo Christianity were but an imitation, then would the expression also be an original one? Would the Mizo Spirituals then also be a mere extension of the western hymns and musical traditions? Many of these queries have been explored in the chapters. There is no denying that the basic foundation of the Mizo Christian Theology is deeply embedded in the western theological traditions. However, with the growing sense of cultural selfhood, the need to establish a Mizo Christian Theology has been realized. The need to perceive their god, as a Mizo God, not necessarily the God that the white missionaries worshipped. Not the God belonging to

other cultures, but the God that is borne out of the indigenous culture. Also the need to worship in a manner that is emerges out of their own culture, not by imitation of other cultures. The Mizo theologians have also begun to question whether the theology they had so easily embraced was most suitable for the Mizo society. The western theology was conceived in an entirely different context. It had come about as a natural development and social critique of the problems and context of the western society in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The differences between the western culture and the Mizo culture in 1894 in all terms were too vast, too great. While the west was far more advanced in terms of modernization, the Mizos were still what was considered 'primitive', directly living off nature. Industrialization had become the major mode of production and the defining terms of the economy in the west. The Mizos were 'head hunters' and their economy was still tribal and agrarian in its nature.

The problems that the western society encountered were therefore drastically different from the problems of the Mizo society. Thus, although the theology that the west propounded may have been well suited to their society, it cannot be said the same of the Mizos. The life and society was consciously or unconsciously imbibed into the Mizo culture, which resulted in the problematization of the Mizos sense of cultural selfhood. When the Gospel had first been imparted to the Mizos and the need for a 'saviour' from their 'sins' was stressed by the white missionaries, they felt no need for such a 'saviour' for they had no sense of sin (Hminga 57). This in itself is the main difference in the conceptions of man and God between the two cultures. Ministers of the Church like Z.T. Sangkhuma blames the Mizos' overconfidence in the white missionaries and to some extent the missionaries themselves as the root cause of the suppression of the Mizo traditional expressions (Pachau 108). Giving way to the freedom of indigenous and creative forms of religious expression becomes the root solution in the formation of the Cultural identity as well as a healthy development of the Church and hence the society as a whole.

Modern Mizo theologians like Vanlalauva have stressed the need to develop a Mizo Christian theology, that has emerged out of the very hearth of the Mizo culture and not one that would be a mere imitation of the west. And for this he believes that the first and the most important step that has to be taken is the formation of a solid and sound



sense of Mizo identity (31-32). The construction of the Mizo Christian theology has been an ongoing process. This is evident especially after the first wave of revival that had shaken the Mizos. In spite of their limitations, it is important to note that it was this need to define their own cultural theology that drove many people to form their sects. The sects have been working in their own way to indigenize and nativize Christianity. Although major denominations have subjected them to severe criticisms, they have made a difference and even affected the theology of even the major denominations. This can be seen in the stylization of the spirituals, the dancing and the use of the drum.

With so many denominations and sects among the Mizos, it may seem to be impossible to create a Mizo Christian Theology that would extend to all Mizo Christians. True that the multiplicity of these Mizo theologies does not solidify the concept a Mizo Christian Theology. But this does not mean that there has to be one homogenous theology that caters to all sects and denominations to create a Mizo Christian Theology. The division of the Mizo population into these various groups would then seem to be a big obstruction to formulate a theology that is culture specific. Or extending it, even to the unified Mizo Christian identity. This would be true if only the points of divergences are dwelt upon and stressed. But there are many points of convergence, which need to be studied and accepted. The study of the Mizo Spirituals may present this very point of convergence. Through the Mizo spirituals the possibility of a homogenous Mizo Christian identity and theology become real. Perhaps, the most important point of convergence is the importance of the theology of eschatology plays in each sect and denomination. For most theologies the concept of life after death is central to their theologies. Another obvious point of convergence, that the Mizo Spirituals reveal is the need to express themselves and worship in a medium that is present within their culture. This has resulted in the creation of the Lengkhawm Zai, the usage of the drum and the use of the Mizo poetic language. And there are no sects or denominations that object to these changes towards indigenisation.

The Mizo Christian theology has actually always been there from the very beginning of the Christianity in Mizoram. The basis may have been western, and many aspects of the western have been solidified into the Mizo culture. Simultaneously, the conscious or unconscious step towards indigenisation has been an on going process.

Theologians have also been working to form a contextual Mizo Christian theology. “In defining the context and deliberating the relevant themes, the writers freely drew from traditional culture as well as from contemporary social life. Theological themes drawn from traditional symbols such as ‘Zawlbuk<sup>45</sup> Theology’ and ‘Tlawmngaihna Theology’ were proposed alongside studies on the primal religion of the Mizos and Mizo pre-Christian concepts of God” (Pachauau 107). Thus the Mizo Christian theology and the definition of the Mizo cultural identity represents an element of hybridity. The western traditions brought to them through Christianity are no longer perceived as the ‘other’. They have been imbibed as a part and parcel of the Mizo culture. At the same time the traditional culture has also survived in many ways. Just as certain aspects of the western culture were moulded and re-modeled to suit their needs, certain aspects of the traditional culture have also gone through modifications to create a hybrid identity called the Mizo Christian identity.

Just as the originality of the Mizo Christian theology is questioned, the originality of the Mizo Spirituals may also be scrutinized as such. We already know that, the initial stages of the Mizo Spirituals began with wholly western themes and concepts. The birth of indigenous Spirituals during the third revival in the early 1920’s unlocked the door for the introduction of traditional poetical expressions for Christian usage. The pioneering Spiritual composers dared not use traditional poetical words, even though such manners of expression were intrinsic to the people and could not be contained altogether (Pachauau 107). The Spirituals themselves mirror this hybrid identity of the Mizo Christians. It is not only the themes of the songs that reflect this state of hybridity but the stylistics, the language and the musical instruments. The Lengkhawm Zai, is an embodiment of these two streams of identity that have come together, for it is neither purely traditional nor is it wholly western. The language of traditional poetic expression was revived and incorporated to the Spirituals, yet they were not quite the same but neither were they prosaic or the language of the everyday speech. It is not only the traditional drums that are used in the singing of the Spirituals. Alongside with the drums, western musical instruments, the piano, guitars etc. are also used. The amalgamation of

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<sup>45</sup> Zawlbuk is a traditional institution. Every village had a special building called the Zawlbuk. All young men of a village gather every night after dinner and spend the night in the Zawlbuk. The Zawlbuk represents a symbol of discipline, learning and training for the young Mizo men.

the western and the indigenous seems to be completed in the development of the Mizo Spirituals.

This brings us to the third dimension of the Mizo cultural identity, which further complicates the issue. As mentioned earlier, colonialism had opened the Mizos to a wider world and a sense of larger identity, called the Indian national identity. The Lushai Hills were open to the rest of the world and vice versa. Until then the Mizo identity was a communally tribal identity. Christianity changed this identity to a hybrid called the Mizo Christian identity. But when the Lushai Hills opened up and added to a larger nation, the Indian nation, their fragile sense of cultural selfhood seemed to face another kind of threat. Before the British rule, the Mizos had no sense of nationality apart from their tribal one. Under the British colonial rule, they were 'The Lushai Hills', one of the many states that were under the colonial rulers. But once the British left India, they were suddenly given a nationality that seemed alien and different.

To the Mizo, the Indian identity represented an identity of the "*vai*"<sup>46</sup>. *Vai* being the name that they used to refer to the people of the plains, a different race, a different culture. Not only did they see the difference, the rest of the country also saw that they were 'different'. There seemed to be nothing that they could identify themselves with. Their race, their religion, their clothes, their language, their lives, their mythology all seemed totally foreign. The rest of the country was perceived as the 'other'. And this feeling culminated in the Insurgency that lasted for twenty years. Through all this the Mizo Christian identity was maintained, yet the third aspect of their identity, which they often feel was imposed on them, was still very hard to negotiate. The insurgency led by the Mizo National Front or the MNF had an agenda: 'to protect your land, nationality and religion' (Pachau 160). This plea appealed to the people. Their sense of nationality had assimilated with their sense of religious identity as well as geographical identity. The larger Indian national identity posed as a threat to their 'nationality'. The MNF accused the Indian government of "designs on religious assimilation and Hindu indoctrination", which they said they could not accept as "it leads to suppression of Christianity"(Vanlalhluna 184). It is to be remembered this anger towards the Indian government, the Assam government in particular began when the government did not

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<sup>46</sup> The term *vai* in its origin simple means 'foreigner'. Like the Burmese were referred to as *Kawlvai*.

give them sufficient assistance during the severe Mautam famine in the 1958. Before the Lushai Hills became a part of the Indian nation, the people could move freely between what had become international boundaries. Trade with Myanmar was highly beneficial for the people. But all these had come to an end with the rise of the Indian State. This is one of the many factors that lead to the rise of antagonism against the Indian government.

The insurgency came to an end on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1986, and Mizoram was declared a full-fledged state. On the surface Mizoram, may have assimilated to the larger concept of the Indian national identity, but there are still many barriers that need to be crossed for that. Infact, total assimilation may result in the loss of the other identities that the Mizos are more eager to preserve. After eighteen years, there have been changes in the attitude of the Mizos towards to rest of the country and hopefully vice versa. It was never an inherent bias, but an attitude that evolved out of their experience of living together (Pachua 170). Among the Mizos, the sense of belonging to the larger Indian nation maybe stronger in the urban areas than in the rural areas. This can be attributed to education and direct links and dependence on the central government economically. The change in attitude may be strongly felt after many Mizos have been exposed to other parts of the country for higher education. However, in the rural areas many still believe that the negatives outweigh the positive aspects of the Indian government and nationality. In the hybrid call the Mizo identity, the third dimension, the Indian identity is still in the process of formation, sure but slowly but surely.

The Mizo Spirituals embody the most important aspects of the formation of the Mizo identity, the Mizo Christian identity. The third dimension of the cultural identity may soon be one of the emerging themes in the up coming Spirituals. They are eventually the biggest, the fastest growing and most popular form of entertainment in the Mizo society, whether one may view them as entertainment of religious nature or purely cultural. The Mizo Spirituals have become secularized to a certain extent. The secularization of the Mizo spirituals began with the opening of a separate discipline of the Mizo in universities a few years back. The importance of the Mizo Spirituals to the Mizos culturally and literally have been stressed through this discipline The truth of the matter is that, through Christianity, a new form of expression and entertainment- the Spirituals have been evolved. Call them religious, call them mere 'songs', but we cannot ignore the

fact that the Mizo Spirituals are not just a part of the Mizo Christian Literature but of the 'Mizo Literary Tradition'. Religion defines culture, shaping its many complexities and so has Christianity shaped the society of the Mizos.

The study of the Mizo spirituals has been an exploration into the roots of my culture. It has been an examination and a scrutiny of my experience and my culture. I have not been a critical outsider, rather a critical insider in an attempt to understand my own culture. Asking the questions that I have in my work and attempting to find answers does not taken away the sanctity or importance of the song at any level. But I hope that through my work, I have opened avenues to read the Mizo spirituals in many different ways. That while they may form an integral parts of the Mizo religion it also forms an intrinsic part of the whole Mizo culture and society. The lasting power of the Mizo spirituals lies in this that they though essentially religious, they reflect the Mizos, their metamorphosis and their attempt to form a unique Mizo identity out of their new and old condition. Eventually the Mizo spirituals have culminated as not just Christian music but the Mizo people's music.

## Appendix A

### The Classification of the Mizo Spirituals as in the KHB.

<b>1. God</b>		
a) Praise	-----	1-13
b) Glory	-----	14-21
c) Guidance	-----	22-31
d) Love	-----	32-44
e) Blessings	-----	45-48
<b>2. Jesus Christ</b>		
a) Praise	-----	49-76
b) Birth	-----	77-102
c) Friend of Sinners	-----	103-109
d) Love	-----	110-121
e) Shepherd	-----	122-128
f) Savior	-----	129-151
g) Sufferings	-----	152-187
h) Resurrection	-----	188-197
i) Second Coming	-----	198-206
j) Glory and Judgement	-----	207-211
k) Service	-----	212-223
l) Fellowship with Christ	-----	224-252
m) Faith	-----	253-263
<b>3. The Holy Spirit</b>	-----	<b>264-277</b>
<b>4. The Gospel</b>		
a) Its Message	-----	278-284
b) Invitation	-----	285-302
c) Mission Outreach	-----	303-324
<b>5. The Church</b>	-----	<b>325-329</b>
<b>6. Christian Life</b>		
a) Salvation and Redemption	-----	330-347
b) Service	-----	348-369
c) Conflict	-----	370-381
d) Joy and Peace	-----	382-409
e) Life	-----	410-413
f) Consecration	-----	414-419
<b>7. Eschatology</b>	-----	<b>420-467</b>
<b>8. Children's Songs</b>	-----	<b>468-487</b>
<b>9. Songs for Recitation</b>	-----	<b>488-491</b>
<b>10. Songs for Specific Occasions</b>		
a) New Year and Harvest	-----	492-499
b) Sunday	-----	500-501
c) The Precious Word of God	-----	502-505
d) New Church	-----	506
e) Greetings and Farewells	-----	507-514
f) Weddings	-----	515-518
g) Baptism	-----	519-520
h) Patriotic Songs	-----	521-522
i) Offerings	-----	523-525
j) Christian Family	-----	526-527
k) Ordination	-----	528
l) Closing Hymns	-----	529
<b>11. Single Versed Songs</b>	-----	<b>530-537( Own Trans. KHB Contents)</b>

**The classification of the spirituals in Sacred Songs and Solos, compiled by Ira D Sankey.**

<b>1. God The Father: Creation, Providence and Redemption.</b>	<b>1-23</b>
<b>2. God The Son:</b>	
a) His Birth	24-35
b) His Life and Love	36-82
c) His Names and Titles	83-112
d) His Humiliation, Resurrection and Glory	113-158
e) His Second Coming	159-186
<b>3. The Holy Spirit: His Office and Work</b>	<b>187-202</b>
<b>4. Public Worship:</b>	
a) Songs of Praise	203-256
b) The Word of God	257-269
c) The Lord's Day	270-276
d) The Lord's Supper	277-285
e) Evening and Closing Hymns	286-302
f) Prayer Meetings And Revival	303-333
g) After Meetings	334-352
<b>5. The Gospel:</b>	
a) Its Message	353-368
b) Invitation	369-427
c) Warning and Entreaty	428-461
d) Response and Repentance	462-499
<b>6. The Christian Life:</b>	
a) Christian Fellowship	500-512
b) Divine Guidance and Protection	513-568
c) Desires After Holiness	569-589
d) Consecration	590-642
e) Love, Joy and Peace	643-668
f) Conflict and Victory	669-708
g) Comfort and Sorrow	709-747
h) Service and Reward	748-820
i) Songs of Pilgrimage	821-840
j) Assurance and Testimony	841-906
<b>7. The Life To Come:</b>	
a) Aspirations After Heaven	907-927
b) Heaven Anticipated	928-989
c) The Redeemed In Heaven	990-1024
d) Death and Resurrection	1025-1046
<b>8. Special Occasions:</b>	
a) New Year	1047-1052
b) Seed Time and Harvest	1053-1060
c) Travellers by Land and Sea	1061-1065
<b>9. Christian Missions</b>	<b>1066-1090</b>
<b>10. Christian Endeavor</b>	<b>1091-1126</b>
<b>11. Hymns For Young People</b>	<b>1127-1167</b>
<b>12. Solos and Choir Pieces (Including National Hymns)</b>	<b>1168-1200</b>

**Appendix B**  
**The Spirituals in the original and its translation.**

**Khawvel a Hmangaih**  
Composed by Rokunga

Pathianin khawvel a hmangaih,  
A fa mal neih chhun a pe;  
Amah chu a ring apiangin,  
Chatuan nunna an neih nan.

A hming Maka, Remruattua,  
Rem Lal Pathian chaka,  
A hming-Remruattua,  
Chatuan Pa, Remna lal, an ti ang.

Eng vang nge maw a hming Maka,  
Remna Lal a lo nih le?  
Thianghim famkim ni mahsela,  
Mi sual kei mi hnar si lo.

Chutriang hmangaihna luipui chu,  
A luang chhuak ka ram thlengin;  
Ka thinlungah hla mawi min pe,  
Lawm hlain ka luang liam ta.

For God So Loved the World  
Translated by Lalthankima

For God so loved this world of ours,  
That he gave his only son;  
By whoever puts his trust in him,  
Everlasting life can be won.

Most Wonderful, a Councillor,  
His name is Prince of Peace,  
Everlasting Father,  
True God is He, evermore the same.

Truly do we call Him Wondrous,  
Rightly named him Peaceful Prince  
For he seeks to reconcile us,  
Longs to save us from our sins.

Now, God's mercy like a river,  
Flows and swells through every place,  
And my heart is overflowing,  
With a new song to His praise.

**A Nunna A Pe Ta**  
Composed by Rokunga  
Hla Thar Bu No. 34

Kalvari tlang chung  
Lunggaia ruma khan,



A lo tuar, a hmangaihte tan,  
A Pa thutiam hlenin.

A ropuiin a va hlu em!  
Kan Chhandamtu lungngaia khan.  
Hringfa sual thawi makmawhte tan.  
A nunna a pe ta.

Kan sual thawina turin,  
Kawng dang a awm lawm ni?  
Engatinge van Lal fa chuan  
Thihna kher alo tuar?

Thisen hlu tak chhuaka  
Thihna ngamtu ngei khan,  
Khawvel sual tan a nun pek kha  
Lei tinrengin fak se.

Thisen hlu tak chhuaka  
Thihna ngamtu ngei khan  
Khawvel sual tan a nun pek kha  
Lei tinrengin fak se.

Ka thla, ve kal ta la,  
Kalvari tlang chuan,  
Rinna nung sinin li kir la,  
Ka fak tawp thei lo vang.

**He Gave His Life.**  
Translated by Lalthankima

He suffered agonies,  
On Calvary's distant hill,  
And through His death for sinners' sake  
Revealed His Father's will.

How precious was the sacrifice,  
He made upon a cross on high,  
The Son of God laid down His life,  
For men condemned to die.

Why should the Son divine  
Die on that shameful tree?  
There was no other way in which  
A sinner could be free.  
His precious blood was given,  
He conquered death and hell,  
The great salvation found in Him  
Each human tongue should tell.

My soul, turn to the Cross,  
Look on that holy hill,  
Be clothed in living faith and love;  
Let praise thy spirit fill.

**Ka Ralthuamna Ka Dam Ngam Lo**  
Comopsed by Thanghuta  
KHB No. 381

*Ka ralthuamna ka dam ngam lo,  
Aw ka chenna raltitna hmun  
Nitin thlemtu chuan min do thin  
Aw ka Tiantu chu phatsan turin.*

*Aw min tuam la Imanuel  
I thlarauvin min tuam ang che  
He khawvel soal thim kulhpui hi  
I tan ka do leh ang e.*

*Chau leh ngui taka ka awm in  
I tan zam hmel ka put pawhin  
Dotute tana Lallukhum  
Aw I tiam kha min hrilh nawn leh rawh.*

*Aw han thlir the ka Chhandamtu  
I thisena I tlansate,  
He khawvel soal thim kulh chhungah  
Aw an tang Lalpa chhiar sen loh te.*

*Nangin min puih leh hmelma te  
Ka hneh ang I thisen zarah  
I chatuan roluah pui turin  
Aw soal bawih ata ka hruai chhuak ang.*

*Nakinah khua a var hunin  
Ka chhandamtu chu ka hmu ang  
Chu tah ralthuam ka dah tawh ang  
Aw, puan var ropui mi sintir ang.*

**I Dare Not Lay My Armour By**  
Translated by Rev. J.M Lloyd

*Surrounded by my foes am I,  
I dare not lay my armour by;  
The tempter tries with all his might  
To make me a traitor in His sight.  
Emmanuel, each day and hour  
Arm me with thine own spirit's power,  
That is my strength, I may begin  
To storm the dark fort of sin.*

*Lord, I am weak and battle- sore,  
Often disheartened by the war;  
But the thought of a victor's crown,  
Forbids me to lay my armour down.*

*On those whom thy did blood did redeem,  
I pray thee shed thy mercy's beam;  
Lock in sin's dark fort here below-  
Come, Lord thou cannot let them go.*

In Calvary's redemptive flow,  
I too can conquer every foe;  
And set free, a new life to win,  
Thou souls who are now enslaved by sin.

The light will break and darkness flee,  
Then my Redeemer I shall see;  
And I shall lay my armour down,  
Clothe Thou me, Lord, in a spotless gown.

**Zoram Hmangaitu Lalpa**  
Composed by Lianmanga  
KTP Hla Bu No. 221

*Zoram hmangaitu Lalpa,*  
A thlawnin Chanchin Tha min pe;  
Hei leh chen hi kan tawmpui,  
Lalpa min ngaidam ang che.

Kan tih tur Chanchin Tha puan darh,  
A thlawna pe chhuak turin;  
Khawvel zawng zawng hi,  
Lalpa tan thawk chhuak nghal r'u

Dak ula lote en r'u,  
Seng turin an hmin zo ta e,  
In favah kengin tunah,  
Lalpa tan thawk chhuak nghal r'u.

Khawvel zawng zawng Lalpa tan,  
Kan bei zel ang kan hneh hma chuan;  
Mahni, tawngtai, thilpekin,  
Lal ram thar kan din zel ang.

Harh r'u Zofate harh r'u  
Hnehna ropui kan chang thuai ang;  
Kan Pathian hmingin puanzar,  
Kan zar ngei ang khawvelah.

**Lord, Lover of Mizoram**  
Translated by Rev. C.L Hminga

Lord, Lover of Mizoram,  
You have given us the Gospel freely;  
But we have been keeping it to ourselves,  
Forgive us, we beseech Thee, Lord.

Our duty to preach the Gospel,  
To give it out freely;  
Till the whole wide world  
Becomes the Kingdom of the Lord.

Look around and see the fields,  
The harvest is ripe and plentiful;  
Set out now with your sickles,  
To start harvesting for the Lord.

The whole wide world for the Lord,  
We shall press on till we win;  
By giving self, materials and prayers,  
We shall conquer new fields for the Lord.

Wake up! Sons of Mizoram,  
The great victory will soon be ours;  
In the name of our God we shall unfurl,  
His banner in the world.

### **Hmangih Tun A Tuar**

Composed by Dr. Ramdinthara  
KTP Hla Bu No. 165

A mak mang e, van Lalber chuan,  
Inngaitlawma hringmi a chan lai khan,  
Nuamsa thei khan hrehawm tinreng chu tuarin,  
Ranthleng leh kraws maw a lo thlan le!

Hmangaih luat vanga inngaitlawmin,  
Hrehawm leh thihna a rawn thlang ta,  
Hmangaihten malsawmna an chan theih nan,  
Hmangih Tun a tuar a tul si thin.

A hniankhunha kan zui ve nan,  
En tawn tur amahin a hnutchhiah kha;  
Mi dang tana malsawmna lo ni yuring,  
Keini pawh kan tuar a tul ngei ang.

Hmangaihna famkim a lang thin,  
Engkim huama tuarna hmuna hianin;  
Lal Isua I hmangaihzia lanna turin,  
Engtia nasa nge I lo tuar ve?

### **Lover's Suffering**

Translated by Dr. Laltluangliana Kiangte

It's amazing that heav'nly King,  
Meekly set himself mere an earthly man,  
Who can take easy had suffered agonies,  
By choosing manger and cross for us.

Demeaning oneself 'cause out of true love,  
For he had chosen distress and death;  
Blessing be showered for the real loved ones,  
He who loved must suffer by himself.

If we follow in his footsteps,  
For he himself had shown and set the pace,  
Just to be a man of blessing for others,  
Forbearance be given to ourselves.

Abiding love has been displayed,  
Here by suffering whatever has to be faced;  
Just to show your love our dear Lord Jesus,

For how much you've been suffering for Him.

Aw, Lalpa, Davida Leh A Thlah Arsi  
Compose by Patea  
KHB No. 9

Aw Lalpa, Davida leh a thlah Arsi,  
I felna ram atan nanging min buatsaih;  
Ka lawmna tuifinriat angin a liam a,  
Thih lui kamah zaiin I hming ka fak ang.

Aw Lalpa, zaiin I hming ka fak ang,  
Khawvela I siam zawng zawng zai se;  
Lalpa chawimawi nan awte chhuah ru,  
Leilung hi zaiin a lo khat ang.

Mihring ka nih hma pawhin Lalpa Isu,  
Thisena man dang beisei lova min tlan;  
Chhiar sengin han hrethiam teh reng ila aw,  
Khawvela zaia tikhat turin ka bei ang.

Lalpa khawiah nge ni hmun mi buatsaiha?  
Daniela angin tukvehaah ka thlir ang.  
Rangkachak thianghlim lah a hmun ropui chu  
Hrehawmah pawh thingthi talin ka thlir ang.

Aw, Imanuel lei leh van that siam chu  
A dung leh vangah te han leng vel ila,  
Buaina tinreng tuara ka then tak te kha  
Van ropuina hain an hmel ka hmu ang.

**O Bright Star of David**  
Translated by Rev. J.M Lloyd

O Bright Star of David and all of his race  
In Glory hast thou preordained me a place,  
The joy in my heart expands like the sea,  
Some day, beyond Jordan, I'll magnify Thee.

To thee, O Redeemer, my song I'll raise  
Let all creation be filled with praise;  
Let every voice to thy glory sing,  
And every creature its anthem bring.

Thy love did embrace me before I was made  
And before I was born my ransom was paid;  
When I ponder upon thy measureless grace,  
I wish that the world could resound with thy praise.

Emmanuel, where is that heavenly place,  
Where I shall forever look upon thy face;  
I kneel and I pray now like Daniel of old,  
In sorrow I long for that city of gold.

I am yearning to walk in the streets above,  
Of the city thou hast created in love

And dear ones clothed all in glorious' array,  
Whom long I have lost I shall see them that day

**Aw Haleluia! Lalpa ropui ber**

Composed by R. L. Kamlala

KHB No. 8

Aw Haleluia! Lalpa ropui ber,  
A fakna kil tinah fawn se;  
Hnam tin lal ropui leh zahawn ber chuan,  
Mi thinlung chhungah thu han sawi leh rawh.

Hruai kir leh ang che kal bo tate;  
Muthlute chu kaitho leh ang che;  
Khawvel hruaitu, Arsi ropui ber,  
Bona ram leh lungngaihna ram chhun eng rawh.

Lalpa Divas leh hruaitu Mosia,  
Lei arsi lian an her liam ta;  
Tunah Lal Krista leh Thlarau Thianghlim  
Kan Puithiam Lalber leh kan Arsi chu.  
Tui leh leilung reng an dinchhuah hmain,  
Hriat Phak loh Pathian I lo ni;  
Ni leh thla leh arsite zawng zawng khian,  
I zarah enna ropui an nei ve.

Thunehna ropui, chawimawina sang ber,  
Malsawmna nei tlak a ni e;  
Lailung pian hma laia talh tawh Beram No,  
A thisenin khawvel chhandam rawh se.

**O, Hallelujah! Most Glorious Lord!**

Translated by Rev. L.N Ralte

O, Hallelujah! Most gracious Lord,  
May your praise resonate in every corner,  
The greatest and the most honorable king of every nation,  
Speak again in the heart of the people.

Bring in those who have gone astray,  
Wake up the sleepy,  
O Guide of the world, most glorious star,  
Shine on the land of the lost and the sorrowful.

King David and leader Moses,  
The great stars of the earth were gone!  
Now Lord Christ and the Holy Spirit,  
Our High Priest and our star.

Before land and water came into existence  
You were already the unsearchable God,  
The sun, the moon and all the stars  
Possess their lights through you.

Great authority and the highest honor,  
He is worthy to have;

The lamb who was slain when the earth was formed  
May He save the world with his blood.

**Aw Lalpa, Chungnung Ber**

Compose by Upa Thanga  
KHB No. 402

Aw Lalpa, Chungnung ber, kan fak hle a che!  
Pathian Nung leh Engkimtithi I ni e;  
Hnehchhiahte, bawih, riangvaite, misualte thian,  
Fahrahte, retheite Lal, Pa leh Pathian.

Tawngtaina chhangtu Pathian I nih vangin,  
I miten an mamawh an dil I pe fo;  
I fate tap leh rum I lo ngaithla thin,  
Thu dik tan, thil tha ti, I ensan ngai lo.  
Tin heng hi mi lian leh mi te te hraitir la,  
Mipuite leh Nangmah ngei dotute berten;  
Tuna chhandama kan la awm ve theih nan,  
Enge kan tih tak ang? ti rawh se, Amen.

Hman tin thim chhuahsan leh bawih chhual lo lawm se,  
Chungnung berah Pathian ropui ber rawh se;  
Lei chung a lawte chuangah rem leng se,  
Hosana! Hosana! Tiin zai rawh se.

Tin, mi tin hnenah I hming lo zahawn se,  
I ram ropui takin lo thleng zel rawh;  
Vana min an tih angin leia miten,  
I duhzawng ti rawh se, ram tinah, Amen.

**Oh Lord Most Supreme**

Translated by Dr Laluanliana Khiangte

Oh Lord Most Supreme, we praise and extol you,  
You are our omnipotent and loving God  
Friend of the oppressed, the poor, slaves and sinners,  
Lord, Father and God to orphans and the needy.

As you are God who responds to our prayers,  
You often grant your people their supplications,  
You hear the cry and the groan of your children,  
You support those who choose the truth and do good.

Proclaim these both to the great  
So that the people and those who have grimly  
Opposed you maybe constrained to cry out,  
What shall we do now that we too may be saved?

Let every tribe from darkness and slavery be freed,  
Rejoice and sing, "Glory to God in the Highest,  
Peace on Earth, good will towards men, Hosanna,  
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna, Amen".

**Aw Ropui Ber Haleluia**

Composed By R.L. Kamlala

KHB No. 72

Aw ropui ber, Haleluia,  
Kan fak a che, immanuel;  
Chawimawina leh lalna zawng zawng  
Chatuanin I ta a lo ni.

Haleluia, Haleluia, Amen

Khawvel hringmi hnam ze tinreng,  
Angel var nen lung kan rual e;  
I tlanna thisen azarah,  
Salem thar tualah kan leng za.

Aw, a thukin a va sang em,  
I finna leh I hmangaihna;  
Thlarau khawvela ri mawite  
Leh van tawngten an puang seng lo.

Aw, min hrilh rawh, thukna ropui,  
Ran thleng leh thing anchhe dawng leh;  
Vana Lallukhum a inzawm,  
Lei Eden leh Salem thar nen.

**O, Most Glorious, Hallelujah!**  
Translated by Rev. K. L Ralte

O, Most Glorious, Hallelujah!  
We praise you Emmanuel,  
All adoration and all sovereignty  
Belong to you eternally  
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Amen.

All people of the world, every nation and tribe,  
With holy angels we are all of one mind  
Through your blood of redemption  
We belong together to one another in the new Salem.  
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Amen.

O how deep and how high  
Your wisdom and your love!  
All the instrument of beautiful music of the spiritual world,  
All the languages of heaven are inadequate to proclaim.  
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Amen.

O tell me, the great depth!  
The manger and the cursed tree,  
And the Crown in heaven are linked together,  
With the Eden of the earth and the new Salem.  
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Amen.

**Muanna A Kim**  
Composed by R.L. Kamlala  
Hla Thar Bu 230

Muanna a kim, lawmna a kim,



Hmangaihna eng ka lal hmelah;  
Sun lai a hnem, tuar lai a hnem,  
Vakvaite tan in nuam.

A awmna hmun tin van a ni,  
A ke bulah chen hi a nuam;  
Lungngaihna leh thim hnuai a chau,  
Lawmin a chawlhthir thin.

Aw, kan mi ngaih kalte ka hmu,  
Hmangaihna engah chuan an lang;  
Lungruala len lai reng a nuam,  
"Rawn pan la aw," min ti.

Khawvelin a hliam hnute zawng,  
Puan var sinin an leng ta a;  
An rumna leh hring nun a reh,  
Angelte dung an thul.

Awmkhua har e ka tak leiah,  
Mahse hmangaihna Lal zarah;  
Ka rau-vi-thla lungduhte nen,  
Vanah a han leng thin.

Ka ngai a che aw, lawmna ber,  
I tuarnain tap lai a hnem;  
Ka lenna ram thlaler a ni,  
Then che ka zuam lul lo!

### **Perfect Peace**

Translated by Lalthankima

There's perfect bliss, yes, perfect peace,  
By the love – light in my Lord's face;  
Joy for the sad, their sorrows cease,  
Oh! What a resting place!

Wherever He be Heaven is there,  
'Tis joy to be, Oh, at his feet;  
Those in the gloom that weary lot,  
With rest my Lord thus greet.

Here in the body lonely pent,  
My soul longs for home and the day-  
When with loved ones my time be spent,  
And I with my Lord stay.

I see dear ones who've gone before,  
Oh, I see them roam in love's light;  
Earthly sorrows they know no more,  
Like an angel- gay and bright.

I long for Thee, my heart's delight,  
The bleeding wound my comfort be;  
Hungry and footsore here I fight,  
To nurture me I need Thee.

Now, God's mercy like a river,  
Flows and swells through every place,  
And my heart is overflowing,  
With a new song to His praise.

**Thisen Hlu, Thisen Hlu**  
Composed by Rev. Liangkhaia  
KHB No. 141

*Thisen hlu, thisen hlu,*  
*Thing kraws chung a luang khan;*  
*Sual lakah min tlanin,*  
*Mi sual thiam min chantir;*  
*Mi sual dum ber a varna chu,*  
*Kalvari thisen hlu a ni.*

*Aw, thisen, thisen hlu,*  
*Van kawng min hawnsaktu,*  
*Van ram min thlen hunin,*  
*Kan hla chuai lo tur chu;*  
*Thisen, thisen, thisen thisen,*  
*Tiin bang lovin an zai ang.*

*Aw Tlang mawi Kalvari,*  
*Miten hmusit mah se,*  
*Tlang dang zawng aain,*  
*Kei zawng ka ngaina hle,*  
*Aw hlimna tlang, aw hmun thianghlim,*  
*Pathian thisen luanna chu.*

**Precious Blood**  
Translated by Dr. Laltluangliana Khiangte

Precious blood, precious blood,  
Upon the Cross it flows,  
Redeeming us from our sins.  
Guilts are cleansed  
The greatest sinners are washed awhite,  
By the precious blood of Calvary.

Oh love-blood, precious blood,  
That shows our heavenly gate!  
When it takes us to heaven,  
A ceaseless song would be;  
Precious blood, blood, blood, blood, Oh blood!

Oh beautiful Mount Calvary,  
Though the world looks down on you,  
Much more than any of those hills,  
I'd like it best  
Joyous mount holiest of all places,  
There flows the precious blood of God.

**Khualzinna Ram**  
Composed by Upa T. Romama

KTP Hla Bu No. 299

Khaulzinna ram khawvelah hian,  
Chatuan khawpui ka pan lain;  
'Hnung lam hawiin lo kir leh rawh',  
Tiin khawvelin min lo au va.

Hawilopar mawi, Krista ka thliak ta,  
Hmangaih takin min chelh reng a;  
Ka lungawi e, ka zai zel ang,  
Ka hawi kir san phal tawh lo'ng.

Hringnun khawvel ka thlir changin,  
Lei mawinaten min lo hip thin;  
Mahse hmangaitu Lal Krista,  
Chatuan Hawilopar ka thliak ta.

Ka sualnate a tlengfai a,  
Sillhfen tharin min thuam ta a;  
'Halu suh ang che', ti hian ka hria,  
Ka hawi kirsan leh phal tawh lo vang.

Sual vanga mittui a hul a,  
Jerusalem thar ka thlir a;  
Ka lawmna ber krista zuiin,  
Zawi tein ka kal dem dem tawh ang.

### **Sojourner's Song**

Translated by Catherine Lalhruaitluangi

Amidst this land of sojourners,  
I walk to the Eternal Land;  
And the world's calling out to me,  
With cries, "Come back and turn back to me".

I've plucked Christ, the Eternal Flower,  
Holding me with love steady hands;  
Happy with Jesus I'll sing on,  
I cannot turn back on Him.

When I look at the mortal world,  
Its transient pleasure attract me,  
But the loving Jesus Christ  
Eternal Flower, I have plucked.

He has cleansed me, my sins are gone,  
With new clothes he has adorned me;  
I feel him say, "Don't be afraid",  
I cannot bear to turn back on him.

Jesus has wiped away my sinful tears,  
Looking at New Jerusalem,  
I am learning to slowly walk,  
Following my happiness- Jesus.

**Engkima Ka Engkim I Ni**

Composed by Ziakkawia  
Hla Thar Bu No. 164

Aw ka chenna he lei hmun hi,  
Thlaler ram ro lungngaihna chauh;  
Khi lamah khian ka la leng ang,  
Beram No Isua hnenah chuan,  
Ka chenna tur aw ka ram khi,  
Ka ngai e, lungduh an lenna;  
Thlir zel ila tlante an za-  
Lenna ra, nuam chu.

Ka tum, ka ram. Ka chenna hi,  
Leiah rethei mah ilangin,  
Ka chhandamtu retheite tan,  
Lawmna tuikhur hlu a hawng e.

Aw ka Tiantu, I tuarna chu,  
Hmangaihna hmu chiang thei ila;  
Engkima ka engkim I ni,  
Ka Thlarau tan engkim I ni,  
Rangkachak tual nuama leng tur,  
I tuarnain a man tawk e;  
Aw, hmangaihna a lo ni,  
Kei mi rethei tan.

Aw Lal Isu, hmu thei ila  
Lungduh zawng tual an lenna chu;  
Kalvaria hmangaihna zarah,  
Chi tin hman tinte an leng za  
Kei p[awh I retheihna zarah,  
Thlaler ram ro ka chhuahsan ang;  
Aw ka Lalpa, min hruai ang che,  
Hmangaihna ramah.

Khawvel a ropui leh lawmna,  
A ral zel ang a mawina nen;  
Chhandamtu kiangah ka leng ang,  
A ropina zam velah chuan lei lawmnate ka ngai lo vang.  
Tin a hmangaih chungah chuanin;  
Chatuan lawm hla kan sa tawh ang.

Thou Art My All in All  
Translated by Dr. Laltluangliana Khiangte

In this earthly life so dreary  
I am desolate and weary,  
But the Lamb is my Redeemer-  
Soon I'll be with Him forever.  
How my soul repeats the story,  
How I long to see His glory,  
In that free dwelling  
With His saints in joy.

Though I am so poor and helpless,  
Glorious hopes support my weakness,

And the wells of joy and gladness  
He has opened for my sadness.

Could I see, O my Redeemer,  
In Thine anguish, love so tender,  
I would find Thine all abundant  
Grace in every way sufficient.  
I am sinful and unworthy,  
Yet thy matchless love did find me  
Gave me life and joy eternal  
Through thy saving power.

O Lord Jesus, grant the vision  
Splendid of that holy city  
Truly reconciled in Calvary,  
Through Thy great humiliation  
I obtained a rich possession.  
Saviour guide lead me onward  
To thy land of love.

Earthly pleasures fade and perish,  
Earthly joys and glories vanish  
For the glory of His presence.  
The yearning of my heart is intense  
Earthly joys no longer hold me  
There's a nobler theme to rouse me;  
Soon with songs that last forever  
To the lamb I'll sing.

**Aw Min Hruai La**  
Composed by Lalruai  
KTP Hla Bu No.391

Hun kha leh chen min kaihruaitu,  
Hre lo hian maw ka lo vakvai;  
Sual thim zingah hlimna zawngin,  
Ka thla tuihalin a chau va.

Aw min hruai la, min kai rawh,  
Khawngaih thahrui, ka ngai em che;  
Bo hmang ka ni aw Lalpa,  
Keimah mai chuan ka kal thiam lo.

Ka zinna ram kawng chhukchhovah,  
Thlemna thlipui an hrang lua e;  
Pen khat pawh ka kal thian nem maw,  
Thlaler ram ro ka pelh hma loh chuan.

Lungchhir mittui tla chung hianin,  
Tunah Lalpa ka lo mkir e;  
Khawngaih banin min kuangkuaah la,  
Ka thla muangin min chawlhtir rawh.

Hmangaih aw nemin min chhem a,  
Lalpa, nang ngei ka rochan chu;  
A va hlu em, kei ka tan chuan,

Ka nun zawng hi I ta a ni.

**Thou Guide Me On, Hold Unto Me**  
Translated by Dr. Laltluangliana Khiangte

Of passing time Thou leaded me,  
I wandered here unknowingly,  
Seeking joy in dark pool of sin,  
My thirsting soul is tired worn-out.

Thou guide me on, hold unto me,  
I need it most your powerful grace,  
Be Stray always in sin, Oh Lord  
Alone I can't walk without you.

I travel on way up and down,  
Ravaging temptations around,  
Lone step I take hardly ahead,  
Before I passed this wilderness.

With flowing tears and regretful heart,  
Back unto Thee I've come O Lord,  
Hold me fast with abounding grace,  
Let my soul rest in pleasing peace.

Blow me with soft and tender voice,  
My perfect share is Thou art Lord,  
So precious was to me alone,  
Ever be yours is life of mine.

**Hnehna Puang Chhuak Rawh U**  
Composed by Dr. Ramdinthara *Sailo*  
KTP Hla Bu No. 228

Zan a lo thleng mek e, muang lovin bei r`u,  
Zam lovin sual ral chu do zel r`u;  
Dak la han thlir vel the, lanu val rual te,  
Sualna tur-in fam a chantir e.

Hnehna puang chhuak rawh u, Lal Isua hmachhuanin,  
Boral mekte chhan chhuak thuai rawh u;  
Kan hneh ngai dawn a ni, sual thiltihtheihna chu,  
Kan hneh ang hnehtu Pathian vangin.

Thlir la kan Zoram hi, aw a paw ngei e,  
Kil tinah sual ral a hrang zual e;  
Harh a hun tawh em e, Lal sipai rualte,  
Hnehna hla nen ram I la ang u.

He khawvel thim zingah eng atan min tir,  
Hlau lovin sual thim I tawn ang u;  
Kan Pathian hrin chuan khawvel a ngam zel si,  
Rinnain hnehna chu kan chang dawn.

**We Shall Win**  
Translated by Dr. Laltluangliana Khiangte

Toil on without delay as the night draws near,  
Face all evil forces with no fear,  
Watch and look around those young men and maidens,  
Devil's agents send them straight to death.

In the name of the Lord spell out the winning cry,  
Save it on the dying soul of man,  
Then we shall overcome evil design of sin  
We shall win as God is on our side.

See around our own land, sorrow is the note,  
Evil forces sprang out everywhere,  
A high time to revive for the troops of king,  
Marching on with words of victory.

We are called on to shine on in this darkling world,  
Let us face the dark side without fear,  
Every child of God shall win the foe of world,  
By faith we'll be winners in the field.

**Ka Lalpa Hmun Ropui**  
Composed by Ziakkawia  
KHB No. 422

Tunah a thar hmangaihna eng nuamah,  
Kan Lalpa hmun ropui;  
Lawmna pangpar rirtui a vul tah chuan,  
A chul leh tawh lo vang.

Lawmin nakinah kan inkhawm ang,  
Van angel var rual zawng zawngte nen;  
Lungangaihna rama rumna zawng hi,  
Kan Lalpa hmaah lawmna hla tur,

Ka dam lai ni hi a tlak hma zawngin,  
Ka tan chhum a zing thin;  
Nakinah chu ram ka thlen ve hun chuan,  
Ka ngai lawng khawvel hi.

Tin, chu ram khawpui lam chu pan zelin,  
Lei hi ka hlat zel a;  
Tunah a par rirtui ka tem ve ta,  
Aw a va nuam dawn em!

Ka chhandamtu hmel duhawm hliam hnu khan,  
A lal thutthleng chungah;  
Ro a rel dawn tlansa te an lawm nan,  
Haleluia Amen.

**With Joy We Shall Meet**  
Translated by Dr. Laltuagliana Khiangte

On high where Our Lord reigns there is brightness,  
Divine love ever new,  
Heavenly flowers all fragrant and unfading

Giving pleasures that's true.

With joy we shall meet in His presence,  
White as the angels around the throne,  
Sorrow and sadness all transfigured  
Nothing but joy can ever be known.

Dark clouds often gather all around me  
Before life's sun grows dim,  
But earthly sorrows and joys will vanish,  
When I shall meet with Him.

As I draw nearer to my heavenly goal,  
The world fades from my sight  
Even now the flowers are spreading their fragrance  
From that land of delight.

The face of the Saviour, wounded for me,  
I shall see enthroned then,  
He reigns, all redeemed shall sing his praises,  
Hallelujah, Amen.

Thumak Ka Sawi Nin Theih Loh Chu  
Composed by Rev. Liangkhaia  
KHB No. 171

Thumak ka sawi nin theih loh chu,  
Kalvari chanchin a ni;  
Engtin nge Pathian Fa mal chu,  
Mi sual ka tan a lo thih?  
Kalvari tlang  
Ka ngaihtuah tawp hlei thei lo.

Nangni, van angel thianglim leh  
Serafim ropuite u;  
Nitin Lalpa rawngbawltu leh  
A duhzawng ti thinte u,  
Kalvari tlang  
Chanchin min hrilh thei lawm ni?

Aw ka thlarau, chu tlangah chuan,  
Chhun zanin va leng fo la;  
I Lalpa, kraws lerah awm chu,  
Nungin I va hmu ang a;  
Kalvari Tlang  
Chanchin a lo hrilh ang che.

Chhim leh Hmar, chhak leh Thlanga mi,  
A ke bulah lo kun se;  
A pui a pang, a lian a te,  
A hming fakin zai rawh se,  
Kalvari-ah  
An tan a tuar tawh vangin.

**Wondrous Words**  
Translated by Dr Laltluangliana Khiangte



Wondrous Words which I cant express  
Is the story of Calvary,  
How the real Son of God,  
Died for a sinful man like me.  
Oh Calvary Mount  
I'll remember without ceasing.

Heavenly Angels, Oh you holy ones  
You are all great Seraphim,  
Serving God happily each day,  
Doing what he likes best.  
Oh Calvary Mount  
Can't you tell us all about it?

Oh my soul, go to that mountain,  
Day and night you may live there  
You'll see the Lord on the Cross,  
You'll see him there alive.  
Oh Calvary Mount,  
Will tell us all about it.

Oh! Men of south, north, east and west,  
All of you here bow down at His feet,  
All ye people of great and small,  
Praise Him all the time.  
Oh Calvary Mount,  
Here he suffered for us all.

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