

**COLONIALISM, CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES AND
CHANGING PATTERN OF EDUCATION IN MIZO SOCIETY:
A CRITICAL STUDY**

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment for
the Award of the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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under the supervision of

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2007



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Date: 27th July 2007

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "COLONIALISM, CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES AND CHANGING PATTERN OF EDUCATION IN MIZO SOCIETY: A CRITICAL STUDY", submitted by B. Lalzarliana in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY, of Jawaharlal Nehru University has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree of this or any other university and is his original work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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*For my brother
Joseph Lalintluanga Bawitlung*

Acknowledgements

Lalpa tih hi finna bul a ni. Thufingte 1:7

This endeavour cannot happen just because of a personal interest and without help from any quarters. I here list in this small space with hesitation those who helped me in this wonderful enterprise.

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Avijit Pathak for his kind and valuable guidance. In spite of my shortcomings and limitation in the research, he patiently gave support and encouragements. He had enriched, refined and developed many of the thought and ideas in the dissertation. The limits and shortcomings of this research remain mine alone.

I express my gratitude to the University Grant Commission for giving me financial assistance during the course of writing this dissertation.

Throughout the course of this work, many scholars and friends have expressed their interest in the work and make valuable contribution for which I am indebted. I express my thanks to the Champhai District Library, Champhai, Mizoram State Archive, Aizawl, Baptist Church Mizoram, Serkawon for their co-operation and giving me access to valuable books and materials.

I am highly indebted to Dr. Lam Khan Piang and Rev. H. Remthanga for showing keen interest in the work and enriching it with their valuable comments and observations. However, I feel sad that two, Rev Khup Za Go and Pu Laldinliana did not live to see this work finish. They taught me to think differently.

I want to thank Thangmin, F-i, Nunpuii, Aren, Lovi, Thang, Joseph, Ngura and Dhiru for their supports and encouragement in time of need. The Jordan Luiral Society without whom this study would have finished in a shorter period of time but with less joy. A big thanks to Gautam Nath for the wonderful work on the maps.

Finally, I want to thank my family members: Mom, Dad, Mapuii, Sangtei, B-a and my grandmother who prayed unceasingly for me. It is only with your love and support that I am able to reach this far.

*B. Lalarliana
27th July 2007*

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Preface

Academic endeavour is a space within which one grows and developed oneself. Looking at the present situation in the education sphere, one cannot but help feel excited and sometimes overwhelmed by the dynamicity and vibrant vitality within the discipline. The nature of education today has changed a lot from the earlier notions of educating. But, to my mind the classical one still remain the same: the endeavour to develop oneself in all the spheres of life.

Locating my position within the present Indian education system, it is interesting for me to look at my grandfather's time and see the kind of education that they acquired. There exists a complete difference. While for us, the emphasis is more on linking India and Indian traditions, for them it was a completely different world out there with more European leanings. That was my first inkling of what this world differs in. As I am interested in reading books and collecting them, it was a shock for me to look at the earlier Mizo books which were available. All the books were very basic in nature and religious books constitute a large portion of them. In schools, we always study some religious text or the other, but mostly Christian texts. Portions from the Bible, *The Pilgrim's Progress* etc. were learned from the school as well as the Church. It was this overarching issue that led me to consider the hegemonic influence of the church.

Before coming to JNU, of course, one did not understand what hegemony was in the Gramscian term. But, it provided the focus for me to start my interest in the internal dynamics of society and its implication. It finally culminated in this study.

Colonial Education as such was never inside my mind as an area of study before my m.phil. Rather, I was interested in the construction of identity and nationalism in Mizoram and among the Mizo people. In fact, my m.phil interview synopsis was based on the issue of identity among the Mizos, a case study of the *Bnei Manashe* (often referred to as Mizo-Israel). But, after engrossing myself in the

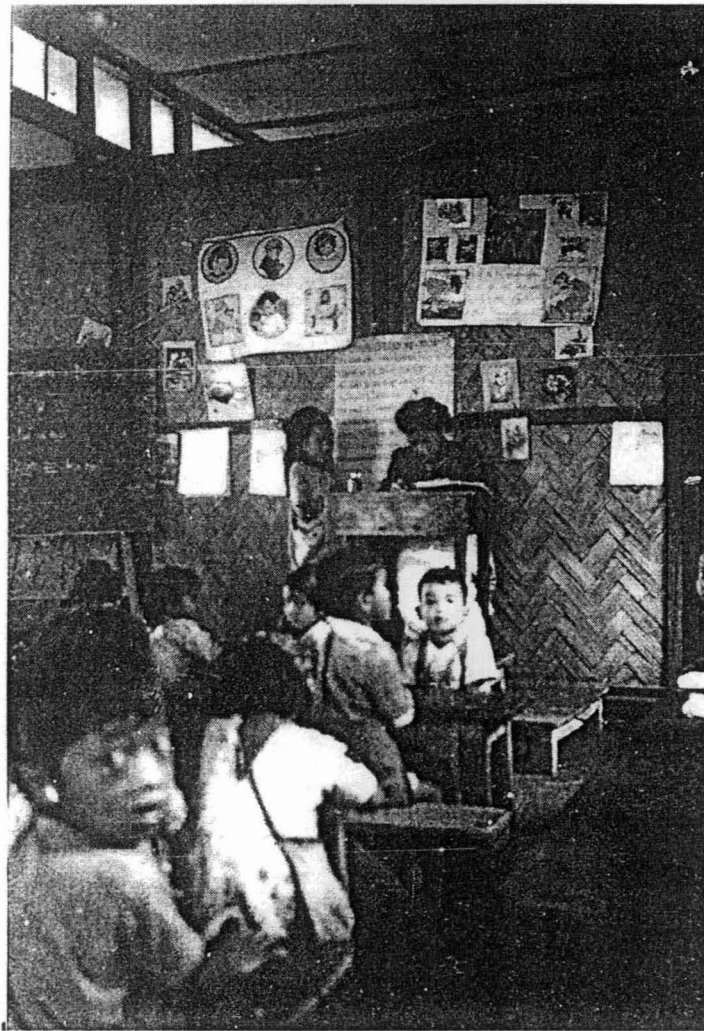
m.phil course work, I feel that rather than looking at the present issue, the roots of the problem needed to be analyzed. In this process, I thus look at colonial education as the site of the origin of the major changes in Mizo society.

Colonial education in some context meant the education provided by the colonial powers viz. the British. But, I took a wider view of the term and use it to include the education provided by the Christian Missions. I bunched them together which might be against some people's notion of colonial. The reason I do it so here is that the two: British Government and Christian Mission in Mizoram work in conjunction with one another. Their level of interdependence is such that to look at education during the colonial period, one cannot separate them into very distinct categories. There is always that underlying strands which run through both of them. However, they revolutionised the educational system in Mizoram.

From my vantage position of a third generation educated Christian. It is a highly interesting journey to delve into the terrains of early Mizo educations. While it is due to their initial contribution that the Mizos, myself included that we are able to come up and participate, the past studies are mostly from the viewpoint of the Church and tended to be sympathetic to the missionaries and thus, criticism was negated to a large extent. Here, I am trying to be an objective observer to the whole scenario. While acknowledging the work of the Christian Mission, I am basically trying to look at the way they structure the Church and education and how it led to the formation of present day Mizo society.



Picture 1. Gardening was an important part of the curriculum



Picture 2. Inside a class-room



Picture 3. Traditional Weaving: A girls' craft



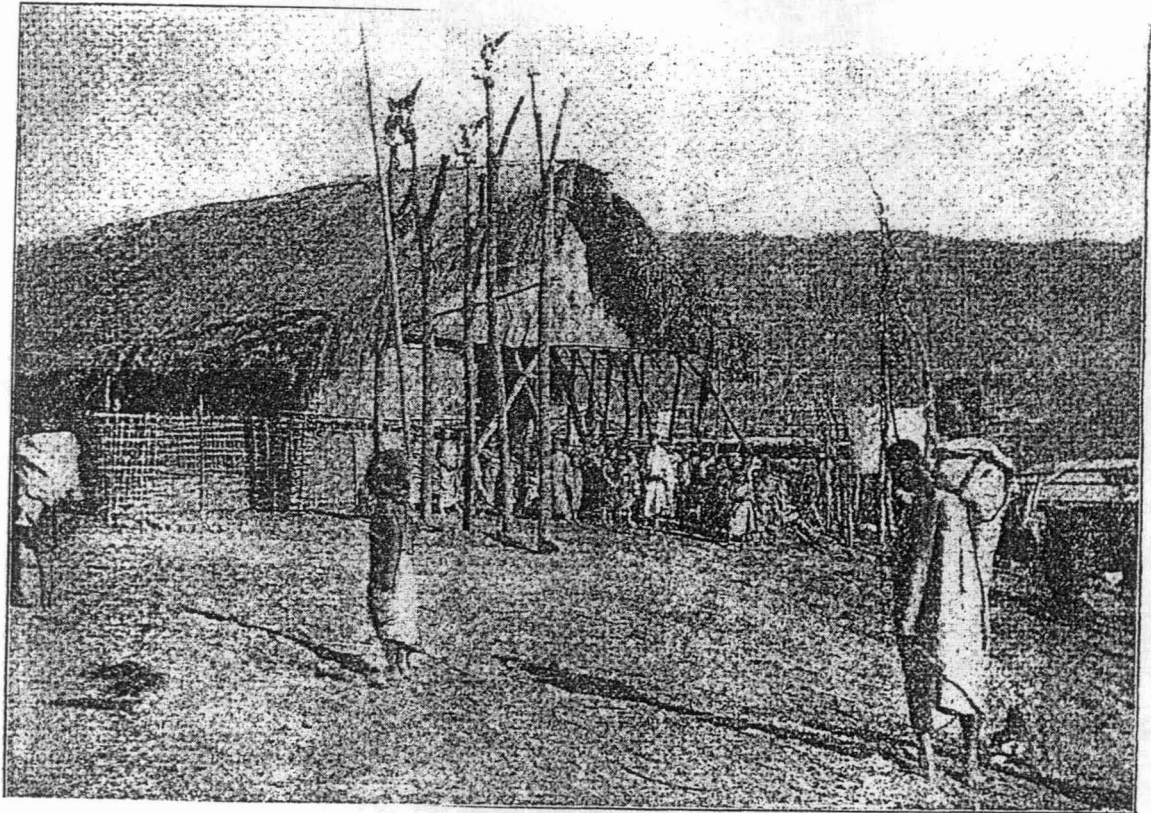
Picture 4. Study and stay fit



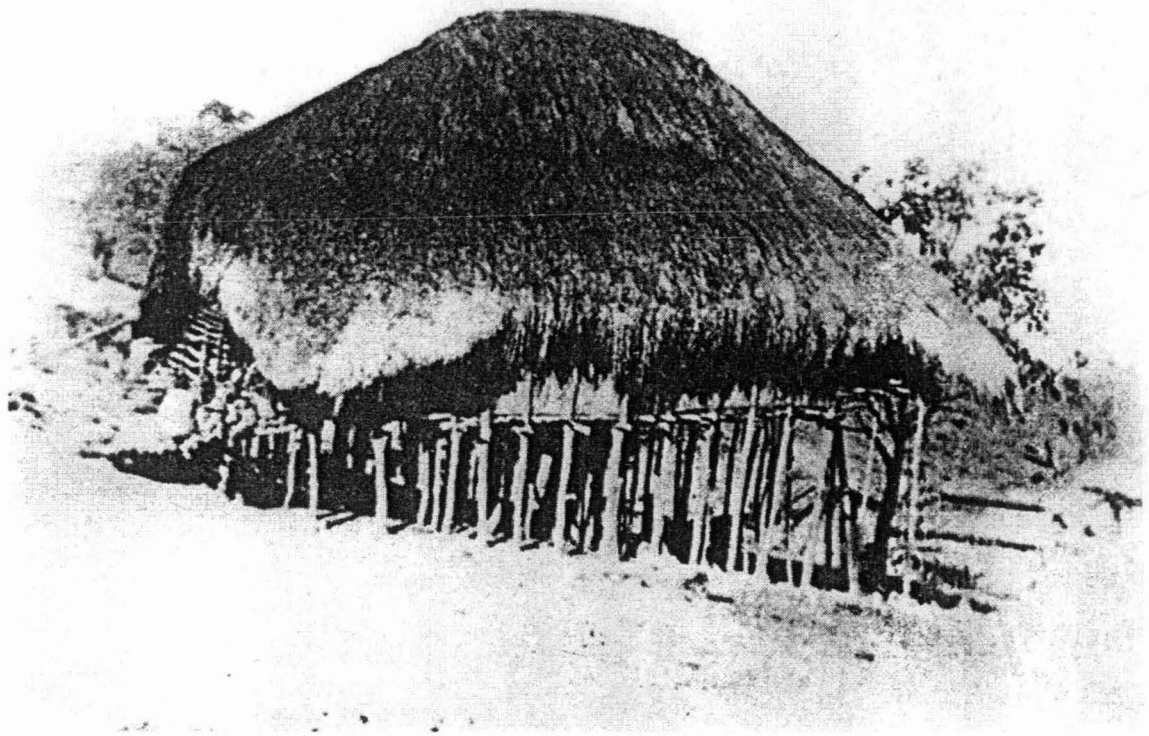
Picture 5. High Aspirations



Picture 6. Grandpa, Tell me more stories!



Picture 7. The Village Chief Residence. The poles outside bore the heads of sacrificial animals



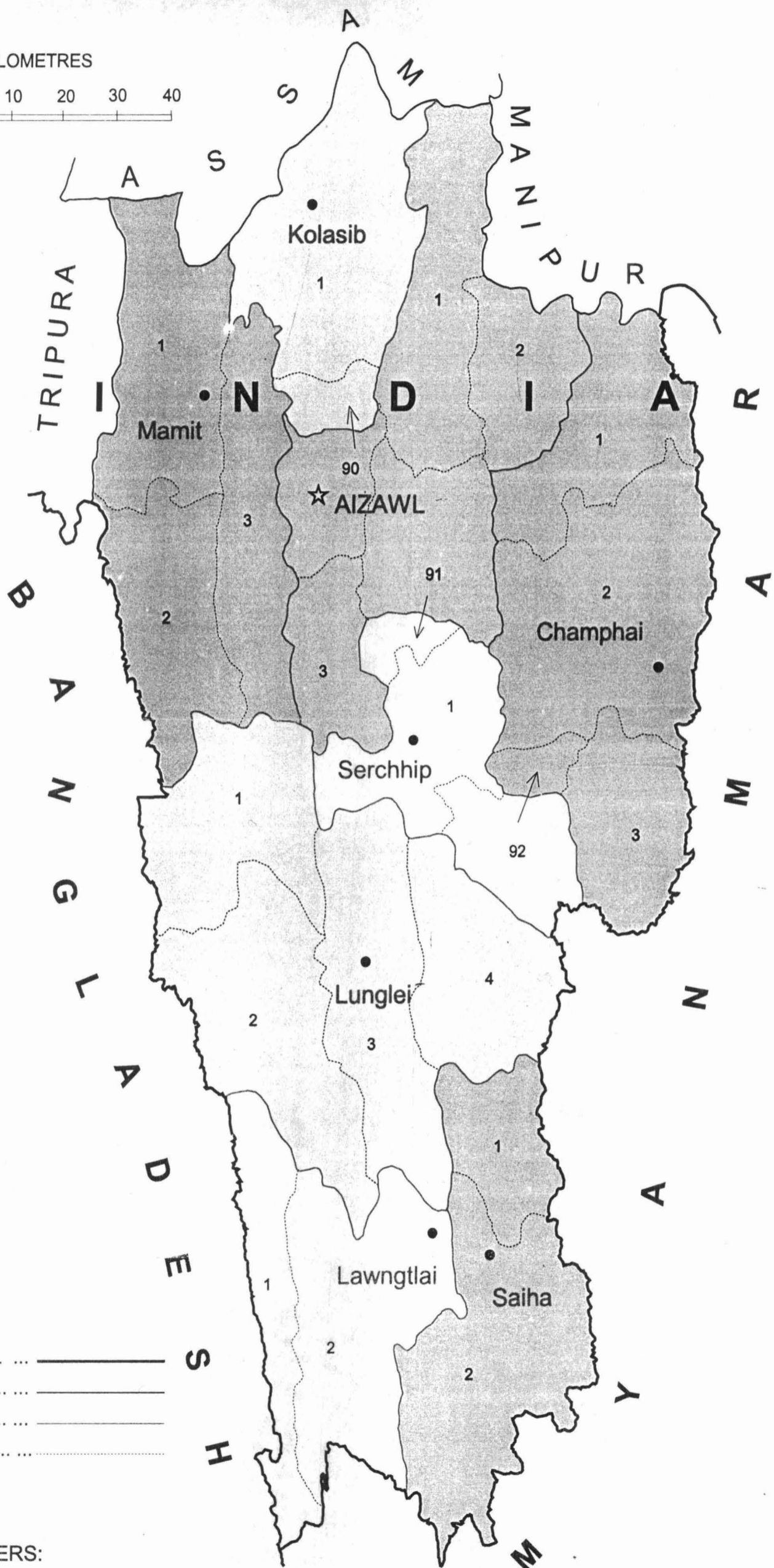
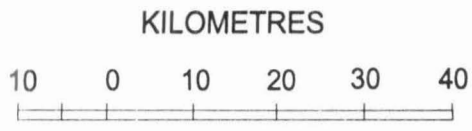
Picture 8. The boy's dormitory: *Zawlbuk*



Picture 9. Typical Lushai Village

MIZORAM

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS 2001



BOUNDARIES:

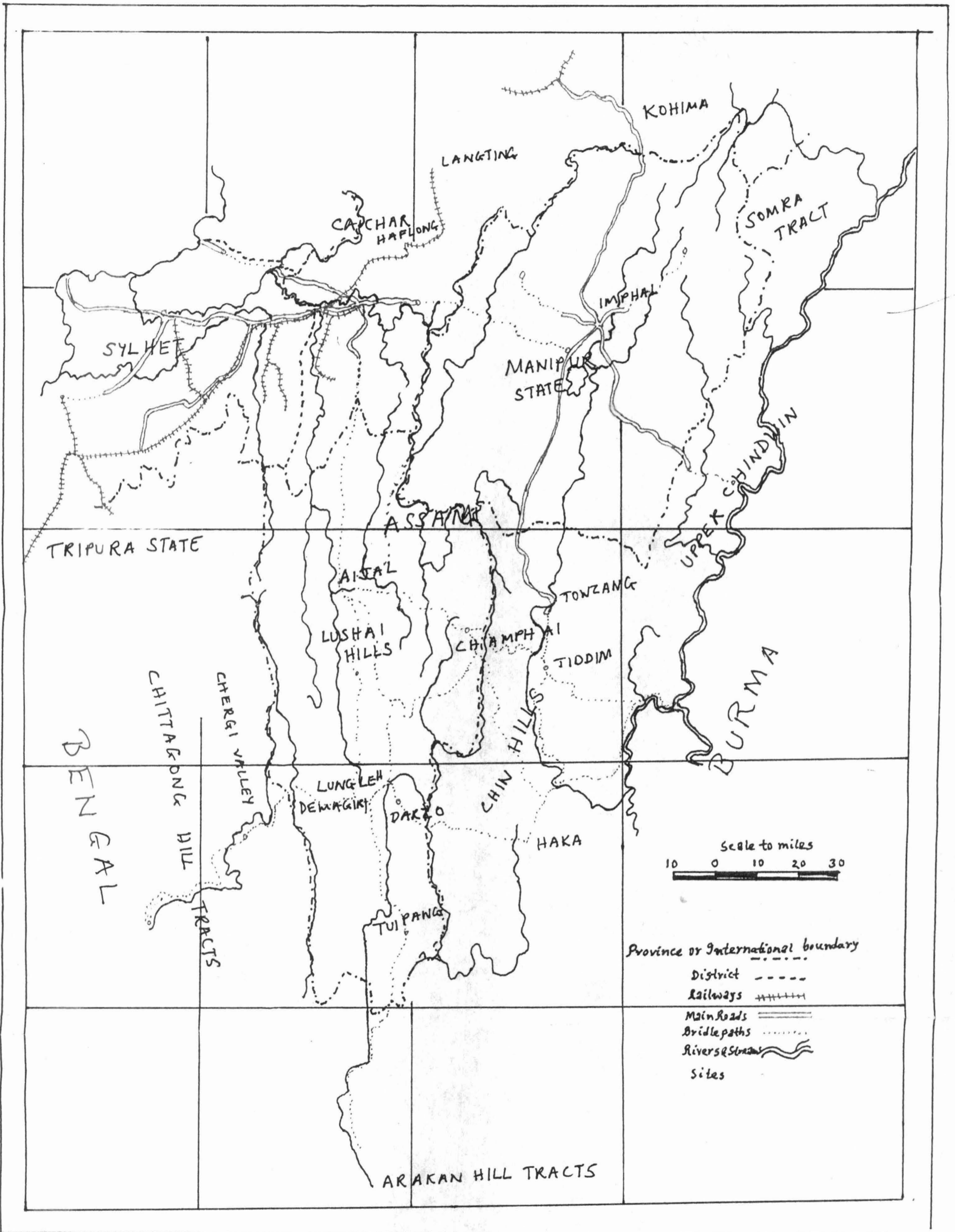
- INTERNATIONAL ... ————
- STATE ————
- DISTRICT ————
- R.D. BLOCK - - - - -

HEADQUARTERS:

- STATE ☆
- DISTRICT ●

1. Parts of R.D. Block (90) and (91) of Aizawl district fall in Kolasib and Serchhip district respectively.
 2. Part of R.D. Block (92) of Serchhip district falls in Champhai district.

LUSHAI HILLS



Source: A.G. McCall, Lushai Chrysalis, Luzac & Co, London, 1949.

INTRODUCTION

Education constitutes an important component of society. Knowledge and reproduction of social ideals take place in many intercourses in which the educational institution plays a very significant role. Schooling and the process that entails it led to a reproduction of society, which in most cases is envisaged by the planner of the education process. Durkheim argued that education played an important role in the socialization of children.¹ For him, children gain an understanding of the common values in society, uniting a multiple of separate individuals through education. It is through this process that the society maintained its socialization and internal cohesiveness.

Parsons gave a different connotation to the process of education. In the twentieth century, he argued that the function of education was to instill the value of individual achievement in a child.² He further maintained that, "a child's status in the family is *ascribed*...by contrast, a child's status in school is largely achieved".³ In this schema, the function of education is to facilitate the children to move away from the family particularistic to the universal ideal and standard that modern society required. The role of education in this instance is closely associated with social mobility and maintenance of social order.

However, education depended on a variety of factors to arrive at such a conclusion. The nature of the educating process, the discourse and the curriculum besides others represented important components within the educational system. The construction and presentation of these components exerts a large amount of influence on the students as well as the society. Thus, the kind of educational system that is in place is a determining factor in the reproduction of the social values and ideals that the society wants to perpetuate for its development as well as its regeneration.

¹ Giddens, Anthony, 2006, *Sociology*, 5th Edition, Cambridge: polity Press. p. 686.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

1.1 Introducing Mizoram

Mizoram is the south-easternmost territory of the Indian Union. It shares national boundary with the states of Tripura, Assam and Manipur as well as a long international border with Myanmar and Bangladesh. Mizoram was known as Lushai Hills during the colonial period and later as Mizo Hill district of Assam. After it gained Union Territory status in 1972 it came to be known as Mizoram. It gained statehood in 1987.

Mizoram cover an area of 21,087 sq. km. and comprised almost entirely of low hill ranges running towards the north and south. The heights of the mountains ranged from 700 to 2300 meters above sea level. There is only one plateau of about 12 sq. km in Champhai valley. The climate is pleasant with a cool summer and temperate winter. Three types of forest, such as tropical wet evergreen, tropical semi-green and montanne sub-tropical are found in Mizoram. However, many forests have been destroyed by large scale *jhooming* practiced by the Mizos over the years.

The Mizos belonged to the Mongoloid group in racial feature. Mizo language is classified as part of the Tibeto-Burman. They came to present day Mizoram in various migrating groups from Burma (Myanmar). The exact origin of the Mizos is unknown even though various speculations are propounded. The opinion regarding the place of origin ranged from China to Israel to Tibet. Some Mizos are of the opinion that they are one of the lost tribes of Israel and called themselves *Bnei Manashe*. It is interesting to note that the Israel government also accepted the fact that they have historical linkages with them.⁴

Before the annexation of the area, they were variously known as Chin (in Myanmar), Kuki, Lushai (in India) and Shendu (in Bangladesh). Here, one needs to clarify the meaning behind dual usage of Lushai and Mizo. When the British first came to Mizoram, the one they were in contact with were mostly the chiefs among

⁴ The Hindu, 21st June 2007, New Delhi Edition.

whom the Sailos were the most notable one. Most of these chiefs including the Sailo belong to the Lushai clan and thus informed the British so. Also, the language which was most prominent among the Mizo was the *duhlian* dialect which was spoken by the Lushais. After the independence of India and during the period leading to it, the people of Mizoram gradually shifted to the term Mizo which was a more encompassing one than Lushai which is just one of the clans of Mizo tribe. At the same time the power of the chiefs gradually declined and they do not exert the same kind of hold over the society that they used to hold and the dominance of the Lusei/*duhlian* speaking people slowly decline.

According to tradition, the Mizos came out of a big cave called *Chhinlung*. But, due to the noise they made, the keeper of the cave closed the door. Legends said that because of this the Mizos are less in population. Others have speculated the *Chhinlung* to be in China. Instead of being a cave, they believed that it was the Great Wall of China and the keeper of the cave the guards there.⁵ The hardship involved in constructing the Great Wall was so great that many died in the process. They wanted to escape from this ordeal, but, due to the guards they cannot do so. They do so in the middle of the night and the noise make by them alerted the guard and the gates were closed. While this story is embedded in the myth of the Mizos, it is the most plausible one.

Locating from the folksongs, the various settlements in Burma can be traced. They had settlement in the Kabaw valley of Burma extending upto Khamti in the north and as far as Kale in the south.⁶ From Burma, they migrated to present day Mizoram in multiple waves till the nineteenth century AD. These various groups went as far as Manipur, Tripura and Chittagong Hill tract of present day Bangladesh. The present day Mizoram in India is inhabited only by a fraction of the total Mizo population. The Chin state in present day Myanmar and the Chittagong Hill tract as well as Tripura and Manipur are populated by large number of Mizos.

⁵ Zawla, K, 1989, *Pi Pute leh an Thlahte Chanchin*, Aizawl: Gosen Press. p. 13.

⁶ Lalthangliana, B, 2001, *Mizo Chanchin*, Aizawl: Remkungi.

1.2 The Thesis

This study is located in the geographical and social terrain of the northeast in general and Mizoram in particular. It is an attempt to understand the nature of the colonial encounter in the construction of the new social milieu that came up after the annexation of the region by British India in 1890-91. For the purpose of this study, the encounter is analyzed from a cultural viewpoint and is situated in the field of education. There was absence of systematized education in the region before. It was introduced by the missionaries. So, the missionary educational activities needed to be seen in the light of the kind of education that they introduced and propagated in the area.

The study also deals with presentation of the indigenous mode of knowledge and its transmission to highlight the dichotomy with the one introduced by the missionaries in the northeast hills. This contrast the pre-colonial education and colonial educational policy for a comparative study. It also analyzes the development of education system in Mizoram as well as the colonial gaze and the colonial discourse that construct the social structure and the knowledge which is the driving force behind it. Finally, it tries to studies the impact of colonial education as the agent of change and transformation in the social structure and religious orientation.

Consequently, the interplay between the various forces in the colonial space and its end result is sought. The colonial discourse of the hills and the positioning of the natives at the receiving end of the discourse presented a picture which is the production of the dominant ideology. But, even within the strands of the discourse, multiple narratives and discourses occur. As presented earlier, in the production of knowledge, the interplay between the various narratives brings into forefront the main narrative which will be the dominant one. To investigate the colonial encounter, an analysis of the curriculum and the dominant colonial discourse is sought. Education and religion present the two main pivot points upon which this study will based its main premises.

1.3 Contextualizing Theoretical Concepts

In the analysis of the colonial education system, the study tried to look into two aspect of the system viz. the discourse connected with the kind of education and the curriculum that encapsulated the whole modicum of teaching. For these purpose, the following theoretical orientations are used to analyze the situation.

1.3.1 Discourse

Discourse can be seen in many ways. It actually originated in linguistics and semiotics and from them; it extended to the other branches of the human and social sciences. The Concise Oxford Dictionary put discourse as: a formal discussion of topic in speech or writing; a text or conversation.⁷ The concept of discourse and its usage can be seen as ontology. In contemporary theory and post-colonial criticism, discourse is employed mostly as colonial discourse, which is specifically derived from Foucault's use of the concept.⁸ Even for the analysis of the discourse here, an attempt will be made to use Foucauldian notion of discourse as the reference point. The Foucauldian sense of the term has little to do with the usage of discourse in the traditional sense. Foucault used discourse to refer to:

'...the general domain of all statements, sometime as individualizable group of statements, and sometime as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements'.⁹

Here, general domain of all statements means that 'discourse' can be used to refer to all utterances and statements which have been made which have meaning and which have some effect.¹⁰ Discourse is thus a regulated set of statements which combined with others in predictable ways which is regulated by a set of rules which lead to the distribution and circulation of certain utterances and statements.¹¹ So, while certain statements are widely circulate and distributed, others have limited

⁷ Pearsall, Judy (ed.), 1999, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁸ Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, 2004 (reprint), *Key Concept in Post-Colonial Studies*, London: Routledge. p. 70.

⁹ Foucault, Michel, 1972, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge. p. 80.

¹⁰ Mills, Sara, 2003, *Michel Foucault*, London: Routledge. p. 53.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 54.

circulation. In the west, the example of the Bible is taken as a reference. It is available in almost every home, college and institutions are dedicated for the sole purpose of studying it and there are numerous journals for its exposition and studies done on it. In Foucauldian sense, this constitutes a discourse, a discourse of the Bible. Discourse is thus a strongly bounded area of social knowledge, a system of statements through which the world can be known.¹² An important feature of this is that the world is not simply there to be talked about, instead, it is through the discourse that the world is brought into being.¹³ This leads us to the colonial discourse.

Colonial discourse is, put simply, the knowledge of colonized by the colonizer, a set of practices exhibited in the colonial space and time. Said's formulation of orientalism illustrated the notion of colonial discourse and its implication. The representations of the Orient since the eighteenth century by the western writers have constructed it as the 'other'. By contrasting themselves with the Orient, western civilization became the yardstick, as Christendom had been earlier, by which oriental cultures and civilizations were measured.¹⁴ The west was pitted against the orient and the orient came to signify all that the west was not and some of what the west actually desired.¹⁵ The basic premise in the Orientalist discourse is that "there are westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated..."¹⁶ A representation of the orient was also controlled on the basis of differences and on the otherness. There is power relationship in the representation of the other. For the Orient, passivity is the presumed role. He is the subject without any say his own representation. He is the subject as well of the object of the orientalist's gaze, while the gazer assumes the power to observe, study and put his own representation. In this scenario, the oriental remain fixed, stable, in need of investigation, in need even of knowledge about himself and represented. Finally, in the relationship, there comes a dichotomy: a source of information (the oriental)

¹² Ashcroft *et al*, 2004, p. 70

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 71.

¹⁴ Sardar, Ziauddin, 2005 (reprint), *Orientalism*, New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited. p. 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 3.

¹⁶ Said, Edward, 1995, *Orientalism*, New Delhi: Penguin. p. 36.

and a source of knowledge (the Orientalist). The relationship between the two is radically a matter of power...¹⁷

Orientalism as a colonial discourse thus presents a picture through which the colonizers try to understand as well as construct the orient. It is within this interplay of knowledge that the northeast got scrutinized from the western lens.

1.3.2 Power/Knowledge

Again, following Foucault, the discourse depends largely on the relationship between power and knowledge. The production of knowledge is not the objective scholastic temper and dedication to the cause of knowledge solely. Rather he projected power/knowledge as an abstract force which determines what will be known, rather than assuming that individual thinker develop ideas and knowledge.¹⁸

Knowledge is the site of power relation. As Said had lucidly presented in his Orientalism thesis, it is the correlation between power and knowledge that the reproduction of the orient is represented. In the colonial empires, the colonizers and the colonized again fight for the space that is contested. Due to this demarcation on the nature of the struggle, the oppressed or the colonized were always at the losing. As Macaulay had tersely put it in his famous pronouncement, that a bookshelf of European books was far better than all the collection of the Orient, clearly portrayed the nature of the relationship. As Foucault further asserts that:

the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of (the) fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations. In short, it is not the activity of the of the subject of knowledge that produce a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it, and of

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 308.

¹⁸ Mills, 2003. p. 70.

which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge.¹⁹

Connected with the power/knowledge duality, the Gramscian notion of hegemony provides an important site for discussion. He located hegemony in the civil society. The dual nature of its implication led to differences. First, its inference to domination; and its second reference to leadership, implying some notion of consent.²⁰ In the modern conditions, Gramsci argued that, "a class maintains its dominance not simply through a special organization of force, but because it is able to go beyond its narrow corporative interests, exert a moral and intellectual leadership, and make compromises (within certain limits) with a variety of allies who are unified in a social block...This block represents a basis of consent for a certain social order, in which the hegemony of a dominant class is created and re-created in a web of institutions, social relations and ideas. This 'fabric of hegemony' is woven by the intellectuals, who according to Gramsci, are all those who have an organizational role in society."²¹

1.3.3 Ideological State Apparatus

Following Althusser, the concept of ISA also needed to be looked in the context of the education system and the construction of the very fabric of society. In the classic Gramscian formulation of hegemony, the functioning of hegemony in the civil society needed to be utilized for the various state apparatuses. The difference between the Repressive State Apparatuses and the Ideological Apparatuses lies in their source of power. While the RSA operated by repressive agencies the ISA functions by ideology.²² The constituents of ISA as marked by Althusser include the religious ISA, educational ISA, family ISA, cultural ISA among others. The premise

¹⁹ Foucault, cited in Mills, 2003. p. 70

²⁰ Sassoon, A. S., 1991, *Hegemony*, in T.B. Bottomore (ed.) 2000 (reprint), *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Delhi: Worldview Publications. pp. 229-230.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 230.

²² Althusser, Louis, 2006 (reprint), *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*. New Delhi: Aakar Books. p. 97.

behind the ISA concept is that while they do possess public status, they are simply private institutions.²³

1.3.4 Social Change

There are many theories regarding the types of social changes and what stimulate them. That is within the purview of this study. However, for a reference point, I will use Srinivas conceptualization of Modernization and Westernization of Indian society and situate it in the context of northeast, particularly Mizoram. Another dimension in Mizoram context is that westernization or modernization is synonymous with Christianity.²⁴ The point of modernization in Mizoram can be taken as westernization. While many authors have disputed this term in the context of studying various societies, in the context of northeast India, it is more or less synonymous.

Prior to the coming of the British, there was hardly any interaction of the hill people from their immediate surrounding. They were entrenched in their own society and territory. The only time that they venture out was when they invade and raid the other territory adjacent to their area. It was only with the invasion of the hills that they come into contact with the pale of modern civilization. The changes that came along with the invasion were basically European notion of knowledge, customs and culture rather than the mainland Indian culture. So, even if other models of modernization were there, the mode of modernization in the hill was due to westernization, which ignited the major sources of change.

1.4 Scope of the study

This study can be divided into three major parts: firstly, the introduction of western education in India and the debate regarding the system of education. The study here is a historical narrative of the construction of western educational system in India and its historical process. Secondly, a narrative of the traditional knowledge

²³ *Ibid.* p.97.

²⁴ Boragohain, R., *Modernization and Mizoram*, Mizoram News Magazine, Summer Issue 1986, Aizawl: DIPR & T, Govt. of Mizoram.

and educational institution that exist in the Mizo society in pre-colonial period till the coming of the British missionaries to Mizoram. And finally, it deals with the formalization of western education with the introduction of writing among the Mizos. It deals with the kind of educational system established by the missionaries and the social change that came about in the following period.

1.5 Method of Inquiry

The method of inquiry used here is historical sociology. This study thus traces the historical moorings of Mizo society and its interaction with educational systems. However, as the time period of M.phil study do not permit extensive ethnographic work, interpretation of textual sources is attempted. Nevertheless, this by no mean restricts the study just to the texts without any interactions. Interviews were conducted in various parts of Mizoram to verify facts as well as legends which are not present in books. However, these cannot be incorporated fully in the study due to lack of time and space. Rather, they helped me in formation of my academic undertaking and helped me developed many of the arguments incorporated in the study.

1.6 Structure

The introduction of this dissertation attempts to conceptualize the theoretical concepts of discourse, power/knowledge, Ideological State Apparatus and social change to understand their implications. Colonialism is understood to include the non-political sphere also. By, discourse, it basically deals with the idea of discourse as used in colonial discourse with Foucauldian and Saidian orientation. Social change is taken from Srinivas conceptualization of Westernization to study Mizo society.

The first chapter deals with the introduction of western education in India. It delineates how English came to have predominance in India. It also looks at the colonization of northeast India.

Chapter two tried to locate the indigenous mode of knowledge base and traditional educational institution in the pre-colonial period. It also narrates the coming of the British to Mizoram and the establishment of the colonial power, the government and the Christian mission.

Chapter three traces the development of education system in Mizoram and the various dynamics within it. It starts with the introduction of schools in Mizoram and how the missionaries apply their education policy along with proselytizing work. It looks into the consolidation of a Modern education system and the construction of the curriculum.

Chapter four posit the Mizo society in the colonial period and traces the linkages of the changes that came about with the kind of education that was propounded. The rise of elite in direct relation to the education system provides a pivotal point in Mizo society. This chapter tries to link the education process and the hegemonic forces that are operating in the education system and the resulting product.

CHAPTER I

BEGINNING OF WESTERN EDUCATION IN INDIA

In countries once occupied by foreign power, the study of the colonial period constituted an important academic endeavor. The impact on the society and country presented an important site of encounter. The colonial encounter faced by India and the other parts of the country that constituted India after 1947 have massive impingement on the nature and future of India. Post-colonial scholarship usually posits the pre-colonial state and the colonial state and try to come up to an understanding of the byproduct, i.e. which is the postcolonial state. The history of colonialism and its construct in the social milieu that it helped produced constitute an important part of the social history.

In understanding the colonial encounter, the level of the relationship the colonizer had with the colonized played an important role in the construction of the society. This led to differences in the understanding of the level that is to be analyzed and exactly what role the researcher is supposed to do. Any standard Indian history textbook written by those belonging to the 'nationalist' stream presented their thesis basing on the point on how India's ill is because of mis-governance by the British and how all will have been well if there was no foreign rule, or to that matter, how the British disintegrate India's economy and led to the various problems in the country.²⁵ But, it is exactly because of the fact that the British come to India that the structure called India exists today. Otherwise, India during those days was not India. Rather, it was different principalities, kingdoms and medium sized empires ruled by different people with a sense of unity and sovereignty that is limited to their territory without any pan-India feeling. So, much do not need to be dwelt upon this point.

²⁵ For this, the economic historians like Dadabhai Naoroji and R. C. Dutt in their various writing showed how it was the misgovernment of the British that led to India's decline.

The colonial encounter was viewed in a way that is both positive and negative because of the perspective of the individuals. The point taken as a reference also served an important site because one needs to dwell on what constitute the valid points whereby the picture of the British Raj can be drawn properly and clearly. So, we will try to demarcate the area of the point of contact to make a point of analysis. In this way, the polity as well as the economy and the knowledge sphere need to be studied properly to ascertain the various intricate linkages within which the colonial power exercised its power and influence.

The most important point, in fact, the one which the British came to be master was their administration. No doubt, the British arrived as traders, the East India Company being the main trading company which they established for India. However, to ensure effective trade that seemed most suitable to the colonizers, they found it worthwhile to launch annexation that would further their interests and maximize their profits as they control the points of production. The process of annexation in India achieved through various policies including the doctrine of lapse, as well as the subsidiary alliance demonstrated the great subtlety that the East India Company showed in India.

2.1 Colonialism: Its interaction with India

Colonialism as an encounter of different cultures presented an important site for power relationship and subjugation. The term is a useful concept in “defining the specific form of cultural exploitation that developed with the expansion of Europe over the last 400 years.”²⁶ Drawing from this, colonialism by its nature was a power relationship that was lopsided and in favor of the one in power which led to exploitation of the weaker one.

Colonialism occurred not only in the political arena, but also in the cultural spaces. Political subjugation ended the major struggle. It was in the cultural space that issues were violently contested. To complete the colonization, the political space

²⁶ Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, 2004. p. 45.

as well as the cultural space was sought to be dominated. Thus, the Saidian contention: that the Orient representation by the Occident was contested to be more accurate than the representation by the native themselves. The colony became a site for reproduction of his own knowledge, not by himself, but by the political power who can afford to impinge his thoughts on the unsuspecting native. The whole corpus of Oriental knowledge thus became a playground for the polyglots of Europe, who then (re)discover the ancient knowledge already there. And in the process became the knowledgeable themselves. This asymmetrical representation and relationship became the hall mark of colonialism in India.

The representation and legitimizing of colonialism derived its meaning from the west triumph march towards civilization development based on the idea of progress and ethics based on western principles. The modern concept of childhood reinforced this belief and colonizers used it to further their interest.²⁷ Childhood was seen as a blank slate where the adult must write their moral codes.²⁸ Colonialism thus used these as a tool and drew a parallel between childhood and primitivism, where the colonies are represented as the primitives and therefore childish who needed to be educated.

This reformation and education was supposed to come through westernization, modernization or Christianity.²⁹ Thus, the colonial space was completely redrawn by the colonialists in their favor. This contest came through various avenues among which education played a key role in the subjugation. The colonial discourse thus presented hegemonized the mind of the natives and it led to the proper functioning of the colonial entrapments.

2.2 The Colonial Machinery

By the very act of administering a country that is far bigger in size and population than their own, the British showed much ingenuity in the art of

²⁷ Nandy, Ashis, 1983, *The Intimate Enemy*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press. pp.14-17.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

pacification and administration. While the British India was governed largely on physical strength by the might of the army and the police force that the colonial masters so prudently established, it was also within the colonial discourse that the power force also lied.³⁰ At this height of colonial entrapments, the means by which the governed are utilized in the manner where they were willing to obey the minority need to be seen in the light of all power relations. At the same time, the codification of the various rules and law regarding the Hindus and the Muslims (who according to the British are the two major groups inhabiting India) and their implementation in the courts that were established by the British led to a circumstance where the law and the actual practice differs.³¹ This change in the functioning of the various courts of law led to a tripartite mode of law where the various communities could get redressal accordingly. However, this was later dissolved and the reform of judicial system in 1894 changed the system and abolished the Hindu and Muslim officers of the law.³² Thus, the form of law knowledge and the system that formed the basis of its formation produced an interesting dichotomy that was to be the mainstay of other colonial ventures in the social life of the natives in India.

2.3 Knowledge and the beginning of Modern Education System in India

Indigenous education system which was the mainstay of knowledge dissemination and reproduction of pre-colonial rule in India come to be challenged. The two predominant groups, the Hindus and the Muslims have their *pathsalas/tolas* and *madrasas* respectively. From the result of studies conducted by Thomas Munro in Madras, Elphinstone in Bombay and William Adam in parts of Bengal and Bihar, a general picture of indigenous education in India in the early nineteenth century can

³⁰ Their existence till today highlights the point of their efficiency as well as its proper implementation. Even the Indian Penal Code drafted way back in 1870 is used till today with minor modifications.

³¹ The British took their model of law from the Hindu *Pandits* and the Muslim *Ulemas*. The information they got was the book view i.e. the laws prescribed in the *Manusmriti*, *Dharmashastras* and the *Hadith* and *Quran* whereas the actual practice differs in the real life. So, there is a dichotomy between the real life and the one prescribed by the law books.

³² For more discussion on this see Cohn, Bernard S., *Law and the Colonial State* in Cohn, 1996, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

be visualized.³³ These pictures showed a scenario where indigenous education was functioning and flourishing within their own limits. But, these are subsumed in the colonial discourse of Indian history.

Each education system has their own curriculum based on the respective religious tradition and culture where religious instruction along with the required knowledge was taught. The mode of teaching were rather medieval in nature with the use of classical language as the medium of instruction i.e. Sanskrit in the Hindu schools and Persian in the other.³⁴ However, these models were not taken as the model for the base of educational system in India. Nusrullah and Naik lamented the fact of this:

The modern educational system in India should have been built upon the foundations of this indigenous system, and the efforts of our educational administrators should have been directed to the improvement of these institutions and to their incorporation in the modern system of education.³⁵

Deliberations and various policies brought changes in the educational system of India. In the beginning, the East India Company did not think it worthwhile to establish schools of learning. However, the idea was later changed with the amendments in the company's policy. Earlier, the policy of the company was to encourage charity schools run by Christian missionaries and supports them.³⁶ This can be seen as the beginning of the educational activity of the East India Company. But, charity schools were limited in their reach as they cater mostly to the children of the European servants of the East India Company.³⁷ According to Nusrullah and Naik, the first proper educational institution established by the Company was the

³³ Nurullah, Syed and J. P. Naik, 1951 (2nd Revised Edition), *A History of Education in India during the British Period*, Bombay: Macmillan p. 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 28.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 32.

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 32.

Calcutta Madrassah followed closely by the Benaras Sanskrit College.³⁸ These were established for the cultivation of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit studies respectively.

The Charter Act of 1813 changed the education situation in India. It produced two major changes in Britain's relationship with her colony: one was an assumption of a new responsibility toward native education, and the other was a relaxation of controls over missionary activity in India.³⁹ By this Act, the onus of the education of the people of India lay on England where previously, it was in the hands of the governor-general at Calcutta. It also led to an upsurge in Mission activities around the country.

It was the Christian missionaries who started the the modern education system in India. Even long before the East India Company took upon themselves the responsibilities of establishing educational institutions, the various Christian missions have already established western education in the country. The Jesuit missionaries arrived soon after Vasco Da Gama's discovery of the sea route to India. From this small step, it was just a matter of time before other denominations followed the footsteps of their Catholic brethren and sought to convert the newly accessible heathen land.

Schooling was seen as a means for proselytizing endeavor besides translating the Bible and preaching, which comprises the missionary enterprise. The Serampur missionaries started their network of schools in 1811 which provide an elementary education, accompanied by religious teachings.⁴⁰ These were soon replicated in other places. These educational institutions were modeled on the system devised by Joseph Lancaster (so-called the Madras system or monitorial system) which was

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 33.

³⁹ Viswanathan, Gauri, 1998, *Mask of Conquest*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press. p. 23.

⁴⁰ Seth, Sanjay, *Secular Enlightenment and Christian Conversion: Missionaries and Education in Colonial India* in Kumar, Krishna and Joachim Oesterheld (ed.), 2007, *Education and Social Change in South Asia*, New Delhi: Orient Longman. p. 29.

considered to be one of the three powerful engines alongside missionary and Bible societies to facilitate the spread of gospel over the world.⁴¹

In this manner, Christian education institutions have facilitated the preaching of gospel alongside the secular learning that students got in the various mission schools. The success was limited, as pointed out by Alexander Duff, that it was the anticipation of free books rather than the attraction of Christianity that led poor children to the schools which later ended as waste paper for retailer in the bazaar rather than stores for the intellect.⁴² So, it was common for huge number of students to turn out on the opening day and dwindle once the books were distributed.⁴³ The proselytizing nature of teaching followed in these educational institutes was not given much attention students. Rather, they concentrate on the secular part of the curriculum. Education in the rulers' system was seen as a ticket to success in life- notably in the acquisition of a government job. This made English education a highly demanded product. Mission schools and colleges provided a way to this commodity. In spite of the religious teachings, parents and students sought out mission institutions for the key to success it provided. Bryce thus commented that:

The native youths do not come to it to obtain religious or Christian instructions, nor is that the object for which their parents send them there. What they are seeking is that education which is best to qualify them for earning a future livelihood; and they only do not refuse to take at the same time the instruction which you offer them, or rather, which you make an express condition of their receiving, in order to get the secular education which they want.⁴⁴

As can be seen from the above passage, education was never the first priority of the missionaries. Rather, it was just a mean in their evangelizing activities as pointed out in two features of missionary educational activities. First, educational work was taken up to meet the needs of converted population and especially to train

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 30.

⁴² Viswanathan, 1998. p. 51.

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 51.

⁴⁴ Bryce, 1856, Cited in Seth, 2007. p. 32.

Indian assistants for their proselytizing activities. Secondly, the missionaries attach great importance to the study of modern Indian language as they had to work among the lowest section of society who can only understand their own tongue.⁴⁵ This led to a proliferation of works on Indian language like dictionaries, grammar and translation, many of which hold their ground in scholarship even today.

2.4 The 18th Century India: Period of decline or Decay?

One trend in Indian historiography is to paint the picture of 18th century India so bleak that the coming of the British would be seen as a shining beacon of civilisational development. The question of whether the 18th century India was a period of decline and decay necessitates the understanding of the whole Indian subcontinent and not just a single point.

The decline of the Mughal Empire and the emergence of regional powers led to fragmentation of the country. The death of Aurangzeb has often been taken as turning point for the Mughal Empire and the disintegration of India into fragmentary states. This line of argument took its impetus from the fact that great empire and centralized authority was needed to maintain law and order as well as for cultural development. With this, a picture of degeneration was usually painted in the knowledge sphere and educational activities. Thus, all in all, India was very dark and stagnant until *Pax Britannica* arrived. The above discussion presents the picturization of India by the colonialists to highlight their achievements.

Bose and Jalal disagreed with this simplistic formulation.⁴⁶ According to them, "...the eighteenth century was marked more by decentralization than decline, economy and society were characterized by general buoyancy and creativity despite some key weaknesses and contradictions."⁴⁷ Actually, according to them, it was the

⁴⁵ Nurullah and Naik, 1951. p. 61.

⁴⁶ Bose, Sugata and Ayesha Jalal, 1998, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press. p. 53.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 53.

very vitality and robustness of the Indian economy that prompted the British traders to come to India.

Thus, the idea of decay is a matter of focus. If the focus was only on the area of decline, then, one can paint a very bleak scenario. In a large country like India, there existed an internal dynamics where change is a perpetual feature. So, there can be no consistency in the functioning of the country. The field of indigenous education also has the same fate.

In spite of the educational survey carried out which is already mentioned above, Nurullah and Naik have a different contention.⁴⁸ As the survey was carried out only in three areas, viz. Madras, Bombay, Bengal and Bihar, it didn't substantiate the fact that the whole country must be in decline. Also, as one of the survey was carried out in a place marked by a long period of anarchy, it didn't automatically mean that other parts where good governance existed will be in the same condition. Bose and Jalal had indicated in their study that stable kingdoms and principalities existed aplenty in the country. The crux of the matter was that the indigenous educational system were so informal in nature, it was difficult to gauge exactly what was happening in the country at that time. Because of this paucity of evidence, the colonial discourse was that indigenous educational system was in decline and it was only the emergence of western education that led to the revitalization of India's educational systems.

2.5 The Anglicist-Classicist Debate and Macaulay's Minute

An important point in the history of Indian education was the point regarding the question of education and the medium of instruction. In the Charter Act of 1833 and the inception of the General Committee of Public Instruction in 1823, there was a struggle regarding the means and context that would ensure the best form of education for Indians. The debate was between the Orientalist and the English party. The bone of contention was that while the Orientalists favored reviving the

⁴⁸ Nurullah and Naik, 1951. pp. 1-2.

literature of the Hindu and Muslims and giving encouragement to its development, the English party was in favor of the adoption of English as the medium of instruction.

On the basis of his study of the colonial history of English language, Pennycook showed how colonial language policy was constructed on four poles:

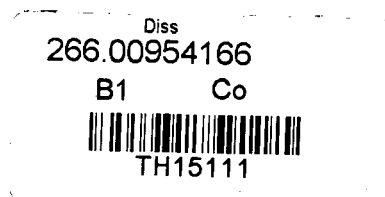
First, the position of the colonies within a capitalist empire and the need to produce docile and compliant workers and consumers to fuel capitalist expansion; second, local contingencies of class, ethnicity, race and economic conditions that dictated the distinctive development of each colony; third, the discourse of Anglicism and liberalism with their insistence on the European need to bring civilization to the world; and fourth, the discourses of Orientalism with their insistence on exotic histories, traditions and nations in decline.⁴⁹

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The character of colonialist domination in the education sphere exhibited a marked vested interest on the part of the colonizers to play with the colonies, in the kind of environment that they want, and its manifestation in an outright sense of cultural superiority or paternalistic tendency towards the native. The Orientalists viewed that the Charter Act of 1813 clause which directed that a sum of not less than a lakh of rupees shall be expended every year for the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India,⁵⁰ should mean local knowledge. The Orientalist argued that:

“The literature meant to be so revived and encouraged was the literature of the two great classes of population, the Moosulmans and the Hindus...The revival of literature has been promoted by the assistance given to seminaries of education previously existing, and by the establishment of fresh, and likewise through the printing and publishing of classical works hitherto only to be procured in manuscript. To these objects a certain proportion of the funds assigned has been

⁴⁹ Pennycook, Alastair, 1998, *English and the Discourses of Colonialism*, London and New York: Routledge. p. 68.

⁵⁰ Nurullah and Naik, 1951, p. 67.



made applicable. The encouragement of learned men, the next thing indicated, has been effected as well through the support afforded them in institutions of education and in the superintendence and preparation of works for publication as by other advantages incident to the system pursued, amongst which not the least effectual is the provision for securing prolonged study by stipends to promising students. All this has been done for the natives and their literature.⁵¹

The third object in the charter 'the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the science' argued that Indians had a prejudice against European knowledge and science and it would not be accepted unless it was presented in a classical language which they respect and which was along the line of their culture to which they were deeply attach. ⁵² In contrast to all these argument Macaulay opined that:

"The admirers of the Oriental system of education have used another argument which, if we admit it to be valid, is decisive against all change. They conceive that the public faith is pledged to the present system and that to alter the appropriation of any of the funds which have hitherto been spent in encouraging the study of Arabic and Sanskrit would be downright spoliation. It is not easy to understand by what process of reasoning they can have arrived at this conclusion. The grants which are made from the public purse for the encouragement of literature differ in no respect from the grants which are made from the same purse for other objects of real or supposed utility."⁵³

He continued that:

"All parties seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoke among the natives of this part of India contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are moreover so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them. It seems to be admitted on all sides, that the intellectual improvement of those classes

⁵¹ *Selections from Educational Records*, Vol. I, cited in Nurullah and Naik. p. 67.

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 68.

⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 70.

of the people who have the means of pursuing higher studies can at present be effected only by means of some other language not vernacular amongst them.”⁵⁴

Macaulay's minute on the General Committee of Public Instruction thus clearly showed the motives of the colonial administrators. At the same time, his minute paved the way for the transition from the deeply religious motivated schooling to more secular motives in English education.⁵⁵ The antipathy towards the traditional knowledge system which was in place in India led to its replacement by the European model based on the English view of education. The minute once and for all ended the question of instruction for the Indian education system. English and English educational model emerged as the medium of education until later policies allow for vernacular education.

So, the Orientalist romanticisation of ancient Indian text and traditional knowledge as well as the indigenous system of education was relegated to the background with the introduction of the European model of education. English literature form the corpus of literary studies and grammar was the exclusive role of English. Indian language or subject was subject to initial scrutiny from the colonial viewpoint. The construction of the WOGS or Western Oriented Gentoos, which was already in place earlier started coming into prominence in the coming years.

2.6 India's Northeast⁵⁶

The Treaty of Yandabo of 1826 signed by the East India Company and the Kingdom of Burma marked the beginning of British rule in northeast India. This event was 'for the first time in its history the region was linked politically with a

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 70.

⁵⁵ Viswanathan, 1998. p. 145.

⁵⁶ The term northeast is a colonial construct. Many theories abound regarding the genesis of the term. The one which seems to be most plausible is that while the colonial capital of India was at Calcutta, the whole present day northeast was actually geographically northeast from Calcutta. So, the term was coined and it stuck even when the capital was shifted to Delhi and it remains so till the present day.

major Indian political power.⁵⁷ The construction of India's northeast was a major colonial discourse which is still perpetuated today.⁵⁸ About three quarters of the region is covered by hilly terrain and one quarter is made up of the four plains area.⁵⁹ The four plains are the Brahmaputra valley and Barak (Surma) valley of Assam, the Tripura plains and the Manipur plateau. While the major part of Assam is composed of plains, some parts of Tripura and Manipur are hilly too. In the days of the company, the area was not demarcated properly. Assam, Tripura and Manipur were understood as having proper kingdoms and the contiguous area was seen as basically inhospitable terrain inhabited by ferocious and savage tribes which act as a buffer zone between British India and Burma till the annexation of the latter. The region was not coveted because of its inhospitable nature and lack of resources.

While the fertile plains of the northeast were annexed one after another, the British authority was reluctant to touch the hill territories. The policy of non-interference was adopted in 1851, and excepting Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the government tried to avoid occupying the hills.

Economically, the area is not rich in comparison to other parts of India. Also, the terrain and climate of the area also contribute to a factor in the hesitancy of the British to annex the area in a hurry. However, on the pretext for the stability and maintenance of peace in the area, the British started annexing the tribal areas one by one until the whole area between the Bay of Bengal to the Burmese kingdom belonged to the East India Company. The level of annexation as well as the penetration of the British in different areas of the northeast exhibited a marked difference in the way of interaction and governance.

⁵⁷ Downs, Frederick S., 1992, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. 5, Part 5, *North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Bangalore: The Church History Association of Bangalore. p. 6.

⁵⁸ If one look at the geography of present day India, the northeast states of India are the only one which are mentioned in official terminology as such. There is no popular term called Northwest India or south east India. One indicator of the very permanency (if today's reckoning can be used) of the term northeast is the creation of the Department of Northeast Ministry in the Indian government. It is the only ministry with a specific regional jurisdiction.

⁵⁹ Das, N. K., 1989, *Ethnic Identity, Ethnicity and Social Stratification in North-East India*, New Delhi: Inter-India Publications. p. 28

Except for Assam and the Manipur and parts of Tripura, the northeast region lacked a proper systematized alphabet and education system prior to the British invasion. Traditional knowledge base and rudimentary forms of educational institutions was used for educating the people. The economic structure as well as the societal development lacked the obligation of having an advanced education system. Subsistence economy in most part and shifting cultivation as well as shifting habitation led to a non permanency in outlook as well as lack of time to properly evolve a systematic culture.⁶⁰

In Assam, due to its linkages with the mainland India since ancient times, there exist developed indigenous systems prior to the British entry. The kingdom of Kamrup evoked mention in the Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The Brahmaputra river valley with its fertile alluvial soil enabled permanent settlements that facilitated the pursuit of knowledge. The development of Assamese script and its location in close proximity to the Bengal and Bihar area also made it an easy receptacle for the cultural and material development occurring in those places.

Manipur also fared equally well. The Imphal valley has facilitated easy permanent cultivation. The fertile plains and the terrain made the valley a choice of settlement. The Tripura plains also made it possible to have cultivation which has led to permanent settlement. It was only in the hill areas that permanent settlement was difficult because of the practice of shifting cultivation.

After the policy of non-interference and pacification failed, an all out invasion of the hills was done. Earlier, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, Khasi and Jaintia Hills were annexed into the British territories due to their vicinity to Assam and the natural resources they abounded in. By the late nineteenth century, barring a few pockets, the whole hill area of the northeast was subjugated and annexed into the British India. This was a new beginning for the hills. They were, for the first time,

⁶⁰ If we look at history, there was no proper systematization of writing and belief system during the pastoral period. It is only when permanent settlements were first created in the river valleys that material culture and systematic knowledge base as well as writing properly developed.

a constituent territory of a sovereign who exert rule over them directly or indirectly. However, in their consciousness, they are always independent by themselves. It is in their memory and within their cognizance that they are dominated and ruled over by a force that is all pervading and more powerful than them for the first time.⁶¹

Unlike other parts of India where a systematized alphabet existed, here, in the northeastern hills, there was no such systematic script. Lack of alphabet and other properly demarcated sign system differentiate it from other area of the colonial encounter. Traditional knowledge and lore constituted the main base of knowledge. But, there was no grand histories and classics to fall back to like other parts of the country. There was lack of proper pre-colonial histories and classic literature. As such, there was lack of knowledge base unlike other parts of India which were richly endowed with it. The onslaught of colonialism was much more intensive in the space and time of the hill people like the Naga Hills, Lushai Hills, Khasi and Garo Hills and so on. The people inhabiting these areas have their own traditional lores and knowledge which was relegated to the background to be overshadowed by other discourses. The coming of these new discourses led to abrupt changes after colonization of the region.

Immediately after the occupation of the hill region, the missionaries followed in the footsteps of the conquerors. The Christian mission made their entry in the Lushai Hills within a period of four years after annexation.⁶² The first military British expedition to the Naga Hills took place in 1832. By 1836 the first group of Christian missionaries had made their appearance in that area. They started the process of evangelizing in the hills and they got their convert soon after. The impact of the colonial political power accompanied by their hegemony in the social structure cut the hill society like a double edged sword slicing it neatly. These forces which

⁶¹ This was accepted with stoic resignation by one Mizo chief. He famously said that, 'we are ruled by the British only because we are weaker, if we are stronger, we will go and conquer their land up to their capital'.

⁶² Complete annexation was 1891. The first missionaries came in 1894. Earlier, there was a scouting mission in 1891.

invaded the geographical territory and the mental space of the hill were the first of the gargantuan changes that were to overwhelm the simple minded hill people.

The introduction of education simultaneously with the new faith created a new space within which the colonial encounter is located. But, the power distribution of the encounter positioned it in the favor of the one in power, viz. the colonizers. The interplay of the forces in the time and space of the colonial period and its aftermath is what this study tries to locate.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN MIZORAM

3.1 Pre-Colonial Period⁶³

Mizo society in the pre-colonial period was a period of non-permanency which got reflected in their agricultural system known as shifting cultivation. The Mizos did not stay in the same place for a long period of time. As the manner of livelihood was cultivation, shifting cultivation was a necessity. The mountain soil with which Mizoram is endowed with necessitates changing the plot of land cultivated from year to year. Lacking knowledge of fertilization and changing crops method, the only venue open for the Mizo was to change his plot of land. Subsequently, no land was cultivated consequently for more than a year or so. When all arable within reach from the village has been cultivated in this way, the village shifted in search of more arable land and they continue with this process. At the same time, there was also fear of enemies. As the Mizos used to engage in warfare, the head trophy being an important show of being a warrior who will be respected even after his death, it was eagerly sought as a mark of manhood and prestige in the society. So, the twin combination of shifting cultivation and fear of enemies led to a shifting pattern of lifestyle where permanency was viewed only as happening after death.⁶⁴ This can be factored as one major reason why the Mizo did not evolved to a more advanced civilisational stage. Looking at world history, all the major as well as minor civilization like the Egyptian, Sumerian, Harappan, Mayan etc. civilization always started in places which were conducive to permanent settlement as well as good and easy source of food which is plainly absent in the northeast India except for the Assam and Tripura plains as well as the Imphal Valley.

⁶³ Looking from a post-colonial perspective, the term pre-colonial is superimposed from the back. However, I used the term with some misgivings as there is no other term which I find fit to describe the periodization.

⁶⁴ The Mizo conceptualization of life after death can be best understood as a permanent place where according to their deed on earth they are divided into two groups that who attain richness or is a great hunter and follow the proscribed rite will go to *Pialral* or paradise and life forever doing nothing. But, those who do not attain this stage will again have to toil for their day to day existence in *Mithi Khua*. However, while this semblance to this world is more or less similar, the only divergent one is the permanency of the habitation of both.

The recorded history of the Mizos started with the coming of the British colonialist.⁶⁵ However, before the historical period starts, there was a long tradition of knowledge system and traditional lore which form the corpus of knowledge base and which serve as a mode of education with which the society govern and perpetuate itself. But, all these lore and knowledge transmission took place in everyday space of oral tradition which was the main way of reproducing and transmission of local lore and deeds which cannot be reproduced or stored in other forms as there was lack of proper material except for verbal reproduction. So, the traditional knowledge and history as well as folklore were all gleaned from oral sources which have been reproduced in writing and books after the entry of colonialists and subsequently modern education and print culture in Mizoram. But, problems arise due to the fact that the authenticity and veracity of the narrative needed to be ascertained when the folklore and other traditional knowledge are determined. In the course of the colonialist's endeavor to understand the Mizo identity as well as to the standardization of Mizo thought and history, first of all, an understanding of the kind of colonial encounter needed to be arrived at, followed by an understanding of the colonialist reproduction of the modes of knowledge.

3.2 Traditional Knowledge

When we say traditional knowledge, it impinges itself on the mode of knowledge that one understands and usually derived meaning of it. According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, Knowledge is 'information and skills acquired through experience or education'.⁶⁶ Traditional knowledge, simply put, in this light can thus be sum up as the information and skill that a particular community or group of people acquired through time immemorial. The Director General of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization defines traditional knowledge as:

The indigenous people of the world possess an immense knowledge of their environments, based on centuries of living close to nature. Living in and from the

⁶⁵ By historical, I mean the history connotation of written history as opposed to oral history and folklore. However, by no means do I restrict it to the historical period only.

⁶⁶ Pearsall, 1999.

richness and variety of complex ecosystems, they have an understanding of the properties of plants and animals, the functioning of ecosystems and the techniques for using and managing them that is particular and often detailed. In rural communities in developing countries, locally occurring species are relied on for many - sometimes all - foods, medicines, fuel, building materials and other products. Equally, peoples' knowledge and perceptions of the environment, and their relationships with it, are often important elements of cultural identity.

So, traditional knowledge constitutes the main area of thrust in knowledge and understanding as well as the pedagogy in the pre-colonial time. Traditional knowledge thus got its impetus not from reduction of belief system. Rather it is the celebration of living a harmonious relationship with nature and other in the surrounding area for survival. Thus, emphasis was given on practical and useable knowledge as well as one that will perpetuate the society rather than abstract metaphysical endeavors. However, the realm of traditional knowledge and knowledge *per se* can be demarcated differently. Western society has percolated its knowledge base and differentiates between secular or scientific knowledge from spiritual or theological knowledge or belief which is divorced from the physical world, and therefore objective knowledge. But, in non-western cultures, the realm of knowledge involves a complete dimension in which the physical and the spiritual comes together to constitute the code by which one live.

3.2.1 Mizo Traditional Educational Institution- *Zawlbuk*

In the Mizo traditional society, the major source of knowledge were elders-grandparents, parents and other elders in the village whose memories became an oral history that pass on from generation to generation. Thus, nighttime was a favorite time when children gathered around their grandparents and listen to lore of valour and other stories. This is an important source of history where major deeds will be recounted. But, these usually took the form of stories rather than recitation of hardcore facts to mesmerize the listeners. So, good storytelling is part of the tradition. However, this can be contrasted with the *zawlbuk* as a source of knowledge and information.

In the northeast, almost all the tribes have dormitories. According to the individual tribe, these were either for boys and girls. But, some tribes like the Mizos have dormitory only for boys. The Mizo boys' dormitory was known as *Zawlbuk*. The *Zawlbuk* was usually constructed on the largest open space in the centre of the village usually close to the chief's house. Depending on the size of the village, there may be two or more *zawlbuk* in the village although most villages usually have one.

The construction of the *zawlbuk* was different from other dwellings. It has no windows and no proper door. It has a humped thatched roof that was quite unique in comparison to other houses which have a sloping roof. Instead of the door big logs known as *bawhbel* were placed in the entrance up to 3 feet in height. To enter the *zawlbuk*, one have to go over it and it is usually very smooth. Different villages competed in using the biggest log they can use for this *bawhbel*. So, the logs were usually the biggest that they can find in their area.

The *Zawlbuk* was a singularly important social institution in every Mizo village, with the exception of the Maras.⁶⁷ It serves as a common dormitory for all the young men in the village. Except the children who were below ten years of age, all the un-married males in the village were under the discipline of *zawlbuk*, their lives being almost completely shaped according to the practices and convention prevailing therein.⁶⁸

According to Hluna, it serves three important functions. It served as sleeping quarters and recreational centre for un-married and as well as young married men. It imparted training and disciplined the young boys. It also served as an inn for visitors from outside the village.⁶⁹ *Zawlbuk* was, therefore, a powerful institution which exercised the greatest sway in establishing social norms and customs among

⁶⁷ Kipgen, Mangkhosat, 1997, *Christianity and Mizo Culture*, Mizoram: The Mizo Theological Conference. p 61

⁶⁸ Hluna, J. V., 1992, *Education and Missionaries in Mizoram*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publication. p. 11

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 12.

the Mizo people.⁷⁰ Beyond these, Kipgen identified two other points. First, it served as a defense ground for the village. In a society like the Mizos in which the villages were perpetually threatened by human enemies and wild animals, it served as an important rally point for defense against them. Secondly, it also served as an information centre for the village. All the young as well as old gathered there at the end of the day to share with one another the news of the day about things seen and heard, activities that merited either appreciation or criticism, and any matters of interest. Information was given as well as received pertaining to the affairs of the village as well as of other villagers brought by travelers.⁷¹ When any male stranger came to any village, the *zawlbuk* was the first place they visited. Here, they were usually challenged by the local youth for a wrestling match. Only after bouts of wrestling they were conducted to their lodging for the night. At the same time, youngsters usually wrestled in the *zawlbuk*, not only to challenge strangers but to prepare themselves for such instances when they will be strangers themselves. If the stranger was very strong and managed to beat the locals, he was held in high esteem.

The most important functions of the *zawlbuk* were education and training. The narratives by grandparents and other relatives, which form an important source of traditional knowledge, are more to the tune of entertainment in nature. However, the training and teaching imparted at the *zawlbuk* was different in the manner of mode of information. The *zawlbuk* has no formal arrangement for the kind of education and knowledge it impart, but the senior members in the dormitory took it among themselves to teach the youngsters about the social mores and values so that they can later on survive by themselves. So, at the *zawlbuk* the inmates learn the traditional handicrafts and arts, stories of bravery, valor and other values deemed worthwhile were taught as well as how to conduct oneself among others and in

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 12.

⁷¹ *Op. Cit.* p. 61.

society. Chaterjee regarded the *zawlbuk* as 'the crucible wherein the Mizo youth, the marginal man was shaped into the responsible adult member of their society'.⁷²

Honesty and sincerity were two traits that flowed strongly in the maintenance of the *zawlbuk*. For use in the dormitory, all boys below puberty were required to collect a specific firewood everyday under the supervision of one elder. If anyone was found secretly abstaining from this duty, he was punished by *vawwi* by the supervisor. To *vawwi* meant having to collect twice or thrice the amount collected by the others over a period specifies on the nature of the abstention. If any theft was committed by anyone belonging to this firewood collector group, all the others will pinch on his body and carry him by his skin. This was considered the ultimate punishment and all the boys tried to avoid it. Even parents never interfere in the administration of the *zawlbuk* in spite of whatsoever might happen to their wards.⁷³

Thus, the *zawlbuk* served as the *gurukul* and *akhara*, the place where knowledge for life and survival can be learnt. It is the only institution in traditional Mizo society with a strong bend on educating and instructing the young about life. It is the precursor for the more formal school to come up before its equivalent in society was achieved. The British were so impressed with the *zawlbuk* that they even try to revive it. But, it failed because by then, the need for the *zawlbuk* was not there anymore. There was no fear of enemies anymore and the learning instruction has been taken over by the mission schools which have come up in the area.

3.2.2 *Thlanrawkpa* and Mizo dreamtime

Here, I digress from using the traditional Mizo formulation of the non-existence of alphabet. According to Mizo lore, in the days of yore there exists an alphabet which was promptly lost as can be seen here in the following passage:

Once, *Thlanrawkpa* organized a *Khuangchawi* in which all the dwellers of the earth were invited to attend. As *Thlanrawkpa* was the son-in-law of *Pathian* or divine

⁷² Chaterjee, N. 1975, *Zawlbuk as a Social Institution in the Mizo Society*, Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute.

⁷³ Lalthanliana, 2000, *Mizo Chanchin (Kum 1900 Hma Lam)*, Aizawl: Vanlalthmuaka. p. 38.

father, his invitation was heeded by one and all. In this day of reckoning, all gifts were distributed to the various animals and men according to their action at the *Khuangchawi*. After all the festive were done, one drunken Mizo and plainsman came, praising *Thlanrawkpa* to the skies. He was so happy that he presented each one with a parchment. To the Mizo, he gave a leather parchment while to the plainsman he gave a paper one. However, the Mizo just put it in an easy lying place and being leather, it was consumed by a dog. But, the plainsman put it in a safe place and gave it as an heirloom to his descendants, that is why the plainsman are more educated and literate than the Mizos.⁷⁴

The main focus that I try to present here by this short reproduction is that, while so-called traditional or tribal societies which are deemed to be out of bound or on the fringes of civilization are supposed to have a less developed sense of themselves. There are also traditions and presentation of knowledge which is not usually acknowledged as proper but rather in the realms of myths and mythology and folklore but which also exhibited their interaction and thoughts.

Here, i borrow the concept of the Australian aboriginal dreamtime where it is used to refer to the 'time before time', or 'the time of the creation of all things', in contrast to 'Dreaming' which is often used to refer to an individual's or group's set of beliefs or spirituality. Thus, *Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi* became an important tradition in Mizo lore where most creations regarding life was instituted. The lore regarding the origin of life is different where *Thimzing* or the Great Fog cover the earth and life emerged after the fog passed away.⁷⁵ But, while creation started from here, knowledge about life and vocation were distributed at the *Khuangchawi*.

⁷⁴ This story has been used as one argument to show that pre-colonial Mizo society while essentially illiterate, there are stories and passages in which there are traces of evidence of literacy. The story is presented in different format and form by various folklorists; I paraphrase it and translated it from Mizo depending on K. Zawla's *Mizo Pi Pute leh an Thlahte Chanchin*, Aizawl: Gosen Press and *Class-X Mizo*, Mizoram Board of School Education. However, several Mizo historians are of the view that this view is superimposed from above i.e. they maintained that this tradition of literacy comes only after the British came to Mizoram. But, the point is debatable as many other cultures have tradition of lost book or alphabet like the Kachins in Myanmar, Lahu in Thailand and others as pointed out by Lalhruitluanga in *A AW B Tobul* in *Lengzem*, February, 2007.

⁷⁵ Zawla, 1989. p. 10.

The historicity of *Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi* can be somewhat equated with dreamtime where both based their origin in the mythical past. However, the difference lies in the fact that while the Mizos are predominantly Christian now, the aborigines have more or less maintain their tradition which they carried forward from the past. Accordingly, one culture led to a negation of traditional belief and its reduction to myths and stories while another celebrate the very existence of the tradition. Both represent the fact that knowledge was also there albeit a different one.

3.3 Oral History and Folklore: The Mizo Context

Oral history suffers from more or less the same fate that traditional knowledge have. The fact that there is no tangible evidence to show for the backing up of it is mentioned and uttered. Thus, the accumulation of knowledge which a literate society possessed was supposed to be superior by the fact that it can be backup by a written piece which is tangible and objective whilst oral knowledge and source is supposed to be less reliable and inferior due to supposed personal interpolations as well as the fact that the veracity of the fact lies on the honour of the narrator. However, this seemed to be a modern convention. In ancient India, as shown by Romila Thapar, written words have no more importance than the utterance of a person.⁷⁶ So what is oral history? According to Shopes:

“Oral History” is a maddeningly imprecise term: it is used to refer to formal, rehearsed accounts of the past presented by culturally sanctioned tradition-bearers; to informal conversations about “the old days” among family members, neighbors, or coworkers; to printed compilations of stories told about past times and present experiences; and to recorded interviews with individuals deemed to have an important story to tell.

Each of these uses of the term has a certain currency. Unquestionably, most people throughout history have learned about the past through the spoken word. Moreover, for generations history-conscious individuals have preserved others' firsthand accounts of the past for the record, often precisely at the moment when the historical actors themselves, and with them their memories, were about to pass from the scene.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Cited in Kumar, Krishna, 2001, *The Political Agenda of Education*, New Delhi: Sage. 2nd Edition.

⁷⁷ Shopes, Linda 2001, n.d., *What is Oral History?* (<http://historymatters.gmu.edu>)

The imprecise term is thus a cause for relegating to the back what can be an important piece of work. As mentioned by Shopes, so-called written history, which are supposedly sacrosanct, are themselves memories and oral narratives which have been recorded and put in written at a vantage junction of time.

There is a need to maintain a difference between oral history and folklore while each can merge within the other also. Oral history is different from written in that one can be preserved for posterity while the other cannot be preserved in the same form. If we look at the great Indian epics the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, they might have weathered hundreds of interpolation before it come to the present form. It is said that even in the early century AD, there are still interpolations. How are we to verify that their present form is the one as written by Vyasa and Valmiki. It is a fact that only because it is put down in a written form sometime long after the actual composition of then is made that it reached an epic proportion. The historicity of them is another matter.

Thus, the selection and preservation of knowledge is also a modern construct whereby there is an emphasis put on the written word. While alphabet has been a part of civilization for a long time, It is only after the Chinese invented the printing press and its subsequent use in the western countries of Europe that books came to reach the masses. Knowledge thus began available in a packet. Earlier, knowledge can be gain only from the 'master'. Now, even without the master, one can, in the safety of home or other places, study and gain knowledge. The main advantage of book over the verbal utterance was that long after the master is gone, the thought can be preserved for posterity as well as future studies. The oral history of the people was thus converted as folklore and part of the myths and legends of the people and not worth consulting for historical purpose. Rather, they are put as old women's' tales and story spinning.

3.4 Narrating tradition: a look at Mizo folklore

Narratives and narrations as shown above have showed that it is in the oral narration that Mizo knowledge is transmitted. But, how is the transmission of the narratives an important part? According to Crook, 'narratives that may be used to sing out an eternal truth are not chronologically bound'.⁷⁸ Ong had shown that how 'although it is found in all cultures, narrative is in a certain way more widely functional in primary oral culture than in others'.⁷⁹ The narrations just change from orality to textuality. Febvre has shown the coming of writing and especially the printed word has led to a large scale change in social sphere.⁸⁰ The European case can be taken as a moot point where traditional folklore and story telling get entwined with printing and the fable become stories in the books. Gutenberg and Caxton had revolutionized the reproduction and archival of knowledge. An instance is *Little Red Riding Hood* which was put in a book form by Charles Perrault in the seventeenth century.⁸¹ An important point is whether the form of narratives was different in the books as well as the oral narrative. Oral narratives have a tendency to dramatize the story with embellishments to portray the story in a vivid and bright picture.⁸² Thus, the listener gets into the mood of the story and can 'imagine' himself in the story or feel that he is witnessing the drama unfolding by the vivid portrayal. Traditional narratives can be changed according to shifts in the social milieu. Elliot put it succinctly:

Tradition is not sole, or even primarily, the maintenance of certain dogmatic beliefs...We are always in danger, in clinging to an old tradition, or attempting to re-establish one, of confusing the vital and the unessential, the real and the sentimental. Our second danger is to associate tradition with the immovable; to think of it as something hostile to change; to aim to return to some previous condition which we

⁷⁸ Crook, Nigel, 1996 (2001), *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press. p. 6.

⁷⁹ Ong, Walter J., 2002, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, London: Routledge. p. 137.

⁸⁰ Febvre, Lucian and Martin, Henri-Jean, 1976, *The coming of the Book*, London: Verso.

⁸¹ Soriano cited in Burke, Peter, 1992, *History and Social Theory*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁸² Ong.

imagine as having been capable of preservation in perpetuity, instead of aiming to stimulate the life which produced that condition in its time.⁸³

To illustrate the Mizo understanding of the cosmos and knowledge formation, we will look at two Mizo folk tales:

1. CHAWNGMAWII and HRANGCHHUANA

Long time ago, in two adjacent villages, lived a young man and a young maiden Hrangchhuana and Chawngmawii, each famed for their beauty. The two came secretly both to know and love each other which was not an easy thing as they belonged to different villages and one never know when enmity might break between the two villages.

As time passed, Hrangchhuana became bold and started killing a child while returning after his visit to Chawngmawii. This led to great alarm in Chawngmawii's village and they started constructing a great wall around the village. They also sprinkled ash around the main roads to pick up the footprint of anyone who might enter the village.

However, Hrangchhuana was also an intelligent man and devised a way to hoodwink the villagers. He approach the village backward so that whosoever was on guard thought that the thief was going out of the village and while departing go backward again so that it look as if he was about to enter. This went on for sometime. But, one night, Hrangchhuana drunk in his success was less careful and he fell in the hands of the guards who promptly slain him.

The Chief then decided to discover whether the thief have any paramour in the village. So, he called the entire young maidens in the village and told them to walk over his body. One by one, the young maidens walk over Hrangchhuana. When it was Chawngmawii's turn, she could not control herself and cried over him. They also kill her immediately. So, together, their soul went to the sky together where both changed into Jupiter (Hrangchhuana) and Venus (Chawngmawii). As they were lover on earth, in the sky they continue to be lover and from time to time they can be seen growing close to each other. It used to be said that when these two lovers court

⁸³ Eliot, T. S., 1953, "Tradition", in *Selected Prose*, London: Penguin Books.

each other in the heavenly sky, it is the best time here on earth to propose to loved ones.⁸⁴

2. HOW THE MUSHROOM CAME INTO BEING

Once, two sisters were searching for cucumbers in a field. The younger one picked up a number but the elder sister was unsuccessful. So she asked her sister to give her some, but the younger one refused saying that she wanted to take all of it home so she can eat with her parents. This greatly upset the elder sister who thereupon called on a clay mound in the ground to swallow her up:

“Swallow me up, O strong clay mound,
My little sister no cucumber can she give,
Swallow me up, O strong clay mound.”

She then gradually sinks in the mound until only the top of her head could be seen. The younger sister then returned home alone. Their parents by then returned from the field and asked her where her sister was. The younger sister truthfully told her parents how her sister was swallowed by the clay mound due to her refusal. The parents were very distressed and told her to go back at once and to try to call her to return. So, she went calling:

“Sister, sister, please do come back,
Mother will buy you rich amber beads,
Father will buy you great brazen bell.”

The elder sister then came out rising higher and higher till only her knees remained. Unluckily, just at this stage cry was raised that the enemy were coming and so they wrenched the elder sister out. But, this caused her to lose her legs which were left in the ground, turning into mushrooms which grow in this way till today.⁸⁵

These two folktales showed the psyche of the Mizo mind. From their rudimentary knowledge, they have tried to understand the cosmos. They also believed that things didn't happen just by themselves. So, they tried to look into the nature of phenomena and come up with their own explanations.

⁸⁴ Paraphrased from K. Zawla 1989 and McCall, 1949.

⁸⁵ McCall, 1949.

3.5 Colonial Period

The colonial period in Mizoram (then Lushai Hills and subsequently Mizo Hills) started properly with the Second Lushai Expedition in 1889. The first expedition was in 1871, but they returned back without any annexation of Mizo territory. The second expedition however establish base in Mizoram and started proper administration and colonization of the Mizoram and surrounding area. They thus administer the area till 1947 without interference from the rest of India as they were part of the excluded area and administered separately.

The colonialists left behind a corpus of various works which they wrote to understand the Mizo mind and mentality. The fact that the main books they wrote are more to the tune of ethnography or anthropological works rather than hardcore analytical works. Also prominent among them are books dealing with the grammar of the area with which they try to understand the Mizo psyche. Thus, the various books which they wrote include *T. H. Lewin, 1874, Progressive Colloquial Exercise in the Lushai Dialect of the 'Dzo' or Kuki Language, with Vocabularies and Popular Tales (Notated)*, *Brojo Nath Saha, 1884, Grammar of the Lushai Language, To which are appended a few illustrations of the Zau or Lushai Popular Songs and Translation from Aesops's Fables*, *C.A. Soppit, 1893, Outline Grammar of the Rangkhoh-Lushai Language*,

3.6 The Colonization of Mizoram

The Mizos first came to the attention of the British due to their frequent raids in the Cachar and surrounding area of Assam which they considered their 'elephant hunting area' and thus theirs by right since time immemorial. However, the British regarded them as not worth troubling as they discern nothing of value in the hills. Rather, they look at it as just a nuisance and interference to their smooth functioning in the Assam plains. But, they cannot just relegate them to the background as they were constantly exposed to them. They even used the Kukis and Manipur Raja to interfere and attack the Lushai columns who frequently raided the British India

territory.⁸⁶ The immediate cause for the first inroad to Mizoram was the raid of Alexandrapore.

In 1871 January, Bengkhuaia, a Mizo chief and his braves attacked the tea plantation at Alexandrapore in Cachar area of Assam and killed the British manager there. Not only that, they took capture of his young daughter Mary Winchester in Mizoram. Moreover, two Mizo chiefs, Lalburha and Thanhranga took thirteen army guns in their raid to the plains of Assam. The two actions combined angered the British administration and started two expeditions to Mizoram.⁸⁷ However, they returned back without making any permanent settlement after they achieved their aim-get back the guns and punish the chiefs responsible for them and get back Mary Winchester.

However, the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872 opened up the Mizo country to the British and revealed the myth of the invulnerability of the hill and added several problems of new aspects which needed to be addressed by the government of India. After the expedition, even though the British did not directly interfered in the internal affairs of the Mizos, an annual durbar of the Lushai chiefs, which was called the Lushai assembly were held at Demagiri presided over by the Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong. These durbars created a substantial amount of goodwill among the Mizo chiefs in the west and the British and assumed a significant place in the formation of Anglo-Mizo relationship.⁸⁸

For fourteen years, the Mizos didn't bother the British territory again because of internal strife as well as the agreement signed in the first expedition.⁸⁹ The famous Mizoram war, *Chhak leh Thlang Indo* took place during 1877 to 1880. The aftermath of it led to a slack in the raids to the plains. However, this resumed again after a brief period. Consequently, the second Lushai Expedition came to Mizoram in 1899. By,

⁸⁶ Foreign and Political Dept. Report 1874., Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute.

⁸⁷ Zawla, 1989. p.204.

⁸⁸ Chaterjee, Subas, 1985, *Mizoram under the British Rule*, Delhi: Mittal Publications.

⁸⁹ Lalthangliana, 2001, p. 417.

1890, the expedition was more or less over. So, 1890 is usually taken as the year of annexation of Mizoram.

3.7 Missionaries and the Introduction of Modern Mizo Alphabet⁹⁰

British military expeditions and missionary activities commenced almost simultaneously. After the Second Lushai Expedition of 1890, the first British missionaries, J. H. Lorrain and F. W. Savidge arrived in Mizoram on 11th January 1894, a gap of only four years. They were sent as part of the Arthington Aborigines Mission. Robert Arthington was a wealthy Christian in England who, after learning of the death of Winchester at the hands of the Mizo raiders, feels burdened to preach the gospel among the fierce head hunting tribes of northeast India. So, his Arthington Aborigines Mission was established for this purpose.⁹¹ At the same time, J. H. Lorrain was deeply affected by a pictorial depiction of the kidnapping of Mary Winchester that he have seen and applied to the Arthington Mission. He then sailed to Calcutta where he was joined by F. W. Savidge, a school teacher who became his partner and lifelong friend.⁹²

The two missionaries, after living in Mizoram, started learning the *duhlian* dialect of the Mizo language and started the Mizo alphabet basing it on simple Roman script with a phonetic form of spelling using the well known Hunterian transliteration schema.⁹³ After reducing the language to writing, they started

⁹⁰ Here i used the assumption used by others also that the modern Mizo alphabet based on Roman numeral is the not the first one. Others has also pointed out the fact that prior to the British entry in Mizoram, there exist a previous letter. However, as the debate regarding the historicity of *Thlanrawkpa* cannot be ascertained and belong more to the mythical past and figment of imagination rather than actual happening. It can be debunked on that point as well as lack of proof. But, the very fact that the existence of such a story presuppose that either the Mizos have their own script or at least have knowledge of such existence from other tribes living around them. The nearest point to which the Mizos can point as alphabet is the alphabet of Pau Chin Hau of Tiddim. However, it has a small reach but significantly precede the Mizo Alphabet. For clarification see *Brief history of Pau Cin Hau and his religion*, Laipian Phungpi: Tedim (n.d.) and Chawngkunga, C. (compiled), 1998, *Important Documents of Mizoram*, Aizawl: Art and Culture Department.

⁹¹ Neil, Stephen, Anderson, Gerald H., and Goodwin, John, (ed.), *Concise Dictionary of Christian World Mission*, Cited in Hluna 1992. p. 41

⁹² Ibid. p. 41

⁹³ Lorrain, J. H., 1940, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, Calcutta: The Asiatic Society. p. v.

translating the Bible and started with the Gospel of John, Luke and the Book of Acts and Education primers. From this end started the literacy journey of Mizo society from a basically oral one leading to one of the highest literacy rate in the country (88.49%) next only to Kerela.⁹⁴

However, Arthington has a strong prejudice against the institutionalization of missionary work and his main objective was its proclamation. Thus, as soon as Christian fellowship was started in one tribe, the missionaries are pressed to proclaim to other non-believers.⁹⁵ So, even the two missionaries who have achieved so much already are forced to move again. So, they went to the Adi area in NEFA. In their place, the Welsh Presbyterian Mission was handed over the task by Arthington's Agent in Calcutta. Therefore, according to the terms of handover and request by the two previous missionaries, the Welsh Presbyterian Mission sent D. E. Jones to continue the task of preaching among the Mizos. The two missionaries applied to the Welsh Mission to continue, not as missionaries but as evangelist among the Mizos, but this was turned down, probably because of denominational difference, among other issues.⁹⁶ So, the very missionaries who gave the alphabet and started the rudimentary work were left to pursue their missionary activity in Assam.

3.8 Three Pillars of Mission Activities

The establishment of missionaries centre followed the British annexations. As mentioned above, the Arthington Mission set-up their post in Aizawl which was the Northern centre of Mizo occupation administered from Assam while the southern part was administered from Bengal. The Mizo area was ruled according to the Expeditions that annexes the area.⁹⁷ The mission started by the Arthington Mission

⁹⁴ Census of India, 2001.

⁹⁵ Storm, Donna, 1983, *Wind Through the Bamboo*, Madras: Evangelical Literature Service.

⁹⁶ J. H. Lorrain and F. W. Savidge were Baptist while the Welsh Mission was Presbyterian.

⁹⁷ The Second Lushai Expedition of 1899-1890 came to Mizo area in two fronts, one from the Assam area and the other from the Bengal area. Consequently, the political officers establish their posts when they reach the vantage points. Thus, these points later on become the centers of British rule in Mizoram as there was no centre of such earlier, the villages being more or less like

was later ceded to the Welsh Presbyterian Mission who took the mission from the previous missionaries. However, after a period of three years Lorrain and Savidge returned to Mizoram again, this time under the aegis of the Baptist Mission, and started their work at Serkawn near Lunglei in Southern Mizoram. This was the start for the Church dichotomy that was to govern Mizoram missionary activity as well as orientations.

3.8.1 Welsh Presbyterian Mission

The Welsh Presbyterian Mission took off where the Arthington Mission left their place. They established the Presbyterian Church in the northern part of Mizoram which till today is the biggest denomination in Mizoram. In the beginning, even before the Arthington Mission came to Mizoram, in the Welsh Presbyterian Church General Assembly, it was decided to send a missionary among the Mizos.⁹⁸ Rev. William Williams, the candidate for the job died before going to Mizoram. So, the first effort of the Welsh Presbyterian failed. In the ensuing period, the Arthington Mission was able to send their missionaries.

The first Welsh Presbyterian missionary was Rev. D. E. Jones who arrived in Mizoram in 1897 August. He was able to stay for four months with the previous missionaries. He was greatly aided by the two missionaries preceding him in his job as missionary as well as in learning the Mizo language.⁹⁹ About the same time, the Khasi Church sends a helper, Raibhajur to help Rev. D. E. Jones in his endeavors and missionary works. The second missionary Rev. Edwin Rowlands arrived in Aizawl in 1898 December. Rowlands was earlier a teacher in America and immediately look after the school department along with his preaching responsibilities.

hamlets and the population level quite low as to qualify for Mizo centre or so. Important places being Aizawl, the present capital of Mizoram was never an important place until the British came and setup their post there. Same is the case with Lunglei and Saiha. This way, the older more important villages were replaced by the colonial construct by their establishment.

⁹⁸ Saiaithanga, Rev., 1969, *Mizo Kohlrin Chanchin*, Aizawl: The Regional Theological Literature Committee. p. 10.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 11.

The two missionaries worked with great enthusiasm and were able to make extensive tours of the Mizoram during the 1899-1905 period.¹⁰⁰ In two years, they were able to report that they have visited nearly two-third of all the villages.¹⁰¹ They had in fact covered the whole of inhabited Mizoram except for the southernmost point.¹⁰²

3.8.2 Baptist Mission

The southern part of Mizoram was administered from Bengal as the transportation was easier toward Chittagong side rather than the Assam border side. A footpath connected the area with Chittagong which was the easternmost town of Bengal. So, the northern side with main centre at Aizawl was administered from Assam while the southern side with centre at Lunglei was administered from Bengal.

The mission activity in Mizoram was directed from the north, from Aizawl where the Presbyterian Mission had their base. They took the whole Mizo area under their ministry and tour the area in their ministrations. At the same time, the Baptist Missionary Society has been working sometime in the eastern border of Bengal, close to Southern Mizoram. The Baptist Mission wants to extend it up to the adjacent Mizoram and send their representative to go up to Lunglei and see whether it was suitable to adopt the area as a field.¹⁰³ He was warmly welcomed by the Christians there and he wrote a favorable report for the adaptation of the field.

The Baptist Mission started negotiations with the Welsh Mission which agreed to have their portion of Mission field taken over by the Baptist Mission. D. E. Jones and Edwin Rowlands were disappointed at this new injunction as they regretted losing a promising field as well as having to divide the Christian

¹⁰⁰ Kipgen. p. 200.

¹⁰¹ Welsh Foreign Mission Report, 1899, p. lvii.

¹⁰² *Op. cit.* p. 200.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* p. 201.

community among a single group of people. But, their objection has no takers as the home office of the Welsh Presbyterian Church has other priorities. As Lloyd put it:

There were certain other factors affecting the Board's decision. They had no immediate prospects of sending reinforcements from Wales to the Lushai Hills. The earthquake of 1897 had placed severer financial burdens on the society which they were still struggling to overcome. The attitude of the Mission board at this time, and for many years later, seemed also to indicate that the main work of the Mission lay in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills which therefore merited more attention and needed greater resources than the work in Mizoram.¹⁰⁴

The issue regarding the division of mission field being finalized; the Baptist Mission wasted no time in searching for suitable missionaries for the mission in Lunglei. The missionaries chosen by the Baptist Missionary Society were the two who had pioneered the work in Aizawl- Lorrain and Savidge. After leaving Mizoram, they had gone to work among the Adis in NEFA, what in present day is known as Arunachal Pradesh.

Lorrain and Savidge arrived for the second time in Mizoram in Lunglei on 13 March 1903. With the permission of the local officer, they decide on Serkawn, a short distance to the northwest of Lunglei, for the mission station which continued till today as the centre of the Baptist Church of Mizoram.

3.8.3 Lakher Pioneer Mission

By establishing the Welsh Mission in the north and the Baptist Mission in the south, the missionaries had assumed responsibility for the whole of the then Lushai district.¹⁰⁵ There were a group of people who lived in the south easternmost part of Mizoram who speak a dialect different from the *duhlian* dialect. They were the Maras or Lakheres who belong to the same stock as the Mizo group. They were not properly part of the area annexed in the Lushai Expedition as they do not belong to the Lushai

¹⁰⁴ Lloyd, J. M., 1991, *History of the Church in Mizoram (Harvest in the Hills)* Aizawl: Synod Publication Board. p. 74-75.

¹⁰⁵ Kipgen. p. 203.

stock and rather do not have much relationship with them.¹⁰⁶ They are included in the present day Mizoram.

While they exercise loose control, the British did not administer the Mara area directly until a boundary demarcation brought portions of it within the Lushai Hills District in 1931-42.¹⁰⁷ Earlier, a few Mara boys used to study in the Baptist Boarding school at Serkawn but otherwise, their area was outside the Baptist Mission Society area. The Maras were warlike and it was considered dangerous to enter their area, even after other parts of Mizoram were evangelized, the Maras were left untouched.

R. A. Lorrain, the brother of J. H. Lorrain decided to preach the gospel among the Maras. Accordingly, with the help of interested friends, they founded the Lakher Pioneer Mission in 1905. After undergoing medical training and the long journey, they arrived at Serkawr in the Mara area in 1907.¹⁰⁸ During this time, the Maras were enjoying a self-sustaining economy and they were not very receptive to the kind of work that the missionaries want from them.¹⁰⁹ Earlier, like any other group in Mizoram, the Maras also have their own conception on divinity as well as evil spirits. Appeasement by sacrifices was a major part of their rituals. However, after the coming of Christianity they have changed all these and embraced it with full devotion.¹¹⁰

These three missions thus constituted the three pillars on which the major task of winning converts for the Kingdom of God fell upon. Within the next fifty years or so, they were able to convert the whole of Mizoram with their missionary activities and in the process create an education system which has deep impact on the society.

¹⁰⁶ Whether the Lakher are part of the Mizo group is a point of debate among various historians. However, B. Lalthangliana put them in the Mizo group. See his *Mizo Chanchin*.

¹⁰⁷ Reid, Robert, 1942 (1978), *The Lushai Hills*, Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute.

¹⁰⁸ Lorrain, R.A., 1912 (1988), *5 Years in Unknown Jungles for God and Empire*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 75.

¹¹⁰ Chawngthu, Chawngkhuma, 2005, *Mara Khawtlang Nun*, Aizawl: Mizoram Publication Board.

CHAPTER III

CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES AND INTRODUCTION OF FORMAL EDUCATION

The introduction of school in Mizoram has two trajectories. For the colonial rulers, the introduction of schools and education system in the annexed areas form an important part of legitimizing colonial enterprise. As in other parts of India, Mizoram also witnessed two kinds of educational set-up viz. schools established by the government and the Christian missionaries. But, unlike other part of India where a secular form of schooling has been attempted, in Mizoram the education process was completely left in the hands of the missionaries. With evangelism as the primary motive of Christian missionaries the evangelizing and the education process went hand in hand in creating a unique system where the hegemony of the church is dominant.

4.1 Establishment of Schools

At the beginning, the government paid no attention to the education of Mizoram. Primary education started only when the British consolidated their power in Mizoram. The first formal school was started in Aizawl on November 1893. It was at a very basic level and was mostly meant for the officials of the British and their dependencies. Mizoram being administered from the Assam and Bengal block, the schools was run in Hindi medium. Similar schools were opened later at Lunglei and Demagiri in 1894. All these three schools were maintained by the Military Police through an annual grant from the Chittagong Hill Tracts Education Fund. But these were in namesake only rather than serious educational pursuits. These schools were not made available for Mizos. Nevertheless, these were the first educational infrastructure in Mizoram.

For the first time, a proposal for the sanctioning of a grant for the establishment of one school for the benefit of Mizo children was submitted in

1896.¹¹¹ In this proposal, A. Porteous, the then political officer requested the sanction to employ one school master and one servant. He also proposed that the language taught should be Bengali as he felt that very soon Bengali would make its way into use as the language of trade and official intercourse.¹¹² He thus strongly recommended that the initial medium of instruction should be Bengali to be later followed by English as soon as possible. He further recommended that the teacher should learn Mizo and that knowledge of the language should be made a condition of appointment.

As a result of the proposal, a government school for Mizo boys was established on 21st August, 1897. The curriculum was basically reading and writing and simple arithmetic. Etiquette was also incorporated to teach the boys how to conduct themselves when in the presence of their teachers and when officers visited the school. The teacher Kalijoy Kavyatirtha strongly recommended the usage of Bengali as the medium of instruction. He argued that, since literature on science, philosophy and other subjects were available in that language, the students could study by themselves to improve their knowledge. This would also enable them to read newspaper in Bengali to have an idea of the civilized world.¹¹³

However, in spite of the arguments put forward, the government did not prescribe any regular course of studies and the chief attention was paid to introducing rudimentary education among the Mizos. The text used was *Zirtanbu* (Primer Book) in Mizo and the arithmetic was usually limited to the strength of the student comprising of compound addition, simple division and simple addition.

In 1904, the development of education underwent a significant change. Sir Bamfield Fuller, the then Governor of Assam came to Mizoram. He visited both the Government School and the school run by the missionaries. Impressed by the

¹¹¹ Hluna, 1992. p. 57.

¹¹² *Ibid.* p. 57.

¹¹³ AR, File No. 3, Misc. Collection-III-Political (General Branch) From Kalijoy Kavyatirtha to the Political Officer, 5th April 1898.

mission school, he handed over the education implementation to the missionaries and gave them the grant which was earlier enjoyed by the government school.¹¹⁴ As a result, the government school was closed and amalgamated with the mission school. From this moment till the attainment of Indian independence, the actual designing of education system was left in the hands of the Christian mission. The role of the government was just relegated to the provider of funding for the various educational initiatives.

4.2 The Mission Schools

Immediately on their arrival the missionaries started school. After finishing a rudimentary form of alphabet and rules of grammar, the pioneer missionaries of the Arthington Mission, Lorrain and Savidge prepared with the new alphabet *Zirtanbu* (Lushai Primer), *Hlabu* (Hymn Book) and *Zawhna leh Chhanna* (Book of questions and answers) in 1896. Due to time constraints and the necessity of translation job, the school they opened was closed almost immediately. Soon after, according to the dictates of the Arthington Mission, they again had to shift to Arunachal to work among the Adis. So, it was left to the new foreign mission – the Welsh Presbyterian church to continue the job.

The advent of the Baptist Mission in the southern parts of Mizoram and the return of Lorrain and Savidge from Arunachal resulted in the split of the education centre in Mizoram. Administration of the area was under one centre, viz. Aizawl. However, the missions have two centers—one at Aizawl and one at Lunglei. But, co-operation between the two missions contributed to the growth of education. The missionaries from both the Welsh Presbyterian and the Baptist Church were given the title of Honorary Inspector of Schools by the British government in Mizoram. This was done because the number of school was gradually increasing but there was no proper system of inspection of both the Mission schools and the government schools. Realizing the need and the involvement of the Church in the educational activity, it was only natural that they were the one taken as inspectors.

¹¹⁴ Saiaithanga, 1969. p. 35.

Till 1952, when the education department was handed over to the Government of Mizoram, the two Missions in Mizoram exercised full authority over the education system except in administration. As a result, the colonial education system in British administered Mizoram may be considered as essentially Christian Education. The correlation between Christianity and education can be seen in the table below.

Census	Population	Christian	Literate
1901	82434	45	761
1911	91204	2461	3635
1921	98406	27720	6183
1931	124404	59123	13320
1941	152786	98108	29765

Table 1.1 Census Data of Population, Religion and Literacy. Census of India.

These mission schools were run by combining the mission fund and the government fund. The mission could not just open school without consulting the government as the majority of the funding came from there. The functioning of the Welsh Presbyterian and the Baptist mission were also slightly different. While the mission in the south seemed to exhibit interest for producing elite the north Presbyterian were more egalitarian in their educational activities as can be seen below.

The Baptist Church was in the habit of selecting a small number of bright young men, intelligent and capable to continue the mission. These selected few were groomed beyond the normal education given to the masses. As a result, the Church in the south produced several luminaries who are well known in the country all over for their vocation. The number of schools that they maintained was also far less than the northern side. The main one at Serkawn was well known all over the area, but there is no one single school which stands out in the north. This ultimately led to a

debate over which one was the better. The following dialogue by a Presbyterian elder and Pastor during the period well illustrates the point:

Elder Laihnuna: We are not on par with the south. The intellectuals our country can boast of are always from the south.

Rev. Saiaithanga: The southern church established one place where they carefully groom a few selected students. Discipline and studies are maintained properly. As a result, these selected few are well known all over Mizoram. We, in the north take the whole country as our goal while the south concentrates on one point. If you look at one point only, the south is shining brighter, but if you take the country as a whole, the north is brighter. Which one is the better?¹¹⁵

The difference in this can be seen from the intellectuals and leaders that came out of the south. All the early politicians are from the south. In fact, the Mizo Union got its impetus from the south only.¹¹⁶ But, for a few selected one, hardly anyone is known while in the north there is no single major head with most of them on the same level.

Number of Schools		
Year	Welsh Presbyterian Church	Baptist Mission
1898	1	-
1899	3	-
1903	15	1
1906	n.a.	4
1915	49	n.a.
1920	53	13

Table 1.2 Growth of School. Source: Rokhuma¹¹⁷

The above figure illustrates the growth of education in Mizoram. It can be seen that there existed differences in their focus in the northern and southern part of

¹¹⁵ Lalhmuaka, 2000, *Zoram Sikul Zirna Chanchin*, p. 135.

¹¹⁶ The Mizo Union was the first Mizo political party.

¹¹⁷ Rokhuma, K. L., 1988, *Mizoram Zirnaa Mission leh Kohhran Rawngbawlna*, Serkawn: BCM.

the country. The number of school in the north increased exponentially because of the way they conduct the schools. The mission usually established the schools as one major way of winning converts. Schools were usually opened with the initiative of the village chief who wanted to have a school. Tacit agreement was necessary as the school building was constructed by the village free of cost.¹¹⁸ The practice of using the educated local students started when the educated ones went back to their villages, they started teaching their friends what they learnt in the schools.¹¹⁹ Capitalizing on these, the missions started schools in the villages employing the students who already passed out from the schools at either Aizawl or Lunglei.

4.3 *Preparatio Evangelica*¹²⁰

Looking at the rationale behind the process of education in Mizoram, the means and method of the education process represented an evangelizing agenda. In the initial stage, one can discerned the various implications that the missionary activities brought. In many parts of India, they were the precursor of education where there is not any, originator of alphabet where none exist and so on. The underlying principle behind this is the plan: the agenda of conversion and the means to support the newly converted by themselves by training the converted native populace to continue the evangelizing work.

In other parts of India where there is a presence of means of systematised learning like the *Pathshalas/Tolas and Masdarsas*, the impact of the school was not because of innovation but rather functioned as a means to attain higher status on the social ladder. From the part of the missionaries, it was a means by which Christian ethics as well as Western culture would be inculcated in the Indian child. In the words of Macaulay, one who would be in mannerism and orientation western but only dark in skin. Thus, involvement in education was seen as an essential and predominant aspect of the mission to convert new believers to Christianity.

¹¹⁸ *Op. cit.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Even though this is a popular term, I follow it from Gauri Viswanathan's book where I encounter it for the first time.

The importance of education was first stressed when the missionaries in the process of winning converts in the early nineteenth century found their way blocked by the hierarchy existing in the society. The heartland of Hindu remained not only enlightened but untouched. Caste was the strong form behind the walls that enfold Hinduism. To go beyond these thick layers demanded more than just itinerant preaching. The social intercourse between the European Christian missionaries from across the *Kala Pani* and the dominant Hindu culture was in a flux. Due to social restrictions and formalities as well as the indifference showed by the local communities, the missionaries found it difficult to make a breakthrough. The missionaries complained time and again that the institution of caste and the native's stubborn attachment to their own superstitions made the work of winning them over all but possible.¹²¹

From this juncture, extensive involvement in education entered in the discourse of the missionaries as an essential and even leading characteristic of the mission to win soul and consolidate their social base. The importance being assigned to education was not only the issue of getting them young but the notion that in India, it might be necessary to proceed by stages and that educating the young one might prepare their minds for later receptiveness to the Word of God.¹²² In the context of mainland India, it was seen as deeply entrenched in religious fanaticism and the thousand of years of civilisation were supposed to be entrenched in the mind of the people. So, everywhere they went, the missionaries were almost always the precursor of modern education.

The process of *Preparatio Evangelica* came to such an extent that it was questioned whether the involvement of the missionaries in school education was distracting them from the real task of winning converts. The Allahabad Missionary Conference of 1872 witnessed several dissensions regarding the emphasis laid on

¹²¹ Seth, 2007. p. 30

¹²² *Ibid.* p. 30.

education. However, one of the major responses to this, in the words of Bishop Cotton was that:

“The general clearing away of ignorance, folly and superstition effected by education are as likely to pave the way for Christ’s spirit as the plan of hurrying from village to village, preaching for a day or two, and not reappearing.”¹²³

Education thus became the preparation for the leavening of the bread, the forerunner for the future evangelizing and the preparation of the field for Christianity to come later. In Mizoram, great importance laid on the presentation of a medium through which winning converts could be done in a successful way. The absence of a script hampered their job in the beginning. If preaching was ever to be done, there was a need for a means of recording for which the new converts can do their reading of the scripture as well as present proper information. So, while a history of the doings and proceeding of the first missionaries are not documented properly, their activities in preparation of an education system and their adaptation and formalization of the Mizo alphabet are recorded properly.

Notwithstanding the first schools which were opened by the government for its employees ward, the proper schools for the mass education was inculcated by the missionaries. Funding for the schools came both from the mission fund and government grants. In fact, the government thought that it was expeditious if the whole process of education was in the hands of the missions. The following passages can be seen as an illustration of the point:

Education in the Lushai Hills has always been under the control of the missionaries at Lungleh and Aijal, who have done magnificent work. Probably more Lushais per cent. of the population are literate in their own vernacular than the inhabitants of any other district in Assam. Education in the Lushai Hills so far has resulted in making a large number of people literate without manufacturing a class of educated unemployed....I think that it would be much sounder to give the missions a larger grant for primary education and to continue as at present than to start Government schools. I think that with education in Aijal controlled by the Welsh Mission and in

¹²³ *Ibid.* p. 31.

Lunglei by the London Baptist Mission the Lushais get a far more efficient education for the money spent than they will ever get if the government takes over education and at the same time the cost to the Government is infinitely less.¹²⁴

Here, a British administrator is exhorting the virtue of having the mission continue as the sole provider of education in Mizoram as a method of killing two birds with one stone: Better education for less expenditure. This scenario is very different from other parts of India where there sometimes exist a clash between secular and religious institution. A point to be noted here is that prior to the coming of the British, there was no organized religion as such, but a faith system which was displayed only on few days of the year. Thus, there can be no organized resistance to the new religion on the basis of othering their faith vis-à-vis Mizo religion.

Paving the way thus, education proved a fruitful tool for the process of winning converts. Even chiefs who were not Christian and who didn't even have sizeable population of Christian in their villages started demanding the opening of a school in their territory. Where there was a school, the missionaries usually organized a Sunday School where preaching and sermon were practiced. So, it was in a way more successful than mainland India where it was first mooted.

4.4 Colonial Education Policy

The role of the Colonial masters in the formulation of the education system can be seen from the reason behind it. In the very beginning of education policy in India during 1813, the debate between the mode of education and the curriculum to be followed was debated vociferously by both sides of the Anglicists and the Orientalists. While it fell within the purview of English education in India, the ongoing process of dissemination and the liminality of the education process put the actual process in state of flux. The various proceedings later on added many new implementations to the ongoing nature of education process within India.

¹²⁴ Letter of N. E. Parry, Superintendent, Lushai Hills to the Conference of Hill Education. 27th July, 1929.

To borrow a phrase from Kumar, the Colonial citizen as an educational ideal as an encounter between adult and child; the adult feeling his responsibility to initiate the child into new ways of acting and thinking seem to put the encounter between the colonial master and the native in a simplified explanation.¹²⁵ Educational ideal usually taken as the means to produce cheap and easy labour was also refuted, the evidence pointing otherwise. The role of the British East India company was to further the economic interest of the British. So, it was argued that the company was required to “create congenial conditions in which the ‘free trade’ ideology of an ambitious English bourgeoisie could safely flourish.¹²⁶ The policy of annexation had to be gradually replaced to be successful for this endeavor. Coercion had to be replaced by socialization in which education was supposed to be the key agent in the creation of civil society in India.

Looking at the history of Indian education, the turbulent motion can be clearly discerned within its fold: The fight for the medium of instruction, the clash between the secular critics and the missionaries who both wanted their way in the consolidation and policy implementations of the educational ideal of colonial citizen and the method by which he was to be trained. So, we will discern here between the two by their policies as well as its implementation.

In the colonial education policy, two trajectories existed. The process of colonization of India entails these two somewhat divergent discourses within which the social structure and educational system functioned. These two are the British East India Company and the Christian Missionaries. While the previous is a monolithic entity within which the internal dynamics are sorted out before it became a proper policy, the latter exhibit far more flexibility and nuances in its functioning. The Christian Missionaries first of all did not belong to Britain only, but to other countries as well. Again, they belonged to different denominations within Christianity with difference on emphasis and way of functioning. Thus, while the

¹²⁵ Kumar, 2005. p. 26.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* p.28

Company and the government are more or less the same, it is singular in its implementation. But, the missionaries have their differences both in orientation and execution. So, in actuality colonial education policy can be seen as the dominant discourse followed by the government and the minor discourses followed by the various mission groups.

4.5 The Curriculum

The school curriculum in Mizoram had to be started from the scratch as there was no prior education system as that of the official which more or less followed the main Indian pattern and medium of instruction being Bengali.¹²⁷ The school started in Mizoram thus had a clean slate to start from. With this, the alphabet was first of all based on the Roman script, the Bengali script being rejected due to its failure to properly represent all the tonal language of the Mizos.¹²⁸

The curriculum which the missionary school followed was based on their own construction of Mizo alphabet and what they thought would constitute proper course for the local populace. Since the government school functioned only for a short period of time, we will not look at their curriculum. Suffice it to say that they also prescribed more or less the same book which the mission school prescribed and prepared by themselves.

The curriculum consisted basically in the primary school of Mizo grammar which was just formulated. Christian education played an important part in the course. Since the Bible and portions from it were among the first text available to the Mizo student, it constituted an important component of the curriculum. Another important component of the book prepared by the missionaries was that they tried to include Mizo sayings and proverbs as well as Mizo culture which do not clash with Christian ethics, but which in fact supports it. Accordingly, the first Mizo textbook published in 1901 (2nd Edition) contained the following:

¹²⁷ Lalhmuaka, 2000. *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

Ru ma ta che
Mi te do shuh
Chi a to lo ve
I nu leh pa zah roh
Mi an dem ngai lo
An at mu an lem

I nu leh pa chawm roh
Kawm shuh
Mite bum shuh
Tih mawh suh
Lal ngai lo lal a na¹²⁹

Do not steal
Do not fight with others
Seeds don't grow
Respect your mother and father
Do not rebuke others
They pay for their foolishness

Look after your mother and father
Do not be miserly
Do not cheat others
Do not be stubborn
A new ruler is unjust¹³⁰

The first Mizo Grammar and Dictionary was printed in 1898 barely four years after they created the alphabet. This helped to a large extent in the introduction of formal education. In the curriculum, as presented above, more emphasis was laid to Biblical teaching and other subjects of elementary education were considered only of secondary importance¹³¹. To attract the sons of Mizo chiefs and their representatives to the mission schools, who were prior to 1904 sent to government school where Bengali was taught, English was introduced.¹³² Mizo was the medium of instruction.

After the students increased, in 1900, the mission school was divided into two sections-elementary and advanced. The advanced students were taught more advanced subjects like Lushai Composition, Geography, Arithmetic, English,

¹²⁹ Lalthangliana, B, 2004, Mizo Literature, Aizawl: M C Lalrinthanga. p. 99.

¹³⁰ Translation is mine

¹³¹ D. E. Jones, Report of 1894.

¹³² *Ibid.*

Reading Methods and the Acts of the Apostle (a book from the Bible).¹³³ Lushai composition comprised of writing of the Mizo traditional religion such as spirits, demons, gods, etc. and also on Christianity. Both sections are also taught about Scripture, learnt verses, catechism and tonic solfa.¹³⁴

The first Lower Primary Examination was held in 1903 at Aizawl. 27 students appeared for the exam out of which 13 were from the mission school.¹³⁵ The results were as follows:

School	Candidates	Passed	Failed
Government	14	6	8
Mission	13	13	--
Total	27	19	8

Table 1.3 First Lower Primary Examination Results

The subjects in this examination were:¹³⁶

1. (a) Handwriting and Dictation in Lushai
(b) Explanation of Lushai Textbook
(c) Translation of short and simple sentences (Lushai to English and *vice versa*)
2. Arithmetic. Question on the first four rule.
3. English (P. C. Sarkar's first Book)

Another important aspect of the curriculum was devoted for eradicating the superstitions of the people. As a result, the *Zirtirh Bu Thar* (New First Primer) published in 1929 contained the following:

Lunglian leh thing lianin huai an nei lo.
 Sakei leh samak tihlum mah ila thih kan tura bik lovang.
 Sih a hlauhawm lova, tui bawlhhlawh in erawh chu a tha lo.
 Lova inthawi hi engmah a sawt lova, hna thawk ila, Pathianin mal a sawm zawk ang.

¹³³ Edwin Rowlands, Report of 1900.

¹³⁴ Hluna, 1992. p. 63.

¹³⁵ D.E. Jones and Edwin Rowlands, Report of 1903.

¹³⁶ *Op. cit.* pp. 64-65.

Big rocks and tree don't have spirits.
We will not die even if we kill tigers and rhinos.
Springs are not dangerous, but drinking dirty water is unhealthy.
Performing sacrifices in the fields are useless, work diligently and God will bless you.

The motives behind these were mainly to impart Christian teachings and enabling the believers to read the Bible as well as to allay the fears and superstitions of the people. However, the hegemonic influence of the Church can be seen in the construction of the curriculum. Taking cue from Kumar's line, 'what is worth teaching?' the education whereby the material considered worth teaching can take plenty of bias.¹³⁷ He further elaborates that "English administrators of the mid-nineteenth century answered it in terms of their perception of what Indian society lacked".¹³⁸ The kind of curriculum that was produced was formulated according to what the administrators construed to be the need of the people.

The expected end result also created a case in the construction of the curriculum. For elaborating on this, let us look at the construction of the Middle English and Middle Vernacular Schools. It was increasingly felt by the missionaries that the course of the school education was not actually helping the students.¹³⁹ The missionaries often exalted the Bible as the ultimate source of authority and made as a condition that if an individual has to worship aright, he must be able to read.¹⁴⁰ It was the aim of every Mizo believer to try and read the Bible. For such a purpose, the initial lower primary education was sufficient. But, with the level of education rising, the utility of education and the course were not in congruent with the needs of the people. Rev. H. W. Carter, the Honorary Inspector of School for South Mizoram wrote in his report about it. The report read:

For a number of years, it has been obvious that in boy's post-primary education in Lushai emphasis has been on the wrong subjects. The Middle English Course has been chiefly a stepping stone to the High School, whence boys have returned

¹³⁷ Kumar, 2005. p.49.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 49.

¹³⁹ Rokhuma, 1998. p.107.

¹⁴⁰ Dena, Lal, 1988, *Christian Missions and Colonialism*, Shillong: Vendrame Institute. p. 90.

eminently fitted for salaries posts, but totally unsuited for a return to village life if salaried post were not forthcoming. How few such posts are in the hill districts of Assam I myself did not realize until I heard at Shillong the Deputy Commissioner of the Garo Hills say that the Government Offices in his district could absorb only matriculate in five years! Openings for boys with high school training are probably no more plentiful in Lushai yet at this moment more than 50 Lushais are studying in High Schools. The danger we have in Lushai have so far avoided, of having a disgruntled, unemployed matriculate class, is now at our door. The remedy is to remove the emphasis from the Middle English course to a new Middle Vernacular course, which will aim at teaching only those subjects which will help Lushai boys to live a normal, yet enlightened village life.¹⁴¹

The earlier Middle English course was based on Calcutta University pattern suitable for Bengal, so a course suitable for Mizoram was deemed necessary to be developed. Proceeding from this in 1935, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills along with the two Honorary Inspectors of Schools revamped the Middle School course. The preamble of the draft paper contained the following clauses:

1. Complete co-operation between the Honorary Inspectors in the North and South with regard to curricula, examinations, publication of vernacular text books, etc.
2. Limitation of the number of entrants to the middle English course, which is principally a stepping stone to the High School
3. Provision of an alternate Middle Vernacular course of education, more suited to the needs of a predominantly agricultural population.
4. Location of a High School within the Lushai Hills.¹⁴²

By this new education policy, the mission and the government tried to arrest the increasing number of educated people who could not be absorbed properly by both in their pool of available job. So, anticipating the possible future educated unemployed, they developed a course more suitable for self employment and self-

¹⁴¹ The Annual Report of BMS on Mizoram 1901-1938. Report for 1935.

¹⁴² Report on Education 1934-35, Educational Policy in the Lushai Hills, BCM Archive Serkawn. For the curricula details see the draft document in the appendix.

farming. The coming of the middle vernacular thus shifted the direction of knowledge and education from the original emphasis on providing literacy to a more utilitarian value.

Beside the above discussions, two important themes in the curriculum need to be look into which have great repercussions in the society. Firstly, in *Zirtirh Bu* the following sentence was included:

Hmanlaiin Mizo rama lal chi bik an awm love. Hnam tin anmahni tawkin an lal.¹⁴³

Roughly translated it meant: There were no chief clan in Mizoram; all tribes are dominant in their own rights. This angered the Sailo chiefs to no end. They even tried to find out the author of the text to change it. But, the seed was shown for the demise of chieftainship in Mizoram.

Another text was:

“Khawvela mihring hnam nga, mi dum, mi buang, mi eng, mi hang, mi ngo an awm. Nimahshela chi khat kan ni.” (Mizo *Zir Tir Bu*, 1901. p. 15)

To which the following italic lines (mine) were added in 1916:

“... Mihring hnam nga ropui tak an awm a- mi dum te, mi buang te, mi eng te, mi sen te, mi ngo te nen. Nimahsela chi khat kan ni. Mi eng an tam ber a, *mi ngo an fing ber a, an lal ber bawk.*” (Duhlian *Zir Tir Bu*, 1921, 5th Edition. p. 32)

Translation:

“There are five races in the world, black people, brown people, yellow people, red people, and white people. But, we are all one people.” (Mizo *Zir Tir Bu*, 1901. p. 15)

“There are five races in the world, black people, brown people, yellow people, red people, and white people. But, we are all one people. The yellow people are most numerous, *the white are cleverest, and they are also the most powerful.*”

(Duhlian *Zir Tir Bu*, 1921, 5th Edition. p. 32)

Looking at these, Lalthangliana posited that the imperialism spirit in the otherwise staid missionaries seemed to manifest itself in these school texts.¹⁴⁴ The question is: whether these missionaries were also trying to hegemonize the brain of

¹⁴³ Zosaphluia and Pasena, 1951 (26th Edition) *Zirtirh Bu thar*, Loch Press: Aijal. Cited in Lalthangliana, 2004.

¹⁴⁴ Lalthangliana, 2004. p. 101.

the young students. It also presents us with the mentality of the missionaries. While the original text did not contain such words, revisions by another include those lines. However, in *Zir Tan Bu* published after Indian independence, these lines were deleted.

4.6 Sunday School Movement: Its Policies and Implications

Two educational movements in the eighteenth century England showed the powerful influence of the Church in institutionalizing certain kind of texts and excluding others.¹⁴⁵ These are Charity School movement and the Sunday School Movement. They both developed out of the Church concern about the rising of urban squalor and crime and out of conviction that unless the poor were brought back to Christian life, the social order would be damaged.¹⁴⁶ The instruction in sound Christian ethics was mooted as a way out of this problem and portions from the Bible which recommend “industry, gratitude, submission and the like virtues” were accordingly prescribed for the movement.¹⁴⁷

The movements tried to promote social harmony thus by Christian principles and the pedagogic practice of imparting selective portions from the Bible as well as from religious tracts, textbooks, parables, sermons, homilies and prayers, some of whom were specially prepared for the programme. One way through which the Sunday School movement attempt was to inspire devotional feelings to the young through tracts written in a language that emulated the simplicity and directness of the Bible.

The practice of Sunday School was imported to Mizoram by the missionaries to incorporate a different kind of Christian teaching. Popularly known as *Sande Sikul*, it was one of the major innovations brought in the hills. It was started from almost

¹⁴⁵ Viswanathan, 1998. p. 69.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 69.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 69.

the beginning of the Christian mission in Mizoram since the 1890s.¹⁴⁸ In the beginning, there was no demarcation between the children and the adult. It was mostly for the adults.¹⁴⁹ It worked in two major strands which we will delineate below.

4.6.1 Sunday School as a mean of Evangelizing

One of the most important functions of Sunday school in Mizoram was a means of preaching and teaching the gospels. Looking at the strength of the missionaries in the area, which hardly account for more than ten at any given time, a secondary system to supplement the normal preaching done by the missionaries needed to be done. At the same time, local preachers known as *Itinerant Preachers* were also employed to supplement the work of the missionaries. As a result, the combination of the two groups of workers along with the Sunday school constituted the main forces in the hills.

Sunday Schools were basically worship services held in the Church on Sundays where some local leader or the visiting preachers would lead the service as well as teaching from the scripture and exposition. It is interesting to note here that most of the teachings were done from translation from the English Bible and most of the service was led by the local people. In the words of Lorrain:

“Out in the districts these schools are conducted by the most intelligent Christian in each village, and the teaching is generally confined to passages of scripture, the catechism, prayers and hymns....some of the outlying schools are being so used to win the young for Christ that heathen parents have become alarmed and are trying to get their chiefs to expel the teachers from their respective villages. We regard the Sunday school as a kind of spiritual thermometer which shows the state of the

¹⁴⁸ It is not exactly known when the Sunday School started, but D.E. Jones in his 1898 Report talk about Sunday service where the morning service was mainly preaching and the afternoon service also included Sunday School. Accordingly, the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram took February 20th 1898 as the starting date of the schools. See 1989 *Khawvel Sande School Ni Thupui*, Aizawl: Synod Bookroom.

¹⁴⁹ Roberts, Gwen Rees, 2003, *Memories of Mizoram: Recollections and Reflections*, Wales: The Mission Board, Presbyterian Church of Wales. p.119.

Christian community in the village. A thriving Sunday school generally indicates live Christians, and a dwindling one the reverse."¹⁵⁰

In another passage he again reported that:

"White visitors in this out-of-the-way corner of the world are very few and far between but this year we had the pleasure of entertaining a Welsh friend for a fortnight, and from him we gained some idea of the methods used in the Sunday Schools of Wales...An attempt to model our Sunday school on a somewhat similar plan has met with great success, and has made them much more popular with the Christians than before...The first hour or so is devoted to prayer, singing, and the learning by heart of suitable passages from the Gospels. Most of the schools have just finished committing to memory the greater part of the sixth chapter of Luke, and they are going on from there to the next passage marked for them in the same book. The second hour is devoted to the Lushai Primer in the hope that in a year or so most of our Christians will be able to read the Word of God for themselves...That the Sunday Schools are a power for good is proved by the fact that in our village 15 scholars have been won for Christ since last year's report."¹⁵¹

The rationale behind the *Preparatio Evangelica* here is both interchanged here. So, education for the sake of further missionary activities and missionary activities for the process of education was practiced in return. Sunday Schools exhibit an important part of the tradition of imparting the Gospel within the realm of educating activities. Looking at the Sunday School curriculum, one can see a healthy dose of Christian texts which are used as the basis for the inculcation of religious doctrine. Rote learning and learning by heart for those who cannot read and write showed the nature of the religious discourse that is evident there. Even looking at the above passage, it is very evident that literacy was for the purpose of reading the Bible for spiritual growth. No other use was not discerned properly and demarcated. The singularity of the idea of the education process within the Sunday school framework limits the reach of the literacy in the secular sphere.

¹⁵⁰ The Annual Report of BMS on Mizoram 1901-1938. Report for 1907.

¹⁵¹ The Annual Report of BMS on Mizoram 1901-1938. Report for 1908.

4.6.2 Sunday School as a mean of Informal Education

Besides the instructional policy of Christian ethics in the Sunday School, another important feature was the educating nature of the institution. As already highlighted, the School was taken as a mean for inculcation of the faithful, but it served a dual purpose. Unlike the normal school where Scripture was one of the subjects, in Sunday School, learning how to read and write was one of the subject taught. In fact, Hminga said that the "primary aim of the early Sunday School were 10 to make Christians, and 20 to make these able to read the Scriptures and the hymn book for themselves."¹⁵² Lorrain again put it explicitly:

In 1905 there was but one organised Sunday School in the South Lushai Hills. To-day there are 55 scattered all over the district, with 1395 scholars on the rolls...The only barrier to the opening of new schools where there are Christians is the absence among them of anyone who can read. In the existing Sunday Schools, besides being taught the Scriptures, numbers of the pupils are learning to read, and not a few have already mastered the art. When any of the latter migrate to a village where there are only illiterate converts, their services are immediately requisitioned, and after a time there springs up a flourishing Sunday School which in due course has its own off-shoots in other villages. The nomadic habits of the people thus tend to spread the Gospel far and wide.¹⁵³

From the above discussions, it can be clearly seen that Sunday School play an important role in the promotion of education among the Mizos. Lalhmuaka claimed that the Sunday School was the main centre of learning till 1922.¹⁵⁴ In the following table a usual constituent of a Sunday School is given. The way that the chart is organized clearly showed the bent on providing education.

¹⁵² Hminga, C. L., 1987, *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram*, Serkawn: Baptist Church of Mizoram. p. 95.

¹⁵³ The Annual Report of BMS on Mizoram 1901-1938. Report for 1912.

¹⁵⁴ Lalhmuaka, 1981, *Zoram Zirna Lam Chhinchhialma*, Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute. p. 53.

	BOYS		GIRLS		Total
	Christian	Non-Christian	Christian	Non-Christian	
Learning to read	330	243	421	61	1055
Able to read	497	130	130	2	699
Unable to read and not learning	42	...	160	24	226
Total Scholar on Rolls	869	313	711	87	1980

Table 1.4 Attendance Rolls of Sunday School, BCM, 1915.

4.7 Women Education

Women education gain less impetus from the beginning in Mizoram. Various writers have pointed out that traditional Mizo society attributed a lower position to women in the social sphere. Various Mizo sayings like 'A women's wisdom do not cross the village water hole', 'Women and crabs have no religion' etc. are taken as points to illustrate their position.¹⁵⁵ At the same time, when education was gaining popularity, many parents were reluctant to send their daughter to school as they feel it a waste of time. In traditional Mizo household, the girl has plenty of responsibilities at home whereas the boy's responsibility lied basically in the forest.

Emphasis on male education was not the lacuna of Mizoram only. Prior to 1882, all educational efforts in India were directed towards the male, and as such women were left far behind men in the sphere of education. It was only in 1882 that the Education Commission recommended that female education should equally have its legitimate share of the local, municipal and provincial funds for its encouragement.¹⁵⁶ Encouragement to women education got a boost from this vantage point.

¹⁵⁵ Translation of *Hmeichhe finin tuikhur ral a kai lo* and *Hmeichhia leh chakaiin sakhua na nei lo*. The village water hole was usually on the outskirts of the village. So, it was taken as the farthest corner of the village proper. Crab and women were taken as similar as both wore cloth or skirt. The crab gill and Mizo wraparound have the same connotation.

¹⁵⁶ Hluna, 1992. p. 148.

The tenacious efforts of the pioneer Christian missionaries in preparing the grounds for educational activity have already been analyzed earlier. However, it was the missionary wives who played the key role in introducing women's education as a separate domain from the existing educational system. Hence the study of women's education needs to be examined within the larger framework of missionary women's endeavors in the region; and the subsequent contribution of the indigenous women in terms of their significant participation in the contested efforts.

Initially, when the missionaries approach the parents for enrolling their daughter to schools, the response was very poor. The response ranged from 'Who would work if the girls were sent to school? , Girls will use their literacy for writing love letters to they will find no husband if they study'. Since she is very important in the house, the parents always volunteered the boy.¹⁵⁷ The utility attached to the girl prompted the missionaries to have a rethink on the subject. More utilitarian values needed to be attached to the women education to attain the status it attain among the men. Women education needed to be planned in a different way.

The first school for girls came into existence in 1904 under the determined initiative of Mrs. Katherine Ellen Jones, the first woman missionary in the region. It is indeed intriguing that despite being a relatively late participant in the British 'civilizing mission', this region should have caught up rather quick in relation to women's education. Any attempt to trace this significant discourse must address what was the ideological basis on which women's education was articulated? How were these ideas played out in the social context and responded? Where did the manifestation of women's education figure in the larger scheme for social change?

In response to the perceived need of the Mizo girls, women education was given a different curriculum. In the beginning, the same schools were attended by both the boys and girls. The Mizo girl, barring a few who were employed as teachers, had to return home after finishing her education to become housewives

¹⁵⁷ Chapman, E and M. Clark, 1968, *Mizo Miracles*, Madras: Christian Literature Service. pp. 13-14

and mothers, and to take up the usual housework like carrying firewood, water, preparing food and help in the upkeep of the *jhoom*. Considering these facts, a system of education which attempt to combine the necessity of housework along with intelligence and wisdom was evolved.¹⁵⁸

When the new arrangement started, parent started sending their girl child to the school. Women education thus started on a different basis as the boys, women to run the house, but with more educational faculties to her command. This started women education, however, after the initial barrier was broken, the difference in the girl education was gradually eased out and the same school served the same purpose for both sexes.

The rationale behind the incorporation of women's education that was clearly in the framework was the fostering of the "distinct Christian Woman". By this, women education also undertook the venture of evangelizing. While education was perceived as an important tool for the continuation of the Christian mission, the same was also attempted for the women who constituted an important part of the Christian believers. The growth of women literacy can be seen below.

Year	Literate Person (per 10,000)	Literate Female (per 10,000)	Percentage
1901	295	14	0.14
1911	472	34	0.34
1921	743	106	1.06
1931	1267	278	2.78
1941	2312	844	8.44
1951	3651	1947	19.47

Table 1.5 Growth of Female Literacy in Mizoram.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ *Op. cit.* p. 157.

¹⁵⁹ *Mizo Women Today*, 1991, Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute.

CHAPTER IV

EDUCATION AND CHANGING SOCIAL REALITY

The condition in Mizoram during the colonial rule produced a condition prevalent to many parts of places of colonial rule. The introduction of an alien culture superior in technology and higher developmental stages led to juxtaposition between the traditional culture and the coming of the new cultural influences. New ideas and ideals, morality and religion came into the forefront. The traditional culture increasing began to reel under the impact of this new front. The society was suspended in a liminal space between traditional society and the changes brought about by colonial rule.

Many factors of changes are associated with the coming of the new social order that increasingly reared its head and which gradually influenced the structure and very fabric of the society. Many studies on Mizo society and how it underwent change already existed. However, other points of reference are taken. For example, the colonial rule, Christianity etc. are the predominant one. They look into the context of how education, Christianity and other modes of change and institutions were introduced. Some also took Christianity as the point of reference for their change.¹⁶⁰ But, here an attempt is made to digress from the previous studies and look at education as the major source of change. Barring the initial colonial contact, Christianity and other changes exist as product of education. If not, they were consolidated by the educational process. However, this is not to indicate that education produce all the social change. But, rather, what is attempt here is to show that when social change occurs in the society, it is education that led to the consolidation of the change. Therefore, education is seen here as the main catalyst that stimulated the social change.

¹⁶⁰ Chawngliana, Kenneth, 1978, *Christianity and the Mizo Society*, Unpublished PhD thesis. Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona University

As contextualized in the beginning, the source of change was predominantly westernization.¹⁶¹ Other source of change also existed such as intercourse with other societies, religion and new political machinery, etc. but, they will be omitted in deference to education as the main source of change. Social change as engendered within the society is conducive not only to pulse from outside but also from within which make it a point to note within the dialectics of the society itself.

Following Bottomore, we need to ascertain four points to understand the context of social change. These four points are:

1. Where does social change originate?
2. What are the initial conditions from which large scale change originate?
3. What is the rate of change?
4. To what extent is social change fortuitous, causally determined, or purposive? ¹⁶²

These points highlight the fact that social change in its entirety is not a singular issue, but, rather a plethora of different happening. In the preceding chapters, we have delineated the various new courses started by the colonial power. While many societies experience change from internal forces as well as external forces, in the case of Mizoram, the change was mostly from exogenous factors viz. the colonization of the area by the British. The initial condition from which the changes originated is quite different when compared to other parts of India. Whereas India has a long civilization spanning thousands of years, the historical period of the Mizos and Mizoram is yet to be investigated properly. Taking the schema of Marx's historical ontology, it can be safely assumed that the Mizos when they were annexed by the British were within the period of primitive communism.¹⁶³

Rate of change by any means is very difficult to gauge. In the preceding centuries, the Mizo society was very stagnant. It was by no small feat that the

¹⁶¹ See Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and other Essays*.

¹⁶² Bottomore, T. B., 1972, *Sociology: A Guide to Problems and Literature*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. pp. 309-310.

¹⁶³ Even though there are opinions expressing that the Mizos are in the Feudal period, there are no proper conclusive studies to portray this feudal scenario.

coming of the British in India brought with it a fresh whiff of development. As can be seen, the rate of development accelerated in the early part of the 20th century. While not on par with the other developed countries in the west, it can be safely assumed that the development and in relation to that, the rate of social change changed rapidly as compared to other preceding period.

The change as, mentioned, is not because of evolution from within. The changes that took place in the Mizo Hills were very much a product of the British incursions and subsequently of their occupation of the area. Looking at the rate of development and change in other part of the surrounding area, it is very evident that changes occur. But in the Mizo Hills, it was a result of the nature of the invasion and the consequences.

Bottomore's guideline proved a determining point in the nature of the analysis of the British contact and the subsequent changes that occurred in Mizoram. Let us now look at the areas of change and its impacts.

5.1 The Emergence of New Elite¹⁶⁴

In the post-colonial Mizo society the emergence of new elite was one of the most remarkable social phenomenon that took place. In traditional Mizo society, the elite were the chiefs and the nobles or elders who constituted the political elites in the village. They exert their influence in the political matter in the society. In turn, their social status was high in comparison to the commoners. But, their power was limited to a single village. The chieftainship was hereditary as well as the noble. But the latter was not very strictly regulated as the chief. Another group of people who have standing and thus considerable clouts in the community were the *Thangchhuah Pa*.

¹⁶⁴ By elite here, i am drawing on the concept of elites in terms of standing in the community, it include political power but not always.

Thangchhuah Pa means one who has achieved the *Thangchhuah*. To be a *Thangchhuah Pa*, a person has to achieve all the rituals and sacrifices prescribed by Mizo religion. The rituals to be accomplished were so numerous that only a very wealthy person or good hunter can achieve it. There are two kind of *Thangchhuah*: *In lama Thangchhuah* and *Ram lama Thangchhuah*. The first can be achieved by one who have done all the sacrifices by a series of feasting and rituals in which the whole village usually participated. For the former, only a rich man can accomplish all the rituals. The latter is for a skillful hunter who killed the necessary prescription of animals. Both were very hard to attain and if one achieved it, they were destined to get good treatment in the next world. Even while in this world, they were allowed various concessions not allowed to the common man or even to the chief who is not yet a *Thangchhuah*.

The elites in traditional Mizo society were thus divided into two: ascribed position based on political matter and temporal space. Their influence is more direct and powerful and they were represented by the chief and the nobles. The chief position was ordained by hereditary. They claimed to be between the sun and the moon much in the line of divine rights of kings in Europe.¹⁶⁵ The other position, achieved was exemplified by the *Thangchhuah Pa*. If one is very diligent, with great effort, he can propel himself on the upper sphere of Mizo society. Yet, the power exerted by this group was not direct and they instead command respect in the society which was not because of their political power but because of their individual achievement. This was the highest stage in Mizo society in which one can go up to. Even many chiefs do not achieve this position. These two represented the dual nature of Mizo society where there is both a hierarchy as well as mean to break that hierarchy.

Thus, the equality of man was inherent in the nature of Mizo society where there was this dual nature in which one can come up and reach to the highest level

¹⁶⁵ A translation from the Mizo *Ni leh thla kara leng kan ni* which was often uttered by the chiefs to indicate their position in the society. By this, they mean to indicate that they are above all the others in the community.

barring the chief who was already up there. The final nature of the power of the chief was challenged by the new stream coming to the Mizo hills.

Agrawal said that, 'the most revolutionary thing which the Mizos learned from Christianity was the equality of man before God'.¹⁶⁶ This contrasted with the earlier Mizo social structure wherein a loose egalitarian spirit was the norm of the day. In this background, the implications for it are overarching within the social structure. And within its wake, it means and measures can be reinterpreted. While there is no doubt about the idea of equality that it brought about, the nature that is inherent in the society also need to be investigated and ascertained. The idea of equality before God does not necessarily translated into equality of all man. However, its inference in the social milieu is subtle and from within.

These egalitarian ideals can be contrasted sharply with the job orientation of the Mizos and the Indian context. One interesting demarcation in the Pan-Indian context when contrasted with Mizo society can be seen in the presentation of the academic elite. In the colonial spaces of Bengal, Madras and other places, the occupational structure of the educated elite is predominantly within the employ of the British Indian government in the capacity of lawyer, clerks, ICS officer and so on. Lawyer, especially seemed to be one of the more popular choice with many of the freedom fighters having studied in law. This was not the case for Mizoram.

To look in the context of Bourdieu construction of cultural reproduction, an ideology of the ruling class can be seen.¹⁶⁷ The British when they first came to Mizo Hills, after sometime they established a school for the children of the chiefs. The purpose of this was not mentioned, but it seemed to be on the line of the British policy of pampering the ruling class in other parts of India also. In this cultural reproduction, the hegemony of the ruling class seemed to be perpetuated by the British. However, the dominant class here is not the elite within the Mizo social

¹⁶⁶ Agrawal, R. M., *Mizos on the Crossroads*, Mizoram Today, Vol. 1., No. 1, Aizawl: Dept. of Information, Public Relations and Tourism, Govt. of Mizoram. 15th August 1974. p. 10.

structure, but, rather an alien culture which is foreign to them. The cultural capital that the chief have is not much of an advantage as most Mizo boys whatsoever their station in the society have more or less the same childhood, with the chief son just nominally above the rest. The only advantage that he can command is that of the inherent temporal power that he exercise or will exercise. However, in the context of the political power, this does not hold for long as the educational activities was soon taken over by the missionaries who have a different set of cultural capital and its reproduction.

To continue with the job orientation of the early Mizos, the first students were the chiefs who do not need to have any other occupation except administering their village. It was the succeeding batch that was to have their impact on the Mizo society. They formed a new group of educated elite and took active role in the bureaucratic system of the state even till today.

The first new elite were the mission workers. The government entrusted the Christian Missions with the responsibility of education. Therefore, being the official educationists they become the most important employer and earlier education itself the passport to material distinction become almost synonymous with Christianity itself.¹⁶⁸ The mission workers consisted of the evangelists and the pastors who assist the European missionaries in preaching and other works like translation and visiting the distant villages.¹⁶⁹ Thus, the significant part is that rather than lawyers and other clerical jobs which are more or less non-existent in the Mizo hills, the Church in fact, became the biggest employer.

This has great implication in the social milieu. Boragohain had said that it led to the emergence of the dominancy of the reverends and pastors who exert great influence in society due to their alliance with the major employer in the area.¹⁷⁰ In

¹⁶⁸ Boragohain, *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

¹⁶⁹ See Saiaithanga and Hminga, C.L. 1987, *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram*, Serkawn: Baptist Church of Mizoram for more details.

¹⁷⁰ *Op. cit.* p.25.

the social sphere, they started having a say in most matters and they were not contradicted. This percolated in the formation of the Young Lushai Association (later the Young Mizo Association) which was also founded by the missionaries.

The power which the chief used to hold in economic and political matter was gradually weakened due to the increasing incursion of the colonial rule that earlier used to leave the day to day functioning of the chief in his hand and interfering only when it is most necessary.¹⁷¹ The spiritual domain, which earlier has no proper adherent, was gradually usurped by the missionaries and the new converts who claim their kingdom in the next world. The traditional Mizo eschatology was put to ruin by the coming of the new faith. The old elite lost his power and his place was taken by the new one-the educated and Christianized elite.

Lalsawma has delineated the four kind of man in Mizo society which emerged after the British colonization.¹⁷² First, the religious man whose deepest commitment was to religion. He may take interest in politics and trade but has chosen to control his thought and action mostly through religious concepts. Second is the political animal. He may be interested in the things of religion, of culture and business, but nothing is more important than his life's calling as politics. The third is the secular man. This group includes men of professional classes of business and various occupations. The secular man devoted his soul to the things of this world. He has chosen for himself a life pattern set in the context of his worldly vocation and all other things are secondary. The fourth group is the man of the street. He is found anywhere doing anything. He is a man without any serious commitment to any walks of life, but living by his likes and dislikes, whims and pleasure. He cares very little for anything except his self gratifications. These four kinds of men are pointed out to represent the Mizo society which is deeply religious, strongly political and actively engaged in drastic changes.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Lalthangliana, 2001.

¹⁷² Lalsawma, *The Shaking of Foundations in Mizo Society*, Mizoram Today, Vol. 1, No. 2, 21st January, 1975. Aizawl: DIPR & T, Govt. of Mizoram. pp. 13-17.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 13.

This classification, delineating how Christianity has percolated to the depth of the society, was done by a pastor belonging to the Presbyterian Church of India, the dominant denomination in Mizoram. Negative overtones were attributed to the non-religious man. In the social sphere, religion gradually exerted an overarching presence whereby its dictates and whims are more relevant to the social context than the political powers.

The emerging elite can be on the formulation of the above based into two main groups: the Church and the Political organ. The main avenue of employment for the educated group was thus only the two-the Church and the government. When the temporal and the spiritual domains having fought on the material ground, the church was on the winning side. It is in regard to this background that McCall present his view regarding the division between the church and the government.¹⁷⁴

The ascribed positions gradually disappear and it finally vanished with the abolition of Chieftainship in 1954. Since then, the Mizo society became more fluid and achieved status is given higher esteem over ascribed status in the process of social mobility.

5.2 The Religious Elite

The majority of elite came from the religious group. This was a direct product of the missionaries and their policies. As mentioned earlier, the government of British India handed over the education department to the missionaries. As a result, the missionaries became the sole in-charge of education in the Mizo Hills. Not only that, they were in-charge of the curriculum and everything concerned with the education department. In the end result, they became the biggest employer in the area with the government following only second.

Most of the early educated Mizo Christians were pastors. This was very important for the continuation of the mission in Mizoram. Consequently, bright

¹⁷⁴ McCall, A. G. 1948, *Lushai Chrysalis*, London: Luzac and Co.

Mizos were selected by the missionaries to study theology and help them in their evangelizing. So, many Mizos who wanted to do other studies were compelled to either continue with theological studies or help the mission in other capacities. As the hegemony of the Church was the strongest in the area, the government rarely interfered in the matter of the church.

5.3 Formation of Mizo Identity

Consolidation and crystallization of the Mizo identity can be seen as one of the most important result of education and its resultant print. Anderson had put succinctly in his thesis the importance of what he called 'print capitalism' and its impact on the formation of national identity and subsequently nationalism.¹⁷⁵ Febvre and Martin have also shown that the coming of the book and the print revolution has led to an increase in the rise of reading and subsequently national language and culture. In these various relationships the identity question is very important for the formation of the collective identity.

For the formation of group identity to come up, various factors are implicated for a collection formation. Erikson's study on the psychological aspect of individual identity formation is important here.¹⁷⁶ He relates personal identity closely with cultural identity recognizing the dynamic impact of the society on the individual identity formation. For him, identity formation "deal(s) with a process 'located' in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his [or her] communal culture".¹⁷⁷ This definition provides framework in which the patterns and characters of group identity formation can be seen. He says,

Identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself [or herself] in the light of what he [or she] perceives to be the way in which others judge him [or her] in comparison to themselves and to a typology

¹⁷⁵ Anderson, Benedict, 1983, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso.

¹⁷⁶ Erikson, Erik H., 1968, *Identity, Youth and Crisis*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid* .p. 22.

significant to them; while he [or she] judges their way of judging him [or her] in the light of how he [or she] perceives himself [or herself] in comparison to them and to types that have become relevant to him [or her]. This process is, luckily, and necessarily, for the most part unconscious...

Futhermore, the process described is always changing and developing: at its best it is a process of increasing differentiation, and it becomes ever more inclusive as the individual grows aware of a widening circle of others significant to him [or her], from maternal person to "[hum]mankind."¹⁷⁸

From the above discussions it is clear that the process of identity formation hinges largely on interaction with others within a close vicinity. Interaction is one of the key to personal awareness. A group became aware of its own distinctive cultural heritage by the presence of other cultural groups in its sight. This led to a complex procedure in group identity. The emotional attachment does not come from a reflection within itself, but more from the action of judging and opposing a significant 'other'. Identity thus creates a temporal continuity between one's past and future. While past experience and memory brought one to his or her present identity, the present identity is also shaped by one's hope in the future.¹⁷⁹ Pachauau analysis continues that "the function of the anticipatory faculty is crucial for group identity formation and development, the group memory is also influenced by its anticipated future."¹⁸⁰

Studies of nationalism always centered on how nations come into being. Anderson's projection of the impact of print capitalism and its formation of a national identity necessitate the idea of a written script. Also, the precondition showed that nationalism was basically a European import along with the press which was the main producer of the print capitalism and thereafter national language. Put it in a different word, a nation is not so much a product of the

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 22-23.

¹⁷⁹ Pachauau, Lalsangkima, 2002, *Ethnic Identity and Christianity*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, p. 8.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p. 8.

sociological conditions, but also a product of a community creative imagination. Chatterjee however criticized this formulation.¹⁸¹ He maintained that, if Anderson is right, the former colonies have nothing left to imagine. "If nationalism in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' form already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine?...Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized."¹⁸² In his diatribe against this form of reduction, Chatterjee drew upon the history of India to show how anti-colonial nationalisms are posited "on a difference with" the western 'modular' forms by creating an inner or spiritual domain which bears the essential marks of cultural identity. Thus, while nationalism borrowed heavily from western skills and technique, tradition become a commodity wherein selfhood or identity based itself.¹⁸³

The consolidation of Mizo identity crystallized during the colonial period. The very word Mizo gained legitimacy during this period only. When the British arrived in Mizoram, they found a country both diverse and unified at the same time. This duality arrived from the cultural and linguistic construct of the area. While culturally the people are the same and exhibit the same characteristics, they were not under the notion of being unified. Each village was a republic under the control of their respective chiefs. The only unity that existed prior to the British colonization was the unity of the Lusei chiefs who were predominantly Sailo.¹⁸⁴ The language that they used was *duhlian* dialect. Thus, when the British came to Mizoram, they call the people Lushai because it was the clan of the chief while the actual composition exhibited a more heterogeneous mix of different clans and sub-clans. The language they used thus has wider patronage than the other dialects spoken by the various tribes. At the time of the Lushai Expedition, no one called themselves Mizo, either it was Lusei, Ralte, Hmar, Pawi etc. the name of the various clans. When they

¹⁸¹ Chatterjee, Partha, 1995, *The Nation and its Fragments*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

¹⁸² *Ibid.* p. 5.

¹⁸³ Pachuau, 2002. p.18.

¹⁸⁴ Lusei is the correct spelling for Lushai; they are a clan out of which Sailo is the sub-clan.

converse, each one of them used their own dialect up to some limit while trying to find a common language because, more or less, they can understand each other.

The preponderance of the Lusei chiefs over the chief of the other clans was prevalent only within the northern and central Mizoram. In the southern parts, bordering Bengal, the Mara and the Lai or Pawi chiefs exerted their power and domination. While not as strongly entrenched as the Lusei chiefs, they were strong in their own rights and they equally dominate their domain with their respective dialects. But, all these were changed with the coming of the missionaries.

If one looks at the history of Europe, the Italian unification invited a lot of scholarly interest and presented an interesting precedent. The unification of the small principalities of the various city republics under the rule of Victor Immanuel and Count Mazzini is a major study in social reconstruction.¹⁸⁵ When all of Italy was united, because of the various differences in dialects, a national Italian language was formed from the shadow of Tuscany which was selected for the reason that it was the language used by the intellectuals. As a result of this linguistic engineering, the other dialects gradually lost their patronage and usage gradually decreased. The Italian language as it is today has its roots in the Tuscan dialect. Likewise, the construction of modern Mizo language has its roots in more or less the same way. However, it is not the result of a deliberate construction of social engineering, but rather a chance of fate from external impetus.

When the British government came in the 1890s, they were in contact with the Lusei chiefs only, and later on, when the mission finally arrived, they based all their material on the Lusei dialect. But, this is only a part of the picture. During this time, dialectal differences aside, there was no sense of unity and cohesion. As mentioned earlier, each village evoked its own independence. Group of near relatives sometime corroborated together for a joint warfare or other activities. Relative here means the relatives of the chiefs. The identity of a person also depended largely on the village

¹⁸⁵ Phukan, Meenaxi, *The Rise of Modern West*, Delhi: Macmillan.

he lived in. His clan and his place of residence are the two major indicators of his identity. This changed to a large extent due to the emergence of print culture.

The Impact of Print Culture can be seen in relation to identity formation in Mizoram. When using print culture here, the literal sense of the term will be used. By connoting print culture to Mizoram, an examination of the nature of the printed books available is necessary for the understanding of the impact in the local context. The choice of dialect of the missionaries dictated the terms of the new education system and subsequently the printing culture that was to develop later on.

The first book in Mizo was the *Mizo Zir Tir Bu* (A Lushai Primer) printed in 1895. The duality of the identity fixture can be immediately fixed. It is very clear that from the title of the book, the British were already equating Mizo with Lushai. Later on, the first newspaper was titled *Mizo Chanchin Laisuih* (1898) and subsequently, Mizo was gradually used in parlance over Lushai to indicate the people.

In the formation of the first Mizo political party in 1946, the Mizo Union took the name Mizo in proper usage by the Mizo themselves. Here, the usage of Mizo has undergone a major transformation; earlier Lushai was used to denote the people of Mizoram who are not even Lusei, but by virtue of living in the villages ruled by the Lusei chiefs. However, the formation of the Mizo Union transcends the narrow connotation of the term and includes all the clans which inhabited Mizoram. The percolation of the term came with a catch. Mizo was earlier synonymous with Lushai. When it was used to include all the other clan besides Lusei, it led to a singularity in language as with the Italian unification. Earlier, in all the publication and educational field, Mizo language was taken to be the Lusei *duhlian* dialect. So, when Mizo was used as single identity, the other clans gradually used *duhlian* dialect. Even today, there are some complain regarding the crystallization of the language.¹⁸⁶ The *duhlian* dialect in its new avatar thus subsumed the other dialects to

¹⁸⁶ This is most evident from academics from Myanmar and the state of Manipur who are not under the impact of the print culture as direct as the inhabitants of Mizoram but who belong to

complete the Mizo identity. Mizo identity based its formation largely on the *duhlian* dialect.

The identity formation contextually is a process of othering as much as inclusion. Same focal interests and orientation thus led to its proper form. Mizo nationalism and political awareness fueled by the increasing awareness of oneself vis-à-vis the others in the political arena brought about this. At the same time, the identity question is not limit just to the process of Mizo identity but also Israel identity.

To put briefly here, as a result of the increasing religiosity and education of the Mizos, a section of the society believed that they are one of the lost tribes of Israel. Various arguments are put forward by them to support their claim. Similarity in religious rituals and folklore has been pointed as evidence. It is evident that, this is a result of the educational and religious awareness of the people. Prior to the coming of the British, there was no evidence in the various folk narratives of the linkage with Israel. It was only after introspection that the Israel identity has been put from above. However, the Israel government already accepted the historicity of the claims put forward and many have immigrated to Israel, a process which is still going on. The percolation of identity is still an ongoing process as can be seen here.

5.4 Politics and state formation

The rise of the educated elite brought changes in the internal dynamics of Mizo polity. Traditional chieftainship gradually came under attack by the educated commoners who wanted a say in the political issues. An interesting aspect of the British policy was that in the beginning, they started a school for the sons of the chiefs. The reason behind this scheme was not exactly mentioned. But, the British in their various notes put forward the view that the chiefs can help in the

the same clan who called themselves Mizo in Mizoram. But, in these respective territories the Mizo identity is not as strong as the individual clan identity which is still the main point of reckoning.

administration of the country as they were doing for the past.¹⁸⁷ Because of their expertise, they were utilized by the British in petty judicial function as well as in governing their respective villages. So, the situation which already existed was not changed much. Since chieftainship was hereditary there was not much space for social mobility within the system, not that there was much stratification. The British system of indirect rule thus utilizes the traditional chieftainship as an important tool for governance of the area. Because the government wanted to use the hereditary chieftainship as its apparatus for control, it maintained the status quo and clamped down on all political activities of the people by the Excluded Area Act.¹⁸⁸ The political scenario was static with the traditional element of direct rule by the chief and other administrative changes by the British rule. The loss of ultimate sovereignty by the chief resulted in the decline in moral authority over his subject and his status came to be challenged by the emerging elite group through activism in the political sphere.¹⁸⁹

With the development of education, the educated people started looking at the political situation in a different way. The chiefs were seen as a hindrance gradually. The upcoming elites wanted their space within the political sphere. As early as 1926, a group of educate people lobbied the government in Mizoram regarding the various misbehaviors of the chief and their action. Also, the practice of forced labor by the British on the local people to act as coolie and the tax that the people pay to the chief and the government together started them to think on a new line.

The political activism in this period was not for independence from the British but more on the line of self governance. Self-government was taken as less interference from the chief. As the apparatus of control was the chief, except in few cases, the people do not have direct dealing with the British government. They have more interaction with the chief. So, the grievances they have were also mostly

¹⁸⁷ Various records, Record Office Aizawl.

¹⁸⁸ Pachuau, 2002. p. 81.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. 81.

connected with the dealings of the chief. This percolated and led to the formation of the Mizo Union which based one of its main premises on the dissolution of the chieftainship. While fights with the British on political issues were few and far between, the contest between the chiefs and the educated elites led to fight within the confines of the society. This fight saw its culmination in the Indian independence.

Nongbri pointed out that the political activism of the upcoming middle class in Meghalaya and Mizoram led to consolidation with India at the time of Indian independence.¹⁹⁰ The polarization between the chiefs and the educated created a rift and a fight for space within the political arena. While the majority of the people wanted to secede from India, their opposition to the traditional chieftainship was the one that led to their inclusion in India as Mizo Hill district in Assam. Thus, the way for state formation in the later part of Indian independence was started with the elites demand for equality in the political arena.

5.5 Social Stratification in Mizo Society

While traditional Mizo society was usually presented as an egalitarian with social hierarchy which was not very rigid and with less stringent social stratification, the education process created a shift in the social structure. Despite the fact that Christianity preached equality, and as Agrawal mentioned one of the most important teachings of Christ that the Mizos learnt was the equality of man before God, in the temporal space a different pattern emerged.

As discussed above, the rise of elites in the society created a rift. The ruptures in the society were rent by them. Not satisfied with the *status qua* they went in for a revision in society where in the name of equality, they fight for their own space. The upcoming educated middle class started dominating the society. The power and privileges the chief diminished in society opposed by the coming of the more powerful British government and the missionaries. The employees of both can afford to disregard the chief almost anytime they wanted.

¹⁹⁰ Nongbri, Tiplut, 2003, *Development, Ethnicity and Gender*, Jaipur, Rawat Publications.

In the new social hierarchy, the government servants, the pastors and other employees of the mission and the emerging educated elite searched for their own place and contested traditional hierarchy. However, the new social stratification which replaced the traditional one changed in one respect. The social mobility entailed by education and Christianity dictated that all are equal in the eye of God. Consequently, the social stratification is based on individual achievement rather than ascriptive. The elites were able to come up only because of their achievement i.e. they get educated. So, from this juncture social stratification on the basis of achievement began its hold over the Mizo society more than ever with the relinquishing of the traditional ascribed chieftainship. The rise of different occupational structure also contributed a lot to the rise of difference in the mode of livelihood. Earlier, everyone from the chief down to the commoner in the village have the same occupation i.e. *jhooming*. But the coming of education opened up more avenues for employment which naturally led to differentiation in the nature of job and therefore stature in the society. As a result, the people have a high esteem for religious as well as political leaders.

5.6 The impact of Curriculum

An interesting aspect of the curriculum in the educational system was its emphasis on religious education. Anyway, one of the major reasons why education was adopted was because of its help in spreading Christianity. It played an important role in the psyche of the people and Christian religion became embedded in the Mizo culture. In fact, one pastor went to the extent of saying Christianity has become Mizo culture. Any Mizo function is started without the mandatory prayer and invocation and close with a closing prayer.

While religiosity became part of the Mizo culture. It can only be laid down at the kind of education that the Mizo got through both the schools and the Sunday schools. An almost obsessive correlation between Christianity and the west has resulted in looking upon western culture as reference point. This led to a change in

the other sphere like poetry and composition of songs where traditional modes have been almost completely replaced by replicas of western models.

The hegemonic discourse expounded by the missionaries still remained in the society. Remnants of the process by which the colonial master have dominated the area have led to a continuation of the rule. As Chatterjee said, their imagination still continued to be ruled by the curriculum and the other modes of colonial discourse wherein the knowledge about Mizo society has been taken from them. Even till the present day, research about traditional Mizo society drew their sources from the colonial ethnographies and monographs rather than the oral sources which abound in places and are dying out. Importance was laid on the colonizers narratives rather than traditional narratives. This indicates that their hegemony and power is far from over. Rather, the power in the knowledge based they constructed continues to regenerate itself in the social spheres.

The Mizo society has experiences tremendous changes as a result of encounter with the British Colonialists as well as the Christian Missionaries, which led to the degeneration of traditional Mizo culture. However, Christianity and education led the Mizos towards modernity. Thus, modern education is working in tandem with Christianity in modernizing the Mizo society.

CONCLUSION

Colonial education system and policy has been under scrutiny by many researchers. The nature of colonial intervention in the matter of knowledge base and formation has always received focus. However, the perspective from mainland India is the issue of the Christian missionaries vis-à-vis the government. At the same time, the duality of secular education and religious education in schools run by Christian missions has a different impact than a wholly secular one. As mentioned in the preceding chapters, the question of identity and religious clash are areas of great significance. For any Indian, religion is always part of his identity and as such, it is a matter of great significance to him.

The existence of a properly institutionalized indigenous mode of learning also posits the traditional education system against the upcoming western education. Furthermore, these institutions also have a religious bend in the kind of education they provided. Consequently, they clashed with the newly established institutions organized on western lines. But, due to the value and utility that they provided, western education won over the indigenous institutions. The modern education reflecting western ideals found an important place in India. As a result, traditional Indian education systems got relegated to the background. In the history of education, tribal education has been much neglected. However, to understand this discrepancy, it is important to locate the difference between tribal education in the Hindu mainland and the one in the northeast that has always remained secluded. This study focused on the latter where the tribes have been subjected to very little external interference prior to their colonization.

Looking at the nature of colonial education in Mizoram, several strands can be discerned. The nature of pre-colonial knowledge being oral, the remnants of the base have its many interpolations. But, all these are not standardized in the strict sense of the term. As a result, the colonial endeavors to codify captured the power from the natives and transferred it in their hand. Through this action, the power

relation changed in favor of the colonizers. The natives have to learn about their own society from reconstruction by the colonizers in the form of the curriculum of education.

Mizo education policy favors Christianity rather than deep understanding of the subject. The question of literacy was favored over everything else. This can be one reason why Mizoram ranked number 2 in India in the rate of literacy but ranked lower in the human development index than other states with lower literacy. However, an analysis of this is beyond the scope of the present study. The measurement of literacy as a means by which education penetrated the masses is not an indicator of educated society but only the shade of it.

The present study is involved in looking at the development of education system in Mizoram and the changes that were brought about. However, the level of hegemonic forces could not be analyzed properly due to constraints of material and space and time. However, the opening of the colonial discourse in the presentation of knowledge, both in religion and secular form can be taken as a point where outside forces due to superior power relations changed the society.

Looking at the whole gamut of educational system in Mizo society from the pre-colonial time till the post-colonial period, two major strands existed which needed to be examined properly. These are presented below:

1. Liminal nature of society

The position of Mizo society and educational set-up is within the liminal sphere. While the transition from the traditional sphere came in the wake of the British colonization, it was not a smooth change. Rather, it ruptured the situation, where the people did not have any social values to turn upon. Due to the subjugation of their traditional beliefs, which were not congruent with Christianity, values and ethics underwent a period of flux, i.e. the liminal stage-not in the past, but not yet with another. Christianity is also in the liminal stage. With tribal theology

coming in- a synthesis between traditional beliefs and Christian ethics is already tried out in various parts of India- the cultural space is recontested with a vengeance.

2. Western Education and its discontents

The form of educational system perpetuated in the Mizo society, while introducing literacy and alphabet, is lacking in the overall project of the educated person. Education becomes more or less synonymous with literacy. As a result, the full project of education is subsumed for the pursuit of literacy. Development suffered as a result. The hegemony of the western and Christian ideals still hold their heads over the educational system and subsequently, the students. Due to this, an overt emphasis on western ideals is placed, leading to the decline of traditional wisdom and knowledge. It is a sad fact that many young students today are more familiar with the history of Europe, America etc. than that of their forefathers. They are more at home in English proverbs and saying than the sayings of their grandparents. The final nail is that more and more students are opting for English and other language than their own mother tongue.

While the modernizing project of education has enabled the Mizos to participate on the world arena, it also led to the decline of their traditional systems. The discontents within the educational sphere exists because of the continuation of the hegemonic power already entrenched in the mindset of the people. As education played an important role in the reproduction and regeneration of the society, the curriculum played an important role here. The selection and omission is a politics where the actions taken were a result of political considerations of the power-holders who determined the mode and kind of knowledge to be studied.

From the two points enunciated above, it is clear that there are more areas out there which were beyond the scope of this dissertation. A more comprehensive study and analysis of the continuation of colonial education is needed to understand the present Mizo society. Colonialism ended more than fifty years ago, but the colonization of the mind is more entrenched than the physical colonization and still

continues even today. So, a continuation of the present study to include the post-independence scenario is necessary to understand the social reality in Mizoram today.

For such a study, an exhaustive fieldwork is necessary which was not possible within the framework of an M.phil dissertation. The rural urban disparity and the nature of education system in place today needed to be analyzed. In the wake of the political agenda of textbooks at the national level, the place of educational priorities needs to be re-examined and what new hegemonic forces are functioning?

The present study is just one part of the journey towards an understanding of the native mind whose social reality was turned upside down by the introduction of new forces beyond his control.

Appendix

CURRICULLA¹⁹¹

1. Primary Course:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Reading and recitation | 2. Writing and dictation |
| 3. Arithmetic | 4. Lushai Language |
| 5. English | 6. Geography |
| 7. Singing (Tonic Solfa) | 8. Scripture |
| 9. Hygiene | 10. Handwork |
| 11. Drawing | 12. Physical Exercises |
| 13. General Knowledge | |

2. Middle English Course

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Arithmetic | 2. Geometry |
| 3. English | 4. Lushai |
| 5. Geography | 6. History |
| 7. Hygiene and physiology | 8. Scripture |
| 9. Singing | 10. Handwork |
| 11. Drawing | 12. Physical Exercises |
| 13. General knowledge | |

3. Middle Vernacular Course

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Lushai Language and Literature | 2. Music (vocal and instrumental) |
| 3. Carpentry | 4. Handwork |
| 5. Gardening/Farming | 6. Nature Study |
| 7. Drawing | 8. English |
| 9. History | 10. Geography |
| 11. Scripture | 12. Hygiene |
| 13. Dramatics | 14. Arithmetic |
| 15. Physical Exercises | 16. General Knowledge |

¹⁹¹ Report on Education 1934-35, Baptist Church Mizoram Archives, Serkawn.

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