

A STUDY OF THE CULTURAL FACTORS IN THE FOREIGN MISSIONS
THINKING OF THE MIZORAM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Abstract

This thesis on the interaction between Mizo traditional culture and Christianity proceeds in the following five steps:

Firstly, *Hnatlang* practices are introduced, analyzed and identified as the principle of Mizo pre-Christian socio-cultural, political, economical, and religious development.

Secondly, it is argued that the Mizo nation embraced and appropriated Christianity based on the cognitive framework of *Hnatlang* which, in turn, shaped their understanding of church and mission.

Thirdly, it is proposed that a profound process of indigenous “translation”, namely, by giving *Hnatlang* a central place in Christian understanding, was the major factor of indigenous church growth. This interpretation challenges the perspective that church growth in Mizoram was simply the fruit of the missionaries.

Fourthly, it is shown that the application of the *Hnatlang* principle in the mission work of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church outside Mizoram led to significant friction and cultural dislocation in the (non-Mizo) target cultures in which the Mizo-s are agents the new “European missionaries” in India (*Mizo missionaries act in the same manner as most of the European missionaries*).

Finally, the thesis offers a theological and missiological critique of *Hnatlang* practices.

This thesis is dedicated to my loving parent
Thangthuama Hlawndo and **Bawihkimi Bawihtlung**
who brought me up in a Christian family continuing their support
with a fervent prayer and valuable advice till today.

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This thesis could not have been completed without the help and encouragement of a large number of people. Time and space allows me to mention only a few of them.

Firstly, I am greatly indebted to my Supervisor, Professor Werner Ustorf, Chair of Mission at the University of Birmingham. Under his expert supervision, I have not only greatly broadened my theological and missiological knowledge but have managed to write a thesis which conforms to the challenging academic writing conventions of the UK education system! I wish to thank him for his guidance, advice and critical comments at each stage of the writing of this thesis.

I am grateful also to the many theologians, missiologists, church leaders, church members and missionaries who have imparted to me their knowledge of Mizo traditional cultural practices and have provided me with a strong insight into Mizo Christianity in general and into the Mizo Presbyterian Church in particular (and its foreign missions).

I would also like to acknowledge the great help given to me by foreign mission field's native workers and native Christians in sharing with me their experience of mission ministry, Christianity and about the Mizoram Presbyterian Church foreign mission endeavours.

I am also profoundly grateful to two organizations for providing financial support during the period of my studies: the Presbyterian Church of Wales and the Church Mission Society. Several individuals also provided financial support. These include: Mr. Dean Vanderney, Executive Director of Set Free Ministries, Mr. Matt Howell and Revd. Lalrodinga Colney, Chairman of the Restoration India Mission. I wish to express my deep gratitude for their concern for my study as well as my family.

Professor Martin Stringer, Director of Education, College of Arts and Law, University of Birmingham helped me to obtain funding for the empirical study reported in the thesis. I owe much to him for his generosity and tireless effort in helping me to secure this funding. My thesis title is the outcome of this crucial empirical study.

Special thanks goes to my wife Rohlupuii Hmar and to our five lovely daughters who have given me both moral and prayer support throughout my research and writing period. I am also grateful to my friends Rob Coleman, Richard Postma and Joshua Gelatt who helped me to proof read my thesis.

Last but not least, I thank God who gave me the privilege of doing this research. I recognize that the opportunity to study for a PhD came through His divine goodness and providence. He has led me to this point on life's journey, providing financial support in times of need, assisting in times of adversity. He has been my light in the darkness, wisdom in uncertainty and encouragement in times of discouragement. As a loving acknowledgement of His grace and Fatherly care, I include in this section my "story" to date.

My mother's fervent prayer, requesting God to make one of her children a missionary, often reverberates in my mind. I also often hear my loving father's challenging and valuable words of advice, "My son, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness".

I was born and grew up in a good Christian family - my grandparents were so-called “converted” Christians. I was the middle child of eight. I grew up in a communal and friendly Mizo society, with lots of friends and I spent most of my time with those friends. However, the negative influences which often affect young people and my early friendships turned my life down a path of darkness, which consequently hampered my Christian life, personal behaviour as well as my education.

God answered the untiring prayer of my parents. Jesus called me when I was in a bar in December 1985. I went to a church immediately and prayed. I could not hold back my tears. Acknowledging my sin and repenting, I decided to give my life as a sacrifice in God’s service and accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and saviour. Reconciliation with God and with my loving parents as a new son brought an astonishing new peace and happiness into my life. That very night, I witnessed the wonderful love of God. But, I had not yet realized that that very night God had answered my parent’s prayer and that I would soon become a missionary.

In April 1986, I received a letter from my sister informing me that she had submitted an application for the job of a missionary, on my behalf. Though the move had been taken without my input, I felt that this opportunity could be God’s providence. Finally, I went for an interview and I was selected by the Synod Mission Executive Committee to be a missionary in the Cachar Mission Field. I learned the native language within a short period of time - now I can witness the gospel to them in their native language.

After nearly four years of missionary ministry, the Synod Mission Office called me back in 1990 to Mizoram to undergo one year of missionary training at Aizawl Theological College. This training proved very important for later missionary work. I attained a good result, getting the highest position among the trainees. This training helped me to develop academic skills and to focus my mind on more intellectual matters.

I am extremely grateful to my wife Rohlupuii who encouraged me to continue my study, despite the growing burden of an ever-increasing family. In 1993, Professor Zatlaia, the then Principal of Hrangbana College, was gracious enough to allow me to study Pre University in Arts and admitted me as a private candidate while working full time missionary. The desire to get a higher degree and the endless desire to acquire knowledge took me further after finishing and I spent another three years completing a degree of Bachelor of Arts at the same college. My aspiration to get a secular higher degree for the purpose of the Gospel ministry was almost fulfilled, but the practical desire to equip myself for mission work and to advance my knowledge of theological and missiological matters still remained.

After working 14 years in different cultural backgrounds, my considerable missionary experience deepened my heart’s desire to pursue missiological study. In August 2000, I was admitted at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI, USA to study for a MA degree in Mission. My academic study of mission began in the capable hands of Dr. Ruth Tucker, Dr. Garry Bekker and Peter Tuith. I am grateful too to Rev. Richard Systma, Dean of International Students, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Rev Carolyn Wharton, the then Pastoral Care Supervisor, Calvin Theological Seminary, who in times when the study of theology and missiology did not sit so well with my poor English language background, helped me and encouraged me so much during my study.

After completing the MA, I went back to India to resume my job as a missionary to do mission work, particularly in urban church planting. I received a posting at the Scottish Church College, Calcutta city, where Alexander Duff, a well-known Scottish missionary had established a mission in 1830. After doing three years practical work in this area I got the opportunity to study for a PhD in Theology and Religion at the University of Birmingham. I do firmly believe that God has a final plan for my destination, to improve my knowledge, skill, and wisdom, tools to be used to further illuminate the glory of His name and to extend His kingdom.

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CHAPTER – I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

Within the space of only five decades (1894-1945), the ‘Mizo’¹ people who live in the territory called Mizoram in North East India left their traditional religion and embraced Christianity.² The land Mizoram, previously known as “the Lushai Hills”,³ is situated between Burma in the east and south and Bangladesh, on the west. It is bordered by the other Indian states of Assam and Manipur to the north and Tripura to the west, with the Tropic of Cancer running through the heart of Mizoram. The land covers 21,087 square kilometers and has a population of 891,058 (census 2001).⁴

Most historians believe that the Mizos descended from a Mongolian race which migrated from Burma just into the eastern and southern part of India sometime in the 18th century.⁵ Mizo language originates from the Tibeto-Burman family of languages.⁶ The use of roman script to write the Mizo language was introduced by British Missionaries in the 19th century.⁷ They also introduced a formal education system.

¹ Mi-zo means highlanders, hill people or Hillman (mi-man, zo-hill) the present occupants of Mizoram.

² Lalsawma, *Four decades of Revivals: The Mizo Way* (Aizawl, Mission Vengthlang: 1994, 4). Here after cited as Lalsawma, *Revival*. “The whole people having been converted to Christianity within the space of 50 years are nothing short of exceptional. The Gospel preaching began in 1894...the end of the Second World War in 1945 show the whole land embracing Christianity to the extent of total abandonment of their old religion.”

³ Lushai/Lusei is one of the major tribe names of Mizo. Some people said the name “Lushai” was an Anglicized form of ‘Lusei’.

⁴ It is hilly topographically, in the eastern part of India. Parallel mountain ranges run through the north and south with narrow and deep river valleys between them. The average height of the hills is about 900 meters. In terms of its climate, Mizoram is generally cool in summer and not very cold in winter. During winter, the temperature varies from 11 C to 21 C, and in summer the temperature varies between 20 C to 36 C. The entire area is under the direct influence of the monsoon. It usually rains heavily from May to September with the average rainfall in Aizawl (capital of Mizoram) at 208 cm (2001). Mizoram has great natural beauty and a variety of landscapes. It is also very rich in flora and fauna – it is made up of dense jungle of all kinds of tropical trees and blossoming plants, which blends with rapid flowing rivers, streams and still lakes.

⁵ J.M. Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram: Harvest in the Hills* (Aizawl: Synod publication Board, 1991, 2). Here after cited as Lloyd, *History*.

⁶ Liangkhaia, *Mizoram Harhna Thu* (Aizawl: Mizo Academy of letter, 1976. 1). Here after cited as Liangkhaia, *Mizo Chanchin*.

⁷ Hminga, C.L. *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram*, (Serkawn: Baptist literature Committee, 1987. 49-50). Here after cited as Hminga, *Life and Witness*.

Mizos have come to lead the upper category of India's educational system. Within the span of a few years, this oral society became literate. According to a survey in 1981, Mizoram boasted an enviable 59.60 percent, the second highest in India at the time. The National Sample Survey of 1997-98 concluded that the literacy rate had increased markedly to 95 percent, which was then considered to be the highest in India. According to the 2001 census, furthermore, Mizoram State remains the second most literate state in India, which is 88.49 percent.⁸

The pioneer missionaries J.H.Lorrain and W.F.Savidge entered Mizoram on January 11, 1894. They were sent by a Christian millionaire, who was a member of South Parade Baptist Church in Leeds, Robert Arthington. The missionaries preached the Gospel as far as they could reach to the villages and through their service; the first two Mizo Christians were baptized on July 25, 1899. Mizo society has undergone tremendous changes over the years since the first converts. Today, most of the Mizos claim to be Christians and church buildings can be found in every Mizo village, town and city. These churches are self supported, self-propagated and self-sufficient and active in missionary outreach.⁹ Altogether, at least 53 European missionaries have continued to work in Mizoram until 1968.¹⁰

The general aim of this dissertation is to investigate the ground work on which a Mizo missiology could be based. The particular focus is an analysis of how the Mizo

⁸ Knoj Badami, 'Literacy scenario of India' [article online]; available from <http://www.Indiahowto.com/literacy-in-india.html>; Internet; accessed on 23 July 2008. Here after cited as Badami, *Scenario*.

⁹ Chapman E and M Clerk, *Mizo Miracle* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1968, 87. "They (pioneer missionaries) determined that the church should be from the beginning self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating, so that it belonged in the fullest sense to the Mizo people. This wise policy was endorsed by the mission as a whole; no mission grants were made for the church at anytime. Money received was used for education, medical work and the production of literature, so that Mizo men and women might be trained to take full responsibility in every sphere of the church's life, in the shortest possible time." Here after cited as Chapman, *Mizo Miracle*. Also see C.L Hminga, *The life and witness of the churches in Mizoram* (Serkawn: Literature Committee Baptist Church of Mizoram, 1987) 306. Here after cited as Hminga, *Life and Witness*.

¹⁰ See Lloyd, *History* 367-370 for the lists of these missionaries and short biographies.

Christianity is based on Mizo traditional cultural practices. To make this theological choice explicit, I will make an attempt to develop and modify this approach by constructing a Mizo contextual missiology. This research project is derived from my conviction that the message of Christ must be inculturated in and through every culture. This study will focus on how the Gospel may be inserted into the Mizo culture and transform it from within, by challenging certain values and cultural expressions. In other words, I will critically investigate the cultural factors in Mizo Christianity. It is this researcher's conviction that missiology must be interpreted in relation to Mizo culture and experiences as well as to non-Mizo cultures where Mizos are charged with the responsibility of preaching. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to provide a contextual understanding of Missiology for Mizo Christians in general, and for the Mizoram Presbyterian Church mission in north India in particular. It is designed so that Mizoram Presbyterian church and its mission enterprise is understood better and transforms in response to the challenges and needs of the foreign mission field what it seeks to reach.

1.1. Christianity and Presbyterian Church in Mizoram

Although there are and have been a number of Christian denominations in Mizoram, the Presbyterian Church is by far the largest. It is also the earliest denomination dating back to 1899, when it was founded jointly by Welsh pioneering Missionaries and native Mizo believers. In 2005 (most recent figures) Mizoram Presbyterian Church had a membership of 403,202¹¹ (half of the population of Mizoram). It has 14 departments or Boards: viz. Mission, Hospital, Finance, Education, Theological Education, Communications, Pension & Provident Fund, Literature and Publication, Sunday

¹¹ Rosiamliana Tochwng, K. Lalrinawmawia and L.H. Rawsea, *Mizoram Presbyterian Church 2005: Report on the Activities and Statistics of Various Departments* (*Presbyterian Church Review*, December 2005, 40). Here after cited as Rosiamliana, *Report*.

School, Music, Social Front, Revival, Christian Youth Fellowship and Women's Wing. In addition to the departments mentioned above, there are various sub-committees running under the supervision of concerned Boards. The Church is mostly run by a centralized administration system. The church headquarters, the highest decision-making body of the church (Synod) is situated at Aizawl (the Capital of Mizoram State). The Synod supervises local churches directly or indirectly and controls all administrative matters through its Executive Committee. Mission is the largest department, which has 1452 employees, including 50 home office staff, 602 missionaries, 346 short-term missionaries and 454 Field Workers working in the Mission Fields in and outside Mizoram. Forty percent of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church's funds (financial contribution) go to missions.¹² The SMB is operating in 15 mission fields, 13 of which are outside Mizoram, and also running partnership ministries with 17 churches and mission bodies in India and abroad. In 2005, 5,650 new believers were baptized as a result of their missionary activities.¹³

1.2. Objectives and Significance of this Study

This study examines hypotheses related to two Mizo missiological issues: the rapid development of Christianity in Mizoram and the level of success of Mizoram Presbyterian missions in the non-Mizo world.

The first hypothesis is that the rapid adoption of Christianity in Mizoram was primarily due to an affinity between certain Mizo traditional cultural practices and a number of practices which might be considered distinctively Christian in concept. For example, there would appear to be a link between the Mizo traditional cultural practices of *Hnatlang* and the community life of New Testament believers. The second hypothesis

¹². Rosiamliana, *Report*, 42

¹³ Available from -<http://www.synod.org> [Internet accessed on May 18 2006]

is that Mizo missions to non-Mizo people groups were not successful largely due to the attempts of Mizo missionary to export their own cultural identity and a form of Christianity related to their own cultural practices, making the same mistakes that the Europeans had made centuries before. These working hypotheses will be investigated in this study, which draws upon the relevant literature, qualitative data from the mission archive and on the writer's own experience of 20 years of missionary work in different parts of India.

Interaction between the Gospel and culture has been a subject of debate among Mizo Christians for many years. In fact, Christian theology has not been interpreted in terms of Mizo socio-culture and thought forms. Previous studies of the growth of Mizo Christianity and mission made little reference to the importance of pre-Christian cultures (e.g. Hminga, *Life and Witness*; Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram and Saiaithanga, Mizo Kohhran Chanchin*). In this thesis, I will focus on the Mizo traditional cultural practice of *Hnatlang*, proposing that it was the major factor for the growth and expansion of Christianity in Mizoram and that, in turns shaped and molded the expression of the mission endeavor since the inception of that work.

In the third chapter, I will identify and explain the Mizo traditional cultural practice *Hnatlang*,¹⁴ that I believe shaped Mizo Christianity and its mission. We will first examine *Hnatlang* as the principle of Mizo socio-economic, political and religious life and show how it was compulsory in Mizo society. We will analyze some of the major traditional *Hnatlang* which were essential for the development and stability of Mizo society and are still important today. This inquiry will be mainly based on my personal experiences and a literature review.

¹⁴ *Hnatlang* literally means social work, united labour, community labour or public work.

In the fourth chapter, we will critically evaluate the first hypothesis i.e., that *Hnatlang* shaped Mizo Christianity and its missions, by discussing mission contextualization. The legacy of traditional cultural practices, as Lalrinawma comments, is the source of changes in Mizoram that affected Mizo Christianity and its missiology.¹⁵ Consequently, this study will demonstrate that there is a significant continuity of traditional *Hnatlang* practice into Mizo Christianity and its missiology. We will investigate the interactions between Christianity and Mizo cultural practices, focusing on the significant factors that contributed toward this result in the church's rapid growth among the Mizo and the commitment of Mizo Christians to mission. We will attempt to discover to what extent different traditional *Hnatlang* played a significant role in the foundation of Mizo Christianity and the spirit of *Hnatlang*, and consider how it enabled the people to preach the gospel and raise the inevitable prospect of an indigenous church.

In the fifth chapter, we will discuss and examine the legacy of *Hnatlang*, and examine whether it really shaped the Mizo indigenous church. We will investigate how the Mizo traditional communitarian society shaped and formed the Mizo Christian community; to what extent the administrative structure of the church was identical to that of the traditional *lal* (chieftainship) and the traditional *zawlbuk* institution, and consider how *Hnatlang* contributed for the establishment, growth and development of the indigenous church. This enquiry will mainly be based on literature studies.

In the sixth chapter, an attempt is made to discuss and critique the hypothesis that the Mizo missions to non Mizo were not successful largely due to the attempt of Mizo

¹⁵ V.S. Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos: Changes and Challenges* (Aizawl: Mizoram Publication Board, 2005) 27. Here after cited as Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*. The author states the eulogy of Mizo traditional culture thus, "The traditional Mizo society may be described as a state of perfect equilibrium in which the internal mechanism of the society was sufficient to maintain the social order for uniting the people in one family.

missionaries to export their own cultural identity and a form of Christianity related to their own cultural practices.¹⁶ We propose to discover how *Hnatlang* practices within the Christian context manifested a desire for evangelism within the land of Mizoram and beyond its borders. We will particularly investigate how the Mizoram Presbyterian Church proclaimed Christianity by extending its foreign mission to North Eastern India (Assam, Karbi Anglong, Manipur, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh) and North India (Delhi, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Siliguri). We will analyze how *Hnatlang* influenced Mizo missions and inspired the people to undertake evangelism, church planting, education and medical ministry in these lands. We will also analyze whether *Hnatlang* missions are facing a critical question to non-Mizo culture and as to what extent *Hnatlang* practices needs to be adopted, stopped or transformed. In order to find the answers to this hypothesis, we will investigate and analyze the history of the “foreign mission” of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church based on a literature review.

There is also a subsequent hypothesis which I wish to propose, that Mizo mission to non-Mizos continues the errors of the European approach to mission of the 19th and early 20th centuries as addressed by Roland Allen and Lamin Sanneh.¹⁷ In brief, my contention is that Mizos are the new “European missionaries” in India. The work of Allen has shown as that the role of the missionaries (the Mizo) should be very limited, and the local people (the non-Mizo) receiving the gospel ought to take responsibility for it. In other words, non-Mizos are believed to be the missionaries doing the “real” mission work. Mizoram Presbyterian Church mission is, I argue, lacking an effective discipleship strategy relevant to their target cultures; conveniently forgetting their significant roles in mission, and more notably, also neglecting the socio-cultural as well

¹⁶ It is significant to note that, until recent years, no specific studies have been conducted or written from the time when the Mizoram Presbyterian Church launched mission in the foreign mission fields.

¹⁷ Robert Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, American edition 1962)); Here after cited as Allen, *Missionary Method*. Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989). Here after cited as Sanneh, *Translating Message*.

as the religious life of the people. As, at the time, Allen criticized western missionaries, so Mizo missionaries today need be to be criticized too for having a desire not only to impart the gospel, but also their Mizo laws and customs in their mission fields.¹⁸ We will critically investigate to what extent this hypothesis is relevant to Mizo missions to non-Mizos, mainly based on literature and the writer's own experience gained by 20 years of missionary experiences of Mizoram Presbyterian Church missions.

In the seventh chapter, we focus on the theological validity of *Hnatlang*. Having discovered that Mizo Christianity as well as its missiology is based on *Hnatlang*; we attempt to suggest a mission paradigm shift for the Mizoram Presbyterian Church *Hnatlang* missiology, using the contextualization concept as a working model. Recapitulating what has been discussed so far, a summary of the findings of the research is outlined in the conclusion. The study shows that a diminutive attempt has been made to develop a missiology in relation to the Mizo traditional cultural context. Missiology obviously developed largely in the contexts of Europe and North America, presumably only duplicated in Mizoram particularly by those who have written the history of Christianity and mission, consequently there has been no serious attempt to take the historical and cultural particularities of the Mizo people into account.¹⁹ Rosiama, one of the prominent theologians and leaders of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church, comments: "We do not have a concrete mission statement as yet. Nor do we make our self clear as to what the objective of our mission is."²⁰ This pioneering

¹⁸ Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 6. Allen states his critique to European missionaries, "We are accustomed to do things ourselves for ourselves, to find our own way, to rely upon our own exertions, and we naturally tend to be impatient with others who are less restless and less self-assertive than we are we are accustomed by long usage to an elaborate system church organization, and a peculiar code of morality. We cannot imagine any Christianity worthy of the name existing without the elaborate which we have invented. We naturally expect our converts to adopt from us not only essentials but accidentals. We desire to impart not only the Gospel, but the Law and the Customs".

¹⁹ S. Nengzakhup, *The Presbyterian Church of Mizoram's: Amazing Mizo Missions* (Bangalore: SAIACS Press, 1999), 3. Here after cited as Nengzakhup, *Mizo Mission*. "Mizo drew their motivation for missions from the Bible although the Presbyterian Church Mission is yet to have its official statement of the biblical theology of mission in black and white."

²⁰ Adapted from Nengzakhup, *Mizo Missions*, 31.

analysis of the subject disclosed the matter and contributed considerable information for further development of the Mizoram Presbyterian Mission enterprises. We will try to discover and reconstruct the theological validity of *Hnatlang*. Without minimizing the divinity of God, a comparison will be made between the *Hnatlang* spirit and action with the attributes of God. In what ways *Hnatlang* was comparable to the Christian doctrine of Trinity, focusing on community and the unity of the three Persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We will analyze *Hnatlang* in the light of the theological and missiological validity of the New Testament concept of *diakonia*, church/community and the great commission. We will also discuss the relationship of the newly- developed mission theology and Mizoram Christian theology with particular reference to the work of Thanzauva and his theology of community.

This study is mainly based on Mizoram and the Mizoram Presbyterian Church and its mission, particularly focusing the Mizo Christianity and its mission inside Mizoram and to some foreign mission fields. We will not cover in detail other Mizoram Presbyterian Church Missions outside India. We will also not cover in detail the other Mizo churches (e.g. Mizoram Baptist Church, Roman Catholic, Salvation Army, United Pentecostal Church, *Isua Krista Kohhran*, and Seventh day Adventist Church) that represent the minority of the population. There are a number of reasons of limiting this study on this way. First, no scholarly study has examined about the *Hnatlang* that apparently shaped Mizo primitive and present society as well as Mizo Christianity and its missions. Secondly, my study is limited to the Mizoram Presbyterian Church and its mission because Mizoram Presbyterian Church is the first and largest Mizo church denomination and represents more than half of the Mizoram state population—this, I believe, will certainly represent the Mizo church and give evidence of the Mizo Missiology. Third, I chose to study the Mizoram Presbyterian foreign mission fields. I

believe that these mission fields are one of the most imperative and essential studies in order to analyze and construct the real identity of the Mizo missions to non- Mizo and the Mizoram Presbyterian Church in particular.

1.3. Definitions

A few of the terms used in this study require explanation. The first of these is “Missiology” (known as the science of missions). Luzbetak explains that Missiology is derived from the Latin ‘*missio*’ (“a sending forth with a special message to proclaim or with a special task to perform”) and the Greek ‘*logos*’ (“a study, word or discourse”).²¹ Etymologically, *missiology* is a study of the sending forth or expansion of the Church.²¹ The first theory of mission in the modern understanding of the term was the work of Jose de Asocta, SJ: *On procuring the salvation of the Indians* (1588) and of the Carmelite Thomas, *A Jesu: On Procuring the Salvation of all Men* (1613). Since the nineteenth century, the Protestant Theologian F. Schleiermacher and Catholic Theologian J.B. Hirscher pioneered that mission should be accorded its own proper place in the system of theology,²² and from then on several attempts were made to establish an independent “doctrine of mission”. Gustav Warneck, a German missiologist, is regarded as the founder of the science of mission studies.²³ His study of mission has significantly contributed a new understanding in missiological studies.²⁴ For Warneck, Missiology is understood as the study of the evangelizing activity of the Church in a systematic way and could be regarded as the theological reflection of the church mission enterprise. J. A.B.Jongeneel agreed that missiology is a systematic and a

²¹ Luzbetak, *Church*, 12.

²² See Stephen Neill, Gerald H. Anderson and John Goodwin, *Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission* (London: United Society For Christian Literature Lutteworth Press, 1970), 387-388. Here after cited as Neill, *Concise Dictionary*.

²³ Neill, *Concise Dictionary*, 38.

²⁴ His missiological contributions can be found from the following books: Gustav Warneck, *Modern Missions and Culture: Their Mutual Relations*; Translated from the German by Thomas Smith (Edinburgh: J. Gemmel, 1883) and *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time: A Contribution to Modern Church History*, Translated from German by George Robson (New York: Revell, 1901).

practical theological discipline.²⁵ From beginning of the twentieth century, mission was no longer seen as being limited to what the *Church* is doing. Rather, mission was what *God* was doing in the world both through and outside of the church to communicate salvation. The International Missionary Council 1952 Conference in Willingen highlighted the concept of '*missio Dei*' (God's mission). The concept of mission now integrates within mission the necessity of an incarnational lifestyle and attitude in which missiology seeks to look at the world from the perspective of commitment to the Christian faith.²⁶

Therefore, the term "Missiology" as used in this study includes the critical investigation of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church's mission theory, method and practical work based on the impact of the traditional cultural practice.

The term "foreign missions" is widely used in this study. The word 'foreign' means "of, from, in, or characteristic of a country or language other than one's own; dealing with or relating to other countries; coming or introduced from outside."²⁷ Bosch writes the terms "missions" (the *missiones ecclesiae*: the missionary ventures of the church) refer to particular forms, related to specific times, places, or needs, of participation in the *mission Dei*.²⁸ Orchard defines mission as "the action of sending men forth with authority to preach the faith and administer the sacraments."²⁹ Thus, 'foreign missions' could be defined as a Christian organization of missionaries in a foreign land sent to

²⁵ J. A. B. Jongeneel, *Philosophy, Science, and Theology of Mission in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Missiological Encyclopedia* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995, 10) here after cited as Jongeneel, *Encyclopedia*.

²⁶ See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 9.

²⁷ Soanes, *Dictionary*, 430.

²⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 10.

²⁹ Ronald K. Orchard, 'Foreign Missions' in Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission edited by Stephan Neill, Gerald H. Anderson, John Goodwin (London: United Society for Christian Literature, Lutterworth Press, 1971, 212). Here after cited as Orchard, *Foreign Mission*.

carry on mission work or a church sends missionary from one country to another country.

The missionary societies which arose at the end of the 18th centuries and the beginning of the 19th centuries had the aim of preaching the gospel throughout the world to those who had not heard it.³⁰ Several countries formed mission agencies or societies to propagate the gospel. The United States of America alone formed about 706 mission agencies and societies from the middle of the 19th centuries towards the end of the 20th centuries.³¹ The term ‘foreign missions’ tended to give place to ‘the mission of church’, ‘world mission’ with the growth of church in Asia, Africa and the Pacific and the developing sense of partnership with the churches of western Europe and North America.³²

In this study ‘foreign missions’ were the primary means by which Mizoram Presbyterian Church spread the gospel and worldview across cultures outside the state of Mizoram in India. In other words, the Mizoram Presbyterian missions in a different state - other than Mizoram. The question may arise why mission to India by Indians should be called “foreign missions”. Ralph D. Winter’s and David A. Fraser’s statement gives the answer:

What staggers the imagination is the human diversity of India. Most countries are stratified, with layers of people ranging from the downtrodden to the aristocracy. But India is not merely vertically stratified by the world’s most rigidly defined social system, it is also horizontally cut up due to the linguistic and racial difference that chop in India into at least a thousand pieces.³³

³⁰ Orchard, ‘*Foreign Missions*’, 212.

³¹ See Bosch, *Transforming Missions*, 327.

³² Orchard, ‘*Foreign Missions*’, 212.

³³ Ralph D. Winter and David A. Fraser, ‘*World Mission Survey*’ in *Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategic, and Cultural Dimensions of God’s Plan for the Nations*, edited by Meg Crossman (Seattle: YWAM publishing, 2003, 450). Here after cited as Winter and Fraser, *World Mission Survey*.

However, no attempt is made in this study to divide or differentiate neither other state in India nor isolate Mizoram from the rest of India or the world by using the word “foreign”. Bosch rightly asserts, “Theologically speaking “foreign missions” is not a separate entity. The missionary nature of the church does not just depend on the situation in which it finds itself at a given moment but is grounded in the gospel itself.”³⁴ Thus, an attempt is made to just basically identify and analyze the interaction between gospel and cultures to other parts of India, particularly in which Mizoram Presbyterian Church established church and mission.

Another important term used throughout this study is “Mizo”. The literal meaning of “Mizo” means highlander and these people are formerly known as “Lushai” by the British. Lloyd defined, Mizo means ‘hill-man’ and the term includes a number of kindred Mongolian tribes scattered over a vast block of hills in eastern Indian and western Burma’.³⁵ Chatterji also defined this term in his book called ‘Mizo Chief and the Chieftdom’³⁶. Thus, in this study this term “Mizo” is limitedly used to denote a tribe that inhabit Mizoram one of the states in India.

The term “culture” is extensively used in this study. This term is widely defined and analyzed by different writers, intellectuals and thinkers of the world in their own way. In the 1952, A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn collected a list of more than 200 definitions of “culture”.³⁷ Culture exists on many levels. It is all so encompassing that no single article or book can conclude or describe the meaning and aspect of different

³⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Missions*, 9.

³⁵ Lloyd, *History*, 1.

³⁶ Mizo is the generic name of the hill men living in Mizo Hills, Chin Hills (Burma), south east of Manipur, Jampui Hills in Tripura, Arakan Hills (Burma) and Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bangladesh). Thus the Mizos, a great race of the Tibeto-Burman Mongolian stock, live in the south-eastern range of the great Himalayas region. They have their own distinct ethnic culture. There are different sub tribes, clans and sub clans amongst them.

³⁷ See Kroeber, A. L. and C. Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (Cambridge, Mass.: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 1952)

cultures. For example: Edward Burnett Tylor, a famous 19th century English anthropologist, defined culture as a complex collection of "knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".³⁸

Anthropologist Haviland defines culture as “a set of rules or standards that, when acted upon by the members of a society, produce behaviour that falls within a range of variance the members consider proper and acceptable”.³⁹ Williams briefly defined culture as “the way of life for an entire society.”⁴⁰ Geertz states, “Culture is a context; something within which social events, behaviours and processes can be intelligibly - thickly – described.”⁴¹ According to Niebuhr, “culture is human achievement...it is that portion of man’s heritage in any place or time which has been given us designedly and laboriously by other men... Hence it includes speech, education, tradition, myth, science, art, philosophy, government, law, rite, beliefs, inventions, technologies.”⁴² Hiebert defines, “Culture as the integrated system of learned pattern of behavior, ideas, and products characteristic of society.”⁴³ Hesselgrave, admitting the diversity of cultures defines, “The word “culture” is a very inclusive term, it takes into account linguistic, political, economic, social, psychological, religious, national, racial, and other differences.”⁴⁴ We will use culture as belief, art, morals, laws, customs and any other activities and habits acquired by people as members of society. In this study we will

³⁸ Quoted in Luzbetak, *Church*, 134. See also Newbegin, *Foolishness*, 159.

³⁹ Haviland, William A, *Cultural Anthropology*, Sixth edition (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1990, 30). Here after cited as Haviland, *Cultural Anthropology*.

⁴⁰ Raymond Williams, *Culture and society 1780-1950* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958). Here after cited as Williams, *Culture*.

⁴¹ Geertz, *Interpretation*, 14.

⁴² Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 33.

⁴³ Paul G.Hiebert, “*Culture and Cross- Cultural Difference*” in *Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategic, and Cultural Dimensions of God’s Plan for the Nations* edited by Meg Crossman (Seattle: Youth with a Mission Publishing, 2003, 276). Here after cited as Hiebert, *Culture*.

⁴⁴ David J. Hesselgrave, ‘*The Role of Culture in Communication*’, in *Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategic, and Cultural Dimensions of God’s Plan for the Nations*, edited by Meg Crossman (Seattle: YWAM publishing, 2003, 322). Here after cited as Hesselgrave, *Role of Culture*.

mainly focus on the Mizo traditional cultures that include the social, religion, political and economical life of the people.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Key Texts in Missiology

There are, no doubt, hundreds of books that have been published on the study of mission theology dealing with the concept of mission for the reflection of Mizo mission theology. However, I have discussed below just a few of these books which I felt were particularly relevant for or important to my research – those which I believe have most influenced my thinking on missiology and inculturation.

2.1.1. Roland Allen

Roland Allen's insightful work, titled '*Missionary Methods: St Paul or Ours?*' first appeared in 1912, offering an important perspective on missions and the church's evangelistic role. Its continued significance is suggested by the fact that it was reprinted in 1962,⁴⁵ 50 years after its first publication and remains in print today. Allen's critique of European's mission to non-European is definitely a useful tool for my research as a reflection of Mizo mission to the non- Mizo world, not least because it seems to me that many Mizo missionaries repeat the same mistakes of their European forbears. I will investigate to what extent Allen's critique of European missionaries and analysis of the biblical principles of mission is applicable to the Mizo Mizoram Presbyterian Church while analyzing its foreign missions later in the sixth chapter.

Allen believed that the missionary methods of the Apostle's were not 'out of date' but rather should be applied to missionary endeavours in any day and time. Allen stated "I myself am more convinced than ever that in the careful examination of his [St. Paul's]

⁴⁵ Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St Paul or ours?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B.Eerdmans Publishing Co, American Edition, 1962). Here after cited as Allen, *Missionary Methods*.

work; above all in the understanding and appreciation of his *principles*, we shall find the solution of most of our present difficulties.”⁴⁶ To emphasise and underline his views, Allen expressively wrote again that “At any rate this much is certain, that the Apostle’s methods succeeded exactly where ours have failed.”⁴⁷ In my opinion, Allen’s principles described in his book apply not only to how the people of one country does missionary work in another. The book really is about what the Bible has to show us about how to carry out the mission of the church, whether in our own culture or in ministering cross-culturally.

Allen argued that Paul's missionary success was not due to preexistent conditions that worked in Paul's favour and made his task easier than our more contemporary one.⁴⁸ Allen also described Paul's teaching, particularly focusing on the relatively short amount of time that Paul spent on both teaching new converts doctrine and preparing them for baptism and ordination.⁴⁹ It was Allen’s view that Paul’s missionary success was not due to preexistent conditions that worked in Paul’s favour and made his task inherently easier than ours today. However, it may well be true that Mizos and their culture were more receptive than the other places where missionaries worked in India. In chapter IV we will take an account of Allen’s perspective whilst considering whether growth in Mizoram was due to the geographical or social conditions of the people or preexistent conditions that worked in the missionaries favour.

Allen believed that control of all monetary funds, responsibility for evangelization and responsibility for the care of the churches should be placed into the hands of the new congregations as soon as they became congregations. Allen believed foreign finance

⁴⁶ Allen, *Missionary Methods*, vii.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 147.

⁴⁸ See Ibid 26-37.

⁴⁹ See ibid Chapter 9.

frequently leads to economic imperialism in the church. He articulated Paul's three financial principles on support of his position: - (1) although Paul received financial gifts from his converts and from the churches he founded, he did not seek money for himself. (2) Paul did not take financial support from his converts. (3) Paul did not administer the funds of his churches.⁵⁰ In my estimation, Allen is right in the conclusions he draws about finance, for many (most?) church planting efforts may be operating under financial principles that do more to hinder rather than help establish a healthy, self-supporting church.⁵¹ I will return to these issues later in chapter VII to assess Mizo missionary works among the non-Mizos, where we will consider whether monetary funds, responsibility for evangelization and responsibility for the care of the churches were placed into the hands of the new congregations and also whether Mizo *Hnatlang* hindered the growth of Christianity in Mizoram.

Allen accused western missionaries of failure to trust the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying and maturing new believers in China or Africa. He reminded his readers that the same Holy Spirit indwells these new national Christians and us.⁵² If God is at work in them, then we must assume that they, too, have all the necessary gifts for the leadership and life of the church. He believed that some missionaries feared that if they removed themselves from control over the new local churches, then corruption and disintegration would soon start.⁵³ Allen's assumption of the western missionary attitude (failure to trust the work of the Holy Spirit) towards the local church membership will need to be critically re-examined while analyzing the missionary enterprise in Mizoram and Mizo missions to non-Mizo.

⁵⁰ See Ibid, 11-12.

⁵¹ See Ibid, Chapter 6.

⁵² Ibid 145.

⁵³ Ibid, 144.

Allen's observations on the biblical pattern for selecting and equipping elders for local church leadership, challenges the practices of most churches and missions today. Most noteworthy and particularly applicable today is Allen's emphasis on the need for churches not to be dependent on their founders, but upon their native leadership.⁵⁴ Churches should not be Western imports, but true representations of God's local work. Allen argued that we should not delay to establish, train and appoint indigenous church leaders.⁵⁵ There is an assumption that Mizo churches did not depend on missionaries, but depended upon their native leaders from the inception of Christianity in Mizoram. Taking an account of Allen's view, we will examine this issue in Chapter V while analyzing the genesis of indigenization.

In my opinion, Allen does not sufficiently deal with the fundamental problem, of whether the New Testament gives us a clear blueprint to follow or principles to be reapplied to every circumstance.⁵⁶ Some further questions arise from St Paul's mission methods and their universal applicability. If Paul planted churches and then moved on quickly after giving some basic teaching and appointing leaders, is it inherently wrong if a missionary stays for several years in one place? If Paul always went first to the city to preach, is it wrong that someone goes to villages first? If Paul preached first to Jews, is it wrong to go straight to Gentiles? In my point of view, if we really long to recall the vitality of the New Testament church it is important first to understand the context in which it operated and relate that to today's world. This principle undergirds much of my thinking throughout the thesis.

Allen mainly contrasts the western domination of local churches in the foreign missions which results in the church remaining a foreign institution with no roots in indigenous

⁵⁴ See *ibid* 141-150.

⁵⁵ See *Ibid*, 100-107.

⁵⁶ This is of course a matter of ongoing scholarly discussion- cited from. Todd Penner, "*Madness on the Method? The Acts of the Apostle on the Current Study*" (Currents in Biblical Research, April 2004 vol.2, 223-293).

life. There is a hypothesis that western missionary domination was not an issue in Mizoram. Missionaries started the work, but the local leaders preached the gospel and established churches that are rooted in indigenous life from the inception of Christianity.⁵⁷ On the other hand, there is another hypothesis that Mizo missionaries dominated their foreign missions and local churches that hindered the growth and the churches remaining Mizo institution with fewer roots in indigenous life. I will return to explain this issue in chapter V while examining further the Mizo church indigenization and in chapter VI while investigating Mizo missionary works among non- Mizo.

2.1.2. Henry Venn

Allen strongly supported the ‘three self’ principles of church-planting which was introduced by Henry Venn (Anglican, Church Missionary Society) (1796-1873) and Rufus Anderson (Congregationalist, American Board) (1796-1880) in early 19th century, particularly in Asia. They believed that indigenous churches should, from their outset, be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating.

Henry Venn was an Anglican clergyman who is recognized as one of the foremost Protestant missions strategists of the nineteenth century. Although Venn never systematized his mission theory and practice in a book, his articles, reports, lectures, theoretical principles and administrative practices would be one of the most relevant and appropriate tool to study the interaction between Mizo culture and the gospel as well as Mizo missions to non-Mizo. Wilbert R. Shenk’s book called ‘Henry Venn-Missionary Statesman’⁵⁸ is a useful tool to investigate Venn’s strategy of missions.

⁵⁷ See Lloyd, *History* 378-379.

⁵⁸ Wilbert R. Shenk, *Henry Venn-Missionary Statesman* (Maryknol, New York: Orbis Books, 1983). Here after cited as Shenk, *Henry Venn-Missionary Statesman*.

The Church Mission Society made a substantial commitment to various kinds of education but Venn was frequently disappointed at the lack of missionary results. He believed that Schools proved ineffective as means of evangelization and were a heavy financial drain on a missionary society.⁵⁹ He also suggested that the local people should build new schools and paid teachers' salary out of local funds.⁶⁰ There is an assumption that most of the schools and church buildings in Mizoram were built by the local believers, not by the Western missionaries. On the other hand, most of the schools and church buildings in foreign missions (among non-Mizos) were built by the Mizo missionaries and the Mizo churches, not by the local churches. We will investigate these assumptions and attempt to identify later to what extent Venn's critique of the CMS educational ministry proves to be true or false to the Western missionary works in Mizoram as well as the Mizo missions to non- Mizo.

Venn argued that the missionary society (CMS) found it difficult to be free of feelings of cultural superiority and thus, paternalism was woven into the very fabric of missions.⁶¹ I acknowledge that most of the European missions if not all were failed to realized their cultural superiority and paternalism was the hinder of the church growth in Asia, India in particular. We will examine whether this cultural superiority and paternalism applied to the Mizo missions to non-Mizo, particularly while examining *Hnatlang* as the Mizoram Presbyterian Church mission's principle to other parts of India.

As self-support became the key to Venn's whole system of missions, he suggested to the CMS missionaries "Never let them imagine the Society is to do all and to pay all. Remind them daily and hourly that you only come amongst them to put them in the way

⁵⁹ See Shenk, *Henry Venn-Missionary Statesman*, 40.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 43.

of doing all for themselves.”⁶² I believe that Venn’s indigenous principle is the most effective strategy for a new church planting. We will thoroughly analyze the failure and success of Venn’s three self principle-self supporting, self propagating and self governing while investigating the cultural factors in Christian missions, particularly thinking of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church and its missions among the non- Mizo.

2.1.3. Mission and Intercultural Engagement ²²²²lume is a collection of papers published When turning to the question of mission and intercultural engagement of the Church in Mizoram and its mission fields, out of several writers, three contextualizing remarks are called for (Newbigin 1986; Anton Wessels 1994; and Stephan B.Bevans 2004) are obviously outstanding with the purpose of studying interaction of Gospel and culture, particularly for evaluating Mizo traditional heritage, socio-cultural, practices and customs.

Newbigin (1986)⁶³ has been one of the crucial influences on the theology of mission in the twentieth century. He modeled what it means to contextualize Christian witness by immersing oneself in the language and culture of particular people. Newbigin believed that a missionary’s encounter with modern western culture was the most urgent item on the agenda of missiology: “It would seem, therefore, that there is no higher priority for the research work of missiologists than to ask the question of what would be involved in a genuinely missionary encounter between the gospel and this modern Western culture.”⁶⁴ My assumption in this thesis is that the Mizo traditional cultural practice of *Hnatlang* has played major role in Christian missions. Taking account of Newbigin’s idea, we propose to critically investigate a missionary (Western) encounter to Mizo culture and Mizo

⁶² Ibid, 44.

⁶³ Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western culture* (London: SPCK, 1986, 3). Here after cited as Newbigin, *Foolishness*.

⁶⁴ Newbigin, *Foolishness*, 3.

missionary encounter to other culture (non-Mizo), particularly focusing on *Hnatlang* factors that contributed for the success and failure of the Christian missions, which, I believe, is the most urgent item on the agenda of Mizo mission theology.

Bevans (2004)⁶⁵ contributes a great deal as we attempt to construct contextual theology based on Mizo traditional cultural practices. He proposes to think more clearly on how the Gospel message interacts with cultures, chiefly focusing how to honor tradition while responding to social change. Based on different perspectives, assumptions and methods, Bevans sets nine models, illustrating each with an example from among Western and Third World theologians: (1) The translation model, which claims that the message of the gospel, expressed in supra-cultural, essential doctrines, is unchanging, but struggles to liberate that message from captivity to Western categories of thought, through the translation of meanings as well as words;⁶⁶ (2) The anthropological model, which emphasizes the cultural identity of each Christian;⁶⁷ (3) The praxis model, in which God's presence is manifested not only in the fabric of culture but in the fabric of history, the history of oppressed peoples struggling for liberation;⁶⁸ (4) The synthetic model which preserves the importance of the gospel message and traditional doctrinal formulations while acknowledging the vital role of culture.⁶⁹ (5) The transcendental model which focuses on one's own experience as a person of faith;⁷⁰ (6) and finally the countercultural model take context (experience, culture, social location, and social change) with utmost seriousness.⁷¹ Bevans provides a good way to think more clearly about the interaction of the Gospel and culture. He also provides a valuable guide to

⁶⁵ Stephen B Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Culture*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2003) Here after cited as Bevans, *Models*.

⁶⁶ Bevans, *Translating*, 37.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 54.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 70.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 88.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 103.

⁷¹ Ibid, 117.

that inevitable aspect of theology particularity to cultural context. Bevans rightly points out that Christians in the other parts of the world "are becoming increasingly convinced that traditional approaches to theology do not really make sense within their own cultural patterns and thought forms."⁷² From my point of view, the attempt to systematize contextual theologies into a logical and ordered set of models seems to contradict the situational, cultural and political theologies mentioned in his book. Based on Bevan's model of contextualization, we will make an attempt in Chapter VII to identify a choice of methodologies for Mizo mission theology.

Wessel's work (1994)⁷³ is a helpful source which considers how Christianity spread in Europe without destroying cultures but by adapting traditional cultural practices. Here, he explores encounters between new religions, Christianity and Europe's older cultures and religions. Wessels asks how Christianity came to be related to pre-Christian culture. Were these swept away or just given a new significance? Which elements of them were abolished and which Christianized? Did Christianity prevail only by incorporating much of what had previously existed? My assumption is that these are the significant questions not only Europe but for every culture particularly in Mizoram where Christianity takes the root within a few decades. We will focus Wessel's questions while investigating a factor of rapid growth of Christianity in Mizoram.

2.2. Mizo Christianity and Culture

Mizoram encountered Christianity for the first time through Rev. William Williams, who visited Mizoram in March 15, 1891. After 3 years Williams returned to England and the pioneer missionaries Rev F.W. Savidge and Rev. J.H. Lorrain arrived in the

⁷² Ibid. 5.

⁷³ Anton Wessels, *Europe: Was it ever really Christian: The interaction between gospel and culture* (London: SCM, 1994); Here after cited as Wessels *Europe*.

land in 1894 marking a new chapter of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the region. Rev. D.E. Jones of the Welsh Presbyterian Church arrived in Mizoram in 1897. Within five decades the entire Mizo population embraced Christianity, as we saw earlier.

From 1940-1950, few historians or writers made an attempt to depict the change and the impact of Christianity to the Mizo culture as well as British administration to the Mizo people. Kyles (1944),⁷⁴ attempts to analyze the transformation of Mizo society from the point of view of the contributions of the pioneer missionaries, namely Lorrain and Savidge. He tries to depict the distinct identity of Lorrain in particular. In my view, however, the way he portrays the Mizo identity and culture is excessive. If you accepted the premise of his account, all Mizo were simply head-hunters and drunks. He did not try to understand the insight of the Mizo pre-Christian cultural factors that I believe contributed for the success of missionary endeavors in Mizoram. We will make an attempt to study the pre-Christian cultural practices from both the inside and outside perspective.

McCall (1949)⁷⁵ dealt with the cultural changes that had come upon the Mizo as a result of the impact of Western culture through actions by both the British administration and missionaries. McCall was convinced that the most dynamic and continued instrument of change was the missionaries while admitting that it was the advent of British administration that changed and maybe confused the Mizo people. He stated the role of the British administration was simply “the provision of law and order, and modicum of utility service.”⁷⁶ He also suggested that changes should be indigenously ignited and properly guided and not forced on the people by outsiders. He contributed to the understanding of certain aspects of the matter center of attention in this study, but he did

⁷⁴ David Kyles, *Lorrain of the Lushais: Romance and Realism on the North-East Frontier of India* (London: Sterling Tract Enterprise, 1944) Here after cited as Kyles, *Lorrain of the Lushais*.

⁷⁵ Anthony Gilchrist McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis* (London: Luzac & Co, 1949). Here after cited as McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis*.

⁷⁶ McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis*, 199.

not deal directly with the traditional cultural aspect. He wrote from an imperial and paternalistic point of view. Thus, his writing is one sided and needs to be re-examined from the inside perspective.

Mendus, one of the missionaries in Mizoram wrote a book called ‘The Diary of a Jungle Missionary’ (1956),⁷⁷ that is the reproduction of his personal diary where he wrote of his personal experiences, his legacies as well as his trials, and reflects on his evangelical touring work in Mizoram. In my view, he estimated Mizoram and the people from a western imperialistic and paternalistic point of view and failed to express the receptivity of the Mizo and their culture. Chapman and Clark’s (1968)⁷⁸ ‘Mizo Miracle’ fairly dealt how miraculously Mizo people embrace Christianity within a short period of time. They tried to analyze possible factors of rapid growth of Christianity in Mizoram. To them, the so called Mizo code of conduct, *Tlawmngaihna*, was “probably the greatest of all”⁷⁹ *Tlawmngaihna*, to their understanding was probably the principle and driving force of the Mizo culture. However, my observation in this thesis is that *Hnatlang* is the principle of Mizo culture in which *Tlawmngaihna* is the spirit of this *Hnatlang*. In other words, there is no *Tlawmngaihna* without *Hnatlang*. In my point of view, Chapman and Clark fail to identify Mizo traditional culture and the major factor of rapid growth of Christianity in Mizoram. We will come back about this matter in chapter III while defining the meaning of *Tlawmngaihna* and in Chapter VII while analyzing the implications of the new missiological insight for contemporary Mizoram Christianity.

⁷⁷ Mendus, Lewis L: *The Diary of a Jungle Missionary* (Liverpool Foreign Mission Office: 16 Falkner Street, 1956). Here after cited as Mendus, *The Diary*.

⁷⁸ Chapman, E and M. Clark, *Mizo Miracle*, Ed. By Marjorie Sykies (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1968). Here after cited as Chapman and Clark, *Miracle*.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 93.

J.M. Lloyd, one of the missionaries, wrote a book called '*On Every High Hill*' (1957).⁸⁰ He makes an attempt to identify the growth of Christianity and interaction between Christianity and traditional culture. He believes that there are certain traditional cultural values in Mizo society that could be translated into Christianity. However, he did not discuss any further particular cultural values or practices that are important for this study. He sees the rise of *Puma zai* (traditional song) as 'a sudden resurgence of heathenism', which made its way into the revival. Lloyd (1991)⁸¹ analyzed all the history of the Wales Presbyterian Church mission and its missionary enterprise in Mizoram as it sought for the transformation of Mizo people. In my view, Lloyd wrote in detail about the history of the Welsh missions and Christianity in Mizoram but failed to value the indigenous contributions for the growth of the church. The rapid growth of Christianity in Mizoram, I believe, was partially because Allen's indigenous principle was successful in which control of all monetary funds, responsibility for evangelization and responsibility for the care of the churches was placed into the hands of the Mizo believers. He also failed to value Mizo culture and wrote the history of missions and Christianity from European imperialistic perspectives. His work needs to be re-examined from Allen and Venn's mission indigenous perspectives.

Published information about Christianity in Mizoram is rare between 1960 and 1970. But some scholars attempted to explain the impact of Christianity, history of the revival and the influence of the British administration to Mizo people from the beginning of 1970s till the end of 1980s. Liangkhaia (1972)⁸² explains the history of revival in Mizoram. His book is informative for the nature of Mizo revival and its influence by church growth in Mizoram. He believed that revival is the most important factor for

⁸⁰ J. M. Lloyd, *On Every High Hill* (Liverpool: Foreign Mission Office, 1957), 55. Hereafter cited as „Lloyd, *Every High Hill*."

⁸¹ J.M. Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram: Harvest in the Hills* (Aizawl: Synod publication Board, 1991). Here after cited as Lloyd, *History*.

⁸² Liangkhaia, *Mizoram Harhna Thu* (Aizawl: V.L. Ringa & Sons, 1972). Here after cited as Liangkhaia, *Mizoram*.

church growth in Mizoram. I agree with Laingkhaia that, certainly, the revival was one of the factors of church growth in Mizoram. However, he failed to identify how and why the revival broke and what the nature of the revival was. There is an assumption that the traditional cultural practices played important parts for the Mizo revival such as- used the traditional tune of the Mizo songs, played traditional musical instruments and danced in traditional dancing style. Thus, we will try to identify the nature of the revival as to what extent the cultural factors played an important role for the Mizo revival.

Lalsawma (1975)⁸³ writes a brief history of revival over its four decades and observes that Mizo Christians fail to demonstrate their Christian ideals in reality in religious, political, secular and common life. He attempts to narrate the different features of the revival waves along with the native cultural practices, which, in turn, molded the life and thoughts of the people in the church. He argues that revival is one of the most significant factors for the phenomenal success of the Gospel preaching in Mizoram. He assumes that there has been a very skilful and effective assimilation of Mizo culture for revival expressions.⁸⁴ He points out some Mizo cultural roots and values which he believes, are formative through the revival movements: nomadic life; adventurous life; old religion (beliefs) and festive merriments. His book is informative in the study of the factors of Mizo traditional culture for the revival and particularly for the growth of Christianity in Mizoram. In my estimation, however, he fails to provide convincing evidences of how the adventurous life and festive merriments of the people contributed for the revival and growth of Christianity in Mizoram. He also fails to discuss *Hnatlang*

⁸³ Lalsawma, *Four Decades of Revivals: The Mizo Way* (Aizawl: Mission Vengthlang, 1994). Here after cited as Lalsawma, *Revival*.

⁸⁴ See Lalsawma, *Revival*, 5.

that I believe, is the major cultural factor that contributed for the revival as well as for the growth of Christianity in Mizoram.

Saiaithanga (1976)⁸⁵ one of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church pioneer ordained ministers dealt with the detailed history of Christianity in Mizoram. His book is systematic, precise and informative for detailed history of the different denominations in Mizoram. He believed that Mizo pre-Christian belief and traditional cultural practices has played an important role for the rapid growth of Christianity in Mizoram. However, Saiaithanga failed to deal with the detail of the interaction of the Gospel and Mizo culture and he did not recognize some elements of the revival, particularly the traditional songs and drums, which are important factors for the revival as well as for church growth.

Hminga (1976)⁸⁶ writes about Mizo Christianity from the perspective of Church growth. He examines the growth of the churches using numerical, organic and qualitative approaches. He argues that the revival movements were the main factors for the church growth. But in my opinion, he does not regard the traditional cultural practices as the subject for serious consideration and thus fails to critically analyze the factors of church growth in Mizoram e.g., *Hnatlang* proved effective as means of evangelization and the local people built new churches and schools and paid local evangelist and school teachers' salary out of local funds. His book needs to re-examine from a missiological perspective, particularly from Venn's indigenous mission principle.

⁸⁵ Saiaithanga, *Mizo Kohhran Chanchin* (Aizawl: Aizawl Regional Theological Literature Committee, 1976). Here after cited as Saiaithanga, *Mizo Kohhran*.

⁸⁶ Hminga, C.L. *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram*, (Doctor of Missiology Dissertation, School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, 1976). Here after cited as Hminga, *Life and Witness*.

Zairema (1978)⁸⁷ wrote about the story of growth of Christianity in Mizoram. He believed that the rapid growth of Christianity was greatly influenced by the revival and contribution of the indigenous believers. He attributed the rapid growth to the “full participation of laymen.”⁸⁸ He argued that Mizo Christianity is the product of the local leaders and believers. Thus, his book is informative in the study about the contribution of the indigenous people for the growth of Christianity. Zairema, however, did not develop the point further and did not explain what the motivating factors of Mizo people were and to what extent the Mizo traditional culture played an important role for the growth of Christianity in Mizoram.

In the beginning of the 1980s, some non- Mizo writers focused on Mizo Christianity, particularly the influences of Western missionaries and Christianity to Mizo people from the beginning and towards the end of 1980s. Lutz Lorry (1980)⁸⁹ explains the history of the transformation of the Mizo people from a Western point of view. He details the process by which the Mizo people received the Gospel through British Missionaries. Ray (1982)⁹⁰ focuses on political, religious and administrative changes in Mizoram. He believed that the indigenous cultural patterns of Mizo people were destroyed by the missionaries. In my estimation Ray is too critical of the influence of the missionaries and he did not adequately provide proof or evidence of his views. Donna Strom (1983)⁹¹ on the other hand traces the impact of Christianity on the strong Mizo tribes of northeast India, tribes that rapidly converted from headhunting and sorcery. According to her, missionaries not only brought deliverance from fear, but

⁸⁷ Zairema, *God's Miracle in Mizoram: A Glimpse of Christian Work- Among Head- Hunters* (Aizawl: The Synod Press and Bookroom, 1978, 12). Here after cited as Zairema, *God's Miracle*.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 12.

⁸⁹ Lorry Lutz, *The Mizo's God's Hidden people: The Miracles of Missions in Mizoram* (Canada: Partner International, Inc, 1980) Here after cited Lutz, *God's Hidden People*.

⁹⁰ Animesh Ray, *Mizoram Dynamics of Change* (Calcutta: Pearl Publisher, 1982) Here after cited as Ray, *Dynamic Change*

⁹¹ Donna Strom, *Christianity and Culture Change Among the Mizoram*. (Missiology 8, JI 1980: 307-317) Here after cited as Strom, *Christianity*

helped the Mizo adapt to the modern world. She also believes that Christianity played a vital role in the preservation of tribal identity, culture, language and history. This book is written mainly to notify western readers and to implore their support for the agents, the missionaries especially to support those activities which were successful. In my point of view, her approach is inadequate either for the purpose of self understanding for Mizo Christians as well as for providing them adequate historical explanation of Christianity in Mizoram.

Hluna (1985)⁹² writes of the impact of Christianity on the political development in Mizoram. Three chapters of his book analyze the growth of Christianity in Mizoram despite the fact that it was not the main purpose of his research. He believes that “the mission ‘policy’ and its implications” and, additionally, to “the responses made by the Mizo people”⁹³ are the rapid factors of growth of Christianity in Mizoram. Hluna, however, does not make an attempt to analyze in depth of these factors. In 1993, he writes the personal history of the missionaries and their contribution in the northern part of Mizoram.⁹⁴ He writes stories from a western perspective as well as his own personal perspective, which is quite a positive one, particularly when it comes to the legacy of the missionaries. However, he fails to depict their hardships and thus his writing is one-sided. I believe, foreign missionaries do not create churches, but simply help local converts develop their own spiritual gifts and leadership abilities and gradually develop their own churches. Thus, his work needs to be analyzed from Venn’s indigenization perspective.

⁹² J.V. Hluna, *Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram: A Study of Impact of Christianity on the Political Development in Mizoram* (Aizawl, Mizoram: Mizo History Association, 1985) Here after cited as Hluna, *Church and Political*.

⁹³ Ibid, 14.

⁹⁴ J.V. Hluna, *Mizoram Hmar Bial Missionary Chanchin* (Aizawl, Mizoram: The Synod Press, 1993) Here after cited as Hluna, *Mizoram*

Lal Dena (1988)⁹⁵ and Hrangkhuma's (1989)⁹⁶ PhD dissertation are useful tools to study the relationship between the British administration and foreign missionaries in Mizoram. Dena analyzes the influences of the British administration and missionaries to the society of Manipur and Lushai Hills (Mizoram). He also describes the work of the missionaries and argues that "the increase in converts was much more phenomenal in Lushai Hills than in Manipur"⁹⁷ despite the fact that these missionaries used the similar methods, partly because "the united efforts of missionaries belonging to different missions working in the area"⁹⁸. In my estimation, however, he fails to provide evidences to prove his claims. Hrangkhuma studies the process, nature and meaning of Mizo socio-cultural changes effected by the British colonial government, Christian missions, the two world wars and the independence of India. He treats the Mizo transformational change informatively and fairly, in my estimation. However, he writes about Mizo Christianity mainly based on a Western transformational perspective. Both of these works need to be re-examined from an inside and an indigenization perspective.

Towards the end of twentieth century some Mizo theologians began to discuss the interaction between the Gospel and culture apparently from the tribal (Mizo) perspective. Zaihmingthanga's (1995)⁹⁹ edited book is the outcome of the *Gospel and Culture* consultation that took place in Aizawl Theological College, Aizawl, Mizoram on November 14-17, 1995. The articles about the interaction between the Gospel and Mizo culture contributed by the writers are somewhat informative for my research.

⁹⁵ Lal Dena, *Christians Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in Northeast India in Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills 1894-1947* (Shillong: Vendrame Institute, 1988). Here after cited as Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism*.

⁹⁶ Hrangkhuma Fanai, *Mizoram Transformational Change: A Study of the Processes and Nature of the Mizo Cultural Change and Factors that Contributed to the Change* (PhD. Dissertation, Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1989) Here after cited as Hrangkhuma, *Transformational Change*.

⁹⁷ Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism*. 103.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 103.

⁹⁹ Zaihmingthanga, (Ed). *North East India Regional Consultation on Gospel and Culture* (Aizawl: Theological committee Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, 1995). Here after cited as Zaihmingthanga, *North East India*.

However, these articles deal with the interaction between Gospel and culture mainly focusing on the two Mizo cultural aspects such as – *Zawlbuk* and *Tlawmngaihna*, which I believe, are merely some of the elements of *Hnatlang* cultural practice. In my point of view, thus, this consultation's articles needs to be re-examined or revised from *Hnatlang* cultural perspective.

In the following year, Kipgen (1996)¹⁰⁰ attempted to defend the idea that the encounter between Christianity and the traditional Mizo culture had produced a unique form of Mizo Christianity and he believes this (traditional cultural practice) contributed possible changes and rapid growth of Christianity. His writing undoubtedly provided an anthropological insight to the Mizo traditional cultural practices, though on the whole he has small investigation on the subject of this research, no detail attempt is made about how Mizo traditional culture contributed to the growth of Christianity and shaped Mizo Christianity and missions, particularly no attempt is made to investigate about *Hnatlang*.

In the middle of the twenty first century, Thanzauva edited and published a book, *Towards a Tribal Theology: The Mizo Perspective* and he published another book in 2004 called *Theology of Community: Tribal Theology in the Making* in which he reflects theological traditions, experiences and aspirations of the tribal Christian in North India particularly in reference to Mizoram. Thanzauva makes an important contribution to understanding certain aspects of the Mizo traditional cultural practices, particularly about the elements of the Godhead, ecclesiology and humanity. However, he does not deal with how Mizo traditional cultural practices influenced or affected the

¹⁰⁰ Kipgen, Mangkhosat. *Christianity and Mizo Culture*. (Rajabari, Jorhat: Assam Printing Works (p) Ltd., 1996). Here after cited as Kipgen, *Christianity*.

growth of Christianity and shaped Mizo church and missions, particularly with reference to the *Hnatlang* cultural practice.

Recently the first volume of *Reading Mizo Christianity Series 1: Ground Works for Tribal Theology in the Mizo Context*¹⁰¹ was edited by three Mizo theologians in which fifteen Mizo theologians wrote different articles on historical, socio-political, economic and religious issues in Mizoram Christianity. These works contain essential resources for a better understanding of Mizo Christianity particularly in relation to Mizo traditional cultural values, practices and religion. All these explanation have some value, however, inadequate either for historical explanation of Mizo Christianity and for the purpose of developing Mizo theology or missiology. Again, none of the writers deal with the contribution of *Hnatlang* with three possible reasons: (1) they simply considered *Hnatlang* as one of the traditional cultural practices but not as the foundation; (2) they believed that *Tlawmngaihna* is social ethics and the foundation of Mizo traditional culture that precede the important of *Hnatlang*; (3) they simply failed to recognize or did not realize the function of traditional *Hnatlang*. We will attempt to analyze how *Hnatlang* consistently shaping the contemporary Mizo socio- political, economic and religious life even after Mizo people embraced Christianity.

2.3. Mizoram Presbyterian Church Foreign Mission

There is a modest amount of literature available for this specific focus of Mizoram Presbyterian Church foreign missions. Zaithanga (1981),¹⁰² the first full-time secretary of the Synod Mission Board, writes the history of the mission work of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church, particularly outside (foreign) the state of Mizoram.

¹⁰¹ Rosiamliana Tochhawng, K. Lalrinmawia and L.H. Rawsea, *Reading in Mizo Christianity Series 1: Ground Works For Tribal Theology In the Mizo Context* (Delhi: Rev. De. Ashish Amos of the Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK), 2007).

¹⁰² Zaithanga, V.L. *From Head-Hunting to Soul –Hunting* (Aizawl, Mizoram: Synod Press, 1981). Here after cited as Zaithanga, *From Head-hunting*.

Vanlalchhuanawma (1983),¹⁰³ in his Master of Theology thesis, deals with the history of the Mizoram Synod Mission Board (1953-1981). These books are mainly written to copy the western imperialistic point of view and to inform Mizo readers stating the people who were involved in the first stages of mission work and their activities. Non-Mizos (target people) are mentioned, of course, but only as the object of Mizo missionary work. These books are informative as to the inception and development of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church foreign mission enterprises. However, in my view, both of them simply eulogize the Mizoram Presbyterian Church mission without critically analyzing the success and failure of the Mizo missions to non-Mizo. These writings need to be re-examined from the perspective of Allen's book 'Missionary Methods: St Paul or Ours?' as he much analyzed the Western missionary enterprises to the foreign lands.

At the end of the twentieth century, Nengzakhup (1999)¹⁰⁴ writes about the Mizoram Presbyterian Church Mission, which he calls the 'Amazing Mizo Mission'. He portrays the Mizo zeal, enthusiasm and creativity in cooperation with the Mission work. He argues the indignity of missions in Mizoram and states "the mission to the Mizos that became mission by Mizos"¹⁰⁵. This book will be helpful particularly for the study of the motivating factors of the Mizo mission. However, again, the book takes only the affirmative point of view, which makes the writing one-sided. He also fails to analyze the *Hnatlang* cultural practices as the motivating factor which, I will argue, is the major motivating factor of the Mizo missions.

¹⁰³ Vanlalchhuanawma, *A Historical Study of the Synod Mission Board: 1953-1981*, M.Th. Thesis (Bangalore: United Theological College, 1985). Here after cited as Vanlalchhuanawma, *Historical Study*.

¹⁰⁴ S. Nengzakhup, *The Presbyterian Church of Mizoram's: Amazing Mizo Missions* (Bangalore: SAIACS Press, 2000 2nd Edition). Here after cited as Nengzakhup, *Amazing Mizo Missions*.

¹⁰⁵ Nengzakhup, *Amazing Mizo Missions*.3.

Ramthar,¹⁰⁶ the Synod Mission Board monthly magazine published continually since 1984, is the most relevant source of information about the Synod Mission Board's mission work. The editorial has always taken a relevant and topical theological perspective on the mission throughout the course of each year. Missionaries, pastors and lay people of the local churches share their ideas for the further development of the mission and they report on current events. These reports are an important source of information for mission headquarters and for mission fields. The magazine also provides the relevant mission rules, practices and applications. However, the non-Mizo mission workers have no privilege to share their report and views and are even unable to read as this is published only in Mizo language. Most of the mission reports and articles are written by the Mizos from a paternalistic point of view. Thus, this information could be misleading and one-sided.

Ramthar Rawngbawlina Enthlatu Committee Report in 1996,¹⁰⁷ (Mission Commission Committee Report 1996) is a useful tool to investigate the Mizoram Presbyterian Church foreign missions. The Synod meeting gave the Synod Executive Committee the mandate to take the initiative regarding the Mission Commission Committee formation (Vide Gen. 8 of 1994). After this, the Synod Executive Committee formed the Commission Committee to revise mission rules and practices and their application, and to make provisions for further steps to be taken in the development of Mission Work. The appointed commissioners visited the foreign mission field to do empirical studies. However, none of the non- Mizo workers or the believers are consulted. Thus, this information needs to be critically analyzed.

¹⁰⁶ Mizoram Presbyterian Church (MPC), *Ramthar* (Aizawl: Synod Mission Board, 1984). Here after cited as MPC *Ramthar*.

¹⁰⁷ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, *Ramthar Rawngbawlina Enthlatu Report* 1996 (Aizawl: Synod Mission Board, 1999). Here after cited as MPC *Enthlatu Report*.

CHAPTER - III

IDENTIFYING HNATLANG AS THE BACKDROP OF MISSION THINKING OF THE MIZORAM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

3. Introduction

This chapter will examine how the Mizo people appropriate the gospel in the context of Mizo traditional cultural practice *Hnatlang*. This cultural practice is a primary factor of change, a foundation of Mizo Christianity, and the backbone of the contextual missiological approaches applied by the pioneer missionaries in Mizoram. Consequently, this cultural practice was also highly influential in the manner by which many of the Mizo missionaries to the non-Mizo world conduct their missionary enterprises. First, we will discuss and examine the legacy of this traditional cultural practice, mainly focusing on what extent the role of the *Hnatlang* cultural practice has played in the foundations of Mizo Christianity historically, and what remnants remain today. Second, we will discuss how Mizos currently appropriate the gospel within the cultural context of the *Hnatlang* and how much this practice still affects the Mizo mission efforts to non-Mizo world. Finally, we will consider the use of the *Hnatlang* as utilized by pioneer mission, to what extent youth and political organizations in Mizoram still depend on this concept, and whether or not the concept of *Hnatlang* is still an effective and culturally appropriate means for effectively communicating the gospel.

Contextualization of mission theology has become the prevailing method of studying theology in contemporary mission studies. Surprisingly, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church has not codified her own systematic mission theology, which would be applicable for the entire mission enterprise. Rather, the current missiology of Mizoram Presbyterian Church seems indirectly adopted from Mizo traditional practices. These

practices were culturally enclosed, permeated with a pre-Christian worldview, clothed in the Mizo culture, articulated in philosophical terms entirely pre-Christian Mizo, and useful within that particular context. Therefore, the so-called inherited missiology, while significant to the present context of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church, is contrary to her non-Mizo mission endeavors; that is, not universally applicable for the non-Mizo contexts. These non-Mizo mission endeavors include those cultures that require constructing a new and relevant contextual theology. Obviously, it is still necessary to discover some of the traditional practices and give Christian interpretation and meaning to them.

Mizo traditional culture (i.e. pre-Christian) is not given full recognition for what it has contributed towards Christian mission principle. In order to better describe the Christian and missions principles in the Mizo context; there is a need to revisit Mizo traditional cultural practices. When looking through the lens of Mizo Christianity and its mission, one can detect Mizo traditional cultural practices that survive in Mizo Christianity and its mission enterprises. One must consider Mizo traditional culture in order to understand the transformation that occurred over the last century and a half among the Mizo people. Over the past twelve decades (1894-2006) of Christianity among the Mizos, despite its widespread mission enterprises in India and even abroad, there is lack of an accurate and systematic attempt to develop missiology within the Mizo Churches and particularly the Mizo Presbyterian Churches. Mizo people had their very own distinctive culture, social norms, and religious beliefs prior to the arrival of Christianity. *Hnatlang* was the central feature of the society that played a crucial role in the village administration and maintenance of these cultural norms. What is *Hnatlang*? In this chapter, we shall have an in-depth study of the Mizo concept of *Hnatlang* in terms of meaning, role, function and relevance to the past. Further, one must consider the

contemporary Mizo mission, reflecting on the past and present role of *Hnatlang* in the Mizo Society.

The advent of Christianity in Mizoram has witnessed an increasing interest in developing knowledge of traditional socio-cultural practices to meet the needs of development of contextualized theology. It is still a debatable question as to why Christianity was growing much faster in Mizoram and why Mizo Christians have more mission zeal than the other states in India. What factors contributed to the rapid growth despite the fact that the same missionaries of the Welsh Presbyterian mission worked both in Mizoram and the Khasia Jantia Hills among the tribes of similar background? The missionaries were apparently using the same method of evangelism, but what made the Mizo Christians so much more mission oriented? Considerable attempts have been made to answer these questions in which many of them identified ‘revival’ as the main factor.¹⁰⁸ Some of the theologians credited the rapid growth and success to the traditional socio-cultural practices.¹⁰⁹ To date, no explanation pinpoints the hypothesis that the Mizo socio-cultural practice of *Hnatlang* was one of the factors that contributed the rapid growth of Christianity. *Hnatlang* affected the entire Mizo mission enterprise from its inception up to this day. It explains the successes of the missionary enterprises in Mizoram, the perpetuity and strength of the gospel in Mizoram today, and can be useful for the Mizoram Presbyterian church to consider when codifying its own missiology. Thus, in this chapter, a detailed and critical analysis of *Hnatlang* will be made in order to demonstrate this hypothesis and to give the possible answers of the above assertions.

¹⁰⁸ Liangkhaia. *Mizo*, 201; Saiaithanga, *Mizo Kohhran Chanchin* (Aizawl, Mizoram: Regional Theological Literature Committee, 1993) 24; Here after cited as Saiaithanga, *Mizo Kohhran*; Lalsawma, *Revival*, 5

¹⁰⁹ Kipgen, *Christianity*, 4; Saiaithanga. *Mizo Kohhran*, 6-9.

Multiple traditional *Hnatlang* practices for the development of the Mizo socio-economic, political and religious development will be analyzed to evaluate *Hnatlang* effectiveness in modeling the Mizo society. The advantage of studying traditional methods and practices of *Hnatlang* is to disclose the historical fact that ultimately built the present Mizo society.

3.1. Clarification of the Term “Hnatlang”

In the Mizo language, the word ‘*hna*’ means mission, job, work; and ‘*tlang*’ means together, mutual, and joint. Thus *Hnatlang* could be understood to mean ‘social work’, ‘joint mission’, ‘united mission’ or ‘partnership mission’ etc. Ropianga defines *Hnatlang* as, ‘a communal labour, a public work, and a social work.’¹¹⁰ Lorrain also defines *Hnatlang* as, “(n) public work or communal labour in which everyone is expected to take part; (v) to do public work, to do communal labour, something used of work slovenly or carelessly done.”¹¹¹ According to Thanga *Hnatlang* means, ‘working together as a group for a particular task’.¹¹² We could define Mizo *Hnatlang* as first, working together in any type of social work at a particular time and place, in which at least one male person from each of the concerned village or area is suppose to attend. Secondly, *Hnatlang* could also means doing something together as a particular group of people for the benefit and development of any individual, family, friends, or the society as a whole. Thirdly, *Hnatlang* means sharing the work as a group. Finally, *Hnatlang* means voluntary work for social, economic, political, and religious development.

¹¹⁰ F. Ropianga, *The Lushai- English Dictionary* (Barabazar, Aizawl: Sinnghula & Sons. 2000) 79. Here after cited as Ropianga, *Lushai*.

¹¹¹ James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. Reprint (Calcutta, West Bengal: The Asiatic Society, 1975) 171. Here after cited as Lorrain, *Dictionary*.

¹¹² Thanga, *Pi Pu*, 49.

Mizos practiced different types of *Hnatlang* in order to keep up the flow of their society (cultural, political and religious). *Hnatlang* promoted social change, problem solving in human relationships, and the empowerment and liberation of Mizo people to enhance well-being of each and every individual. The entire community practiced *Hnatlang*, wherein the absentees were given punishment, which they called ‘*run*’¹¹³ if they did not make any excuses, or the excuse was not accepted. Dokhuma and Selletthanga both agree in the explanation of this practice in their books.¹¹⁴ But there was also a common practice in which an exemption is made for *Hnatlang* for a disabled person, sick people, or if anyone has an acceptable excuse. However, the absentees must send a mediator who would bring their excuses to the attendees for their consideration. Then the *Hnatlang* exemption would be accepted, only if the majority of the attendees accepted the excuses (with the exception of disabled and widows, who were understood as an automatic exemption on the list of the *Hnatlang*). Dokhuma makes a list of people who could be exempted from ‘*Hnatlang*’¹¹⁵.

3.2. Importance of Hnatlang in the Mizo Society

In Mizo society there is very little emphasis on individualism. The individual is understood only within the context of the community at large. In this communitarian society, each individual person feels a responsibility for community service and well being, and the one who dutifully submitted most and provided the most significant contribution to the community was greatly rewarded and held in high regard. This communitarian society has greatly influenced the socio-cultural, religious, and economical life of the Mizo people. The Mizos, even today, make the unity among

¹¹³ The word ‘*run*’ means ‘to exact a fine, especially when some people fail to attend in village ‘*hnatlang*’ they would ask to pay certain amount of money or any other equivalent which will be used or eaten by the ‘*hnatlang*’ attendees.

¹¹⁴ Dokhuma, *Hmanlai*, 173. And also see Thanga, Pi Pu, 50.

¹¹⁵ Dokhuma, *Hmalai*, 174. (1) Widows (2) who has not completed his house construction (3) a blacksmith, only either he has job to be completed as yet or if he is the only male in the household (4) Naulaihrilh hman mek (5) a recent bereave family and (6) disabled people.

themselves known, for example, by sharing food and joining together with brotherly love among themselves. The common and prominent Mizo word “*Sem sem dam dam ei bil thi thi*” (share equally otherwise you die) is one of the most outstanding examples of Mizo collective oneness.

The communitarian society of the Mizos traditionally practiced different types of *Hnatlang* to maintain societal harmony that developed and cultivated the individual's life as well as the community's life. Mizos worked together, shared their ideas and belongings selflessly. In other words, the Mizos continued existence was exclusively dependent upon the *Hnatlang* system. A prominent feature of all Mizo living is its community-based approach, facilitating the building up of a lifestyle with a strong community base and to establish a profound and accommodating relationship among them, even while inhabiting smaller villages. They cared and respected for one another and were reluctant to speak in opposition to the will of others. As in a very close family relationship, they not only acknowledged others problems but also shared their joys as well as sadnesses. Indeed, Mizo society was a self-governing and self-sufficient society and the land was a land free of poverty, not because of economic stability or development, but simply because of the practice of *Hnatlang*. Everybody helped one another. They helped the widows and handicapped enthusiastically, constructed their houses and collected or contributed foods for them as necessities arose. One of the Mizo theologians, Lalrinawma, writes, “The Traditional Mizo Society was a communitarian, free and happy society people lived in a close-knit homogenous society and with no class distinction, before and after the entry of the missionaries”.¹¹⁶ As a result of this practice, a general harmony and peace existed.

¹¹⁶ Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 20.

Hnatlang manifests itself in various forms in the multiple and complex transactions between Mizo people and their environments. Its mission is to enable all the Mizos to develop their full potential, enhance their lives, and avoid dysfunction. *Hnatlang* values are based on respect for the equality, worth, and dignity of all the Mizo people. Since its beginnings, *Hnatlang* practice focused on meeting the immediate needs of the people in the village.

Given the absence of a written language in pre-Christian times, convincing evidence is not available when the practice of *Hnatlang* was first initiated, but most of the Mizo historians believe that it was started soon after Mizo settled in their present land. This study unambiguously shows that the past and present Mizo socio-cultural and religious lives depended upon *Hnatlang* concept; consequently *Hnatlang* concept is very much alive, though unconsciously incorporated, into the Mizoram Presbyterian Church mission venture as a whole and particularly to the foreign mission fields which have comparatively distinctive cultures. Thus, as mentioned earlier we will discuss and critical investigate when, how, and to what extent this *Hnatlang* practice played a crucial role for the development of Mizo socio-cultural, political, and religious life, and how it dictates current missiological practices.

3.3. Tlawmngaihna: Spirit of Hnatlang

Beyond a doubt *Hnatlang* played a crucial role in Mizo socio-cultural, political, and religious life. However, it is observable through the lens of Mizo traditional culture that Mizo Christianity (and its defining concept of “*Tlawmngaihna*”) is the social ethic and Christian mission principle carried over from the traditional Mizo culture. Hence, *Tlawmngaihna* was the spirit, the driving force and the backbone of the *Hnatlang*.

Several Mizo theologians treat *tlawmngaihna* as the umbrella of Mizo traditional culture. As a result, this is one of the most theologically debated and studied in analyzing contacts between the Gospel and Mizo culture.¹¹⁷ However, this study argues that *tlawmngaihna* is apparently misinterpreted or overestimated by analyzing the fact that *tlawmngaihna* is only the outcome of *Hnatlang*. In other words, *tlawmngaihna* is the necessity of *Hnatlang* thus; there could be no *tlawmngaihna* without *Hnatlang*.

What is *Tlawmngaihna*? There is no exact English equivalent to define *Tlawmngaihna*. *Tlawmngaihna* is a valuable social ethic, which is a beautiful expression that describes self-sacrifice, self-support, self-sufficient, self-propagation, perseverance, obedience, bravery, industrious, and messenger, etc. No single word could define the meaning of *Tlawmngaihna*. Lorrain attempts to define this word in his dictionary as follows:

(a) To be self-sacrificing, unselfish, self denying, persevering, stoical, stout – hearted, plucky, brave, firm, independent, loath to lose one’s good reputation, prestige, too proud or self respecting to give in. etc; (b). to persevere, to endure patiently, to make light of personal injuries, to dislike making a fuss about anything; (c) to put one’s own inclination on one side and do things which one would rather not do, with the object either of keeping up one’s prestige or of helping or pleasing another or of not disappointing another etc; (d) to do whatever the occasion demands no matter how distasteful or inconvenient it may be to oneself or to one’s own inclinations; (e) to refuse to give in, give way or be conquered, (f) not to refuse a request, to do a thing because one does not like to refuse or because one wishes to please others, (g) to act pluckily or show a brave front.¹¹⁸

Mizo society has obligatory practices that every Mizo must observe ‘*mi tlawmngai*’ (*mi*=men, *tlawm*=humble, *ngai*=required), which means everyone is to presume to have a spirit of social consciousness, voluntarism, and self-sacrifice that enables them to do

¹¹⁷ James Dokhuma, “*Tlawmngaihna*” in Meichher, Vol XI, No. 11, April, 1976, 9. P.L. Lallianzuala, “*Tlawmngaihna Theology*” in Mizo Ziaa Pathian Thu (Aizawl: Synod Publication Board, 1988, 102-118); Sangliana, “*Tlawmngaihna and the Mizos*” in Mizoram, News Magazine, Issue No, 1, August 1984. K. Thanzauva, “*Mizo Tlawmngaihna and Nishkama Karma*” in United Theological College Magazine, 1984). Laithuama, “*Tlawmngaihna*” in Thu Leh Hla Book-4, April, 2000.

¹¹⁸ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 513.

Hnatlang. The word ‘*tlawm*’ does not mean humble in this word; rather, it means cowardice, humiliating, disgraceful, unreliable, or despicable. The typical Mizo would not like to be referred to as a “*tlawm*” person, who is cowardly, humiliating, disgraceful, unreliable and despicable; and accordingly, he tries to be a person who is brave, honorable, and trustworthy in every walk of life. Thus the word ‘*tlawmngai*’ defined as “*tlawm duhlo*” refers to one who does not desire to be beaten or to be fearful of losing a good reputation and the spirit of *Hnatlang*.

The spirit of *Tlawmngaihna* is defined differently. Vanlallawma defines it as the following: “We discovered three important points when we seriously consider the spirit of *Tlawmngaihna*: fear of losing prestige before the public, high competition and to do good for reputation”¹¹⁹ Mizo *tlawmngai* person felt ashamed not to help who are in need. Thanzauva writes, “*Tlawmngai* is an attributive adjective form of *Tlawmngaihna* to describe a person who practices *Tlawmngaihna*. In order to become a *Tlawmngai* person, one must be courteous, considerate, helpful, unselfish, courageous, industrious and ready to help others even at considerable inconvenience to oneself.”¹²⁰ In short, in Mizo traditional culture, *Tlawmngaihna* spirit inevitably led the Mizos to practice *Hnatlang* in every walk of life. In other words, even though so-called “human rights and dignity” were not codified into law in Mizo society, *Tlawmngaihna* spirit served as the motivation and justification for *Hnatlang* action.

3.4. General Characteristic of *Hnatlang*

Hnatlang could be classified within four major areas of development: Social, Economic, Political and Religious. In practice, all four types of *Hnatlang* have not necessarily been fully realized in each developmental stage, and the order of their historical development

¹¹⁹ Vanlallawma, *Mizo*, 2.

¹²⁰ Thanzauva, K. *Theology of Community: Tribal Theology in the Making* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Cooperation. 2004, 154). Here after cited as Thanzauva, *Theology*.

is not the same as the order of their logical development. Each type of *Hnatlang* has its own characteristics, which are integrated into each development stage. The first refers to the development of Mizo social life; the second has to do with the development of economics; the third has to do with the political administration; and finally for the development of the religion.

3.4.1. Hnatlang as Community or Social Development

From the very existence of Mizo community, *Hnatlang* evidently played major roles in Mizo socio-cultural life. The pre-Christian Mizo community's vitality and very existence was dependent upon *Hnatlang* practices, and one could claim that one of the more famous English phrases '*united we stand, divided we fall*' was evident among the Mizos. This practice of *Hnatlang*, and the driving philosophy of *Tlawmngaihna*, addressed the possible barriers, inequities and injustices that could exist in Mizo society. *Hnatlang* responded directly to crises and emergencies in the villages as well as to everyday personal and social problems. Its mission was to develop the village's livelihood and enable all people to develop their full potential, enrich their lives, and prevent the dysfunction of any individuals who were more or less vulnerable, e.g. widows. There were, and continue to be, endless applications of *Hnatlang* for the welfare of the socio-cultural life of the Mizo people; but, we will discuss examples of particular practices which reveal the role of *Hnatlang* for the development of Mizo socio-cultural growth.

3.4.1.1. Zawlbuk Sak Hnatlang- Constructing a Bachelor's Barrack

The word ‘*zawl*’ means ‘plain’ or ‘flat’, and ‘*buk*’ means ‘cave’ or ‘barrack’. One could refer to a *Zawlbuk* as ‘Male Dormitory’ or ‘Bachelor Barrack’. ‘*Zawl-buk* means ‘the large house in a Lushai village where all the unmarried young men of the community sleep at night to protect the village’.¹²¹ This structure and practice likely arose due to constant warring among various Mizo tribes, and the necessity for the readiness of men to protect the village and go to war at short notice¹²². *Zawlbuk* is the largest building in the village and stands prominently near the center, proximate to the chief’s house. The structure itself is square in shape and much larger than other common structures in the village, whereas the other buildings were rectangular and smaller. The fire in the center of the main room is never extinguished. At one end of living quarters there is a raised platform, about one foot high, and along the sides there are shelves where the blankets (bedclothes) are placed during the daytime”¹²³ Each and every village had their own *Zawlbuk* indicative of its important role and necessity in the protection of the village. When a Mizo youth turned fifteen it was an obligation to sleep in the *Zawlbuk*, as they were responsible to protect and help their own people, and were usually punished if they declined to work in this capacity. The activities of the *Zawlbuk* had a strong education for young men in the training over the individual’s mind, instilling the philosophy of *Tlawmngaihna*, and his daily practice of *Hnatlang* with all levels and age groups.

No clear evidence is found that *Zawlbuk* was started before Mizo people settled in the present land (now known as Mizoram), however Lalrinmawma writes of a cultural precedent of the *Zawlbuk* back to China where long houses or communal houses were readily found¹²⁴. When the nomadic Mizo tribes settled in the present-day Mizoram, they often gathered in groups, after moving generally every 5-10 years in the search of

¹²¹ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 562.

¹²² Lianhmingthanga, *Mizo*, 88.

¹²³ See Lloyd, *History*, 79; Kipgen, *Christianity*, 61.

¹²⁴ Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 38.

better pastures. When they migrated to the present land, the first village called ‘Selesih’ was established around 1740-1750 under the seven chieftainships in which seven *Zawlbuk* were built.¹²⁵ It was said that Mizos built *Zawlbuk* prior to their own houses.¹²⁶ The origin of the *Zawlbuk* was not known; however, the Mizo theologian Hrangkhuma believed that it arose out of simple necessity.¹²⁷

Each and every individual felt responsible to build the *Zawlbuk* and consequently contributed time and money to build it, which made ownership collective. *Zawlbuk sak Hnatlang* was usually organized in the month of March when everybody in the village was temporarily retired from their respective jobs (shifting cultivation). *Zawlbuk* was solely built out of the community’s *Hnatlang* strategy in which everybody willingly contributed their talents.¹²⁸ In order to build *Zawlbuk* the village chief called for *Hnatlang* in which the entire community willingly took responsibly. The strategy of *Zawlbuk Hnatlang* is further clarified by historians. Selletthanga, for example, explains that this *Hnatlang* used to be performed as, “*apa chhuakin*”¹²⁹ which means all the adult men were working together with the aim of finishing the task within a short period of days so that ‘*pahmei*’¹³⁰ could soon continue their individual job.¹³¹ Another historian Zatlounga asserts that *Zawlbuk Hnatlang* is one of the most mass participations in which all men above 11 years of age are required to participate.¹³² But Dohkuma, one of the well-known Mizo historians, writes, “But this *Hnatlang* was prepared as ‘serial

¹²⁵ See Lianhmingthanga, *Hmanlai*, 88. Zatlounga, *Mizo*, 109; Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 163.

¹²⁶ Dokhuma, *Hmanlai*, 236.

¹²⁷ Hrangkhuma, *Mizoram*, 60. See also K. Thanzauva, *Theology of Zawlbuk in Towards A Tribal Theology: The Mizo Perspective* (Jorhat: Mizo Theological Conference, 1989), 100. Here after cited as Thanzauva, *Theology*.

¹²⁸ Lianhmingthanga, *Hmanlai*, 88.

¹²⁹ As mentioned earlier it means ‘by all adult men’, in this case (*apa chhuakin*) of *hnatlang* all the adult male are expected to participate regardless of the number of male member in the family.

¹³⁰ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 343. ‘*Pahmei*’ –n. 1. a small family (a married couple with or without a few young children); husband and wife, (with no one else in the family to help with the field work, etc) 2. A man with only his wife to help him in the field work etc, -all the rest of the family, if any, being too young.

¹³¹ See Thanga, *Pi Pu*, 50.

¹³² See Zatlounga, *Mizo*, 111.

labourship’ by making working schedule as it could not be performed as ‘*apa chhuak Hnatlang*’ for the nature of the job, sometime even men-women *Hnatlang* also needed to perform.”¹³³ In fact, *Zawlbuk* was built regardless of the varieties of circumstances that might be unique to the situation, place, and people. In short, *Zawlbuk* is a fundamental and historic Mizo social institution owned by each and every village in the land, entirely built by the village people as a function of *Hnatlang*. Being included in the Mizo society meant being included in the ‘*Zawlbuk sak Hnatlang*’ mandate.

Mizo boys between ten and fourteen years of age had two specific responsibilities in performing *Hnatlang*: by collecting *Thingnawi* (two/three bundles of firewood) and *Tui* (drinking water) for the *Zawlbuk* every day. As mentioned earlier, a fireplace was located at the center of the *Zawlbuk* where *Zawlbuk* dwellers surrounded the fire and chatted about three to four hours every night. This inevitably required considerable amount of fire wood. The village boys as a group or individual went to the jungle to collect firewood and bring it to the *Zawlbuk*. Unlike *Thingnawi*, *Tui* was not brought either from the jungle or from the well but collected from each and every household as required.¹³⁴ Any failure to supply the daily quota of firewood and drinking water would be punished and the parents’ interference was not tolerated.¹³⁵ These *Hnatlang* practices and responsibilities would build and develop these boys into adulthood and shape their worldview as they were shouldering these responsibilities in the communitarian society.

The *Zawlbuk* functioned as a source of social development, and Mizo culture as it is today would manifest itself quite differently without the *Zawlbuk*.¹³⁶ Several writers

¹³³ Dokhuma, *Hmanlai*, 174.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 241.

¹³⁵ Kipgen, *Christianity*, 62.

¹³⁶ Dokhuma, *Hmanlai*, 236.

agree that the *Zawlbuk* was the village information center, education center and a club house.¹³⁷ *Zawlbuk* was used principally as a dormitory in which all the young men of the village gathered at the end of the day and share the daily news and events with one another. All adults from age fifteen were expected to occupy the *Zawlbuk* in the night, and were under the discipline and protection of the *Zawlbuk*. Young men were available for cooperation in times of necessity and tragedy. The young men's lives were almost completely directed according to the practices and conventions that existed by the authority of the Chief of the village. The *Zawlbuk* was not only a place for the young but also the elderly (Upa) who would sit by the *Zawlbuk* fire for hours together in unfolding their past experiences and providing stories as education about the brave warriors and grand hunters of the past. These older members contributed in the determination of the behaviors and ambitions of the younger ones.

In addition to being the sleeping places, the *Zawlbuk* constituted the center of the village, running as a traveler's inn for the tired ones passing from one village to another. Those travelers boarded at the *Zawlbuk*, shared the news which they collected from different villages as well as from their own respective villages. In short, *Zawlbuk* is a place from where necessary information and alertness was constantly maintained to guarantee the safety of the village, and the education of its members.

The *Zawlbuk* served miscellaneous needs of the village: it functioned as the clubhouse of the young men where they could organize their entertainment activities or chat with one another for commissioning any joint venture (possibly hunting or raiding expedition). Wrestling was one of the most prominent indoor games played on the premises of the *Zawlbuk*. Despite the fact that Mizos had no written script as yet,

¹³⁷ Dokhuma, *Hmanlai*, 240. Kipgen, *Christianity*, 62-63.

Zawlbuk was a training institute for the young men and boys to learn the singing, dancing, oratory, traditions, religious teaching, myths, Mizo history, and all other essential parts for the maintenance of the Mizo culture and identity.¹³⁸ Chatterji summed up *Zawlbuk* as “the crucible wherein the Mizo youth, the marginal man was shaped into the responsible adult member of their society.”¹³⁹

From the inception of Christianity, *Zawlbuk* was used as a center place of evangelism. The pioneer missionaries visited *Zawlbuk* several times in their early evangelism work. Presbyterian Church pioneer missionaries, D.E. Jones and Edwin Rowlands, wrote in their missionary report of 1899-1900: “...there are also advantageous for mission work; one special advantage is the *Zawlbuk* system in the village. The *Zawlbuk* is a large a building where the young men, the bigger boys and stranger sleep; and here, at evening, an audience may always be found.”¹⁴⁰ Again, in the following year report, they wrote of the explicit use of *Zawlbuk* for the ministry.¹⁴¹ As Christianity, along with the British Government policies, gradually attacked the traditional culture, inevitably the importance of *Zawlbuk* institution was decreased. Lloyd writes how the *Zawlbuk* institution and oral educational system was gradually replaced by the Christian institution and written educational system after D.E. Jones opened a school.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Rinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 305. Dokhuma, *Hmanlai*, 239. Kipgen, *Christianity*, 62-63.

¹³⁹ N. Chatterji, *Zawlbuk as a social Institution in the Mizo Society* (Aizawl: Tribal Institute, 1975), 3. Here after cited as Chatterji, *Zawlbuk*.

¹⁴⁰ Thanzauva, *Report*, 7.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 11. About miles from the Mission House there is a large *Zawlbuk* for strangers to lodge at Lushai from distant village working for Government put up there. Sometimes there are 80 or more there at the same time. This was visited twice a week, and sometimes views with the magic lantern were exhibited. In this way many from distant and scattered villages had an opportunity to hear the gospel, and they were continually changing.

¹⁴² Lloyd, *History*, 42. On 15th February, 1898, on his 28th birthday, D.E. Jones opened a school on the verandah of his house. Soon about thirty boys and girls came to be taught. But attendance very irregular at first. Enough came, however, to justify erecting a small hut in front of the bungalow. It was in fact an all purpose building for worship, for Sunday school, as well as for the day school. In 1900 a larger building was set up on a lower slope which served as church cum-school till 1913. See also Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 112. The traditional educating role of the *Zawlbuk* system was reduced to insignificance by the introduction of the Western system of education ...

Despite its fundamental role in shaping and molding the Mizo society, *Zawlbuk* gradually lost its significance in Mizo culture and finally was abolished in 1954. There are substantial reasons which led to this occurrence. First, the British regime took control of the land, and it followed that most of the traditional administration system was changed and transformed. Secondly, Christianity as a whole had a great impact on the traditional social values that ultimately reduced the importance of the *Zawlbuk*. Third, the missionary opened a new school where boys and girls learnt to read, which directly minimized the importance of *Zawlbuk*. Fourthly, it was felt by some of the Mizo intellectuals that *Zawlbuk* hindered a creative vision to the youth for progressive social change. Fifthly, Mizos who took part in the Second World War wanted to adopt the western way of living and proposed to relegate the *Zawlbuk* as a relic from the past. Finally, Mizo Christians under the leadership of the pastors, evangelists, and elders has decided to remove it.¹⁴³

3.4.1.2. **Tuikhur Hiah Hnatlang - Digging a Waterhole**

The word '*tuikhur*' literally means 'a well, a waterhole, spring or stream from which water is drawn for household use. The words 'hiah' or 'hiat' mean 'to dig', 'to clear or clean out'. Thus, '*tuikhur hiah*' means 'to dig a waterhole' or 'to clean a waterhole'. Mizos occupied predominantly hilly areas where more often than not sufficient water was not readily available. Lloyd, one of the pioneer missionaries in Mizoram, expresses his experience:

But the greatest hardship lies in the fact that there are no springs of water on these mountaintops, which means, that every day during the dry season, at least one laborious journey had to be made down the steep slopes to fetch water from below. It is a journey which usually takes several hours. In March, it is not unusual for the women of the Lushai homes to start out at three o'clock in the

¹⁴³ These 5 points are collected and modified from different views of the scholars: Chapman and Clark, *Miracle*, 120. McCall, *Chrysalis*, 211. Kipgen, *Christianity*, 175-182. Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 203-211.

morning, long before day break, to fetch the water, which they carry inside short pieces of thick bamboos.¹⁴⁴

Since the Mizo people occupied their current geographic location, they relied on stream or well water. Several *tuikhur* (waterholes) were erected in the village which was shared by certain numbers of people living in the surrounding areas. In order to erect *tuikhur* and to clean streams, the village *Lal* took responsibly to summon *Hnatlang*. He would call *Tlangau* to make an announcement, giving clear instructions of when and how that particular *Hnatlang* would be operated. This *Hnatlang* applied to the entire village, in view of the fact that this type of *Hnatlang* is compulsory to every family, and the absences without reasonable excuse would be fined. In special cases, those who were living and sharing the same *tuikhur* could also organize *tuikhur hiah Hnatlang* to repair and clean it.

Typical Mizos who lived in a strong, homogenous society had a habit of sharing in those things which they built and maintained their relationships by performing ‘*tuikhur hiah Hnatlang*’. Normally, an individual could not own his or her own waterhole, nor would he/she be willing to assert such a right. The water was another object of communal function within the village, and those who desire to draw water, did so in an orderly queue. As a result *Tuikhur* also became a place of gathering for youth that afforded them a privilege to converse and even to engage in pursuit of love interests. *Tuikhur* as not only a place where water was drawn, it was also a place of companionship for young men and women.

These *tuikhur hiah Hnatlang* practices are more or less the same in rural areas today. After the British rule and Christianity brought changes in socio-political, economic, and

¹⁴⁴ J.Meirion Lloyd, *On Every High Hill* (Liverpool: Foreign Mission Office 1957), 11. Here after cited as Lloyd, *On Every High Hill*. See also Woodthorpe, *Lushai*, 219.

religious life in the land, they introduced a new political administration, a new educational system, a new economical system, and most significantly a new religion. They introduced Village Council administrations under the leadership of the Village Council President, who replaced a traditional village *Lal*. The *Lal* summoned any community *Hnatlang* including *tuikhur hiah Hnatlang*. The modern *tuikhur* now employ more sophisticated engineering and are built stronger by using bricks and cements. This inevitably reduced the need of *tuikhur hiah Hnatlang*, especially in the more urban areas and cities. Mizoram Government recently introduced a Public Health Department (P.H.E) that holds responsibility over the water supply.

3.4.1.3. **Hmeithai In Sak Hnatlang- Constructing a Widow's House**

The term '*hmeithai*' simply means 'a widow' but the Mizo understanding of widow refers to many other things. Lorrain defines the term '*hmeithai*' to men, a widow or divorced woman or spinster living by herself, for instance, without any adult males in the house.¹⁴⁵ A typical Mizo woman, who has chosen to be single, living separately from her family, is also considered as *hmeithai*.

In the Mizo patriarchal society of former times, female status was much lower and different in comparison to the male status. As Thanzaupa pointed out, the weakness of the Mizo community lies in a fundamental fault in the relationship between men and women in which women are regarded as subordinate to men and have been oppressed and deprived of equal opportunities.¹⁴⁶ Hrangkhuma highlights, how the roles of males and females were clearly demarcated. Daughters had no rights of inheritance, and women were considered to have no religion of their own, to cite two examples. The females took almost all the home working responsibilities such as cooking, washing up,

¹⁴⁵ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 162.

¹⁴⁶ Thanzaupa, *Theology*, 235. See Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 307.

cleaning the house and caring the children, etc.¹⁴⁷ Women worked with men in the *jhum* by sowing seed, hoeing, and harvesting. The men assumed the responsibilities of hunting, protecting the village and constructing homes, which also required the collection of housing materials from the jungle. The men also cleared the jungle for *jhum*, burned the areas, and were responsible for sowing the seeds.¹⁴⁸

As mentioned above, constructing a house and collecting housing material was male responsibility; consequently, a widow was not expected to build her own house. In addition to this *Hnatlang*, the *Hnatlang* for constructing homes would be organized for a man who was living alone or with someone but could not build his house for an unfortunate reason e.g. if he was disabled.

3.4.1.4. Chhiatni - In time of Tragedy

Traditionally, the Mizo community never isolates a family who has lost someone in death. When an individual died in the village, all members of the entire village took *Hnatlang* responsibilities to carry on the responsibilities of labour to help the family of the departed. These *Hnatlang* normally included ‘delivering the message’¹⁴⁹ cleaning the house, making the coffin, collecting firewood and rice, digging the grave, consoling, giving information to their families and relatives, attending the funeral service, making and serving tea, etc. The funeral service was conducted on the same day of the death, if a person died before twelve noon. But if a person died in the afternoon, funeral services most likely took place on the following day. As mentioned above, everyone from child to adult took on their respective responsibilities. Elderly people stayed in the house of the departed family to console them; five to ten adult men who had talent or skill of carpentry work prepared the coffin; young adult men dug the grave; five to ten youth

¹⁴⁷ See Hrangkhuma, *Mizoram*. 56-57.

¹⁴⁸ See Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ In early days, young people would go to the neighbouring villages to bears a message of a verbal communication about the tragedy from one village to another.

went to the neighbouring village to give information; young females collected fire wood and rice from each and every house and also served tea to the consolers as well as to the diggers of the grave. It is significant to note that the departed family had nothing to repay in return for the service rendered by the public. In short, most of their burden was shouldered by the community by way of *Hnatlang* practice.¹⁵⁰ We will discuss further the community *Hnatlang* mandatory in time of death.

3.4.1.4.1. **Zualkova Tlan: Delivering a Message**

In traditional Mizo society, no mailing system was available to provide information to families, friends, and relatives. The only messengers or postmen were those who volunteered. If a young person in the village was informed of an individual who was seriously ill or died, this required that information be given to their families, friends and relatives who lived in other villages—the young person would be prepared and run for to deliver it.¹⁵¹ In similar ways, there were other incidents when a person was needed as a messenger whom they called ‘Zualko’. Subsequently ‘Zualkova tlan’ could be translated as ‘delivering a message’, ‘running for a duty’, ‘running for a message’ or ‘running for an emergency’.

In general, Mizo villages were established five to ten miles apart, and the village’s young men would volunteer to be sent this distance. When death occurred in the village, someone needed to go forth to inform the relatives of the deceased, or provide any other emergency information to the neighbouring villages. In those instances, neither heavy rain nor distance could stop the groups of three to five village youths tasked with keeping the information until they reached the target villages. As soon as they reached the village, they would pass the information along discretely and therefore

¹⁵⁰ The writer has considerable experiences of how Mizo community operate *Hnatlang* in time of tragedy.

¹⁵¹ Challiana, *Pi Pu*, 11.

minimize the tragedy that could result due to the unpleasant nature of the message. For instance, if the message were concerning the death of a loved one, they would convey it as serious illness.¹⁵² The *Zualkos* would pass over the responsibility to the village young men who would do the same to their neighboring villages as the necessity arose. In such a way, the message would be carried over in a relay fashion until all the target people received the message. *Zualkova tlan* would also be organized when any accident or tragedy occurred outside the village such as those circumstances when someone had a tragic fall or cut parts of their body with a sharp tool. In these circumstances, anyone who first noticed the incident would help the injured and designate the *Zualkova tlan* duties appropriately. Mangkhosat quotes Parry's observation about Zualko practice in his book "Christianity and Mizo Culture" that describes the practice in more detail.¹⁵³

3.4.1.4.2. **Thlan Laih: Digging a Grave**

The Mizo practiced a burial system. The Mizo terms for the conventional system of burial was named '*thlan*', *lai/laih*' which means 'to dig' and thus '*thlan laih*' means 'to dig a grave'. As discussed earlier, Mizos were a nomadic tribe that usually moved to a new place in five year intervals, and as a result, they could not have a permanent grave yard. Dead bodies were usually buried near their own respective houses; a typical family could have several graves close to their house as options were limited in those days. The grave was dug relative to the size of the dead person--the width varied but the depth of the grave was normally five feet. The village favorites¹⁵⁴ or the heroes¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Ibid, 11.

¹⁵³ Kipgen, *Christianity*, 66. It is the custom in Lushai villages if a man is sick, for all the villagers to combine and carry him into hospital. Supposing someone from a far away village has to be carried into hospital, he is carried by his own villager to the next village and thence by the inhabitants of that village to the next village on until the hospital is reached. When anybody has to be carried in this way two young men who are known **Zualko** are sent on the next village to inform that villagers that a sick man is on the way..

¹⁵⁴ In Mizo society, youth has more or less responsibility to carry on their communitarian society alive and this inevitably makes the youth the favorites of the village people.

graves were usually dug deeper about 10 feet (doubled to the normal) to show their respect and honor to them. The practice of establishing a plot of land designated as a proper graveyard was established only after the British took control of the area. In 1930, Superintendent C.G.G. Helm M.A., I.C.S released an order called “Parwana No. 273” in which every village was obliged to set aside their own grave yard.¹⁵⁶

Every adult male, apart from the close relatives and friends of the deceased in the village, were expected to do *Thlan laih Hnatlang*—any absence under these circumstances, without reasonable excuse, was considered an infidelity. Therefore, every young man in the village would come together, bringing with them tools for cutting the earth, such as- *bawngtuthlawh* (a large hoe), *suahdur* (a spade), and *thirtiang* (a crowbar). The men would stand around the grave and dig the earth while taking turns, competing to be the most efficient digger. For the limitation of space, young men who did not have a chance to dig the earth would sit or stand together near the grave, enjoying the opportunities of this social function--conversing and laughing together. In addition, a wrestling game could be organized if time permitted after completion of *thlan laih*.

This *thlan laih Hnatlang* would take two to three hours depending on the width and depth of the grave, as well as the condition of the earth. Young men not only took the *thlan laih Hnatlang* (grave digging responsibilities), but they also took the responsibility of carrying and burying the body. After finishing the formal funeral service, the young men were charged with carrying the *ruang* to the grave.

¹⁵⁵ This includes: The village chief and his family. *Pasaltha* -a person who is brave and manly; a famous warrior or hunter. *Thangchhuah* -a man who has distinguished himself by killing a certain number of different animals in the chase, or by giving a certain number of feasts. His wife shares his title.

¹⁵⁶ See Zatuanga, *Mizo*, 15.

British rule and Christianity brought changes in Mizo traditional cultural practices; however, *thlan laih Hnatlang* continues to be practiced to this day almost the same as before the Western culture and religious practice influenced the Mizo society in the beginning of the nineteenth century. *Thlan laih Hnatlang* has contributed considerable advantages for the stability and development of the Mizo society. The practice consists of entirely free labour, and consequently, the deceased family does not pay anything in return for the work rendered by the village. This practice maintained and built unity among all in the village. However, *thlan laih Hnatlang* also has its disadvantages for the Mizo society. For instance, no limitation was made on how many young men were expected to attend, resulting sometimes in 50 to 100 young men digging the grave; whereas this task could be done by five to ten people only. It has often resulted in wasting of time and energy as several young men could have continued their respective jobs on that day instead.¹⁵⁷

3.4.1.4.3. **Miruang Zawn: Carrying a Dead Body**

The word '*ruang*' simply means 'a dead body' or 'a corpse', and '*zawn*' means 'to carry'; thus, *ruang zawn* means 'carrying a dead body' or 'carrying a coffin'. When any Mizo died by accident or illness in any place other than his/her hometown, the body was carried back to his/her hometown by the young men of the village. The information was given publicly by *Tlangau* so that the young men could be prepared to perform *Hnatlang* immediately. As soon as the young men heard the information, they would come together and volunteer regardless of the circumstance, time, danger, at night or during heavy rain. After preparing a coffin and a stretcher, the young men carried it to the village. This would take several hours depending on the distance of the village. The heavily steep and risky road was not an exemption; they had to go through even the

¹⁵⁷ The writer has attended a considerable number of *Miruang Zawn Hnatlang* while he was living in his home town at East. Lungdar.

darkest forest at night. The smell of the dead body sometimes caused a lot of trouble to the young men as they could not provide any fragrance to decrease the smell. Typical Mizo young men, however, would never complain nor give up the *Hnatlang* obligation.

Before they carried the *ruang* they would send a *zualko* to the destination village so that they could be prepared to receive the *ruang* at the border, because each village's young men would carry the coffin up to their own territory, themselves. In the spirit of *Tlawmngaihna* they would often attempt to carry the *ruang* beyond their territory; in the same manner, the neighbouring village young men would gather waiting for the *ruang* in the border or even beyond the border.

In the instance they met each other; they struggled with one another with the aim of holding and getting the *ruang*. The *ruang* carriers would try to hold it as long as they could and the others would try to drag it away from them as soon as they could. As it was a game for exhibition, they would not hurt each other. While no limitation of time was fixed, the *Val Upas* from both sides watched over and controlled the game and stopped them at the appropriate time. Very often, one village would have a clear advantage because of the size of the village and also sometimes because of timing difference, as this incident would happen when most of the young men were still working in the rice fields and other village young men were already at home. In this case, *ruang* would be passed over by a mutual understanding or by the designation of one representative from both sides to wrestle over the *ruang* while the rest would watch them. In this way, Mizo young men took advantage of sobering circumstances to socially reach out to other villages.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ The writer of this thesis has attended a considerable number of the *Miruang Zawn* while he was living in his home town in East lungdar.

3.4.1.4.4. **Mi Bo Zawn: Finding a Missing Person**

Mi bo zawn simply means ‘finding a missing person’ or ‘looking for a missing person’. Every culture in the world has experienced this problem of ‘missing persons’ and Mizos are no exception. Mizo people went missing for many different reasons. Sometimes people went missing on their own volition following an argument, or because of bullying, abuse, or unhappiness, etc. In other cases, people went missing on account of a mental disorder. Most commonly, Mizo people faced the problems of missing persons because it was predominantly a hunting culture--sometimes a hunter was killed accidentally by his friend, or by himself, or by wild animals. It was also common that elderly people went missing, because elderly women went to the forest to collect firewood and elderly men went hunting in the forest, where they frequently lost their way. In short, disappearances or missing persons were common in Mizo society. However, whether individuals chose to go missing or not is a different subject, which we will not discuss in this study.

Regardless of the characteristic of the missing person or the circumstances under which the person went missing, there were severe impacts on families and friends as well as on the society as a whole. Mizo communitarian society dealt with this matter seriously and never casually dismissed this circumstance. As soon as the *Tlangau* information was heard, all the young men in the village would come together in the *Zawlbuk*, they would then start the search for the missing person according to the instruction given by the *Val Upa*. While young men went to look for the missing person, in some occasions, young ladies supported the search efforts by providing food to them. Older people in the

village community would gather in the house of the missing person consoling his/her family.¹⁵⁹

Young men in the village would continue *mi bo zawn Hnatlang* up to seven days, during which everyone stopped their daily activities and duties. If they did not find the missing person within three days, they would ask their neighbouring village to join them in their efforts and thus, *mi bo zawn* became a united effort, staying organized up to another four days. If they did not find the individual within a week, they would completely stop searching and considered the missing person as “dead”.

Mi bo zawn Hnatlang was no doubt one of the most demanding *Hnatlang* among the Mizo community labour; it affected the emotional well-being of the entire community. Young men courageously searched throughout all the dense forests despite the consequences of possible injury, dangerous wild animals, poisonous snakes, leeches and varieties of insects that could cause serious harm the body. It often proved quite daunting because the missing person, in some cases, was killed or had committed suicide by hanging on a tree. The missing person could have died a couple days before they were found which would have definitely produced an unbearable smell and ghastly sight for the young men who found the body. Despite all these circumstances, the Mizo community continued its existence, taking care of the deceased, helping and comforting the relatives, confronting the challenges head on in order to maintain the survival of the society up to this day.

3.4.1.4.5. **Kang Thelh: Fire Fighting**

The literal meaning of *Kang thelh* is ‘fighting fire’ or ‘extinguishing fire’, thus *kang thelh Hnatlang* means ‘community fire fighting’ or ‘united fire extinguishing’. Almost every year, fires claimed lives, destroyed land and property in Mizoram. In early days,

¹⁵⁹ See Dokhuma, *Hmanlai*, 259.

there were no hired or appointed fire fighters who were specifically tasked with the job of helping and protecting the public against these dangers, by responding to fires and a variety of other emergencies. Mizo young men were the first line of defense in an emergency, putting out fires at the scene of a traffic accident, for example. To sum up, Mizo young men were ever-ready volunteers at every emergency scene to perform duties assigned by the *Lals* or *Val Upas*.

As discussed earlier, Mizos were historically dependant on shifting cultivation, or *jhum* cultivation, in which they practiced a slash and burn process of cultivation. They cut the forest trees and bamboos and kept it dry before they burnt it in the fields. In order to protect the uncut forest they created *meilam*, or fire lines, cutting down trees and clearing out all combustible vegetation in the path of the fire. Very often, the fire broke out in the forest before or while burning the *jhum* fields even under thorough preventative techniques. In that incident, the *Tlangau* would announce the detailed information of when and where the fire broke out. As soon as the *Tlangau* had been heard, all adult men in the village would immediately run towards the place where the fire broke out and try to extinguish it together. They stood in line and hit the burning fire using sticks and green branches until the fire was extinguished. The village knew the risks of *kang thelh Hnatlang*, but such risks were needed to save the forest and thereby save the community life.

When a fire broke out at home, whoever first noticed the fire would announce it publicly by screaming or shouting ‘*in a kang e*’ (house in on fire). Whoever heard the announcement would go immediately carrying water and other useful tools for the *kang thelh Hnatlang* regardless of the weather or hour. While some fought the fire, others found and rescued occupants who were unable to safely leave the house without

assistance. This *kang thelh Hnatlang* involved the risk of death or injury from exposure to flames and smoke. The time for *kang thelh Hnatlang* was varied and unpredictable; sometimes the task was finished within or even less than hours, whereas sometimes it took several hours and even a few days. The young women of the village would usually provide drinking water whilst men were fighting the fire.

Typical Mizo houses were easily consumed by fire as they were built out of wood, bamboo, and sun grass. Sometimes an entire village would be consumed by fire.¹⁶⁰ In this case, the neighbouring villages would make a consolidation day, identifying with the sorrow of their neighbors in their suffering. No one would go out for work on these days. On a day of consolation, they collected clothes, food, and any other items that they wanted to give the suffering families. The following day, they would go to their village carrying the collected gifts and helped to build the temporary shelters and do other necessary work to ensure the survival of the neighboring village. Parry states this clearly in his book:

If a whole village is burnt down, the neighbouring villages contribute food, clothing and household utensils to replace those that have been burnt and also help to rebuild it. This is due to *Tlawmngaihna*. In the same way, if a man's house is burnt down and his property and paddy is destroyed, his fellow villagers help him with contributions of food and cloths and also help him to rebuild his house. 161

3.5. Hnatlang as Economic Development

Hnatlang action is taken locally by a Mizo community to provide economic opportunities and advance social conditions in a sustainable way. Thus, the *Hnatlang* initiatives aim to improve the entire group of those individuals who live together in a particular villages or streets. An aspect of “localizing economics” was commonly

¹⁶⁰ In May 1973, a fire broke out in the writer's village called *East Lungdar* in which more than 200 houses were flamed on fire within 3 to 4 hours. The fire broke out from a boy who lit a fire at home using kerosene oil. It was later discovered that he put too much kerosene in a fireplace. But fortunately, for the hard work of *kang thelh Hnatlang*, no one was either dead or seriously injured.

¹⁶¹ Parry, *Monograph*, 21. See also Dokhuma, *Hmanlai*, 130; Zatluanga, *Mizo*, 26.

practiced in which the community was the foundation and center of all *Hnatlang* processes that promote the economic, social, ecological, and cultural well-being of the Mizo communities. *Hnatlang* was the important channel on which the Mizo economic development method, structural change, and the potential improvement for the mass of the population were based. Thus, *Hnatlang* as economic development involves the creation and application of Mizo economic theories and methods that aid in the determination of types of *Hnatlang*.

In early days, Mizos had no native market or currency among them, but they were aware of its use, and employed it in purchasing articles in the frontier markets.¹⁶² Money was introduced in Mizoram in the second half of the 18th century.¹⁶³ The Mizo economy was dependent on the *jhum* cultivation, hunting, fishing, and warfare. As the village economy was so dependent upon food production, land ultimately became the primary resource in the village economy. Rice was grown as the main crop; other vegetables such as corn, millet, mustard, pumpkins, melon, cucumber, peas, beans, potato, etc. were also grown. They also grew cotton, tobacco and sugar cane. Bamboo was the most abundant plant which could be observed as one of the most important sources of economics among the Mizos. Bamboo is used for food (the young shoots are used as a vegetable), fencing, water tubes, spears, hockey sticks, smoking pipes, woven baskets, cooking vessels, rice stirrers, trays (for sifting and winnowing grain), spoons, drinking cups, fire-bamboo, furniture (for making table, chairs, benches and shelves etc.), housing (for making floors, walls and roofs), etc.

¹⁶² Hminga, *Life*, 26, quoted from T.H. Lewin, *Wild Races of South- Eastern Indian* (London: Wm. H. Allen and Co, 1870, 272).

¹⁶³ See Rinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 152.

Domestic animals were an all-important prestige item in the Mizo economy. These consisted of gayal, buffalo, pig, dog, fowl, and goat. All of these domestic animals were usually killed for sacrifices and ceremonies and as a result, Mizo warriors had to do hunting to kill wild animals and birds for everyday food consumption.¹⁶⁴ They invented different kinds of indigenous hunting strategies and traps for killing and catching wild animals, crabs, birds, and fishes in which *Hnatlang* played part and parcel.

3.6.1. Lo-neih: Jhum Cultivation

In early days, the Mizo livelihood was dependent on *jhum* cultivation that involved different *Hnatlang*. Mizo *Jhum* cultivation involves clearing of a piece of land followed by several years of bamboo and wood harvesting or farming until the soil loses fertility. Once the land becomes inadequate for crop production, it is left to be reclaimed 5-10 years by natural vegetation. This system of agriculture was practiced at the level of an entire village.

Mizos believed land was not merely a property to be used and judged by the worth of its utility and production, but also as a sacred and holy item which is animated by spirits. Mizos also believed that the land was where their ancestors emerged, from a big hole in the earth or from the bowel of the earth.¹⁶⁵ In view of the fact that the Mizo life relied profoundly upon the *jhum* cultivation, the fertility of the soil was not a merely of luck, but of utmost priority. So, they admired the earth and appealed to the soil to be kind, fertile, and generous as they worked and sowed seeds. Thanzauva cited Longchar's explanation of how ceremonies are directed by the process of *jhum* cultivation.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Hminga, *Life*, 26.

¹⁶⁵ See Thanzauva, *Theology*, 219.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 218, cited from Wati A Longchar, *The Traditional Tribal World View and Modernity* (Jorhat: Limala, 1995), 75-80. The tribal people performed several ceremonies such as purification of forest at the beginning of jungle clearing, purification of soil after burning of the jhums, dedication of seed just before

Traditionally, a Mizo village community owned/controlled the surrounding forest land and decided on a specific rotational cultivation pattern under the stewardship of the village *Lal*. Thus the Mizo community cultivated land for its livelihood while carefully practicing sensible conservation by observing the ecological balance.

At the beginning of the year, *Lal* and *Upas* decided and selected a particular place and a range of land for *jhum* cultivation for the entire community. After that, they fixed a particular day and requested a *tlangau* to publicly announce information about *ram theh Hnatlang*,¹⁶⁷ which lasted one day, normally in the month of January. At least one adult male from each family is required to attend this event. Carrying food and necessary tools, they would all gather together in a particular place before they proceeded to the land in the morning hours. Here, *Val Upas* would divide them in different groups which consisted five to ten people. Each group had their own leaders who were knowledgeable of the specific plot of land to be worked that day. Each group would be told their respective area of land as well as their responsibility in that area.

They would proceed to their respective plots of land after all the necessary information was given. After reaching the land, they would begin dividing it into different sizes. The land was divided by cutting and clearing the trees. The size of the areas to be cultivated would be prepared according to the size of the respective families, or the ability of the members of the family. The size of the land was measured according to the amount of seeds sown. They would use a *tin*¹⁶⁸ to measure the rice seeds. If one full tin

showing seeds, dedication of fields to the Supreme Being after showing seeds, dedication of paddy during the weeding, rededication of paddy, fruit testing and the thanks giving or harvest field.

¹⁶⁷ The literal meaning of '*ram theh*' is plotting a land or dividing a land ('*ram*' is land or forest and '*theh*' is divide or split).

¹⁶⁸ Mizo used the word "tin" without translation. It means empty 20 liters kerosene oil tin or container which is used by a Mizo for putting rice or measuring amount of paddy seed.

is sown in the land they would estimate it as *tin khat hmun* (one tin of seeds covered), if two full tin or bucket seeds is sown they would estimated as *tin hnih hmun* (two tin of seeds covered) and so forth. In such away, they would divide land into different sizes from one to fifteen tins of seeds. It was impossible for *ram theh Hnatlang* to make an exact measurement of the land until the seeds are sown. As a result, estimates had to approximate the size of each plot. This *ram theh Hnatlang* is still practiced in Mizoram, particularly in rural areas. However, today the positions of *Lal* and *Upa* have been replaced by the village council president and the council members.

In order to access to their respective *jhum*, a road had to be built out of necessity every now and then. In early days, individual Mizo villages were an independent unit that had little contact with other villages. The entire land was mostly covered by thick forest with high and steep hills. No proper road system was available in order to access either the other villages or even their respective areas, and as a result of this, building of roads was the exception not the rule. At the same time, the Mizo livelihood was dependent on *jhum* cultivation that required moving around to different areas. In order to access to their respective *jhum*, a road had to be built out of necessity every now and then. Normally, they used to have this type of *Hnatlang* at least twice in a year. The first one was normally arranged just before showing the rice seeds in the rainy season, and the next was organized in winter, which was specifically organized for repairing or cleaning the road which was previously prepared. In order to do this *Hnatlang*, the village chief would ask *Tlangau* to make an announcement. However, this *Hnatlang* could be organized according to the conveniences of the people who would share the same road.

In early days, communications between the villages were inefficient. No proper road was available and people made their way according to their own conveniences. But it

was since 1890, the British took the control of Mizoram and they appointed circle interpreters, who took authority over certain areas. Those interpreters set out plans to improve communication, and did so by imploring the people to do *Hnatlang* for road construction. This '*kawng sial Hnatlang*' (making road) became one of the greatest undertakings of the public. However, the Mizos have never hesitated or have ever been reluctant to do the *Feh kawng sah/sial Hnatlang*, which was solely voluntary service no matter the great weight of the task.

They shared work despite the fact that each family has their own *jhum* by way of '*lawm rual*' (agriculture partners). According to Lorrain, "*lawm*" means "to assist a person in any kind of work or occupation in exchange for similar assistance received or to be received"; and "*lawm-rual*" means a party of people engaged in helping one another, especially work in the field.¹⁶⁹ In addition to that definition, Vanlalchhuanawma explains how "*lawm-rual*" engaged in helping one another while sowing the seeds in the field.¹⁷⁰ We might translate the word as "agriculture partner" since it involved mainly agricultural work. *Lawm* is usually practiced by only two to four people, whereas *Lawm-rual* consists normally of a group of five to fifteen people among relatives, friends, or neighbours. This *lawm-rual hnatlang* demonstrates that Mizos as a communitarian society not only practiced the sharing of food and materials but also sorrow and joy at work. This is of particular importance regarding the *Jhum* cultivation work or any agricultural task that could be a difficult, boring, or difficult if done alone. Vanlalchhuanawma explains the benefit of this practice:

"Lawm-rual again engaged in weeding and harvesting, making a round robin from one *jhum* to another. This feature increased the productivity of the work

¹⁶⁹ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 288.

¹⁷⁰ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 42. A lined is formed at the lower end of the clearing, and the whole family or spontaneous group called *Lawmrual* of neighbours and friends proceed slowly upwards, dibbling shallow holes with their daos and dropping into each a few seeds.

and provided a natural band of defense against enemy surprises as well as an opportunity for young people to select life partners.”¹⁷¹

As mentioned above, *lawm* is practiced mainly between two and four people. It was very common that *lawm* was practiced among friends. Even though the agricultural system has been changed greatly over the last century, the *jhum* cultivation system and *lawm rual* or *lawm* system is still practiced in Mizoram, particularly in the rural areas.

3.5.2. **Pum Sak -Constructing a Blacksmith’s Shop**

The literal meaning of *pum* is a smithy, a forge or a blacksmith’s shop.¹⁷² In every Mizo village, there was at least one *pum* where a selected *thirdeng*, a blacksmith, created useful objects from iron or steel by forging the metal, i.e. by using tools to hammer, bend, cut, and otherwise shape it in its non-liquid form. Usually the metal is heated until it glows red or orange as part of the forging process. A *thirdeng* produced all agricultural implements, cooking utensils, and weapons at the *pum*.

Customarily, under the administration of the village *Lal*, the people would select a suitable person who possessed the skills for a blacksmith’s job. The village *Lal* would then appoint the *thirdeng*; sometimes bearing the name of *Lal* and hence was called *Lal thirdeng*, a chief’s blacksmith. Depending on the size of the village, there could be one or more *thirdeng* in a single village. From time to time, villages lacked such a talented person and failed to fill the position of *thirdeng*, because a training center was not available, and therefore systematic training was not provided to become a *thirdeng*. In such a case, member of the village would go to the neighbouring villages to find a *thirdeng*. *Thirdeng* consequently possessed high admiration and respect from the village people.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 42.

¹⁷² Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 370.

Pum is normally built at the center of the village proximate to the *thirdeng* house. It was constructed by the *Hnatlang* of all the men of the village. But, according to Dokhuma, only a few people whom the *thirdeng* exempted from the “*khawlai buh*”¹⁷³ collected materials and built the *pum*.¹⁷⁴ Since *thirdeng* had no time for farming or cultivating rice, he collected *dawrawn khat*¹⁷⁵ of un-husked rice from every household. Regardless of the quantity of the people who heavily used the services of the *thirdeng*, *pum sak Hnatlang* was practiced as united effort or community labour for the communal interests of the village.

Pum was built, as were all other house in the village, of timber and bamboo, tied together with cane, and thatched with either cane leaves or sun grass, yet a bit smaller than the normal house about 10 to 15 feet wide and 20 to 25 feet long. The opening entrance was about three and half feet in width and six feet in height. The earth was suitable for the floor as flammable materials could cause a fire in the house. At the center of the floor, an air blowing object made out of wood and cloth was placed to fan and produce a flame. A bamboo pipe was fixed at the far end of this object directing the air at the fire to keep the flame constantly hot. This object is known as *pum*. *Pum* being the primary constituent of the house, the house itself was named after it; hence it was also called *pum*. Two to three pieces of iron were affixed nearby as the base for striking melted metal or iron. A small water pot was placed near these irons to cool the melted metal or iron. The walls of the *pum* were often not fully fenced and gaps were left to let the light in.

¹⁷³ “*Khawlai buh*” is a certain amount of un-husked rice collected by the village blacksmith every year in return to his service for the people by making, repairing and sharpening their agricultural implements.

¹⁷⁴ Dokhuma, *Hmanlai*, 156.

¹⁷⁵ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 110. *Daw-rawn*, n. the name of tall closely- woven basket tapering downwards, used specially carrying un-husked rice, and for measuring the same. All dawrawn baskets are not of exactly the same size. A large dawrawn full of grain generally weight about a mound. See also Dokhuma, *Hmanlai*, 156.

Pum was the only place where *thirdeng* made various tools for the entire village. As a result of this, he had no time either to do farming or to go hunting. He helped the villagers construct and sharpen their tools for farming, and the villagers would in turn give un-husked rice one full *dawrawn* at the end of every year. In those days, hunting was one of the prominent ways of getting meat. But as already discussed above, *thirdeng* had no time for hunting; consequently, when villagers went hunting, they would give him a portion of meat. *Pum* was not only a place for making tools, but also a place of community fellowship amongst men. Men conversed and helped the *thirdeng* while he worked.

3.5.3. Sanghal Rual Zim - Hunting a Herd of Wild-Pig

Traditionally, Mizos practiced group hunting in which *Sanghal rual zim* is one of the most prominent and enjoyable forms. Mizoram was a land of rolling hills covered with a thick forest, spotted with rivers and lakes. As many as twenty-one major hills, ranges, or peaks of different heights run through the length and breadth of Mizoram. The hills are extremely rough and steep, which dominate the landscape leaving only some plains scattered occasionally here and there. The vegetation and climate of Mizoram offer ideal sanctuary for wild animals.¹⁷⁶ This unique land used to be a hiding place or home for varieties of wild animals such as elephants, leopards, tigers, bear, deer, wild boars, barking deer, wild plants, domesticated animals, as well as human inhabitants. However, many of these wild animals (except leopard and tiger) provided a valuable food source for the Mizos. Mizos were fond of fresh meat and they eat the flesh of most animals.¹⁷⁷ As such, the Mizo people were adept at hunting wild animals.

¹⁷⁶ Hminga, *Life*, 5.

¹⁷⁷ See Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 42.

The typical wild pig in Mizoram has a thick, blackish or brown hair and stands up normally 35 inch. (90 cm) tall at the shoulder. They have sharp tusks and, though normally not aggressive, can be dangerous. Boars live in groups as large as 50 to 100 in many rural areas. *Sanghal rual zim* operation was organized in different ways, but it usually involved the entire village. When an individual spotted a herd of wild pigs in a certain forest, he/she would inform the *Val Upas* and accordingly *Val Upas* made public announcement by sending *Tlangau* or directing the sounding of a big drum on the top of the hill so everyone in the village could hear it. All the adult men in the village would come together at the appointed place as soon as *Tlangau* or the drum had been heard. Then *Val Upa* would give clear information about the hunting plan; disclose the location of the herd of wild-pigs, a time to go for hunting, hunting tools to be carried, and a strategy for hunting.

After all the information was given, all the adult men in the village, apart from the weaker and elderly, went to the appointed location in the forest at evening time to surround the wild pigs. Nighttime is the crucial time to surround herd of wild pigs as they usually take rest at night. They surrounded the target area which was usually 200-500 square meters, splitting into a group made out of two to five people, they cut and cleared trees and bamboos, and they made “sadaï”¹⁷⁸ (which is a hunting fence), and their own hut (a temporary shelter). Very often, the wild-pigs heard the noise and tried to escape, but the hunters made noises at appropriate intervals in order to constrict them in their fright. In the morning, everyone was ready with various weapons such as metal spears, guns, and bamboo spears to hunt down the surrounded wild pigs. After *Tlangau* made an announcement, the selected “*hual-lut*”¹⁷⁹ entered the wild pigs’ hiding place

¹⁷⁸ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 397. A fence or barrier with apertures at intervals in which noose-traps are set for the larger animals such as deer, wild-pig, etc.

¹⁷⁹ The selected 15 to 25 brave and strong youth who are entered the place where wild-pigs were hiding and pasturing with the intention of scaring and driving out of their hiding.

from the top of the hillside by shouting, screaming and making noises to frighten and scatter them. Suddenly, the wild pigs run around inside and to the corner of the *sa-dai* trying to escape from the trap, while the hunters shoot or spear them. On many occasions, considerable numbers of the wild pigs escape. The hunters with guns were posted at the bottom of the hill to catch these escaping wild pigs. Shooting or spearing was complete after the *hual-lut* made two to three attempts to drive out all the wild pigs from hiding. A *Sanghal rual zim* was considered a success if more than one hundred wild pig were killed at one time.

At this point in the hunt, they collected all the wild pigs killed and placed them in a convenient location. Before the wild pigs were cut into pieces, a list was made of the shooters. The first shooter was called “*a lu mantu*”¹⁸⁰ and he received the head. The second shooter was called “*a bawp mantu*”¹⁸¹ and got one leg. After figuring out all the shooters and distributing it to their share, they cut the meat into pieces as equitably as possible. The hunters subsequently stood or sat in a queue, placing a leaf or bag in front of them in which the pieces of meat were distributed equally. Customarily, only men participated in the *Sanghal rual zim*, but if there were no male in the family, any female adult was given the equal share of meat as the male received. The meat would also be shared with an absentee family who could provide a representative for the *Sanghal rual zim* due to sickness or for other unavoidable reasons. In such a way, the successful *Sanghal rual zim* produced plenty of food and fully satisfied the entire village people from the poor to the rich and from a famous hunter to the unknown hunter.

¹⁸⁰ The literal meaning of “*a lu mantu*” is “the one who got the head” that does not necessarily mean the one that killed a wild-pig, but the one who first shot or speared the wild-pig. However, the first shooter must be able to prove the wound and how, when and where he shot or speared the wild-pig, sometimes they required a witness.

¹⁸¹ The literal meaning of “*a bawp mantu*” is “the one who got the leg” that does not necessarily means he killed the wild-pig, but he is the second shooter or the one who made a second wound to kill that wild-pig.

There are two main reasons for the reduction in population of wild pigs in Mizoram. Since Mizos practiced a slash and burn *jhum* cultivation system, they cleared a substantial number of trees every year that resulted in deforestation of the land. The increasing population and the removal or destruction of significant areas of forest, resulted in degraded food and shelter for wild animals. Undeniably, *Sanghal rual zim* was the primary reason that impacted the reduction in the number of wild pigs in the forest.

The practice of *Sanghal rual zim* gradually disappeared in the twentieth century as the Mizo economy rapidly changed and modernized. A marketing system for fresh meat (mainly beef and pork) was progressively introduced even to the remote villages. Additionally, the Forest Department of Mizoram Government implemented a series of wildlife protection laws beginning on October 1, 1974. At the end of the twentieth century *Sanghal rual zim* lost its function to provide food for the village, and has completely disappeared in Mizoram.

3.6. Hnatlang as Administrative or Political Institution

Prior to the advent of British rule and the introduction of Christianity to the Mizos, each village would have a *Lal* (chief) of its own who had supreme rights over the lands within his jurisdiction. The exact date of the introduction of the practice of Mizo chieftainship is unknown, but it is determined from the traditional lore of the Mizos that it was started in the 18th century as they were migrating to their present geographic location.¹⁸² Mizo people at that time lived in villages under the rule of a *Lal*¹⁸³ (Chief). He was responsible for taking care of the administration of the village with the help

¹⁸² See B. Lalthangliana, *Mizo Lal Ropuite* (Aizawl: Art & Culture Department, Mizoram, 1996). 4. Here after cited as Lalthangliana, *Mizo Lal*. See also Liangkhaia, *Mizo*, 58. Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 5.

¹⁸³ The word 'Lal' means 'a chief'. Traditionally each and every Mizo village has their own Lal (chief) who has over all administrative authority of the village.

Upas¹⁸⁴ (Elders). His duty includes the following: (1) appointing upas (elders). (2) Appointing *Tlangau* (village crier/herald). (3) Presiding over all council meetings. (4) Allotting the lands to the villagers for cultivation. (5) Keeping harmony and peace in the village. In short, Lal is a ruler or administrator who has absolute power in nearly all matters concerning village administration. The chief was the secular head of a village or cluster of villages.¹⁸⁵ *Lal* as a village chief had certain responsibilities to fulfill so as to maintain village government stability; and accordingly, he had no time to do manual labour like ordinary people. As a result of his obligations in administration, the villagers were obligated to help the chief by providing food and free labour.

3.6.1. Lal In Sak Hnatlang- Constructing a Chief's House

Those who resided in the village contributed free labour to cultivate the chief's paddy field and to build his house. His house was customarily built as a function of *Hnatlang*. This '*Lal in sak Hnatlang*' could take several days depending on the size of the chief's house and how many members of the village were able to help with construction. Ideally, the chief's desire was to have a bigger and stronger house, but the limitations on the size of the village and resources available were the primary determining factors in construction, as the chief must remember to assess the strength of his people and the proper delegation of time for this specific project.¹⁸⁶ Typically, a chief's house is located at the center of the village. It was built using shrubs for pillars, thatched with sun grass, and walls built with coarse bamboo matting, and floor covered with sand. Wood Thorpe explains the shape of the chief's house:

The chief house is of similar construction, but much larger, being about forty yards long, by ten wide, and is divided within into one large hall, and two or three sleeping rooms opening on to a passage running the whole length of the building.

¹⁸⁴ Traditionally Lal (Chief) appointed some elderly men known as Upas (elders) who assisted him in dealing all matters of internal village government.

¹⁸⁵ C. Nunthara, *Society and Polity*, (Shillong: 1996), 66. Here after cited as Nunthara, *Society*.

¹⁸⁶ See Thanga, *Pi Pu*, 50.

It has generally, in front a large level open space, and from this the streets radiate in all directions, following the spurs or slopes of the hill. The whole is enclosed in a stiff timber stockade, excellently constructed on the most approved principle, with a ditch and banquettes in rear and loop holed. The entrance is through a passage of strong timbers, and defended by a thick door or gates.¹⁸⁷

His house was used for many purposes. Village administration concerns could be addressed in meetings in the chief's house. A murderer could seek refuge to hold '*Lal sutpui*'¹⁸⁸, a threshold over which no avenger is allowed to pass; however, the escapee directly becomes the slave of the *Lal* by seeking protection under the '*Lal sutpui*'. The poor and destitute and even criminals could take refuge in the *Lal*'s house. To sum up, traditional *Lal* house was a house of forgiveness, a house of salvation, a house of peace as well as a house of administration. Dorothy rightly comments:

The relation of the chief with the village is interesting. He is supported by the people, and in return he is a father to them. Any orphan, widow or other unsupported person is at liberty to enter the chief's household, to work if able, but each and all will be lodged and fed. The chief has an extra large hut for this reason. Free to come and go at first, if the new inmate decides to stay there is a ceremony when he acknowledges himself a willing slaves of the chief. This does not seem a completely savage custom, any more than the hospitality".¹⁸⁹

The people presume the goodness of the office of chieftainship and accordingly the chief must understand his identity as benevolent leader and protector. The chief must also properly assess his people or else overwork and unreasonable harshness may cause the migration to another village, which could effectively end his chieftainship.¹⁹⁰ Consequently, there was little room for a village chief to introduce and apply a strict and stubborn hierarchical system in the Mizo society. He looked after all those who resided in the village as his own people. In response, the villagers were to comply with

¹⁸⁷ R.G. Wood Thorpe, *The Lushai Expedition 1871-1872* (reprinted) (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1978), 81. Here after cited as Thorpe, *Lushai Expedition*.

¹⁸⁸ A big post fitted inside the chief house that supports the ridgepole. The murderer to take refuge since no avenger is allowed to go through this post.

¹⁸⁹ Dorothy, *On every*, 22. Also see Hminga, *Life*, 28.

¹⁹⁰ Shakespear, *Lushei*, 44. 'The chief was in theory at least, a despot; but the nomadic instinct of the people is so strong that any chief whose rule was unduly harsh soon, found his subjects leaving him, and he was therefore constrained to govern according to custom'.

his instructions and carry out the responsibilities given to them willingly and communally. In such a strong community life, the village people would not have hesitated to build the chief's house; rather, they would do so with genuine willingness as if it were their own house. Thanga explains the enthusiasm and self-sacrifice of Mizos undertaking the construction of the chief's house--the village people would never give self-priority until they finish the chief's house construction even though their own houses were not fully complete.¹⁹¹ Thus, a chief's house is built as a function of *Hnatlang*, which is entirely a voluntary enterprise.

In order to build the chief's house, village people would collect necessary construction materials ahead of time such as timber, bamboo, sun grass etc. After collecting all the necessary materials they would start the building construction until it was finished. This *Hnatlang* is usually organized in the month of March when village people are not active in their *jhum* cultivation work. Presumably, this laborious work was not accomplished in a single day. Minimally it took at least a week, but as mentioned earlier it could take several days depending on the size of the chief's house. Typically, one male adult is expected to attend from each and every household, but very often '*apa chhuak Hnatlang*'¹⁹² is also organized as necessity arises. This *Hnatlang* requires all adult men to attend, whereas women are totally exempt. Wherever Mizos set up a village, a *Lal In* (chief house) is the highest priority, even built prior to the *Zawlbuk* institution.

The last decade of the nineteenth century witnessed astonishing socio-political changes in Mizoram. Since 1891 the British took control of the land and, coincidentally, Christianity arrived three years later in 1894. However, a detailed study of those

¹⁹¹ Thanga, *Pi Pu*, 5; see also Zatluanga, *Mizo*, 176-178.

¹⁹² '*Apa chhuak*' means all male adult in the household.

incidents in addition to function and operation of the chief will not be done here as previous study was already made by some historians.¹⁹³ But it is important to notice how Mizo chieftainship as the central figure of the Mizo society was changed, transformed, and finally came to an end which affected the community life as well as community labours (hnatlang).

For a *Lal*, war against a neighbouring village chief was a common task, as was war against the neighboring 'plain people'. Mizo *Lals* had made a considerable number of attacks on the neighbouring plain people who were under the auspices of the British. According to the 1854 report, during 1837-1854 Mizo *Lals* and warriors raided their neighbouring plain people 19 times, killing 107 and capturing 186 for slaves. More significantly, in January 23, 1871 Bengkhuaia and his men raided Alexandrapore, killed James Winchester and captured his five years old daughter Mary Winchester.¹⁹⁴ In acts of retaliation, 'plain people/*vai*' and the British regime raided the Mizos several times, burning their villages, killing and capturing people. The first British expedition was launched in 1871, which they called "The Lushai Expedition 1871-1872" and one of the main targets was to rescue Mary Winchester. Even after this attack, Mizo *Lals* did not stop raiding the neighbouring people. They launched three severe attacks during 1888-1889 in which they killed British soldiers and plain people, even capturing a considerable number of slaves.¹⁹⁵ In response to those attacks, the British regime launched a military campaign starting in 1889 until they captured the entire land and ruled in 1890.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ See Lalhuanawma, *Christianity*, 80-89. Nunthara, *Society*, 50-63; Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 161-180.

¹⁹⁴ F.Lianhmingthanga, and B.Lalthangliana, *Mizo Nunhlui (Part II): Pawl 9 & 10 Zirlai Bu*(Aizawl, Mizoram: Mizoram Board of School Education, 1992), 33. Here after cited as Lianhmingthanga, *Mizo Nunhlui*; see also Zatluanga, *Mizo*, 178.

¹⁹⁵ See Liangkhaia, *Mizo*, 139.

¹⁹⁶ See Nunthara, *Society*, 118.

After the British had consolidated their rule in Mizoram for about 63 years (1890-1953), they had done so without abolishing the chieftainship. The British introduced a new law and order that impacted the socio-cultural, economic and political life of the Mizos.¹⁹⁷ Lushai (Mizoram) was divided into two districts; namely, Northern Lushai Hills District and Southern Lushai Hills District by means of Aizawl and Lunglei as the capital respectively. These areas were administered by superintendents. The *Lal* was allowed to maintain limited power by the British regime, but the position and power of the *Lals* had been visibly reduced because they were bound to follow and obey British law. The *Lal* now became secondary to the British ruler, and took the position of an agent between the people and the British officials, which meant eventually the *Lals* became unwilling representatives of the alien rule over their own people.¹⁹⁸ The influence of the *Lal* to the people gradually diminished as a result of change in position and power. The District Council Meeting held on November 25, 1952 unanimously resolved to abolish the chieftainship. On April 1, 1954 the Assam Lushai Hill District Act became effective and caused the end of chieftainship completely.¹⁹⁹

3.6.2. **Kuli- the New Method of Hnatlang**

The term '*Kuli*' is originally taken from a Hindi word which means 'day-labourer' or 'manual labour'. Lorrain defines it as (n) an impressed labourer; (v) to work as an impressed labourer.²⁰⁰ This term is generally applied to a laborer of Asiatic decent belonging to the unskilled class, as opposed to the artisan. Kuli are designated as those who are native of Indian and China who leave their country under contract of service to

¹⁹⁷ Lalthuanawma, *Christianity*, 87. 'The unexpected imposition of the British rule in Mizoram in 1889 shattered the traditional social structure of the Mizos and greatly embittered the Lals and the common people alike'.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 88.

¹⁹⁹ See Kipgen, *Christianity*, 174.

²⁰⁰ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 275.

work as labourers abroad regardless of their professions or socio-economic standing.²⁰¹ When it first entered the English language, "coolie" was a *designative* term describing a low-status class of workers rather than a *pejorative* term for them. However, in the wake of centuries of colonialism and the social inequalities thereof, it has taken on, not only the characteristics of a slur in the general sense, but also that of a racial epithet. Nowadays, the word *kuli* is used in Hindi to refer to luggage porters at hotel lobbies and railway and bus stations.

The British regime introduced this new *Hnatlang* system replacing the Mizo traditional practice as soon as they took control of the land. Under the administration of the new *Lal* (Superintendent), people were asked to offer free labour carrying British soldier's luggage, paving the new roads, constructing military camps, supplying water for the soldiers and washing up their vessels, etc. Sometimes a *kuli* is paid in food or a limited amount of money for his labour. But evidently the communal labour system (*Hnatlang*) was replaced by the hierarchical forced labour (*Hnatlang*) that inevitably changed the attitude of the people towards *Hnatlang*.²⁰²

3.6.3. Raldai Theu - Erecting Enemy Fence

The plain meaning of '*ral*' means 'enemy', 'opponent' or rival; '*dai*' mean 'fence' and '*theu*' means 'to make' or 'to erect'. Lorrain defines '*ral dai*' as '(n) a place or district exposed to the attacks of an enemy because lying out in the direction from which they may come; (v) to be situated so as to be exposed to the attacks of an enemy'.²⁰³ Thus '*raldai theu*' literally means 'to erect an enemy fencing or to make enemy fencing'.

²⁰¹ Available at <http://www.hum-coolie.com>. [Internet accessed on 12.07.2008]

²⁰² Larinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 173. 'The imposition of forced labour was another problem that the Mizo faced during the British rule'.

²⁰³ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 374.

In early society, Mizos were always in a constant war with their neighbouring villages which necessitated them to make or to erect '*ral dai*' in order to protect the village people from their enemy as well as to position themselves advantageously from those who might attack them. The village chief makes a compulsory summons to each and every family for this *Hnatlang*. Any excuses made by the people must be presented or announced publicly, and if the majority accepted it as reasonable, then only the absentee will be exempted. But if a majority disagreed, a fine must be given which would be shared by the attendees. Excuses could be considered in case of illness and to someone who missed the *Tlangau* message on account of travel or absence from home. However, as mentioned earlier, widows and disabled are automatically exempted from any type of *Hnatlang*.

Traditionally, each Mizo village was under the administration of Lal, and accordingly Lal has responsibility to protect his people from the enemy. As mentioned above, the constant war between the neighbouring villages required them to do *Raldai theu Hnatlang* (erecting their own village enemy fencing). The only fencing material used by the Mizos was bamboo and log fencing, because either rock fencing or brick fencing were apparently an undeveloped technical skill at that time. The village Lal did not have an appointed or paid army organized to erect the fencing, but the all adult men in the village were automatically or voluntarily a member of an *ad hoc* village army, which served as the best means to erect fencing and to protect the village people as and when necessity arose. This *Raldai theu Hnatlang* demanded hard work and it could take several days depending on the size of the area that needed protection. However, *Raldai theu Hnatlang* was operated with a total voluntary workforce, and it is significant to note that no record was found that spoke of a Lal or his/her village without having enemy fencing.

3.7. Hnatlang: Religious Development

Some early writers concluded that Mizos practiced an animist belief system, and had no known God or religion.²⁰⁴ However, after careful investigation, some theologians and historians believed that Mizos had knowledge of God even prior to arrival of Christianity.²⁰⁵ The word “religion” is translated in Mizo terms as “sakhua”. Hrangkhuma believes that the word “beliefs” is more appropriate than the word “religion” to interpret the term “sakhua” for two reasons: First; it is not clear whether the Mizo sacrifices to demons should be considered as religion, per se. Second, the Mizos did not distinguish religious beliefs from other areas of culture.²⁰⁶ Hrangkhuma’s conclusions seem plausible on the surface, but we simply use the Mizo term “*sakhua*” as the term “religion” for three reasons. First, to a certain degree the English word “beliefs” comes under the category of “religion”. Second, the term “religion” is better understood by readers than the term “belief”. Finally, many authors define the term and share the same view that “*sakhua*” means *Pathian* (God), in which “*Sa*” and “*Khua*” combined and make “*sakhua*”.²⁰⁷ Lalsawma states, since the Mizo term “*sakhua*” is commonly used for religion in its full sense, then its old and limited sense should no longer be pressed into the modern context.²⁰⁸ Vanlalchhuanawma is convinced that this view is the correct one, as he states:

“Mizo understood *Pathian* as *Sa*, the root and origin of man and of various clans and tribes, signifying God as creator. On top of that they perceived God as *Khua*, representing him as the Sustainer, Protector, Benevolent and Designer of man’s destiny.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ McCall, *Lushai*, 67, Ray, *Mizoram*, 62. Kyles, *Lorrain*, 6. Lloyd, *History*, 9. Saiaithanga, *Mizo Sakhua*, 1.

²⁰⁵ Liangkhaia, *Mizo*, 26. Saiaithanga, *Mizo Kohhran*, 5. Lunghnema, *Mizo*, 178. Challiana, *Pi Pu*, 24. Dokhuma, *Hmanlai*, 31. Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 63. Hminga, *Life*, 33.

²⁰⁶ See Hrangkhuma, *Mizoram*, 31.

²⁰⁷ See Shakespeare, *Lushei*, 61. Liangkhaia, *Mizo Sakhua*, 2. Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 356. Lalbiakthanga, *Mizos*, 26.

²⁰⁸ Lalsawma, *Revivals*, 23.

²⁰⁹ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 62-63.

In agreement, Hrangkhuma claims, “in some vague way the Mizo believed *Pathian* to be the creator of everything. He was the source of blessing and protection. He was beneficial and very good.”²¹⁰ Persuasive evidence is not available to pinpoint the time for the appearance of the term *sakhua*; however, Liangkhaia believes the possible date would be between 1000-1500 A.D.²¹¹ Vanlalchhuanawma captured the Mizo understanding of God and the attributes of the Supreme Being, borrowing from Zawla’s view.²¹²

Mizos believed that there would be life after death, meaning the human soul should go to one of two places according to the lifetime achievements which they called *mitthi khua* and *pialral*. “*Mitthi khua*” literally means Hades--the abode of departed spirits. Mizos believed that every living creature had a soul. After death, everyone would go to this place apart from the *Thangchhuah*.

Pialral is the Mizo paradise or heaven, situated beyond the *Pial* River where abundant food and drink would be obtained without labour that could only be attained by *Thangchhuah*. This was the highest eschatological hope. They would live a normal life as they did on earth; however, there would be no more pain, misery, or suffering.²¹³ It was the highest achievement a Mizo male could attain in religious and social terms.²¹⁴ The literal meaning of the term is *thang*—that is, fame, renown or reputation; and *chhuah*—is the completed, accomplished or finished life or one who has completed all the necessary requirements to enter “*pialral*”. The word “*Thangchhuah*” therefore, is a

²¹⁰ Hrangkhuma, *Mizoram*, 33.

²¹¹ Liangkhaia, *Mizo*, 21-24.

²¹² Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 64. i) *Puvana* (God in heaven) represents the majestic, highly exalted and superior God who reigns; ii) *Vanchungnula* (heaven’s maiden) is the atmospheric goddess who sends the rain; iii) *Vanhrika* is the god of science and magic and; iv) *Khuanu* (Mother of Goddess) or *Khuavang* represents a god or goddess who dispenses blessings on earth and heaven.

²¹³ Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 98.

²¹⁴ Hrangkhuma, *Mizoram*, 63.

title given to a person who fulfilled the entire requirement set up by the Mizo society in order to attain certain benefits in daily life and to get a passport for *Pialral* (paradise) after death. The meaning could be translated as “the famous ones” or “the heroes”. To attain this title is beyond the dreams of ordinary people. It could be thought of as the equivalent of a contemporary Christian term: “born again” or “saved”.

There were two types of *thangchhuah*; one was called “*in lama thangchhuah*” (*thangchhuah* at home) and the other was called “*ram lama thangchhuah*” (*thangchhuah* at forest). For *in lama thangchhuah* a person had to give a series of at least seven feasts to the whole village. So far as Mizo religion was concerned, *thangchhuah* was the highest admired, honored and desirable identity to be achieved which not only embraced this life but also a life to come (i.e. life after death). Vanlalchhuanawma rightly expresses that *thangchhuah* is the highest position in the social ladder of the Mizos and very few could attain it, as the cost involved was extremely heavy. It demanded foresight, sincerity, dedication, hard labour, selfless sacrifice, magnanimity and an overall genuine *tlawmngaihna* on the *Thangchhuahpa*²¹⁵. Hrangkhuma lists the requirement feasts for *in lama thangchhuah*, “the minimum requirement for the seven feasts includes 7 grown male pigs, 2 mother pigs, 14 baby pigs, one mother mithan, 8 full grown male mithans and a he-goat.”²¹⁶ These 7 feasts to the entire village could not be performed or organized without *Hnatlang*, which meant that these feasts were entirely dependant upon voluntary services. As a result, *Hnatlang* in this specific circumstance was unavoidable. Rev. Edwin Rowlands writes in the mission report how community feasts played a central part in Mizo traditional religious practice.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 67.

²¹⁶ Hrangkhuma, *Mizoram*, 63.

²¹⁷ Thanzaupa, *Report*, 7. “During the first tour, we witnessed one of the Lushai feasts, in which, as they say they worship their God. They generally sacrifice to demons, of whom they are in great fear; but two

While *in lama thangchhuah* demanded wealth at home, *ram lama thangchhuah* demanded bravery and good hunting skills in the jungle. This required killing of an approved number of animals such as wild boar, wild gayal, barking deer, bear and sambar deer.²¹⁸ To kill all these animals was very challenging particularly a wild gayal and bear which were quite rare to find and could be threatening to one's life. In addition to this, each killed animal must be celebrated with expensive feasts of domesticated animals for the entire village. In spite of these difficulties, the eschatological hopes motivated an individual to accomplish these tasks, remembering he would be accompanied by the spirits of all the animals killed by him on his way to *pialral*. He would receive warm welcomes at the *pialral* where he would enjoy comfort of life. Again, without *Hnatlang*, *ram lama thangchhuah* could not fully be efficiently attained as it demanded considerable community feasts in which *Hnatlang* was mandatory. Vanlalchhuanawma explicitly states how *Hnatlang* played a significant role in Mizo religious practices.²¹⁹

Thangchhuah family arranged a day in which *buh-den*²²⁰ *Hnatlang* was organized usually one month before the feast. They prepared sufficient *zu* (Mizo beer made out of

or three times a year they worship their God. Two of these feasts are held: one after the clearing of the land for sowing, and the other after the 'harvest home.' This was a sight of the degradation of religion not to be forgotten; for two or three days the large village was 'given to drunkenness'; old women and old men mutter in drunken accents, that they were worshipping God!"

²¹⁸ See, Challiana, *Pi Pu*, 42. Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 67.

²¹⁹ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 64-65. "In preparation for the community feast all the young men and women together cleaned and pounded the rice for making *zu*, collected firewood and plantain leaves, reinforced the platform and the house as were done for the Chai. About seven ngans of *zu* as *sumdeng zu* for cleaning rice and *thing ek zu* for collecting firewood and leave were allotted to the young people who were required to keep vigil the first night of the Chawng called *thingfar night*".

²²⁰ The word 'buh' simply means rice, and *den/ deng* means to pound or to husk. In early days, Mizos used *sum* (a large wooden mortar) for pounding rice which was the only available tool for such a task. *Sum* was located at *sum-hmun*--the entrance or the verandah of the Mizo house. *Suk* (a wooden pestle 4 to 5 feet long) was used to pound the rice. As mentioned earlier, rice was staple food for the Mizo diet and was served at every organized feast and hence plenty of rice was always needed. To pound or husk sufficient rice in order to feed the entire village was, no doubt, a demanding task. Thus, *buh den Hnatlang* was called for.

rice) which they called “*sum-deng zu*”²²¹ well before the *Hnatlang* was organized, to satisfy the thirst of the *Hnatlang* attendances. All the Mizo young men and women in the village were invited to attend this particular *Hnatlang*. Young men usually husked the rice while women were shifting and winnowing the rice using *thlangra*²²². Sometimes men’s hands and fingers were even blistered from the hard work. *Zu* was distributed at appropriate intervals, as a privilege for those gathered to work. Young men and women played and talked with one another while working, taking on the atmosphere of a social gathering rather than a hard labour.

The *Thangchhuah* family made arrangements to organize ‘*Sathing zar*’²²³ *Hnatlang*’ to which all the youth in the village, both male and female were invited. In the morning, they went to the jungle carrying their own lunch, *chem* (a dao), and *hreipui* (an axe) for cutting woods. Usually they cut loads of green branches first and then cut these again into pieces, and placed them in a row on the side of the road to let it dry. These types of *Hnatlang* were organized usually two to three months before the feasts were celebrated so that the cut wood would be dried enough for the fire. Again *thingphurh Hnatlang* (carrying firewood) was usually organized one day before the public feasts were celebrated. Young men and women were involved in the same manner as the *sathing zar Hnatlang* by carrying home all the firewood. In addition to this *Hnatlang*, another *Hnatlang* was organized but only in a particular feast celebration like “*khuangchawi*”,

²²¹ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 422. Beer supplied to the young men and maidens who husk rice for *chawng* feast.

²²² Ibid, 477. *Thlangra* is a bamboo tray for sifting and winnowing grain; a Lushai sieve. (The *thlangra* has no holes in it like an English sieve. The sifting process accomplished by shaking the tray up and down and from side to side in such a manner as to separate the husked rice from the unhusked and broken pieces of grain. The up and down motion is also used to winnow the unhusked rice and separate the full grain from the chaff or si.

²²³ Literally ‘*sa*’ means meat, ‘*thing*’ means fire, and ‘*zar*’ means to spread. Lorrain defined *sathing-zar* as to place firewood along the side of the village. It was placed along a path to dry for preparation of forthcoming sacrificial feasts (verb); or firewood so placed (noun).²²³ As mentioned above, almost all the religious ceremonies demanded a feast. In those days, kerosene, electric, charcoal and cooking gas were unknown to the Mizos except firewood for cooking food. Thus, further *sathing zar Hnatlang* was called for, in order to store adequate firewood for the feast.

or in *chhe siam Hnatlang* (house repairing day); the latter being organized just before the feast day in which they repaired *Thangchhuahpa*'s house.²²⁴ Normally, a typical Mizo house was temporality built as movement of peoples in and out of villages occurred in the Mizo society. Thus, repairing or refurbishing a *Thangchhuahpa* house was mandatory as community dancing was organized inside the house on that day.

3.7.1. Hri-dai Theu Hnatlang- Erecting a Disease Fence

Lorrain defines *hri-dai*, n. a stockade or fence erected near a village to protect it from a pestilence, epidemic, or prevalent sickness.²²⁵ Mizos believed that *ramhuai* that lives in the forest or jungle always entered the village and caused sickness to those living within. As a result of this, Mizos erected fencing in order to defend or protect the village from *ramhuai* attacks. The communal activity of erecting a disease fence was called "*hri dai theu Hnatlang*".

Mizos had certain beliefs in a pantheon of evil spirit which they called "*huai*"²²⁶ or "*ramhuai*". Mizos offered different kinds of sacrifices to gratify them. These *huai* lived everywhere: they lived in water, jungle, big trees, rocks, graveyards and houses. These evil spirits even entered and possessed animals and human beings. The *huai* were named according to their dwelling. Those dwelling in the forest or jungle were called *ramhuai*. Mizos offered sacrifices to them believing that *huai* caused different kinds of trouble and sickness to humans.²²⁷

In early days, modern medicines were not known, nor were physicians available. Mizos, as a nomadic tribe, did not possess an intricate and safe system of sanitation.

²²⁴ Challiana, *Pi Pu*, 40.

²²⁵ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 183.

²²⁶ Ibid, 188. *huai*, n. an evil spirit, a demon, a devil, a nat.

²²⁷ Liangkhaia, *Mizo Kohhran*, 4. Hrangkhuma, *Mizoram*, 34. Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 90.

They did not have proper drains for dirty water, no proper latrines, and rubbish lied hither and thither. No doubt, after occupying a village for 3 to 4 years, it became a vulnerable place for outbreaks of infectious diseases. People living in the village were easily infected, because they did not clean their bodies properly and had no access to the services they would have needed to treat their illness or avoid infection entirely. Before the British occupation, the land was attacked twice by dangerous plagues in 1857 and 1862 where many people lost their lives. Many of the most severe plagues suffered by the Mizos could have been entirely prevented with the knowledge of sanitation we have today. However, Mizos did not remain silent, inattentive, or inactive during times of plague and simply observe the suffering, but they did their level best by means of *hri dai theu Hnatlang*, which was the best option or solution known to them at the time.

Whenever a plague emerged among the Mizo villages, *Lal* and *Upa*'s summoned *hri dai theu*

Hnatlang in which all adult men in the village were required to attend. They came together at the appointed place and time and went to the village entrance. They cut the trees and hung up a leafy branch on the side of the village entrance road, but without blocking the road for the public. They constructed a statue using weeds or a straw, around which monkey skin was used to cover, further decorating it to give it the most horrific appearance possible. They placed this statue at the entrance of the village. This omen was designed to thwart the efforts of the evil spirit which they believed was the cause of the plague. Often, the statue stood holding a knife or a spear. It was believed that this statue could drive away both the evil spirit and the plague.²²⁸

²²⁸ See C. Vanlallawma, *Hringlang Tlang* (Aizawl: MCL publication, 1998), 74-75. Here after cited as Vanlallawma, *Hringlang*.

In 1905, a severe plague broke out *Vanphunga* village Khandaih²²⁹. This plague followed after one of the most significant events called the “first revival” among the Mizo Christians.²³⁰ People were dying every day, no one dared to venture out in the street, and everyone slept even before dusk. On December 4, 1905 alone, five people died including a village’s chief elder. No solution was found to heal the sick or to purge the village of that horrible plague even after *hri dai theu Hnatlang* was done. Vanphunga, a village chief, blamed Christians as the cause of a plague and kicked one of the Christians named Darchhingvunga out of the village.²³¹ Apparently, *hridai theu Hnatlang* was one of many cultural practices that came under attack by the Christian missionaries from the very beginning.

3.8. Conclusion:

From the above discussions, we are able to observe that *Hnatlang* practices fundamentally advocated and developed the social, economic, political, and religious development for all members of the Mizo community. Simultaneously, Mizos are aware of the importance of preserving socio-cultural, economic, political and religious integrity of their own community for their existence and development. The cultural practice of *Hnatlang* was the umbrella of Mizo traditional society that would inevitably become a major factor of change and the foundation of Mizo Christianity and its mission. The legacy of *Hnatlang* was, however, not simply invented to serve a mere practical function in Mizo culture; but it was an enduring and fundamental cultural practice that existed in the minds of Mizos and, therefore, manifested most circumstances of Mizo life. We will discuss and examine in the following chapter the

²²⁹ Lalsawma, *Revivals: The Mizo Ways* (Calcutta: Print well Offset, 1994.) 38. Here after cited as Lalsawma, *Revival*. Khandaih village, now named Phullen, situated on the western shadow of Mawmrang Mountain, about 150 Kilometers from Aizawl. It was then one of the largest villages in Mizoram, consisting of 400 families. Here Edwin Rowlands opened a Primary school in 1903 through a fine young man named Hrangsaipuia.

²³⁰ Ibid, 38-39, Vanlallawma, *Hringlang*, 76.

²³¹ Vanlallawma, *Hringlang*, 76.

legacy of this traditional cultural practice, mainly focusing on what extent the role of *Hnatlang* cultural practice has played in the foundations of Mizo Christianity historically and what remains today. Further, we will discuss how Mizos appropriate the gospel today within the cultural context of the cultural practice of the *Hnatlang*, and how much this practice still affects the Mizo mission efforts to non-Mizo world.

THE CULTURAL FACTOR IN THE CONVERSION METHOD

4. Introduction

As discussed earlier, from the very beginning of occupation in the present land, Mizos survived as a communitarian society under the leadership of *Lals*. The practice and spirit of *Hnatlang* shaped people's lives long before modern economic, socio-political, and religious norms were established. Politically, there is no record of any Mizo village rebelling against their respective *Lals*; rather, people were committed to the *Hnatlang* for the development of village administration. Economically, because of *Hnatlang* practice, Mizoram was called a "beggar free land" despite its very limited agricultural produce. The Mizo people had no official religion but believed in a God who was kind and benevolent and the creator of everything. They were obliged to commit their time and talents to any *Hnatlang* for the development of religion. In the name of religion and to fulfill their eschatological hope, wealthy men hosted a series of feasts. No wonder Zisangzela Hnamte repeatedly eulogizes the Mizo traditional cultural life as "*Zo nun mawi*" (Zo beautiful life).²³²

Modern Christian missions began working extensively in India at the end of the 18th century under the auspices of colonial powers. Despite a great deal of effort in India since the beginning of the colonial era, Christian evangelism made little progress till the

²³² Zirsangzela Hnamte is one of the Mizo celebrities, known as a male vocalist and a songwriter. He composed a song in which Mizo traditional life is extraordinarily praised. The first verse and chorus of the song read: *Lenrual te u i dawn chiang ang u kan nun hi*, (Friends let's carefully behold our life); *Kan pi leh pu nundan mawi kan chhawm kha* (The beautiful life we inherited from our ancestors), *Tlawmngaihna hlu rinawmna leh thudik tana huaisenna ten, tunah mual liam tumin, phur hlan an siam tak hi*. (The precious tlawmngaihna, faithfulness, righteousness and bravery they lived by are now nearly departing). *Zonun aw nun mawi, tap tapin ka au ding zo silo aw!* (Zo life oh! beautiful life! I beg with tears to uphold). *Zonun aw nun mawi liam lovin la cham rih hram rawh aw* (Zo life, oh beautiful life, would you please remain with us).

end of 19th century. Christian missionaries were unable to overturn the tide of paganism and materialism in its quarters. In the same way, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Mizo tradition of “Zo beautiful life” became a fundamental part of Christianity in Mizoram. As mentioned earlier, studies show that the Mizo people almost entirely embraced Christianity within a few decades.

This chapter analyses what contributed to the rapid growth of Christianity in Mizoram. What are the possible factors that contributed to overwhelming shift in society and rapid growth of Christianity? How did *Hnatlang* as the traditional Mizo cultural practice influence this growth and in turn shape Mizo missiology? In other words, when and how was Christianity contextualized into the existing Mizo traditional culture?

4.1. Factors of Change in Society and the Rapid Growth of Christianity

Extensive efforts have been made to establish why Mizos embraced Christianity and why the church and mission grew so rapidly among this particular people. Scholars have identified several possible factors. Some attributed the rapid growth of Christianity primarily to the influence of the British administration and their practice of Christianity.²³³ Several scholars give credit to “revival” movements early on in the history of Christianity in Mizoram.²³⁴ More plausibly, the Mizo traditional culture, itself, was the major factor as Mizos developed an indigenous form of Christianity and a mission distinctly functional along side of and within their existing culture. Other possible factors of changes and growth are further explored below.

²³³ See Parry, *Lushai*, 22. Khuanga, *Role*, 90. Hrangkhuma, *Transformational*, 74.

²³⁴ Lalsawma, *Revivals*, 5. The phenomenal success of the Gospel preaching in Mizoram was brought about through the Revival Movements. Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*. 1. Christianity in Mizoram is best understood as the product of the interaction of a continuing revival movement with the institutional church.

4.1.1. Isolation of the Land

There is no convincing evidence that would indicate any significant contact between the Mizos and the British before the advent of Christianity. Mizo people lived in isolation long before the advent of the British regime (1776)²³⁵ and Christianity (1894). Geographically, Mizoram is fairly isolated from the rest of the Indian states. Only one-fourth of its border lines the rest of India - consisting of the western border of Tripura in conjunction with a narrow northern border with Manipur and the Cachar district of Assam.²³⁶ Kipgen believes this isolation resulted in the development of a unique culture, unaffected by surrounding cultures.²³⁷ “Mizo Christians, and church and political leaders in particular, feel strongly that God has a specific plan in keeping them part of India,” states Nengzakhup.²³⁸ It is significant to note that neighbouring peoples did not attempt to convert them to their religious beliefs such as Hindu, Buddhist, or Muslim. Zairema wrote:

We find the Hindus and the Muslims living on the northern and western borders of Mizoram while most of the people of the southern and eastern borders profess Buddhism. It is interesting to note that none of these great and philosophical systems exerted any appreciable influence on the religious and cultural life of the Mizos.²³⁹

Winter and Fraser considered isolation as one of the factors of receptivity while analyzing world missions. They believed that tribal groups (including Mizos) are refugees, living in perpetual fear of aggression from more powerful civilizations. As a result they usually live where no one else would want the land, incredibly mountainous areas as in West Cameroon, South China, or Northeast India, Great Island of New

²³⁵ Hminga, *Life*, 38. From available data, the first recorded meeting between the Mizos (then known as Cucis) and a British official took place in 1776.

²³⁶ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 9.

²³⁷ Kipgen, *Christianity*, 47.

²³⁸ Nengzakhup, *Amazing*, 73.

²³⁹ Zairema, *Mizos*, 31

Guinea, the tiny atolls of the South Pacific, or the swamps and jungles of the upper Amazon.²⁴⁰

4.1.2. Dreams and Visions

Mizo people traditionally believed in wisdom having provenance in dreams and visions to provide warnings, predictions, and guidance in human affairs. Kipgen writes,

Most of their clan gods and sacrificial systems had their origins in dreams. They were believed to be the means of communication with human used by supernatural beings, both good and evil.²⁴¹

It was said that two men named Selkhuma (in the early part of the nineteenth century) and

Darphawka (at the end of the nineteenth century) had dreams prior to the advent of Christianity. Carter interpreted Selkhuma's dream, quoted by Kipgen in his book. Darphawka's story read like this,

A man named Darphawka who lived in Vancheng village had a dream at night in which a voice was saying: "A great light will appear from the west and shine upon Mizo land: follow the light, for the people who bring it will be the ruling race."²⁴²

Darphawka shared his dream to his sons and friends and advised them to follow it when the time came, but told them that it would not be fulfilled in his lifetime.²⁴³ Accordingly, the Gospel came from the west and the British took control of the land for many years. It was said that when the Gospel was first preached at Darphawka's village, many people gave their names as enquirers because their mind was prepared by Darphawka's dream. Lloyd wrote that Darphawka's dream was still fresh in the memory of many, and the appearance of the white missionaries seemed to bring a divine

²⁴⁰ See Winter and Fraser, *World Mission Survey*, 452.

²⁴¹ Kipgen, *Christianity*, 188

²⁴² Ibid, 189. From H.W. Carter, *Chhimbial Kohhran Chanchin*, 1945, revised and enlarged by H.S. Luaia, and reprinted as *Mizoram Baptist Kohhran Chanchin* (Serkawn: Baptist Church of Mizoram, 1981). The horizon will be stirred; then will come the annihilation of all human beings. There will be lights in the South and the North. One who has never been a chief will rule at the source of the Tlawng River. I will die from the strike of a he-goat; you will bury me in the clay soil of my garden.

²⁴³ See Hminga, *Life*, 44. Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 95-96.

fulfillment of his vision.²⁴⁴ In the year 1902, the first baptisms took place in the south. Tlawmi (Darphawka's daughter) and Thankunga (Darphawka's son-in-law) were among them.²⁴⁵

4.1.3. British Occupation

Some scholars believe that the British invasion and occupation was the primary factor that contributed to the rapid growth of Christianity in Mizoram. Hrangkhuma states, "The British administration contributed to the spread of Christianity mainly by its provision of peace, communication and law. In the provision of law and order, the British administration furnished special treatment for Europeans and this was helpful for the missionaries".²⁴⁶ The British administration contributed directly and indirectly to the changes and growth of the church. The direct influence occurred when missionaries were permitted into the territories under the control and administration of the British. Hminga references this process, in that Christian missionaries were the fellow countrymen of the British regime and consequently missionaries were entrusted with the educational development of the Mizos. The British provided financial help to the missionary's efforts, and some of them were very sympathetic to the cause of the gospel, as well.²⁴⁷ Hrangkhuma observes that Mizos settled peacefully under the British administration.²⁴⁸ The British government delegated some administrative power to the missionaries, e.g. in the buying and selling of salt and various other minor economic transactions.²⁴⁹ In short, the British political administration, missionary access, and shared economic development all blended easily into the existing Mizo society, and this contributed to the rapid growth of Christianity.

²⁴⁴ Lloyd, History, 71. See also Hminga, *Life*, 44.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 72. See also Thanzauva, *Report*, 17

²⁴⁶ Hrangkhuma, *Mizoram*, 107.

²⁴⁷ See Hminga, *Life*, 282-283.

²⁴⁸ Hrangkhuma, *Mizoram*, 78. Once the British subjugated the people and law and order was imposed, the Mizo settled down under the British rule peacefully. There was no rebellion throughout the British rule. The Mizo adjusted to the tremendous cultural changes forced upon them by the British power.

²⁴⁹ See Hawla, *Mizoram*, 17.

4.1.4. Pioneer Missionary Identity and Approach

The contribution of the pioneer missionaries to the changes and growth of Christianity in Mizoram is an ongoing discussion. Whether or not they adopted a contextualized missiological approach knowing the theory of culture is not clear. However, Hrangkhuma states that the missionaries did not understand many of the social and non-religious functions of Mizo culture.²⁵⁰ Hminga states that missionaries had no missiological training before their arrival in Mizoram.²⁵¹ If this indeed was the case, some would question whether these missionaries could be seen as the primary factor in the change and the rapid growth of Christianity in Mizoram. In this study, however, an attempt is made to show that whatever their training may have been, there is clear evidence that these missionaries contributed much to the change and the growth of Christianity in Mizoram.

Some scholars credited them for a great deal of change. From the very beginning, the pioneer missionaries tried to follow a simple lifestyle so that they could communicate with Mizos proximately and efficiently. The missionary pioneer William Williams, the first to set foot in Mizoram, spent most of his time (March 20- April 17, 1891) observing their way of life and trying to learn their language.²⁵² Two pioneer missionaries that followed, J.H Lorrain and W.F. Savidge, first lived in a tent, and so built up mutual confidence and relationship with Mizos from the very first night by willingly assuming a modest lifestyle.²⁵³ This was the first time the Mizos had seen

²⁵⁰ See Hrangkhuma, *Mizoram*, 115.

²⁵¹ Hminga, *Life*, 247

²⁵² See Ibid, 47.

²⁵³ It was said, some Mizos came at night to their tent asking whether they had a gun. But they answered them honestly saying, "We do not have a gun." Seeing the fact of white men without a gun, they began to refer to them as the "Wandering Sahib" or "Mad Sahibs" because to live or travel without a gun especially for a white man was dangerous at that time.

white men carrying their own baggage.²⁵⁴ Soon after they became the favorites of the people and consequently won the title “Zosap”.²⁵⁵ The pioneer missionaries knew the importance of understanding the people’s language to effectively witness the Gospel. They learned much of the spoken Mizo language prior to entering the land and starting missionary work.²⁵⁶ They transcribed the Mizo language making an alphabet using the Roman script. Within a short period, they also prepared grammar and dictionary books. This became an educational foundation for the Mizo people as well as a foundation and channel for preaching the Gospel. Liangkhaia agreed that these two pioneer missionaries laid the foundation for preaching the Gospel through language and education, although they had little time to do church planting, per se.²⁵⁷

Lloyd writes how D.E. Jones, the first Welsh Presbyterian missionary (31.08.1897) apparently followed in the footsteps of the pioneer missionaries, living closely with the Mizo people to gain insight into their culture: “In Chhingchhip village he [D.E.Jones] lived very much as the Mizos themselves did, with very few comforts or luxuries”.²⁵⁸ Nengzakhup gives credit to the foreign missionaries and writes, “foreign missionaries in many ways set models for Mizo Christians to follow, with missionary attitude among the foremost.”²⁵⁹ It is undeniable that missionaries were those who lit the fire of the Gospel and planted the church.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁴ Kipgen, *Christianity*, 194.

²⁵⁵ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 100. Mizos accorded them the title “Zosap”, that means “Sap for the Zos” to differentiate them from the other sahibs (white men).

²⁵⁶ Kipgen, *Christianity*, 195. Despite the initial suspicion of them, it was not difficult for the missionaries to gain the confidence of the people. In the first place, the people were impressed by their rudimentary knowledge of the language - which they had studied during the year in Silchar.

²⁵⁷ See Liangkhaia, *Mizo*, 190.

²⁵⁸ Lloyd, *History*, 64.

²⁵⁹ Nengzakhup, *Amazing*, 69

²⁶⁰ Lloyd, *History*, 225. Since there were three male missionaries in Mizoram at that time, the Commission suggested a tripartite division of the land. It was probably thought that three men would be the maximum number that would be posted there. This was correct. There were never more than three - usually less.

4.1.5. The Traditional Cultural Factors

Here we explore the influence of the most readily observable cultural factors in Mizo culture that significantly contributed to the rapid growth of Christianity in Mizoram. As discussed earlier, Mizo culture simply means “way of the whole life of the Mizo people” which includes socio-economic, political, and religious life. As discussed in the second chapter, survival of the Mizo traditional culture was solely dependent upon *Hnatlang*. After careful investigation of the traditional Mizo communitarian society, there remains a firm affinity between traditional cultural and biblical practices. In other words, anything within the traditional cultural practice that hindered the adoption of Christianity was discounted. Thanzauva writes, “The Christian principle of love, ethics and fellowship (*koinonia*) are very much in tune with the Mizo traditional beliefs and practices.”²⁶¹ Lianzuala believes that Mizo traditional culture was the most probable factor contributing to the changes as he states, “the same spirit [of the Mizos] was one of the probable factors that contributed to the fast spreading of the Gospel among the Mizo community.”²⁶² He adds how *Tlawmngaihna* the spirit of *Hnatlang* survived as the guiding principle of the post –Christian Mizo society.²⁶³ Khuanga, one of the pioneers’ prominent church leaders, strongly believed that the Christian principle of “love” had already been present in *Tlawmngaihna*--that is, a life philosophy, cardinal virtue and practice of the Mizo people that binds the community together.²⁶⁴ Thanzauva goes on to state that:

²⁶¹ Thanzauva, ‘Introduction’ In *Toward a Tribal Theology: The Mizo Perspective* (Jorhat: Mizo Theological Conference, 1989, 4). Here after cited as Thanzauva, *Introduction*.

²⁶² P.L. Lianzuala, *Towards a Theology of Mizo Tlawmngaihna in Towards a Tribal Theology: The Mizo Perspective* (Jorhat: Mizo Theological Conference, 1989, 60). Here after cited as Lianzuala, *Towards*.

²⁶³ Ibid, 56. It is noteworthy that while a number of Mizo cultural practices have been annulled by the higher and nobler teaching of Christianity, *Tlawmngaihna* remains intact and survives as the guiding principle of the post Christian Mizo society.

²⁶⁴ Khuanga, *The role of Christianity in the socio-economic praxis of Mizoram, in Towards a Tribal Theology: The Mizo Perspective* (Jorhat: Mizo Theological Conference, 1989), 97. Here after cited as Khuanga, *The role of Christianity*. “When the Christian Gospel was preached to the Mizo people its essence ‘love’ had been already present in the life philosophy and practice of the Mizo people. Thus, they had no problem to embrace Christianity. It can be regarded as the forerunner of the gospel.”

Tlawmngaihna is a message of Jesus Christ hidden in the tribal culture. It is active love, or love in action. If love is the essence of Gospel teaching, *Tlawmngaihna* is the hidden Gospel written in the hearts of the tribal people even before they embraced Christianity.²⁶⁵

Vanlalchhuanawma affirms this by saying:

Subsequently it was the early Mizo Christians in a pure spirit of *Tlawmngaihna* who promoted the cause of Christianity in Mizoram by their enthusiastic involvement in the evangelistic activities.²⁶⁶

“To the Mizos”, said Chapman and Clark, “to accept the teaching of Jesus meant to be *Tlawmngai*” and “to serve God at whatever cost, was to fulfill the old Mizo ideal of *Tlawmngaihna*”.²⁶⁷ Lalrinawma says; “it is a spirit of *Tlawmngaihna* that provides a high motivation in all men to do any social voluntary work (*Hnatlang*) in the society.”²⁶⁸

Traditionally, Mizos believed in the existence of a supreme spirit called *Pathian*. This term was adopted by the pioneer Christian missionaries to represent the Christian God.²⁶⁹ Christian eschatological hope (“heaven” or “paradise”) was already conceived in their traditional religious beliefs and practices as “*Pialral*”. To attain “*Pialral*” one must be a *Thangchhuah* who was required to sacrifice his wealth, time, and talent for the community.²⁷⁰ The community, in return, would follow his example rendering their service as *Hnatlang* so that everyone could enjoy life in the name of religion. Everyone had a heart desire to go to *Pialral* (reserved for only the skillful, mighty, and rich people), but it was impossible for an ordinary person to attain *Thangchhuah* in order to go to *Pialral*. The pioneer missionaries to the Mizos offered a new and very simple way

²⁶⁵ Thanzauva, *Theology*, 163

²⁶⁶ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 149

²⁶⁷ Chapman and Clark, *Miracle*. 115. See also Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 208

²⁶⁸ Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 208.

²⁶⁹ Hminga, *Traditional*, 51

²⁷⁰ Zairema, *Mizos*, 42. The whole village would spend three or four days in drinking and feasting at his expense. In one of such ceremonies, the man and his wife who performed the feast would be carried on a platform along the streets with their valuable things to the crowd to scramble for them. One of the most valuable possessions was the gun; even this would be given away. When the ceremony was over, a fairly large portion of his wealth would be gone.

of *Thangchhuah*, which was simply to believe and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, requiring neither expensive *Hnatlang*, feasts, nor sacrifices. It seems this was a very appealing and reasonable offer for any Mizo desperate to go to *Pialral*.

Scholars posit that the *Zawlbuk* institution was the forerunner of the church building (later known as the *Biak in*).²⁷¹ This matter will be discussed in detail later.

Similar to the Christian “missionary” concept and practice was *zualko*. The *zualko* is always ready to bring and deliver an emergency message to a target place or person as the need arises, and would never neglect to deliver the Gospel message. It was said that every new Mizo Christian felt a responsibility to become a *zualko*--a missionary who witnessed their newfound faith to another. Supposedly, it would not be difficult to imagine a typical Mizo following Christian *kerygma* i.e. preaching or heralding the Gospel. Extensive teaching of Christian *koinonia* (fellowship) was seemingly unnecessary, because Mizo traditional culture was already a communitarian society practicing a similar concept in *Hnatlang* (fellowship).

In many ways Mizos already functioned in a culture where principles similar to those in Christianity already existed. Before learning about the person of Jesus Christ and His teaching, Mizos had found the value of generally similar lessons in its own society. In other words, providence had directed the development of Mizo culture in order that it would be prepared and receptive for embracing Christianity. A similar concept to confession of sin and forgiveness at the cross was practiced. A big wooden post was fixed inside a *Lal* house, a person who committed crime or murder would be forgiven if he could reach a *Lal* house and hold it (the wooden post) before he was arrested.

²⁷¹ Thanzauva, *Theology*, 104

However, he would then become a servant of *Lal*, not by force but by his own submission. Presumably, the Mizos easily understood the central messages of Christianity: “confession of sin “and “forgiveness” (a sinner becoming a servant of Jesus Christ). When revival first broke out among the Mizos, there was, at first, knowledge of sin and then forgiveness followed. Vanlalchhuanawma records the words of the song composed by Thanga during this period: “Sinner, sinner, sinner am I Lord, But you have forgiven me. I’ll praise and praise you ever.”²⁷²

Lalsawma recorded how the first Mizo revival and the birth of Pentecostalism in America coincided on April 9, 1906 in which confession of sins was a theme in both revivals. Mrs. Hlunziki, wife of Duma (the first Mizo to be baptized) stood up before the congregation and danced continuously and made a spontaneous confession of sins, a confession that affected all deeply.²⁷³

We discuss further how Christianity adopted the *Hnatlang* traditional cultural practice which ultimately shaped their indigenous mission.

4.1.5.1. **Fangrual-Group Touring**

The word *fang* means touring, traveling, visiting, or roaming; and *rual* means flock, party, group, together, or united. The literal meaning of *Fangrual* is (n) a traveling party or (v) group touring. Lorrain defined *Fangrual* as (n) a party traveling about together, a traveling party; (v) to travel about together in a party.²⁷⁴ In the Christian context, *Fangrual* means visiting people or traveling to the other villages as a group to preach the Gospel. Vanlalchhuanawma writes, “It was a *Tlawmngaihna* people, both men and

²⁷² Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 170.

²⁷³ Lalsawma, *Revivals*, 36.

²⁷⁴ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 133.

women, who formed themselves into groups of *Zinrual* and *Fangrual* to voluntarily accomplish the task of evangelizing the land.”²⁷⁵ *Fangrual* is a group of people who volunteer their time, talent, and possessions in order to travel about to preach and witness the Gospel.

The above definition portrays *Fangrual* as a similar term for *Hnatlang*. But *Fangrual* is more specific than the general idea and practice of *Hnatlang*. Prior to the advent of Christianity, Mizo believers had a *Hnatlang* spirit (a missionary zeal) because a typical Mizo has a heart desire to share work and news with others. Saiaithanga agrees: “They [Mizos] felt obligated to bring the message to the unreached people or villages as everybody seemed to be saying, for we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”²⁷⁶ No record was found that Mizo Christians were trained or encouraged to do this, but it simply existed as a trademark of the culture.

After the arrival of Christianity, Mizos adopted a type of traditional *Hnatlang* called *zualkova tlan*.²⁷⁷ New converts voluntarily traveled and preached their newfound Christian faith regardless of the time, distance, and possible offences and persecutions involved. D.E. Jones clearly writes how the pioneer Christians applied *Fangrual zualkova tlan* in his report dated 1900:

Khuma and Khara who were baptized the previous year went together on a long journey to preach. They went to the South as far as they could until they reached villages whose dialect they did not understand. Both of them also accompanied us when on tour and proved a real help. Khuma has become a good speaker.²⁷⁸

This *Fangrual* ministry was the first and apparently the most effective way of conducting evangelism at that time. It would not seem surprising to a typical Mizo village to see a group of people who were traveling and preaching the Gospel. The pioneer

²⁷⁵ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 311

²⁷⁶ See Saiaithanga, *Mizo*, 19.

²⁷⁷ *Zualkova tlan* means to go or to run by bearing an urgent or special message.

²⁷⁸ Thanzaiva, *Report*, 9.

missionaries acknowledged the indigenous contribution in their mission enterprise.

D.E. Jones again wrote in 1901 report describing this practice:

Including the journeys of our men, about half a dozen long evangelizing tours were taken during the year. Phaisama and Khuma having lately been up as far as the boundary of Manipur, from which they were warned by one chief not to go further, report that Lushai on the northern boundary are more eager to receive them than the southerners even.²⁷⁹

D.E. Jones was pleased to see the enthusiasm of the new Christians who willingly volunteered their time and talent for the success of *Fangrual* ministry. He mentioned this in his consecutive year report on 1902: “There are now about 13 who preach in North Lushai alone, and most of them have been on preaching journeys.”²⁸⁰ In 1903, three Evangelists and one bible woman were supported by the Mizo church and they visited a large number of villages in the north.²⁸¹ Another four Christians (Parima, Thankunga, Lengkaia, and Zathanga) volunteered in the “Great Gathering” of 1904 to serve as evangelists to be sponsored by the national Church.²⁸² In 1905, three Evangelists (Dokhama, Phaisama and Vanchhunga) were appointed by the church to work in the villages where *Fangrual* ministry was the most effective. Vanlalchhuanawma writes how the Mizo Christian women were involved in *Fangrual* ministry:

They (Women) actually helped the needy in grinding and cleaning rice, fetching water as well as firewood. Even the Fangrual took out time to help the widows and the weak in weeding their jhums besides holding all night preaching.²⁸³

In 1906, a group of nine Mizo Christians traveled to the neighboring state of Meghalaya to attend the assembly meeting which was held at Mairang. It was said the main intention of the tour (*Fangrual*) was to experience the revival.²⁸⁴ Indeed, they encountered the revival there, which in turn affected the whole of Mizoram when they

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 13.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 16

²⁸¹ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 165.

²⁸² See Hminga, *Life*, 69

²⁸³ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 313

²⁸⁴ Thanzauva, *Report*, 29. Nine Christians from Lushai, having heard of the wonderful works of God in Khasi, travelled to Mairang, hoping that they also might be baptized with the revival spirit.

went home to relay the impact of these events. Many scholars consider this event in their writings, identifying it as one of the main factors contributing to the growth of Christianity in Mizoram.²⁸⁵ Saiaithanga asserts how the emerging Churches emphasized *Fangrual* during the so-called “second revival” that broke out in 1913.²⁸⁶ These revival tides embraced and enveloped the land until nearly the end of the First World War 1918. Liangkhaia elucidates this ministry further:

People had a strong desire to preach about the Cross; a group of people, male and female, consisting of twenty to thirty, which they called ‘Zinrual Pawl’, traveled together. Believers were rapidly increased. Within four years during the years 1919-1923. 19,197 (nineteen thousand, one hundred and ninety seven) believers alone were added to the *Hmar bial* (Presbyterian Church) (Translation).²⁸⁷

During this period, an indigenous Mizo Church with its own identity and leaders emerged. Chapman notes: “Trained Mizos carry on all the work, and the work is growing and developing – a Mizo Church with its roots in Mizo culture...”²⁸⁸ Another Welsh Presbyterian missionary Rev. F.J. Sandy writes in his report:

In villages where previously no Christians were to be found, there are now churches meeting regularly for worship; and in villages where there but few Christians there are now large numbers, eager also to preach the Gospel and to help to gather in their neighbours. Bands of young men and young women are traveling from village to village, preaching and exhorting, and there is a spirit of gladness in the churches, which makes it very enjoyable to visit them.²⁸⁹

In summary, the practice of *Fangrual* was already a cultural norm among the Mizos, and the practice was easily adopted for use in the evangelizing of villages, and the wider spread of Christianity in Mizoram.

4.4. **Beihrual - Mass Mission**

The word *bei/beih* means to try, to do, and to work, and *rual* means mass, group, flock, together, or united. Therefore, we could translate *Beihrual* as mass mission, united

²⁸⁵ See Lloyd, *History*, 89-94. Lalsawma, *Revivals*, 31-36. Saiaithanga, *Mizo*, 24-26. Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 166-180.

²⁸⁶ Saiaithanga, *Mizo*, 56.

²⁸⁷ Liangkhaia, *Mizo*, 203.

²⁸⁸ See Chapman, *Mizo*, 93-94.

²⁸⁹ Thanzauva, *Report*, 63.

mission, or united effort. According to Lorrain, *Beihrual* means, “a special united effort to win converts, which is an annual event of the Lushai Church, generally lasting for a month, v. to make the above united effort.”²⁹⁰ Saiaithanga simply translated the term *Beihrual* as “campaign” in which he referred to all the early Gospel campaigns operated by the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram outside of Mizoram.²⁹¹ From the above two scholars’ interpretation, *Beihrual* is a newer but related word to the concept of *Hnatlang*, because the meaning and concept of *Beihrual* is essentially the same as *Hnatlang*; however, *Beihrual* is a more modern term, limited only to Christianity and specifically to matters related to the Christian evangelization efforts. According to Vanlalchhuanawma “The *Beihrual* to the Mizo Christians was not only a marshalling of labor, but also a contextualization of the Christian act of evangelism. It was a call for community service to accomplish what was considered best for the society.”²⁹²

Vanlalchhuanawma believes that *Beihrual* was the outcome of the revival movements and he asserts that, “The revival movement in turn exerted much pressure on the Church to speed up the evangelization of the land.”²⁹³ But in contrast to this view Saiaithanga believes that *Beihrual* came about through the demise or downturn of the revival movement. The revival movement had waned ten years after its inception, and this had a negative impact on the spiritual and financial strength of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church. Towards the end of the First World War, many Christians were backslidden, while others faithfully kept constant in their Christian walk, and a considerable number of indigenous church leaders were still emerging. The Church could not maintain its financial status and they had to reduce the monthly salary from 10 Rupees to 8 Rupees

²⁹⁰ Hminga, *Life*, 35.

²⁹¹ See Saiaithanga, *Mizo*, 129-138

²⁹² Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 311

²⁹³ Ibid, 310.

for their seven evangelists.²⁹⁴

Typically, the Mizo community stood firm and united to face hardship. The Mizo Christians and Presbyterian Church in particular did not give in to these negative circumstances. The *Hnatlang* spirit was still alive, and this spirit united the Church community and made all possible efforts to regain its strength. The Presbytery Meeting of September 1917 resolved to make a mass effort to solve the problem. Resolution no. 24 read: “We entrusted to the Aijal Church elders the Evangelistic Campaign (Beihrual); they will report their finding to the next presbytery meeting”²⁹⁵ (Translation). The appointed Aijal Church elders prepared the *Beihrual* program and reported to the Presbytery Meeting that was held on March 15-18 at Aijal (now known as Aizawl). The Presbytery meeting resolved to have the first *Beihrual* in the month of June 1918. The resolution no. 10 of the Presbytery Meeting read:

We have decided to organize Christian Beihrual to be held in June, 1918. The first half of the month should be used for strengthening, growing in holiness and for the development of the local Church. Then, earnest endeavours to be made to reach and to bring them to Christ during the later part of the month. Then, each church should make its own respective plan (Translation).²⁹⁶

The purpose of *Beihrual* was twofold. The first purpose was to witness the Gospel to the non-Christian, particularly their fellow countrymen in Mizoram. The second purpose was to encourage and strengthen the backslidden believers. It is significant to note the unity Mizo Christians had in making decisions as well as in devoting themselves to others and the development of the Church. As mentioned above, the entire month was dedicated to the *Beihrual* (mass evangelism) with all believers expected to be involved. However, when referring back to the *Hnatlang* (traditional

²⁹⁴ Saiaithanga, *Mizo*, 58. See also Thanzauva, *Report*, 61. In his report, D.E. Jones admitted the financial problem in the church, but he believed this problem was due to the famine.

²⁹⁵ H.Remthanga, *Mizoram Presbyterian Kohhran: Synod Thurel Lakkhawm* Volume 1 (1910-1959) (Aizawl: Synod Literature & Publication Board, 1996). 229. Here after cited as Remthanga, *Mizoram Presbyterian Kohhran*.

²⁹⁶ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, *Kristian Tlangau*, May 1918, 94. See also Hminga, *Life*, 114

cultural practice), this was neither a burden nor a demand; to a certain extent, it was a norm or a duty to be fulfilled.

According to the Presbytery decision, each church operated *Beihrual* in the month of June 1918. Zairema wrote:

In each village, groups of four or five Christians were formed to visit non-Christian homes. This is still a regular feature, but now this ‘Beihrual’ month focused on backslidden members of the church.²⁹⁷

Every evening in the first half of the month, the group met and organized in the church or a house. They sang, had fellowship, bible study, and topic discussion, and listened to sermons delivered by selected members. The latter half of the month was devoted to mass evangelism focusing on non-Christians. The first *Beihrual* was heralded as very successful, with many backslidden members strengthened and equipped for church ministry, and all Christians including children were involved in evangelism. According to the report given by 10 churches (Aijal, Sawleng, Zokhawsang, Sehlawhkawn, Hliappui, Khawlek, Sihphir, Lalzika khua, Lungsum and Champhai), 344 believers were added through the *Beihrual* operations.²⁹⁸ The detailed *Beihrual* report of Aijal Church written by Rev. Liangkhaia and F.J. Sandy garnered a lot of attention:

We started our meeting from 1st June; we were so blessed by God that everybody was happy, it was unlike our previous Church services. Even the first meeting overran and had to be brought to a close. During this period, whether we met in the Church or a house, meetings always brought contentment. We had “consecration services” on the third Sunday, just before the first half of the month was completed. In this service, “consecration paper” was distributed for people to renew or revive abandoned promises made to God. After that, someone preached about consecration, and after hearing, everybody felt convicted about their commitment to God. People said, “I should give of myself more than before”. Then, the church elders collected a “consecration offering” totaling Rs14 in which everybody contributed more than before. After that, evangelism commenced among the non-Christians. The rich spoke to the rich, poor to poor, young women to young women, young men to young men, old men to old men, and children to children. As God gave us strength, everybody

²⁹⁷ Zairema, ‘*The Mizo Church*’, in *Reading in Mizo Christianity Series 1: Ground Works For Tribal Theology in Mizo Context* (Aizawl: ISPCCK, 2007), 27. Here after cited as Zairema, *Mizo Church*.

²⁹⁸ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, *Kristian Tlangau*, October 1918, 95.

gave their best even in rainfall, without fear, shame or weariness but rather rejoicing... (Translation).²⁹⁹

The outcome of the first *Beihruai* impressed the Western missionaries, church leaders, and congregations as a whole. Consequently, the Presbytery meeting held on October 1918 at Champhai Hmunhmeltha resolved to organize another *Beihruai* in the month of September 1919.³⁰⁰ After that, *Beihruai* was continually organized throughout the year. The strategy of *Beihruai* was same: in the first half of the month they organized daily evening worship at the Church or in a house in order to strengthen and encourage the believers. The second half of the month was used for evangelism, preaching the Gospel in the street, and visiting non-Christian homes.³⁰¹

In July 26, 1919, revival broke out in the Mizo Church just one year after commencing the *Beihruai*, a providential consequence of the *Beihruai* operations. Most writers agreed that this revival was the most widespread and effective in Mizoram leading to growth and conversions throughout Mizoram. From the very inception of this revival, using *Fangruai* and *Beihruai* approaches, a group of people would travel to attend the larger meetings with the intention of experiencing the same revival that broke out in their neighbouring villages. Meanwhile, a considerable number of people and congregations who had experienced revival visited other churches where the revival had not yet been experienced.³⁰² As a result of these continuing efforts, it is claimed this revival penetrated the whole of Mizoram within two to three months.³⁰³ F.J. Sandy reported how Christianity grew immensely during this period:

During the Rev. D.E. Jones' absence in France and on Furlough, Mr. Sandy was alone in Lushai from early 1917- until February, 1921. During this period the

²⁹⁹ Ibid, 194-195.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 229. See Saiaithanga, *Mizo*, 58; and Lloyd, *History*, 172.

³⁰¹ Saiaithanga, *Mizo*, 58.

³⁰² Lalsawma, *Revivals*, 89. Kipgen, *Christianity*, 238. Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 238.

³⁰³ Liangkhaia, *Mizoram*, 23. Saiaithanga, *Mizo*, 59.

Revival broke out, 4,000 converts being added to the Churches in 1919, and over 3,000 in 1920.³⁰⁴

In 1920, *Beihruul* was organized in the month of September, but the Presbytery Meeting held on October 1920 resolved to organize the 1921 *Beihruul* program in the month of January. And again, the Presbytery Meeting held on October 1921, resolved that the next year's (1922) *Beihruul* would be in April. Up until 1925, *Beihruul* was organized every year in the month of April. But the Assembly Meeting of 1925 resolved to have *Beihruul* in September from 1926 onwards.³⁰⁵ Every year since then, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church held the *Beihruul* operation in the month of September with each Church preparing its own detailed program independently. But since 1937, the Synod chose to prepare a *Beihruul* theme and program so that every Church could study the same theme simultaneously. For example, the theme of "perseverance" was selected and four people (Pastor Chhuahkhama, Pastor Mendus, Pastor Edwards and Pu Sena)³⁰⁶ were chosen to write a study guide and program to guide the local churches. They have prepared the program each year ever since.

Beihruul was a major factor in the trajectory of Church membership growth, stability of the Mizo community life, equipping church leaders, and motivating for missions. It is significant that *Beihruul* continues 90 years later (1918-2008). No doubt, Lloyd considered *Beihruul* a significant factor in the spread of the gospel through Mizoram, writing: "The Evangelistic Campaign or *Beihruul* as it is always called still does fine work every year, and its influence is strongly felt in every village."³⁰⁷

4.1.5.3. Chanchintha Dak- Gospel Mail

³⁰⁴ Thanzauva, *Report*, 79.

³⁰⁵ Remthanga, *Synod*, 230.

³⁰⁶ Ibid, 230.

³⁰⁷ Lloyd, *History*, 172.

The literal meaning of *Chanchin-Tha* is ‘good news’ and *Dak* simply means ‘mail’. Hminga adopted Lloyd’s translation of the word *Chanchintha Dak*: “The Gospel Post”³⁰⁸ Robuanga, a well-known evangelist since 1945, founded Chanchin Tha Dak, known as the Gospel Mail ministry, by delivering Christian literature to the Chin Hills.³⁰⁹ Later, the Young Mizo Association (Y.M.A) and the Church took responsibility for this same effort by collecting literature, making boxes, and transporting them to the Chin Hills. In short, *Chanchin Tha Dak* means carrying on or passing on the Christian literature by means of *Hnatlang*. Lloyd writes, “This [*Chanchintha Dak*] was a most unusual and remarkable instance of missionary expansion.”³¹⁰ Vanlalchhuanawma believes that *Chanchintha Dak* created the greatest revival upsurge within his study of revival movements. Vanlalchhuanawma writes, “It was a cultural response to westernization in Mizoram despite the fact that it is characteristically distinct from the foregoing revival movement and it was marked by obvious socio-political concern.”³¹¹

The beginning of Chanchintha Dak resulted from unique historic circumstances. During the Second World War, Mizo churches experienced a revival and celebrated the Gospel Jubilee, held in 1944.³¹² Particularly, the Mizoram Presbyterian church had fresh enthusiasm, addressing itself to evangelizing beyond Mizoram, and could no longer remain idle to the call of evangelism beyond the Mizo people. A number of traders visited the Chin Hills in Burma as soon as it was free of Japanese occupation. During that time, only a few Mizos living there embraced Christianity. They were comparatively poorer than the Mizo in India.

³⁰⁸ Hminga, *Life*, 185.

³⁰⁹ Chin Hills (now known as Myanmar) is the eastern neighbouring country of India where remnants of Mizo clans - Hualngo, Zahau and Paihte and other clans - are still settling since the Mizos descended toward the western part during 1700-1800 A.D.

³¹⁰ Lloyd, *History*, 351.

³¹¹ See Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 437;

³¹² See Saiaithanga, *Mizo*, 75-76. Hminga, *Life*, 175-177.

At a certain Hualngo village called Lianhna in Burma, there were three Christian boys Tiauluaia, Chalthuama and Kapkhuaia who used to arrange meetings in a house in order to pray, sing, and study the Bible. The village chief's son was privileged to have a New Testament and occasionally joined them. Nevertheless, for some reason he abandoned them and refused to lend his Bible. As a result, the boys met together without a leader or presence of a Bible to read or study. Robuanga³¹³ writes in his book how he heard this story and became convinced of a call from God to witness the Gospel in the Chin Hills and how he started the *Chanchintha Dak* ministry.³¹⁴ This event was one example of the need to begin this ministry, but it was not the only motivation for *Chanchintha Dak*. The problems and needs of the Mizos in the Chin Hills in Burma were more apparent to the Christians in Mizoram from the reports of the visitors, traders and servicemen.³¹⁵ These reports broadly expressed the urgent need for evangelization.³¹⁶

On October 12, 1945 after traveling a couple of days on foot, Robuanga safely arrived in Lianhna village carrying Christian literature, particularly hymn books and bibles that he had collected from Champhai and neighbouring villages.³¹⁷ He distributed the literature in several villages, preaching the word of God and teaching Christian songs. Robuanga discovered about thirty Christians in *Lianhna* village who had been converted by the three pioneer Christians but lacked much of the resources to maintain their

³¹³ Robuanga was the pioneer of the Chanchintha Dak. He was born in 1925 at Thenthelh village near Ruantlang. He was a well-known evangelist of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church.

³¹⁴ Robuanga, *Ka Khualzin Kawng* (published by Vanlalchhawni, Aizawl: Lengchawn Press, 2002), 16. Here after cited as Robuanga, *Khualzin Kawng*. In the month of March 1945, some of my friends who went to Burma to collect some left behind belongings by the British soldiers told me about their tour and experienced. One-night, three Mizo Christian boys visited them and said, "Teach us Christian songs because we do not know any song to sing, because our boss abandoned us and he sometimes refused to lend us his Bible as well." After hearing this, this word hit me like a stone being thrown into my heart "Yes! I am qualified to be a missionary..." (Translated)

³¹⁵ See Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 438.

³¹⁶ See Saiaithanga, *Mizo*, 81-82. There was a delegates meeting after the 1946 synod meeting, over which discussion was organized concerning the development of the Mizo people in Burma and broadening the Lusei language (Translated).

³¹⁷ Robuanga, *Khualzin Kawng*, 21.

spiritual needs. He felt greatly challenged by the needs of the people and was very impressed by the faithfulness of the believers under such less-than-ideal circumstances. He was also very excited by the warm welcome he experienced wherever he went, particularly the welcome he received of the pioneer Christians.³¹⁸ After a few weeks, he returned home reporting his tour to his family and friends and at the same time describing the needs of the people he had visited.

As already mentioned the *Hnatlang* concept was very much alive and effective in Mizo socio-political life as well as religious life. A strong communitarian society and the *Hnatlang* orientation of the Church would never allow Robuanga to carry the burden alone. The Young Lushai Association and the Church took the initiative in officially launching the *Chanchintha Dak* ministry. However, it is important to realize this initiation was not only due to Robuanga's influence or Christian evangelism. Many Mizo traders, refugees, servicemen and others visited Burma witnessing the problems and then impressed upon the Mizo Christians the urgent need for kindness and evangelization.³¹⁹ On the other hand, Mizos who lived in Mizoram had a desire to spread the Lusei language (now known as Mizo language) to their fellow tribes who lived in Burma.³²⁰ Thus, the *Chanchintha Dak Hnatlang* was driven by multiple motivations: evangelization, serving the poor, promoting literature, and not least an expansion of Mizo nationalism and unity.

The *Chanchintha Dak Hnatlang* was organized between the church and the Young Lushai Association (now known as Young Mizo Association) on two occasions within the three year period of 1946-1948. The *Hnatlang* arranged a collection of old and new

³¹⁸ Ibid,

³¹⁹ See Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 438.

³²⁰ In those days, Young Lushai Association took initiative for spreading the Lusei language; it was then, for them, a great opportunity to take the initiative. It was said; they had a considerable committee sitting with the Church leaders for this to happen.

books, clothes, bibles, Christian songbooks, student and other books, all of which were of value to the effort. Young Lusei Association members, themselves, took responsibility for the collection. They visited houses, churches, schools, and government offices. Everybody contributed as they could, including the missionaries with several books, notably Christian literature. After the collection, the Young Mizo Association made boxes and stretchers as in the custom of *Miruang zawn Hnatlang* (carrying the corpse or sick by the Mizo young men). These boxes were delivered from one village to the next at established meeting places. Thus, *Chanchintha Dak* was operated following much in the traditional *Hnatlang*. They collected books in boxes to be carried by the stretchers. Zairema described this practice:

The Mizos practiced the custom of carrying dead bodies from village to village, and each village was deemed responsible over its area so much so that even the poorest of the poor could avail of this customary practice. Seizing upon this practice the books were packed and named “Gospel Mail” and were launched from Aizawl for the 140 miles journey over hills and valleys.³²¹

In July 1946, four boxes of books were prepared for Burma.³²² These boxes were carried by young male volunteers from one village to another in the same manner of traditional *ruang zawn/hlang zawn Hnatlang* practice. Before they proceeded, they had a dedication service in the Mission Veng chapel.³²³ According to the plan, they split into two groups and each group took two boxes and met at Champhai. One group would carry the boxes by the Aizawl/Champhai route while the other group carried the boxes via North Vanlaiphai. It was said the boxes were carried with enjoyment and enthusiasm. “Processions were formed to carry the boxes from village to village singing as they went along, keeping step and time to the beating of the drum.”³²⁴

³²¹ Zairema, *Mizo*, 36.

³²² Lloyd, *History*, 353. This, in 1946, was the real beginning of the movement, which soon pulsed throughout the land and affected every church. Each Christian village was encouraged to make and fill its own box; putting in it whatever they thought would help the Burmese villagers for whom they were destined.

³²³ Robuanga, *Ka Khualzin*, 73.

³²⁴ Lloyd, *History*, 353.

Following traditional *Hnatlang*, the two boxes carried through the Champhai route quickly arrived at their destination. They plan to carry on the boxes as traditional *Miruang Zawn Hnatlang* would practice (wherein every village on the way to the destination was expected to carry the box). But extraordinarily, it was soon carried directly to the destination of Champhai on July 29, 1946.³²⁵ While carrying the boxes, God touched the carriers' hearts and they repeatedly proclaimed *Ava mak e! Ava mak e...* (How wonderful! How wonderful!).³²⁶

The other two boxes carried to the North Vanlaiphai route took much longer to arrive because the journey was heavily celebrated by Pathian *Chawimawi* with such animals as goats, pigs, oxen, and bison for up to a week in some villages. Out of evangelistic zeal people donated their clothing and money.³²⁷ Sailam young men planned to receive as traditional *ruang zawn Hnatlang* while Sialsuk were handed over to them. However, to their amazement they saw Pastor Nikhama leading the box carriers while others accompanied waving flags and singing missionary songs. God moved their hearts and they realized they could not simply receive this as an old traditional *ruang zawn Hnatlang*.³²⁸ As the *Chanchintha dak* progressed, people did not simply receive the boxes, but added new boxes of clothes and books they had collected. By such means 15 boxes arrived in Champhai around the second week of September.³²⁹

The second event of *Chanchintha Dak* in August 1947 was well publicized. Young Mizo Association leaders, Church leaders, and the founder Mr. Robuanga, took responsibility for this second event. This time, not only the city Churches made the mail

³²⁵ Robuanga, *Ka Khualzin*, 73. Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 440.

³²⁶ Robuanga, *Ka Khualzin*, 74.

³²⁷ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 441.

³²⁸ See Robuanga, *Ka Khualzin*, 73-74.

³²⁹ See Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 441.

boxes, but the vast majority of the village churches also assisted. Clothes, bibles, hymn books and other books were collected as before, but additional money was donated to the first *Chanchintha Dak*, and from Mizo army personnel in India and Burma. These funds were used to buy additional bibles and hymn books.³³⁰ When the collection was over, a dedication service for the mail boxes was organized by the Dawrpui and Mission Veng Churches. A full *Chanchintha Dak Hnatlang* operated in the entire land for several days and altogether more than 300 boxes reached Champhai.³³¹

Champhai local Churches took responsibility for receiving these boxes and delivering them to Burma. After receiving the boxes, the Churches had a joint committee to plan their management and disbursement. They placed most of the boxes at Chawnnchhim and six boxes were split between six local Churches who held their own dedication before the boxes were delivered. When everything was prepared, the Churches informed their kinsmen who lived in Burma to come to the border and collect the boxes. At the appointed time, they took all the boxes on the bank of the border river *Tiau* of Burma and placed the boxes on a table especially made for them. Mr. Robuanga writes of this exciting moment in his book:

They made an entrance Gate at the Champhai plain rice field, the riverbank and both sides of the main road (north and south) in which 40 or more adult men were standing. All the villages, apart from those who were sick or had a child or who had unavoidable circumstances, attended and brought their own big and small drums³³² While going towards the meeting place, they said together, "Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors that the King of glory may come in." (Psalm 24:7) and the Israel song of restoration from captivity (psalm 126)... four adult men stood at every corner of the boxes table, wearing big parandi (overcoats) and holding a stick. They made Areopagi from which Mr. Lalkherha preached and read Revelation 5:1-5...after reading this, he kept quiet for a while bending down with great sorrow...From among the thousands, one man stood and responded, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." Suddenly, Mr. Lalkherha

³³⁰ See Ibid, 441.

³³¹ See Ibid, 441.

³³² Traditionally Mizo used two drums- small and big which has its own different bit to suit the song.

looked upwards with great joy and said “Halleluiah! Thank you Lord, Halleluiah! Thank you Lord, people of Tiaural, people of God, do not worry, Lord Jesus opened the scroll and triumphed, thank you Lord!” And then many people responded by exclaiming Halleluiah...!³³³ (Translation).

On completion of the ceremony, people came from Chin Hills area of Burma and took over the *Chanchintha Dak* with the help of several volunteers from Mizoram.³³⁴ The Champhai Assembly meeting, held in February 1948, resolved to carry the last *Chanchintha Dak* and made the following announcement: “*Chanchintha Dak* boxes to be carried and distributed beyond border (beyond *Tiau* River) by anyone who could volunteer. Those who cannot stay longer should put boxes at *Zathlir* which will be distributed by the other volunteers.” On hearing the announcement, several Mizo Christians volunteered to carry the boxes up to *Zathlir*.³³⁵ This concluded the most successful undertaking of such a practice, and the first application of Christian evangelism and care outside the land of Mizoram, by the indigenous Church.

Several scholars observed the significance of the *Chanchintha Dak*, its impact and contribution to the Mizos who settled in Burma (Chin Hills) as well as to the Mizo society and churches in Mizoram. Thus, the *Chanchintha Dak* accomplished evangelization, serving the poor, promoting literature, and the promotion of unity among the Christians in all of the Chin Hills.

4.1.5.3.1. Educational Development in Chin Hills

In order to understand the written revelation of God in the Bible, educational development was essential.³³⁶ The literature provided by *Chanchintha Dak* greatly assisted this process. Hundreds of items of literature (bibles, hymn books, student

³³³ Robuanga, *Ka Khualzin*, 77-78.

³³⁴ Ibid, 82.

³³⁵ Ibid, 105.

³³⁶ See Lloyd, *History*, 352.

books, newspapers etc.) which they would not have otherwise been able to afford were made available to them by means of the *Chanchintha Dak*. Ever since the resources were made available, both adults and children enthusiastically embraced the privilege to read and write.³³⁷ Literate people utilized *Chanchintha Dak* literature to help the illiterate within their family, community, or church.

4.1.5.3.2. Indigenous Church Growth

As already mentioned, preaching the Gospel was one of the major motivating factors of *Chanchintha Dak*. People did not simply carry boxes of books, but sang and witnessed the Gospel throughout the procession. Those receiving the boxes did the same. Thus, *Chanchintha Dak* drew attention to the gospel message and inspired people, flowing with power wherever it went. It was the catalyst for significant numerical growth in the Church across Mizoram and the Chin Hills in Burma. Zairema writes, “Wherever the Gospel Mail touched, almost the whole population became Christian.”³³⁸ Lloyd adds “The Books were intended to help to convert villages in Burma; in fact, they converted many within Mizoram even crossing the border river.”³³⁹ Dengthuama notes that “because of the Gospel mail movement, Christians among Mizos in Chin Hills increased 70%.”³⁴⁰ Hminga writes, “Mizoram Presbyterian Church communicant members increased by 6,553 during a five year period (1945 to 1949).”³⁴¹ Lalchhuanawma records the growth in Northern Mizoram, “By 1950 Christians in the north alone numbered 100,513.”³⁴² Robuanga writes how *Chanchintha Dak* touched

³³⁷ B. Lalthangliana, *History of Mizo in Burma* (Aizawl: Zawlbuk Agencies, 1977), 57. Here after cited as Lalthangliana, *History*. The Mizo in Chin Hills now began to take more interest in education. As they were all rural people, they found it hard to send their children to school at towns. In 1951, 10 students went to Rangoon with government scholarship, 10 girls went to Rangoon on similar aids in 1955. Reading and writing Mizo literature is taught at primary schools, and Methodist Church had classes on Mizo opened during summer vacations, using textbooks and hymn books printed in Mizoram. Mizos of Burma could produce very little books in Mizo, and that explains why Mizoram books are still popular among the Mizos of Burma.

³³⁸ Zairema, *God's Miracle*, 39.

³³⁹ Lloyd, *History*, 354.

³⁴⁰ Dengthuama, *Presbyterian*, 26.

³⁴¹ Hminga, *Life*, 347.

³⁴² Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 444.

the hearts of the people and transformed their lives.

A certain widow, Thatkimi by name, a zu (rice beer) -brewer and seller at Champhai, was so touched by the Mail that she donated a hundred rupees towards the Chanchintha Dak project, a rarity at that time and became a Christian. Ladanga (non-Christian and known as a drunkard) was touched by the Holy Spirit while he was trying to mock Chanchintha Dak and asked his friend to carry his body just like Chanchintha Dak was usually carried...another man Kaphranga (non-Christian and known as a dirty joker) was touched by the Holy Spirit that he cried without stopping while he was trying to make fun of Chanchintha Dak by wearing a traditional English dress.³⁴³ (Translation)

The American Baptist Mission was the first to introduce Christianity to the Mizos in the Chin Hills beginning in the year 1899.³⁴⁴ Church growth was rather slow, even though the revival broke out in 1935 through a prominent preacher, Mr. Thawng Khaw Zam. In this revival, American Baptist Missionaries resisted Mizos using traditional drums for the music and dancing and consequently excommunicated them from the membership. As a result of this, the revival soon came to an end, ultimately hindering the growth of Christianity in the American Baptist Mission enterprise. Eventually, a few Mizo Christians from this area established the Independent Church of Burma on July 30, 1938 adopting Presbyterian Church doctrine and structure.³⁴⁵ Robuanga recalls this event:

In 1948 – a Baptist Church Assembly meeting was held at Satawm (Kalkha was the Baptist mission headquarters). They (the Baptist Church) disciplined Pastor Thankapa just because his wife was experiencing revival. He was trying to deposit his offering contribution in that assembly meeting (1948). Hualngo Baptist Church replied to him by saying, “we do not believe your revival experience of body shaking, speaking in tongue and a ghost that makes you cry, therefore we cannot accept your contribution, and we won’t even accept you as a member.” However, he repeatedly asked their pardon saying, “please forgive me and accept at least my offering contribution”. But his request was plainly rejected.³⁴⁶ (Translation)

³⁴³ See Robuanga, *Ka Khualzin*, 82-84. Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 442

³⁴⁴ See L.R. Bawla, *History of the Presbyterian Church of Burma* (Tahan: General Assembly Press Sub Committee, The Presbyterian Church of Burma, 1981), 6. Here after cited as Bawla, *History*. See also Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 437.

³⁴⁵ See Dengthuama, *The Presbyterian Church of Myanmar: ICM Lo Din Dan Leh Hmasawn Dan 1955-1999* (Tahan: Theological Education Board, The Presbyterian Church of Myanmar, 2000), 39. Here after cited as Dengthuama, *Presbyterian Church*.

³⁴⁶ Robuanga, *Ka Khualzin*, 106.

Chanchintha Dak was the catalyst for the evangelization of the Mizos in the Chin Hills because the preaching of the gospel and church planting followed. Between 1946 and 1950, eighty villages were visited. Robuanga, the founder of *Chanchintha Dak* states: “Churches were planted wherever we go except at three villages namely Auhmun, Lawitlang and Tlahmun.”³⁴⁷ Lloyd describes this in his book, “the movement (Chanchintha Dak) thus succeeded beyond all our expectations and a thriving church has grown up in the western hills of Burma.”³⁴⁸ Thus, within a few years, *Chanchintha Dak* influenced almost the entire area where Mizos settled in the Chin Hills. Eventually, the Independent Church of Burma and many of these new Christians decided to form a Presbyterian Church in Burma, believing they were the offspring of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church. Lloyd quotes one of the leaders of the Presbyterian Church in Burma:

Because the Gospel Boxes came from the Presbyterian Church in Mizoram, many regarded themselves as the offspring of the Church, and sought a church structure, which would be faithful to that pattern. They saw it as church with long traditions, sound doctrine and a good, broadly based form of church government.³⁴⁹

It is true that *Chanchintha Dak* sought to bring about church planting, but not a new denomination or a Presbyterian Church. Despite much effort, the Independent Church of Burma ultimately failed to join the Mizoram Presbyterian Church. In the meantime, however, the desire to form a Presbyterian Church was still alive, and so by the common consensus, the Presbyterian Church of Burma was ultimately established on February 18, 1956 with 16 elders in 12 Mizo villages. The first meeting was held on February 5, 1958 at Losau Primary School.³⁵⁰ The Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod meeting of February 1959 resolved to send one pastor (Pastor Lalthanga) to help this

³⁴⁷ Robuanga, *Ka Khualzin*, 86. Robuanga, however, did not mention the reason for this.

³⁴⁸ Lloyd, *History*, 354.

³⁴⁹ Ibid, 354

³⁵⁰ Dengthuama, *Presbyterian Church*, 27.

newly planted Presbyterian Church.³⁵¹

4.1.5.3. Revival

Chanchintha Dak was the greatest revival upsurge, argues Vanlalchhuanawma.³⁵²

Chanchintha Dak undoubtedly has become the catalyst for the stirring of the revival in the Mizoram Presbyterian Church as well as the churches in Burma. Lalchhuanliana lends support for this assertion: “It turned out to be a blessing not only for the Mizos in the Chin Hills but also a spiritual blessing for the church in Mizoram. It produced revival in every church.”³⁵³ Zairema the first Mizo Secretary of the Presbyterian Church Mission writes in a report:

You will have probably heard from our Missionaries of the “Gospel Mail” sent to the Chin Hills...The response was amazing. Gifts of books and money came in great numbers and the villagers offered to carry the boxes containing them in relays, each village handing them on to the next. In the wake of this great enthusiasm for the Gospel Mail the revival also spread not only in the Lushai Hills but in the Chin Hills also.³⁵⁴

Vanlalchhuanawma further testifies to the *Chanchintha Dak*’s impact: “It may not be an exaggeration to say that the event led to a wholesale revival in Mizoram and an unprecedented evangelization of the Mizos in Burma. There had been no more sweeping and overpowering revival stirring in Mizoram than that produced by the Gospel Mail.”³⁵⁵ *Chanchintha Dak* not only brought revival to the people in Mizoram and Burma, but also physical healings. Considerable miraculous signs were experienced in Burma. God used the hands and voices of those involved in *Chanchintha Dak* in a similar way to Joshua’s experience: “I will give you every place

³⁵¹ Robuanga, *Ka Khualzin*, 113. Saiaithanga, *Mizo*, 121-122.

³⁵² Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 436

³⁵³ Lalchhuanliana, *Chanchintha Dak* (Aizawl: Synod Press, 1992), 1. Here after cited as Lalchhuanliana, *Chanchintha*.

³⁵⁴ Thanzauva, *Report*, 196

³⁵⁵ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 441.

where you set your feet, as I promised Moses.”³⁵⁶ These miraculous signs further supported and spread the revival through Mizoram.

This *Chanchintha Dak* revival movement in the traditional Mizo way of life challenged western Christianity and worship. Western Christianity and particularly its contemplative and conservative worship style seemed out of place and incompatible with the Mizo tribal customs such as drinking, singing, and dancing together while celebrating festivals. People would shout at the top of their voices to address friends, and express feelings of joy whilst working in the *jhum* and walking in the *jhum* path. The *Chanchintha Dak* movement in Mizoram was a fresh cultivation of the traditional Mizo way of life. The expression of joy, shouting, and singing songs was nothing new in Mizo culture and it was natural to praise God in the same way. Since the people involved in *Chanchintha Dak* were eager to see the movement spread, *Chanchintha Dak* was used to translate traditional expression of the feelings within Mizo life into an evangelistic and worship context. The *Hnatlang* spirit encouraged *Chanchintha Dak* evangelism which could be seamlessly applied in the life of a village farmer, for example, praising God became an integral part of his traditional expression of feelings whilst going about his work. Out of the *Chanchintha Dak* movement, thus, came a distinctive Mizo Christian Missiology and indigenous way of worship.

4.2. Tlangau: Community Herald

Since some gospel communicators have often underestimated the importance of cultural factors that may have assisted in the carrying of the gospel message among the Mizos, one must first understand the centrality of the *Tlangau* in evangelistic work. Communicators of the gospel may place a priority on the preservation of the purity of

³⁵⁶ See Robuanga, *Ka Khualzin*, 86. (Note: Robuanga did not mention the detail reason)

the gospel and its doctrinal formulations, but a primary cultural factor, such as the *Tlangau*, may have lead to compromises in its purity. Many Christians may be slow to reflect critically on the impact of their own cultural heritage on their understanding and interpretation of the gospel. Others have overestimated the importance of cultural factors and thus have watered down the essence of the gospel message. As a result, a critical analysis must be made to determine what extent '*Tlangau*' was one of the central factors in influencing Mizo Christianity and its mission particularly for the construction of Mizo missiology.

The position and function of *Tlangau* endures in the Mizo Christian context, and actually shapes the way in which Mizo Christians understand the gospel and the evangelistic enterprise. In the year 1899, five years after the arrival of the gospel in Mizoram, the first Mizo converts Khuma and Khara became an active '*Gospel Tlangau*' by traveling to different villages where they announced their newfound faith. They were known to say, '*Isua hi lo ring ve tawh rawh u!*' (Come and believe Jesus!).³⁵⁷ The early Mizo converts and emerging church leaders apparently embraced the *Tlangau* concept, consciously or unconsciously, and applied this (*Tlangau*) approach for the successful approach for the Gospel proclamation. In Mizo society it was a norm to listen to '*Tlangau*' and to respond to it as necessity arose; likewise, the gospel '*Tlangau*' carried the weight of necessity and urgency: "Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2), for example. Pastor Vanchhunga, one of the first Mizo ordained ministers, told Lalhmuaka how he applied *Tlangau* mission approach in his early preaching.³⁵⁸ Two pioneer Christians, Zathanga and Parima, applied this *Tlangau*

³⁵⁷ See Lloyd, *History*, 59; Saiaithanga, *Mizo*, 16.

³⁵⁸ Lalhmuaka, *Zoram*, 111, 'Pastor Vanchhunga told me his evangelism tour to Lunglei with Lianphunga was like this: "I was reading the Gospel of Luke at Darmaka's Village, Pukpui Street. Darmaka suddenly appeared with his Kukri and said to me, "do you want me to rip off your head as well as your book?"' (Translation)

approach in their early evangelism.³⁵⁹ In the year 1903, Thankunga and Zotawna were appointed to make known the glad tidings.³⁶⁰

The Mizoram Presbyterian Church's first Christian news magazine "*Krista Tlangau*" (Christ Herald) was published after one decade of Mizo Christianity in October 1911. Even to this day, this magazine is one of the most outstanding, largest printed and subscribed to Christian magazines in Mizoram. This magazine was the outcome of the first generation of Christian enthusiast leaders (including Pu R.Dala, Pu Zakunga, Pu Thangruaia, Pu Suaka, Pu Zotuawnga, Rev.L.H.Thanga, Pu Dohnuna and Pu Daia), all of whom had first considered this publication and generously contributed Rs, 400/- from their own pockets during a most difficult financial crisis of Mautam³⁶¹ famine. Mizoram Presbyterian Church use *Krista Tlangau* to inform the public, which is particularly effective for staying connected with the local church ministries and for the '*Gospel Tlangau*'. The first edition of *Krista Tlangau* stated the purpose of publishing this news magazine:

This magazine is designed only for the Christian ministry and the word of God. It will also covered Mizoram Churches and other churches news, God's miracle, explanation of difficult biblical words, words of encouragements and the things which are yet to be discovered...³⁶²

The English Missionaries Rev. J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge in 1894 published a magazine, which they called "*Missionary Tlangau*". This magazine plays an important role in the church ministry, as well as in the mission field to this day. The website of the Baptist Church of Mizoram gives a clear picture of where the church stands in terms

³⁵⁹ Ibid, 115. 'Zathanga and Parima traveled to southwest Lunglei; they would put down their bags and proclaim the gospel (au lauh lauh= to herald repeatedly) in the street even before finding a house to stay'(Translation)

³⁶⁰ BMS, Report, 1901-1938, 8. "During the rains, when traveling is impossible, they have been receiving further teaching from us, and now that the cold weather has come again, they are making known the glad tidings among their own tribesmen."

³⁶¹ 'Mau' means bamboo; 'tam' means to die off. The Mizoram bamboos flower and fruit and die down periodically about every fifty years after flowering and fruiting. This occurrence is followed by a plague of rats, which devour the rice crops and cause a famine.

³⁶² Mizoram Presbyterian Church, *Krista Tlangau*, December 1911, 1. And also see Lloyd, History, 244-245

of mission and how much this particular magazine contributes in the walk of its mission enterprises.³⁶³

In 1918, the Salvation Army of Mizoram was formed under the leadership of Kawlkhuma.³⁶⁴ The first newspaper was named '*Sipai Tlangau*' (Army Herald) and was published in 1934.³⁶⁵ Major Vanlalfela the present editor of '*Sipai Tlangau*' explains the reason why this magazine was called "*Sipai Tlangau*' by the founders: "...after discussion, they [the founders] unanimously agreed to translate the existing Salvation Army Magazine, *War Cry*.³⁶⁶ *Sipai Tlangau* plays a foundational part of the *Mizoram Chhandamna Sipai Pawl* (Mizoram Salvation Army) for the survival and maintenance of the ministry to this day.

Another religious magazine called '*Israel Tlangau*' has been published since 1987 by a certain group of Mizo people who believe that they were one of the lost tribes of Israel,

³⁶³ At present BCM operates in seven states in India among 20 people groups or tribes and has missionaries to five foreign countries. About 600 churches have been established consisting in total of 48,680 members. Apart from sending Mizo missionaries, the Church also supports several local workers, and at present the number is 233. On average, the number of new converts is about a thousand in a year. (<http://www.mizobaptist.org>. Internet accessed on 12.02.2008).

³⁶⁴ See C. L. Hminga, *The life and witness of the churches in Mizoram* (Serkawn: Literature Committee Baptist Church of Mizoram, 1987) 139. Here after cited as Hminga, *Life and Witness*.

³⁶⁵ B. Lalthangliana, in *Mizo Literature* (Mizo Thu leh Hla). Special Edition (Khatla, Aizawl: M.C.Lalrinthanga. (Mizo Literacy Centenary 1894-1994, 1993) 317. "In the beginning of the year 1934 Chhandamna Sipai Pawl (Salvation Army) published at Lila Printing Works, Calcutta. This is a monthly Magazine containing 8 pages. Pu. Laldena was the first Editor. It was published under the guidance of the Plain officers and consequently the outside matters were more written than the Mizoram. This publishing includes, sermon, individual testimony and growth, and development of the Salvation Army in Mizoram. Here after cited as Lalthangliana, *Mizo*.

³⁶⁶ Available from the website of the Salvation Army International Heritage Centre. House 14, The William Booth College Denmark Hill, London, SE5 8BQ- <http://www1.salvationarmy.org.uk/history>; Internet accessed on 26.02.2007). It is the name of the Salvation Army first magazine published in December 27, 1879. "Thus General William Booth began his first article on the first page of the first number of the *War Cry* on Saturday 27th December 1879. How the name was chosen has not been recorded, but. It is easy to imagine that such Salvation Army choruses as "Ever is our war cry, victory!" influenced the decision... It was a time, too, when boys' stories featured Red Indians with war paint and war cries; the newspapers had also been full of accounts of the Zulu war and of the warriors shouting as they charged."

particularly descendants of Manasseh or Ephraim. Most writers agree that Saichhuma³⁶⁷ and Challianchhunga³⁶⁸ were the pioneers of this view. The present editor and composer of the name of this journal '*Israel Tlangau*', shared the reason why they used the word '*Tlangau*' as such: "I felt the immediate needs (in reference to Bible verse Joel 2:15 '*Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast*'; RSV) of doing *Tlangau* so that the entire Mizo people could hear and soon realize that they (Mizos) were truly one of the lost tribe of Israel."³⁶⁹ This view as well as '*Israel Tlangau*' had a great influence on the Mizo that, within a few years, at least one hundred people joined this group. Chhinlung Israel People Convention (CIPC) was formed on July 7, 1994 under the leadership of Lalchhanhima Sailo not only to promote Mizo Israel identity but also to employ this view as a political agenda.³⁷⁰ Accordingly they submitted the appeal of memorandum to the General Secretary of UNO on Feb 10, 1998 in which they explicitly appealed their opinion that the Mizos were one of the lost tribes of Israel.³⁷¹

The entire Bible was translated into the Mizo language in 1959.³⁷² The pioneer missionaries J.H. Lorrain and F.W.Savidge, with the help of Suaka³⁷³ and Thangphunga,³⁷⁴ did the first translation work.³⁷⁵ In order to accomplish this, the pioneer missionaries had to work diligently to learn the Mizo language since Mizo had

³⁶⁷ Saichhuma was born at South Hlimen and was ordained as elder of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church in 1926. He was well known as a composer of 'Mizoram Political Psalm', which was about prophecy or revelation that Mizo were one of the lost tribes of Israel. (See Biaksiana p. 4, 11).

³⁶⁸ Challianchhunga was born at Buallawn a small village in the north Mizoram. He was well known as a street preacher who used to go to the street and preach (*Tlangau*) the word of God.

³⁶⁹ Personal interview with Ms Zodingliani on 12.02.2008.

³⁷⁰ P.C. Biaksiana, *Mizo Israel: Chhinlung Israel People Convention* (Aizawl, Mizoram: Omniprint offset, 2003) 36. Here after cited as Biaksiana, *Mizo Israel*.

³⁷¹ Available at <http://www.travelblog.org/Photos/22102.html>, Internet accessed on 17.02.2008), The Chhinlung Chhuak as we called our self or the Chin-Lushai etc. as called by the British Government popularly known as the Mizo in Indian constitution are the lost tribe of Israel - of the tribe of MANNASEH and EPHRAIM the sons of Joseph through his Egyptian wife Asenath daughter of Potipherah priest of on Genesis 41:45, 51, 52.

³⁷² Zairema, *Kan Bible Hi* (Kolkata: Swapna Printing Works, 2003). 177. Here after cited as Zairema, *Kan Bible*.

³⁷³ Suaka a Chief of Durtlang village was one of the first Mizo literate persons. He knew Bengali, which was helpful for communicating with the missionaries.

³⁷⁴ Thangphunga was also one of the Mizo literates lived at Durtlang village.

³⁷⁵ See Zairema, *Kan Bible*, 167.

no written script up to that point in time. They learned the language from two books: T.H. Lewin, “Progressive Colloquial Exercise in Lushai language”, and Natha, Brozo, “Grammar of the Lushai Language”. These were the only printed books to learn the Mizo language available at the time of the pioneer missionaries.³⁷⁶ In August 1896, the translation work was started initially from Luke, John and Acts based on the Revised Version.³⁷⁷ But at the end of the year 1897, J.H. Lorain and F.W. Savidge left Mizoram before printing these translations. The first printing was done with the help of the Welsh Presbyterian Church pioneer missionary D.E. Jones, who arrived in Mizoram on August 31, 1897. D.E. Jones wrote a brief report:

In June the first printed copies of the Gospels of Luke and John, and the book of Acts in good large type and on the style of the Revised Version, come to hand. About 150 copies were sold before the end of the year. The people say they are difficult to read not because of any stiffness in the translation, but because it is also different to their mode of thinking.³⁷⁸

D.E. Jones continued the translation work of the Bible, and contributed a remarkable volume of additional work with the help of Pu. Chhunruma and Pu.Vanchhunga. He translated five books: Gospel According to Matthew, I & II Corinthians, Hebrews and Revelation. Another missionary, Edwin Rowlands, who arrived in Mizoram on December 1898, also extended a helping hand for the translation work. It is unknown exactly how many books he translated, but it is known that he translated Mark in 1911 and made a draft of the epistles Philippians, Colossians, and I & II Thessalonians not long after. It is significant to notice that Pu. Thanga (who was the first Mizo student finishing High School Leaving Certificate [HSLC] equivalent to British Graduate Certificate Secondary Education [GCSE] translated the book of Daniel and Proverbs in the year 1915.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁶ Ibid, 167

³⁷⁷ Ibid, 168-169.see also BMS, *Report*, 6

³⁷⁸ Thanzauva, Reports, 6.

³⁷⁹ See Zairema, *Kan Bible*, 171.

F.W. Savidge and J.H. Lorrain returned to Mizoram on March 13, 1903 to continue the mission work, this time particularly focused on the southern part of Mizoram. As soon as they arrived, the translation work began again. This time they had a number of literate and educated Mizos who could help with the translation work, which included Pastor Zathanga, Pastor Challiana, Pastor Chuaftera, Pu Darruma and Pu Darchhunga. Within a few years, the New Testament translation was completed through the untiring commitment of these people. Lorrain writes in a 1915 Report: “The completion of the translation of the New Testament into the Lushai language is at last within sight, and sometime in 1916 we hope to have the whole book in the hands of the people.”³⁸⁰

During World War I (1914-1918), some missionaries left Mizoram including J.H. Lorrain who was responsible at that time for the translation work. Rev. F.J. Sandy, who arrived in Mizoram on January 17, 1914, took a further step in the translation process, namely the translation of the Old Testament into the Mizo language. Sandy was well educated and considered one of the best students while studying theology at the Aberystwyth Theological Seminary.³⁸¹ He translated four Old Testament books including Nahum, Micah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. Dr. Fraser, one of the Welsh missionaries, also translated the book of Jonah. In order to complete the remaining translation work, the church both in the north and south entrusted people who would take necessary steps to make drafts of the remaining books, which the committee would be responsible to finalize. The following are those entrusted individuals in the north - Rev. Chhuahkhama, Rev.Saiaithanga, Rev. Liangkhaia, Rev. Thanga, Pu Muka, Pu Pasena, Pu Vanchuanga, Rev.Zairema, Rev. J.M. Lloyd and Mr. Basil. E. Jones. In the south Rev. Chuaftera, Rev.Zathanga, Rev.Challiana, Rev. J.H. Lorrain, Rev.W.A.R.Wengner, Rev. F. Raper, Rev.H.W.Carter, Ms. E.M. Chapman,

³⁸⁰ BMS, Reports, 127.

³⁸¹ See Hluna, *Mizoram*, 93.

Rev.C.L.Hminga, Pi. Zirtiri, Pu. Thala. Finally, 62 years after the arrival of Christianity, the entire Bible translation into the Mizo language was completed in 1956, and three years later, was published in 1959.³⁸²

Mizo is not an exemption from the fact that the act of translation plays an important role in redefining and altering cultures. The process of translating the Bible into Mizo was not socially, culturally, and theologically an isolated event. There is no doubt the translation had a massive impact on the development, enrichment, and promotion of the Mizo language. On the other hand, the influences of both the Mizo traditional cultural practices as well as foreign cultures (western cultures), were inevitable in the translation. One cannot be entirely sure, but there are enough indications to form a heuristic hypothesis, that that Mizos originally understood the Bible, missionaries, church, and Christianity on the basis, not of an imported message, but rather on their own cultural terms. And, most importantly, the primary Mizo categories and social institutions were preserved in Bible translation and the church organization, especially the *Tlangau*.

Tlangau and its related words are extensively used in the Mizo Bible. The first is used in Exodus 32:5b (*tin Arona chu a tlangau va, "Naktukah hian Lalpa tan kut awm rawh se"*³⁸³ *ati a*) where Aaron announced or proclaimed (*tlangu*) a sacred day for God. In this verse the word *tlangu* is used as a 'verb'. The second is in Daniel 3:4a (*Tin, ring takin tlangau a lo au va,*³⁸⁴) where king Nebuchadnezzar's 'herald' (*tlangu*) announced or proclaimed his command. In this verse *Tlangau* is used as 'pronoun' (herald). Examples abound throughout Scripture of this *Tlangau* word and meaning.

³⁸² See Zairema, *Kan Bible*, 175-177.

³⁸³ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a festival to the LORD" (RSV)

³⁸⁴ The herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages (RSV)

Beside these, the verb '*tlangaupui*' which means 'to herald,' to proclaim, or to make known is used 20 times in different verses both in Old Testament and New Testament. In Psalm 40: 9a (*Inkhawmna ropui takah chuan felna chu ka tlangaupui a*)³⁸⁵ the word 'told' (*tlangaupui*) is used as the Psalmist foretells that work of wonder, the redemption by Lord Jesus Christ. In Psalm 50:6 we read in English '*the heavens 'declare' his righteousness*' (RSV). In this verse the word 'declare' is translated in Mizo as '*tlangaupui*'. God sent Jonah to Nineveh in order to warn against their wickedness (Jonah 1:2). In this verse the English word 'cry out' is translated as '*tlangaupui*'. But the meaning of the word 'cry out' in Mizo could be interpreted as '*tap chhuak*'.

In a New Testament example, Jesus encouraged his disciples not to fear at the time of persecution. He told them to *tlangaupui* (proclaim) from the housetops what they heard by whisper.³⁸⁶ Again, the word 'proclaim' is translated as '*tlangaupui*' in this verse whereas the literal meaning of 'proclaim' in Mizo is '*puangzar*'³⁸⁷. A man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit proclaimed (*tlangaupui*) in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him (Mark 5:20 RSV). In Luke 8:39, Jesus healed a demon-possessed man and asked him to proclaim (*tlangaupui*) what he has done for him. When Philip went to Samaria and 'proclaimed the Christ there' (Acts 8:5 *Krista thu a tlangaupui a*), his message was 'the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ' (Acts 8:12). 12:3; Act 8: 5; (9:20; and in the synagogues immediately he proclaimed Jesus, saying, "He is the Son of God."). Revelation 14:6, Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim (*tlangaupui*) to those who dwell

³⁸⁵ I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; see, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD.

³⁸⁶ What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops (Matthew 10:27 RSV).

³⁸⁷ J.F. Laldailova, *English-Lushai Dictionary* (Guwahati: Bhargoba Offset, 1995) 419. Here after cited as Laldailova, English.

on earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.

A different English word ‘preach/preached/preaches/preaching’ is translated as ‘*tlangaupui*’ in the following RSV Bible verses:

Acts 10: 42: And he commanded us to preach (*tlangaupui*) to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. Acts 19:13; then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches (*tlangaupui*).” Acts 20:25. “And now, behold, I know that all you among whom I have gone preaching (*tlangaupui*) the kingdom will see my face no more.” Galatians 2:2; “I went up by revelation; and I laid before them (but privately before those who were of repute) the gospel which I preach (*tlangaupui*) among the Gentiles, lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain. Colossians 1:23 provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which has been preached (*tlangaupui*) to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. I Peter 3:19; in which he went and preached (*tlangaupui*) to the spirits in prison.

Another word ‘*Tlangaupuitu*’ is used in I Timothy 2:7, where Paul identified him as the one who was appointed as a *Tlangaupuitu* (Herald) of the gospel. The word *Tlangaupuitu* literally means ‘assistance of herald’ or ‘helper of herald’, that the Mizo Bible translators and interpreters apparently identified in Jesus Christ as the main *Tlangau* (Herald), whereas Paul as the assistance or helper. God directly spoke to Noah and chose him to be the herald (*Tlangau*) of divine judgment as well as a herald (*Tlangau*) of righteousness. As a herald (*Tlangau*), he proclaimed to all, that which God had committed to his trust (Genesis 6:13-22).

The Prophets’ mouths spoke commands, requests, and general information. While God could have done it Himself, he interposed Prophets and certain individuals as His herald (*Tlangau*). God’s Word, however, was no less effective when He commanded it to be spoken by a man, than if He had spoken it from heaven, Himself. God placed Prophets in the midst between Him and his countrymen, so as to be the herald (*Tlangau*) of future

events, not only in words, but also by a visible symbol. The Prophet, like its Mizo corollary *Tlangau*, therefore makes known what would happen, by the command of God. It was common that the herald (*Tlangau*) of God's wrath was made evident to his people, and thus God discharges the office of a herald (*Tlangau*), and summons the nations to appear before the judgment seat of God. Similarly, as a typical Mizo Chief selected *Tlangau*, God selected different heralds in order to announce His plans, commands, and any necessary information to be given to His people.

4. 3. Conclusion:

How did *Hnatlang* influence growth and shape Mizo Christianity? The church and missions grew rapidly among the Mizos. Some attribute this growth to various factors such as the influence of the British administration. Some scholars believe that British administration of provision of peace, communication and law was helpful for European missionaries. The missionaries were permitted to do their mission enterprises under the control of the British. The British administration entrusted the missionaries with the educational development of the Mizos, provided financial help to the missionary's efforts and delegated some administrative power to the missionaries.

It was more likely that the Mizo traditional culture, itself, was the major factor in which *Hnatlang* played an important role for the foundation of Mizo Christianity and its missiology. Several traditional cultural practices have their roots in the idea of *Hnatlang* including: *Fangrual*, *Beihrual*, *Chanchintha Dak*, and *Tlangau*. The practice of *Fangrual* was an established cultural norm amongst the Mizos, and it was easily adopted for the evangelizing of villages. *Beihrual* was demonstrated to be an important factor in the growth of Church membership, and the same *Beihrual* practice continues to this day. The *Chanchintha Dak Hnatlang* emerged out of a need in the Chin Hills of

Burma and it brought the gospel to the unchurched, served the poor, promoted literature, promoted unity among the Christians, and ultimately was responsible for the formation of a denomination in Burma. Finally, *Tlangau* was very important in the growth of the church and understanding of the gospel. *Tlangau* was an established practice that held through the transition to Christianity. And the concept of *Tlangau* was a central idea used in the translation of the Bible and thus, promoted a seamless understanding of the gospel, while establishing a unique Mizo cultural identity with the gospel. These practices of *Hnatlang* were the primary factors in influencing Mizo Christianity and its mission.

There is considerable evidence for the reasons why *Hnatlang* must be given credit as the fundamental factor that contributed to changes in society and the rapid growth of Christianity, and particularly for shaping Mizo missiology. Mizo missiology is conducted by way of *Hnatlang* even to this day, where the sharing of joy and sorrow, contribution of their talent, time and wealth, making every possible effort to share their faith with others, *et al.* The pioneer Christians established a way of missiology based on *Hnatlang* (the traditional communitarian society) where all people could fully and effectively become involved, where everyone could lean on each other for support and help where needed. *Hnatlang* today is the Christian principle of love and fellowship.

Christianity was cultivated by the practice and spirit of *Hnatlang* that shaped peoples' lives long before modern economic, socio-political, and religious norms were established. Scholars give credit to the Pioneer Missionary attitude and approach, isolation of the land, God's sovereign means for the preparation of the gospel, and the British occupation and administration. However, *Hnatlang* cultural practice undoubtedly played the most crucial role, while these other circumstances for social

change and growth of Christianity have their place. Thus, *Hnatlang* influenced the growth of Mizo Christianity and in turn shaped and developed Mizo mission.

HNATLANG: INDIGENOUS ECCLESIOLOGY AND MISSIOLOGY

5. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we witnessed the crucial role that *Hnatlang* played in the dynamic interaction between the gospel and Mizo culture. Mizos appropriated their cultural practice into Christianity and its mission. The Christian ethics and concept of church were comparable to the fundamental values of Mizo culture and so Christianity was readily received.

We have discussed how the pioneer Christians preached their newfound faith, establishing new churches and bringing a new way of life through Christianity. By adopting traditional *Hnatlang* approaches, mass evangelism (such as *Fangrual*, *Beihrual* and *Chanchintha Dak*) took place. Additionally, *Tlangau* – community herald and *Tlawmngaihna* - spirit of *Hnatlang* played an important role.

In this chapter, continuing the investigation into the legacy of the Mizo pioneer Christians and their culture, we will first examine the general meaning of indigenization, its practices and problems, and then Mizo church indigenization. How was Mizo *Hnatlang* appropriated into Christianity to help establish, grow and mature an indigenous church, to be a force for local, national and international mission?

5.1. Indigenization Meaning and Practices

The term “indigenize” means “bring under the control of native people”.³⁸⁸ In terms of Christian mission, it refers to making the Gospel understandable to the local people. Smalley defines “indigenous church” as “a group of believers who live out their life,

³⁸⁸ Soanes, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 568.

including their socialized Christian activity, in the pattern of the local society and for whom any transformation of that society comes out of their felt needs under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures.”³⁸⁹ This word is used in two senses, first the question of the emancipation of younger churches, and their freedom to develop on their own lines without rigid control from the west. Second, what should be the relation of Christian church to the non Christian past which it has inherited?³⁹⁰ “Indigenization meant the translation into “native” cultures of a *Missio Dei* previously adopted by the missionary”³⁹¹ says Ruy O. Costa. In short, Christian indigenization means making the Gospel understood and acceptable to the local people.

From the inception of Christianity, the encounter between gospel and cultures had been taking place. Related words of indigenization such as adaptation, accommodation, incarnation, acculturation, contextualization, enculturation and inculturation are extensively used to study the concept of gospel and cultures. However, in this study, detailed study of these related concepts will not be conducted. Rather a brief analysis of the indigenization concept is conducted to re-interpret Mizo church indigenization.

The old term “indigenization” is used here rather than other words that are commonly used in contemporary missiological studies for the following reasons. First, the assumption is made that indigenization, or indignity, succeeded in Mizoram whereas it failed in many other parts of India. Second, an attempt is made to prove that indigenous Christianity was established in Mizoram from the inception of Christianity. Observation

³⁸⁹ Smalley, William A, Cultural Implication of an Indigenous Church, in Crossman, Meg, *Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategic, and Cultural Dimensions of God's plan for the Nations* (Seattle WA: YWAM publishing, 2003. 344). Here after cited as Smalley, *Cultural Implication*.

³⁹⁰ Stephen Neill, ‘*Indigenization*’ in Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission edited by Stephen Neill, Gerald H. Anderson and John Goodwin (London: United Society for Christian Literature, Lutterworth Press, 1970, 275). Here after cited as Neill, *Indigenization*.

³⁹¹ Ruy O. Costa, ‘*Introduction: Inculturation, Indigenization and Contextualization*’ in One Faith Many Cultures, edited by Ruy O. Costa (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Boston Theological Institute, 1988, xii) Here after cited as Costa, *Inculturation*.

is made that, the initiative in respect of indigenization came mostly from the newly converted but not from the missionaries.³⁹² Foreign missionaries did not plant churches, but simply helped Mizo converts develop their own spiritual gifts and leadership abilities and gradually developed their own churches that have always been self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing. Finally, we discover that Mizo Christian faith and practice is rooted in their traditional culture *Hnatlang*.

The church began as a tiny Jewish sect. The original Christian community in Jerusalem was exclusively Jewish.³⁹³ But Christianity grew not only among the Jews but also among the Gentiles. It was written that Paul and Barnabas were giving away the faith to Gentiles that caused problems among them. When challenged, Paul sharply “disputed and debated” the issue, the result was the watershed decision of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15.³⁹⁴ There should be no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Galatians 2:11). Paul recognized that God engraved his law on every human heart, including the heart of the pagan (Rom 2:14). Newbiggin rightly asserts, “Every statement of the gospel in words is conditioned by the culture of which those words are a part, and every style of life that claims to embody the truth of the gospel is a culturally conditioned style of life.”³⁹⁵

“Christianity, more than any religion has been able to outgrow every nationality with which it once seemed fully (even hopelessly) identified, replanting itself in distant

³⁹² See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 449. But according to Bosch, “often the initiative in respect of indigenization did not come from the newly converted but from the missionaries with a sentimental interest in exotic cultures, who insisted on the “otherness” of the young churches and treated them as something that had to be preserved in their pristine form.”

³⁹³ Luzbetak, *Church*, 85

³⁹⁴ Robert A. Blincoe, *As the Waters Cover the Sea: His Glory Expands to the Nations, in Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategic, and Cultural Dimensions of God’s Plan for the Nations*, Edited by Meg Crossman (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 2003, 99). Here after cited as Blincoe, *As the Water*.

³⁹⁵ Newbiggin, *Foolishness*, 4.

cultures in completely unanticipated ways”³⁹⁶ Sanneh rightly says, “Christianity has become as pluralist dispensation of enormous complexity, and religious statesmanship requires the flexible approach of translatability to foster this pluralism rather than opposing it as a threat.”³⁹⁷

Henry Venn (1796-1873) and Rufus Anderson (1796-1880) simultaneously developed a strategy of indigenization in response to the extreme paternalism exercised by western missionaries in the early 19th century, particularly in Asia. Accordingly many 19th century Western missionaries were inspired by the goal of planting self-propagating, self-supporting, self-governing churches throughout Africa and the rest of the developing world planting an “indigenous” church. Anthony Norris Groves (1795-1853) favoured no foreign denomination or missionary society, but rather encouraged full co-operation between Protestant missionaries to encourage indigenous initiatives. John Livingstone Nevius (1829-1893) criticized the missionaries' practice of paying national workers out of mission funds, believing the healthy local church should be able to support its own local workers. Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) founder of China Inland Mission actively encouraged an indigenous church; he learned local dialects, adopted local dress, and trained indigenous leaders to lead.

An Indigenization movement was introduced in China at the end of the nineteenth century lasting up to the middle of the twentieth century. During that time, a number of Chinese scholars emerged in politics, trying to save China from westernization. Among them, Chinese Christian scholars wanted to introduce Christianity into the Chinese culture. The five Indigenization approaches were: Wu Leichuan (Inclusive); Wang

³⁹⁶ Blincoe, *As the Waters*, 100.

³⁹⁷ Sanneh, *Translating*, 6.

Zhixin (Harmonization); Wei Zuoming (Fulfilment); Wang Mingdao (Independent) and Zhang Yijing (Judgement).³⁹⁸

Wu Leichuan (Inclusive) was a professor of Yang Jing University. He believed there was no conflict between Christianity and Chinese culture. He claimed that whilst Christianity was inadequate to replace the fine Chinese culture, it could be a companion. Wang Zhixin (Harmonization) believed that Christianity was a universal cultural system that could accommodate both eastern and western cultures as they are. Wei Zuoming (Fulfilment) believed that Christianity was the answer for China, with Jesus the focus of the Gospel. Wang Mingdao (Independent) was a popular evangelist in the 1920-30s, who believed in God's sovereignty and the depravity of man. Wang divided the world into believers vs. non-believers, God vs. Satan and light vs. darkness, and as a result of this view he did not pay much attention to traditional culture. Zhang Yijing (Judgement) proposed to use Christianity as a great metaphor to the Chinese culture. His love towards Christianity did not affect his interest in Chinese culture. Zhang believed that Christ was in charge of history and hoped that Christianity would compensate for the shortcomings of Chinese culture.³⁹⁹

5.2. Indian Church Indigenization

Robert de Nobili, a Tuscan Jesuit missionary arrived in Southern India on May 20, 1605. He pioneered new methods of accommodation, adopting many Brahmin customs that were not, in his opinion, incompatible with Christianity. This practice was very controversial in the following decades. In sharp contrast to Portuguese missionaries, he

³⁹⁸ Available at <http://www.yutopian.com/religion/history/Indigenization.html>, (Internet accessed on 15.3.2008)

³⁹⁹ Ibid,

attempted to present the gospel in a form less alien to Hindus where he worked.⁴⁰⁰ Opposing westernization and western missionaries, Nadar Christians left the Church Missionary Society and formed “The Hindu Church of the Lord Jesus” in an attempt to indigenize their church. Lal Bihari Day, Indian pastor and author, started a movement against the inclusive missionary control of the church, but his proposal and movement was dismissed by the missionaries as unacceptable.⁴⁰¹

There was a period when the missionary movements placed Christ within western Christianity and culture. From 1857, movements rose against missionary control. Indian Christian leaders and missionary pioneers distinguished between Christ, Christianity and culture and sought to relate Christ to Indian culture, thought and tradition.

In 1877 K.C. Banerjea and J.G. Shome organized the Bengali Christian Movement, criticizing missionaries for denationalizing Indian Christians and proposing to form an indigenous church. But their proposal did not fit with the western pattern of ministry. As a result, they formed “The Calcutta Christo Samaj” emphasizing the importance of indigenization. But it was met with opposition from the missionaries and was dissolved in 1894.⁴⁰² The National Church of Madras formed in 1886 under the leadership of Dr. S. Parani Andi. He claimed that Christianity was Asiatic in origin and all Indian Christians should be part of a self-supporting and self-governing church; the church should not be bound by any western creed and confession.

In the early and middle decades of the twentieth century there was a Rethinking Movement in Indian Christianity under the leadership of P. Chenchiah, V. Chakkarai

⁴⁰⁰ Francis X. Clooney, *Christ as the Devine Guru in the Theology of Roberto de Nobili in Costa, One Faith*. 25.

⁴⁰¹ See Baago, *Pioneers*. 2.

⁴⁰² See Ibid, 6-7.

and V.C. Rajasekaran. This group's primary aim was discussion of indigenous Christianity in India. A book called 'Rethinking Christianity in India'⁴⁰³ was the outcome of this group.

From the beginning of the middle of the twentieth century, until the beginning of the twenty first century, several scholars have tried to re-interpret Indian Christianity especially on the complex issue of the relationship between gospel and culture. Some scholars have dealt with historical perspectives, the teaching of the church and culture and surveys of the past inculturation attempts⁴⁰⁴ Despite considerable attempt having been made, over all, little progress has been made due to a complex factors. However, this detailed study will not be conducted in this research.

⁴⁰³ G.V. Job, ed. *Rethinking Christianity in India* (Madras: A.N. Sudarisanam, 1938).

⁴⁰⁴ For further study read the following books: D.A. Thangasamy, *The Theology of Chenchiah with Selections from his Writings: Confessing the Faith in India Series* (Bangalore: The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society and The Literature Department of the National Council of Y.M.C.A.'s in India, 1966); Mathias A. Munddan, *Indian Christians: Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1984); Joseph Prasad Pinto, *Inculturation Through Basic Communities: An Indian Perspective*(Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1985); Rajasekaran, V. C. *Reflections on Indian Christian Theology* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1993); Roger E. Hedlund, *Quest for Identity, India's Church of Indigenous Origin: The "Little Tradition" in Indian Christianity* (Delhi: MIIS/ ISPCK, 2000); Paul M. Collins, *Christian Inculturation in India: Liturgy, Worship, and Society* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2007).

5.3. Genesis of Mizo Church Indigenization

How did the missionaries and pioneers fare in establishing an indigenous church with regard to the Mizo church development? My assumption is that *Hnatlang* played a major part and made the process easier. Christianity arrived at the end of the nineteenth century and the missionaries to Mizoram were no different to those working in neighbouring states. But the mission was so successful that, within a few decades, Mizoram almost entirely embraced Christianity. As mentioned in the previous chapter, scholars have long debated where the credit for this should lie.

When did indigenization begin? Scholars believe that the Mizo churches, particularly the Presbyterian Church, were “indigenous” in nature from the very beginning, despite their foundations in the Welsh Presbyterian Church. The churches were self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. Pioneer missionary D.E. Jones observed this very fact and described it in his report.⁴⁰⁵ The Mizo Christians managed without help from foreign Christians. In 1900, the first Mizoram Presbyterian church supported four evangelists despite having only fifteen members.⁴⁰⁶ They built their own schools and church buildings without aid or assistance.⁴⁰⁷

From the start, missionaries were supported from local church contributions. Leaders of the indigenous church oversaw its government and administration. Lloyd, one of the pioneer missionaries writes, “The Mizo church was thus on its way to taking full care of itself and becoming self-supporting, and self-propagating.”⁴⁰⁸ In short, the indigenous

⁴⁰⁵ Thanzaupa, *Report*, 9. “Khuma and Khara, who were baptized the previous year, went together on a long journey to preach. They went to the south as far as they could until they reached villages whose dialect they did not understand.”

⁴⁰⁶ Lloyd, *History*, “As early as 1900 the Christians agreed to provide for their evangelists. Four were appointed on a salary of Rs. 3 each per month. To ensure this the Christians gave a tenth of their income, and a great many have continued to do so to the present day.”

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 20. “Nine schools were opened in the country villages...they were not promised any salary; they were told that we were feeling our way...they went out gladly...and the young men built school houses.”

⁴⁰⁸ Lloyd, *History*, 122.

churches were not only built out of the wealth and strength of the Welsh Presbyterian missionaries, but by the Mizo Christians.

The pioneer Christians established self-propagating churches from the beginning, in which the members effectively witnessed their newfound faith from the context of a functioning and self-sufficient church. Lloyd says, “The church has been full of missionary zeal from the beginning and it continues full of such zeal unto this day.”⁴⁰⁹

The first believer, Khuma, expressed his commitment and heart’s desire, “If all the world refused to believe in Christ, I should still believe in Him, and I would die for Him if need be.”⁴¹⁰ The Welsh Presbyterian Church and its neighbouring sister church

(Khasia Jantia Hill Presbyterian Church) could not provide any more missionaries for Mizoram. Lloyd quotes one of the missionaries: “Edwin Rowland is reported to have

said that lack of missionaries should be taken as a sign that God wanted the Mizos to do their own evangelism.”⁴¹¹ Agreeing with him, Lloyd says, “Edwin Rowland’s confident

interpretation proved true, and the Mizo Christians began to take up the task of evangelizing the land, tentatively at first, but with more confidence as time went on.”⁴¹²

Thus, the three ‘self principles’ of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson provide a standard to identify an indigenous church, and sufficient evidence is available to show that the Mizoram Presbyterian Church met these criteria.

5.4. Hnatlang: Indigenous Ecclesiology and Missiology

As already mentioned, traditional *Hnatlang* was from the very start an intrinsic cultural element for the survival of the Church in Mizoram, the Presbyterian Church in particular. The traditional *Hnatlang* concept was consistent with the gospel writer

⁴⁰⁹ Lloyd, *History*, 290.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid, 56.

⁴¹¹ Lloyd, *History*, 56.

⁴¹² Ibid, 56.

Luke's concept of Church.⁴¹³ Through *Hnatlang*, the Mizoram Presbyterian Churches were those where no one stood alone and where no one stood still. In the following, we discuss how the Mizo people introduced traditional *Hnatlang* practices into their new found faith to develop an indigenous church and mission. In other words, how an indigenous ecclesiology and missiology was built through *Hnatlang*.

5.4.1. **Kohhran Hnatlang- Church Hnatlang**

The literal meaning of Kohhran is separated into *kokph*=call, and *hran*=separate. We will not discuss the meaning of *Kohhran* in detail here, but merely define '*Kohhran*' as a church in which an individual or group of people share a Christian belief. *Hnatlang* plays a crucial role for the very existence of the Mizo *Kohhran*. A typical Mizo Christian needs no initiation to *Hnatlang*; it is assumed as an indispensable practice for Mizo church life. *Kohhran Hnatlang* simply means "Church social work" in which church members volunteer their time and talent to develop the Church. Fundamental to the *Kohhran Hnatlang* is attention to the entire church community and its ministry including evangelism. In the following, we discuss how Mizo *Kohhran*, within the Presbyterian Church in particular, adopted different *Hnatlang* practices for its establishment, growth and development.

5.3.1.1. **Biak In Sak Hnatlang - Constructing Church Buildings**

Biak in sak Hnatlang is the term associated with church construction. Constructing church buildings was one of the most important and prominent *Hnatlang* of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church. Generally, the Mizo term *Biak* means to talk or to communicate. Lloyd defines '*Biak*' as meaning:

"...to someone with a purpose in view, to interview or to address. However, it carries religious overtones, it being the old Mizo word for worshipping through

⁴¹³ All the believers were together and had everything in common (NIV Acts 2:44)

sacrifice. It is not the word for prayer or the word for praise or the word for preaching, but it can include aspects of all three. 'In' simply means house or building."⁴¹⁴

Vanlalchhuanawma defines the term *Biak* literally as one who is addressed or spoken to, and it was traditionally understood as the object to which one must sacrifice, therefore, God. The root of the term is *bia*, that is, to 'speak' or 'talk' in common usage, but in a religious sense it means to worship. *In* means a house. *Biak In* therefore may be rendered as either a house of God or house of worship. According to Lorrain, *Biak in* means a church, a chapel, a kirk, a place of worship, a house of God, a temple, a synagogue, a mosque.⁴¹⁵ *Biak In*, therefore, simply refers here to a church building.

Right from the start, pioneer Mizo Christians built *Biak In*. Vanlalchhuanawma writes, "the construction of *Biak In* was undertaken by the Christian community, often helped by non- Christians, on a voluntary basis in the same manner that the *Zawlbuk* was always constructed by community service."⁴¹⁶ The first indigenous *Biak in* solely for the purpose of worship was built in 1903 at Sethlun village.⁴¹⁷ Christians built the second *Biak In* in 1907 at Zokhawsang village.⁴¹⁸ It was said Mizo believers held such a task with such high honour and priority that they even built *Biak In* prior to their own homes.⁴¹⁹ Where there was a believer, there was a church and where there was a church, there was a church building. No record is found of Mizo Christians asking for help from Western missionaries, nor did the missionaries encourage the construction. Everyone felt obligated and responsible for building their own *Biak In*. It was reported to the 1914 October Presbytery meeting at Aizawl that almost every village had a *Biak In* of its

⁴¹⁴ See Lloyd, *History*, 111-112.

⁴¹⁵ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 43.

⁴¹⁶ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 218.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid*, 218.

⁴¹⁸ Lloyd, *History*, 110. The Christians were allowed to build a *Biakin*, which was not only a symbol of their faith, but also an appreciation of their newfound freedom in Zokhawsang village. (It was, however, built on the outskirts of the village).

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid*, 112. Hauzika was a Christian who went to live in Chawnchhim a village on the Burma border. The villager expected the new comer to build his house at once. Instead of that he first built a chapel as there was none in the village. For him the house of God had first claim. See also Lalhmuaka, Zoram, 242.

own.⁴²⁰ D.E. Jones, F.J. Sandy and Mr. Jones write in the report of the Lushai Hills 1914:

Very little money is spent on building chapels or houses in this country so far, for just as each man builds his own house, so each church builds its own chapel with the labour of its own hands. There are no builders by trade in this country. The men are helped by the women who carry timber, bamboo or grass or leaf.⁴²¹

Early *Biak In sak Hnatlang* construction materials were quite different from those for the modern *Biak In*, but the practice of *Biak In sak Hnatlang* remains largely the same. No *Biak In* is built without *Hnatlang*. *Biak In sak Hnatlang* encouraged personal voluntary commitment, in contrast to traditional *Hnatlang* which was compulsory and often suffered absentees. Typically *lei laih Hnatlang* was organized first in which the earth was dug to level out the ground for the foundations. On certain appointed days, members of the church arrived with their own tools such as *Bawngtuthlawh* (a large hoe), *Suahdur* (a spade) and *Thirtieng* (an iron stick) and other implements. As there was no caste system, everyone (regardless of gender, wealth or age) dug the earth together. This *Hnatlang* could take several days depending upon the *Kohhran* members involved, the urgency, and the size and condition of the plot.

As soon as the digging was finished, another *Hnatlang* was organized to collect materials for the *Biak In* construction. In the early days, bamboos, trees and sun grass were collected from forests short distances away. This *Hnatlang* was organized differently depending upon the *Kohhran*. Some *Kohhran* organized mass *Hnatlang* on a particular day when all the adult members went to the jungle to collect bamboos and trees. Some *Kohhran* divided the *Hnatlang* task between its members, and each collected materials according to their own ability. They brought the materials to the plot of land where the foundations had been laid.

⁴²⁰ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 218.

⁴²¹ Thanzauva, *Report*, 55.

Instead of collecting all the materials in advance, some *Kohhran* organized *Hnatlang* to collect the material progressively or as required. Generally, each member attended *Hnatlang*, but that did not mean he or she could do everything, or that everything was done on the same day. Often it was organized so that members could contribute whenever conveniently possible. In organising *Hnatlang*, the *Kohhran* embraced Christian community, fellowship, and relationship.

It is true that *Biak In* was solely constructed through the traditional *Hnatlang* system, but questions remain about the construction, shape and how the administrative structure was maintained. The *Biak In* was neither built in the shape of a Mizo house or *Zawlbuk* (the existing traditional community institution) but in one comparable to the Presbyterian Church of Wales. Lloyd gives details of the shape of the church building and construction materials:

Nothing could be plainer than the average village chapel. It was built largely of bamboo... The doors and windows of the chapel were bamboo. The walls were of split bamboo, sometimes in the simple cross pattern, or more elaborate lattice work the diamond pattern often found in the chief's house. Naturally the floor was not on stilts like the average house, but on ground that had been leveled out and smoothed. The pulpit was a low, small erection and was liable to collapse if the preacher became too excited. The seating was primitive and consisted of planks or tree trunks sawn along the middle, standing on short posts. Such backless seats were easily made and very convenient for the women who frequently brought their babies on their backs to church. Not even the chiefs had chairs in their houses and cushions were unheard of, so the rough seating was nothing new. As rough as Jacob's pillow yet the *Biak in* were a House of God and a Gate of Heaven.⁴²²

Ground was not normally leveled or smoothed similar to the constructions of a traditional Mizo house or traditional institution house *Zawlbuk*. The new form of construction posed a greater challenge at the outset, and it always took several days to complete for preparation of the ground for a new *Biak In*. However no challenge would

⁴²² Lloyd, *History*, 111. Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 218.

defeat the *Hnatlang* spirit and resulting communitarian zeal. The new architectures style, the preaching pulpit, long benches, and chair for the worship leader were all new things. Vanlalchhuanawma writes:

No concept of a house for worship had arisen in the Mizo religion. Moreover, *Biak In* became a centre of congregational worship including singing, prayer, and preaching-unknown in the traditional religion in which most activities were carried out on plot of land called *Bawlmual* by a priest of a family of a head.⁴²³

5.4.1.2. **Biak In: An Indigenous Ecclesiology**

Several writers believe that the *Biak In* was a continuation of the traditional *Zawlbuk*. The most prominent comparisons are as follows: the village people built a *Zawlbuk* as *Hnatlang* and the members of the church built the *Biak In* as *Hnatlang* also; the *Zawlbuk* was normally located at the heart of the village near the house of the village chief, and the *Biak In* was located near the house of the pastor; the *Zawlbuk* was a community home, a focal point for the village community and the *Biak In* was also usually located at the heart of the village serving the same function. As with the *Zawlbuk*, the *Biak In* integrated the members who attended the functions in their respective social institution.⁴²⁴

Pastors and elders (*upas*) constituted the local *Kohhran* committee who held the democratic administrative responsibility for the *Biak In*, in the same way as the village chief and his *Upa* took hold of the democratic administrative responsibility of the *Zawlbuk*. The Pastor as chief of the *Kohhran* had indirect authority over the Church building, in a similar way as the village chief had only limited authority over the *Zawlbuk*. The selected *Kohhran Upa* were respected and highly honoured by the church

⁴²³ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 218.

⁴²⁴ Thanzauva, *Theology*, 177.

members as well as the whole community; likewise the village *Upas* were respected and honoured by the village community.

Almost every *Biak In* served as a school, instructing young people daily in general and religious ideals, and used to be referred to as chapel-cum-school.⁴²⁵ In 1899, Pioneer Missionary D.E. Jones erected a small hut (called *Biak In*) in front of his Bungalow. It was an all-purpose building for worship, for Sunday school, as well as for the day school.⁴²⁶ The *Zawlbuk* was a training institute for young men and boys to learn the art of wrestling, singing, dancing, oratory, handicraft, technique of war, about sex, good manners, Mizo traditions, customs, religious teachings, myths, their history and all other things essential for their lives.⁴²⁷ The essence of the *Zawlbuk* ecclesiology is that the church is a community of believers responsible for the realization of the kingdom, not of the worldly king, but of the king of kings.⁴²⁸ The transition from *Zawlbuk* to *Biak In* was not an immediate transition, but a gradual process. The increase of the *Biak In* with its modernizing influence, however, slowly reduced the need for the *Zawlbuk* existence and later led to the ultimate abandonment of the system.⁴²⁹

Zawlbuk was a community home in which the high ethical principles of *Hnatlang* and strict discipline were maintained. It had limits in membership and scope. Membership was open only to villagers, but was inclusive in the sense it admitted all the bachelors (in some case even the ladies in the village).⁴³⁰ *Biak In* was a community home in which ethical life and strict rules for its members were imposed; it also had limits in

⁴²⁵ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 218. Thanzauva, *Theology*, 177.

⁴²⁶ See Lloyd, *History*, 42. Thanzauva, *Theology*, 177.

⁴²⁷ Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 305.

⁴²⁸ Ibid, 305.

⁴²⁹ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 218.

⁴³⁰ See Thanzauva, *Theology*, 177.

membership and scope. Membership was open only to the Christians but inclusive in the sense that it admitted all the villagers who wanted to attend the worship service.

5.4.1.3. Modification of Biak In sak Hnatlang

Mizoram was gradually developing in its socio-political, economic and religious life. The interaction between the British administration and Christian missions resulted in dynamic cultural change for the Mizos. Christianity as a whole should be given the most, if not all credit, because of its work in literacy and health education, for example, which shaped a new Mizo society. However, we will not discuss the socio-cultural, economical, political or religious changes here, but rather the change brought about by *Hnatlang*, particularly the *Biak In sak Hnatlang*.

In most of the villages after the 1970's, *Biak In* was built with a more sophisticated structure and shape. Aluminium tin was used for the roofs replacing sun grass; tiles were used for the walls instead of bamboo splits. Some were built stronger using iron, brick, cement and sand. Regardless of material used or structural changes, *Biak In sak Hnatlang* construction remained a norm. However, changes in the structure of the *Biak In* inevitably changed the nature of *Biak In sak Hnatlang*. Only certain skilled people could do certain tasks, and so the *Hnatlang* requirements changed.

In the early days, using iron, cement, brick and sand was unheard of amongst the Mizos. But eventually they imported iron, cement, brick and sand from neighbouring states for use in the construction of the buildings. They also enlisted experts in construction using those materials. Nevertheless, members of the church continued *Hnatlang* by collecting

locally available materials such as rocks and sand.⁴³¹ Some churches organized *rawra chhut* (breaking rock) *Hnatlang* in which members of the church broke rocks into pieces to be used for the *Biak In* floor and roof. Sometimes they organized a mass *rawra chhut* (breaking of rock) *Hnatlang* in which at least one member from each family would come and attend the *Hnatlang*. In this case, they would break the rock together in one place; others would continue collecting rocks whilst others, particularly females, would prepare tea. By attending *Kohhran Hnatlang*, they enjoyed community fellowship and the burden of labour was lessened. Thus, class division or distinction was avoided and this may have facilitated and/or strengthened the growth and unity of believers.

A mass *Biak In sak Hnatlang* was called especially when they made concrete roofs or floors. They mixed cement, pieces of rock and sand with water, without the aid of a mixing machine (because these machines were not available or not yet introduced). *Biak In* concrete flooring or roofing was best completed in one operation, to be productive and to ensure a strong building without leaking. Therefore, the *Kohhran* would announce a mass *Hnatlang* in which all of the adult *Kohhran* members were expected to attend that one day. The main task involved mixing the concrete, and supplying materials along a human chain. In this *Hnatlang*, *Kohhran* explicitly practiced and portrayed the words “united we stand, divided we fall”.

5.4.2. Christmas *Hnatlang*

As mentioned earlier, the entire Mizo people embraced Christianity six decades following the arrival of the first missionary in the land. Cultural transformation was

⁴³¹ The writer had considerable experiences of this *Hnatlang* while living in a village called East Lungdar. The church organized *Hnatlang* in which they went to the riverbank to collect sand. It was six to seven miles away from the village and took four to five hours to return. Members of the church would go in the morning taking their own basket for carrying the sand. It was one of the most challenging *Hnatlang* as it caused real hard work. One person could only take twenty to fifty kilograms of sand depending upon the person, which is why the church had to organize several *Hnatlang* to accomplish the *Biak In*.

inevitable as traditional religious beliefs were swept away by Christianity. The prominent religious *Hnatlang* called *Raldai theu Hnatlang* was obsolete because all fear of evil spirits causing disease was gone. Christmas celebrations, or festival and feasts, replaced the public feast frequently hosted by the *Thangchhuah* and consequently this affected its related *Hnatlang*. The Mizo had three types of traditional festivals - *Chapchar Kut*⁴³², *Pawl Kut*⁴³³ and *Mim Kut*⁴³⁴ in which *Hnatlang* played a major part; but when Christianity arrived, these were replaced by Christmas celebrations. *Hnatlang* however survived with the new celebrations.

The wholesale rejection of the traditional festivals had a great effect on the Presbyterian Church and Mizo society as a whole. A series of attempts has been made to restore the traditional festivals. The first came in 1952 when the District Council was formed and a public holiday was declared in the name of these festivals.⁴³⁵ However, no one dared celebrate these festivals fearing both the church reaction and a loss of individual reputation. However, the 1962 *Chapchar Kut* (considered the least attached to the old religion of the three festivals) was celebrated under the guidance of a prominent government official named Hrangiaia. Churches, the Presbyterian Church in particular, neither approved nor made any obvious attempt to stop the celebrations but openly

⁴³² *Chapchar Kut* is a spring festival, held in the month of February or March, which was usually between cutting and burning of the Jhum. This festival is normally celebrated for seven days to give thanks to God for his protection from the possible injuries while engaging in the cutting, and for the blessings he bestowed them. This festival involved several public feasts depending upon the riches of the village people.

⁴³³ *Pawl Kut* is a harvest festival, held normally in the month of December after all the harvesting is finished. This festival is celebrated by the entire village people to give thanks to God for the agricultural blessing. There was heavy drinking and feasting during this festival.

⁴³⁴ *Mim Kut* also known as *Mitthi Kut* is an autumn festival, held normally in the month of August or September when all the crops apart from the paddy were reaped and weeded from the Jhum. Mizo believed that the spirit always revisited them and accordingly during *Mim Kut* they offered the first fruits of the crops to the departed soul. This festival is not a joyful festival and that is why they also called it "Tahna Kut" (weeping festival) like the other two festivals.

⁴³⁵ See Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 296.

criticized them in the synod meeting.⁴³⁶ Church criticism against the traditional festival prompted the government to cease *Chapchar Kut* in 1965. Another attempt was made to renew it by the student organization *Mizo Zirlai Pawl* (MZP) in March 1973. This time, objections from the church towards traditional culture had reduced and the Government of Mizoram proceeded to organise the *Chapchar Kut* celebration. Gradually, the worldview of Mizo Christians softened and traditional cultural practices, particularly the *Chapchar Kut*, found a place in the hearts of the people. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church publicly withdrew its opposition after more than ten continuous years of *Chapchar Kut*.⁴³⁷ Thus, *Chapchar Kut* is the only remaining traditional festival and is celebrated up to this day.

Mizos generally disposed of their traditional religious beliefs and cultural festivals, but the *Hnatlang* spirit and practices did not diminish because of Christianity, but rather improved and developed. The churches, the Presbyterian Church in particular, celebrated Christmas with feasts, fully supported by the *Hnatlang* system. Everyone was involved including children. Boys fed animals bought for the feasts and at times helped the adults bring green leaves from the forest. Girls helped the adults bring water from the well and firewood from the forest. *Kohhran* usually allocated *Hnatlang* responsibilities to each and every member according to their abilities and the nature of the work. Around twenty to thirty men were given *fatu*⁴³⁸ responsibility depending upon the size of the *Kohhran*. *Fatu* involved killing the animals, butchering meat, cooking

⁴³⁶ Ibid, 296. In its annual Synod meeting in 1963, the church did speak against it, “Christians are not to do anything to revive the old culture and the old life style. The Presbyterian Church severely criticized the celebrations and even dissuaded its member from participating in the next celebration.

⁴³⁷ Ibid, 297. The Presbyterian Church appeared to have progressed towards admitting the positive role of traditional culture as part of the social context of the church. In 1984 Synod Annual Conference, it was declared that culture is an important element of ethnic identity that, at the same time, may also contain elements unacceptable to the church. Therefore, we (Mizoram Presbyterian Church) need a well-defined guideline.

⁴³⁸ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 134. *fatu*, n. one who presides at a feast; one who prepares and cooks a feast, serves the guests, and clears away after they have finished. There may be several of such at a big feast and they are often relations of the one who gives the feast.

and serving food, and clearing and cleaning at the end of the feast. Another ten to twenty men were selected to obtain wild plantains, which would be used as plates for the Christmas feast.⁴³⁹ A woman from each family was expected to participate in the *Christmas Thingpurh Hnatlang* (carrying Christmas firewood from the forest). *Thingphurh Hnatlang* was usually organized well in advance so that green firewood could be dried properly. Beside these practical *Hnatlang* responsibilities, every *Kohhran* member contributed money as a Christmas offering towards the cost of the feast. Ever since Christianity removed almost all of the traditional feasts, the Christmas feast was always eagerly awaited.

5.4.3. Synod Hnatlang

As mentioned earlier, the Mizoram Presbyterian church is the largest church denomination in Mizoram consisting of more than half the population of the land. The main headquarters, called “Synod Office”, is located at Aizawl, Mizoram’s capital. The administration of the Mizoram Presbyterian church is vastly centralized, and the headquarters for all departments are based in this office. The church administration is directly overseen by the Synod Office. The synod office was built in January 1970 with an estimated amount of Rs. 1, 50, 000/-. The construction work was completed in 1977.

The Synod Executive Committee, held on October 2006, decided to demolish the old Synod Office and construct a new building. This meeting also resolved to call a *Kohhran Hnatlang* in which most of the *Kohhran* within the city of Aizawl were expected to be involved. The question is why the Mizoram Presbyterian Church called a *Hnatlang* rather than hire paid labourers or a company who could easily demolish the

⁴³⁹ Mizos traditionally ate any kind of feast by using plantains. This practice is still continued in many village churches. Eating with silver plates, plastic plates or other sophisticated plates is considered as untraditional or unusual.

building within a few days. The answer is very straightforward: by doing *Kohhran Hnatlang*, the *Kohhran* leaders seemingly wanted to retain the central power of the Synod Office and maintain and strengthen the relationship with the local *Kohhran*. Biakmawia, Synod Executive Secretary, comments, “Workers were very much excited they could attend the Synod *Hnatlang*. This *Hnatlang* united the *Kohhran* and it was a good opportunity to form new relationships with other *Kohhran* members. This *Hnatlang* explicitly demonstrated their identity, ownership and responsibility within the Synod.”⁴⁴⁰

Synod *Hnatlang* commenced January 2008. In total, there were 129 *Kohhran*, in which 4,524 members participated.⁴⁴¹ This is one of the most extensive and largest *Hnatlang* organized from the inception of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church. Synod *Hnatlang* explicitly demonstrated the *Hnatlang* upon which the Mizoram Presbyterian Church has relied up to this day.

An important analysis has been conducted of another important Synod *Hnatlang*. *Kohhran* Conference has been held every year since a Presbytery was formed in 1910.⁴⁴² The Presbyterian *Kohhran* was growing numerically and consequently the Presbytery meeting of October 1923 decided to divide the Presbytery meeting into three Presbyteries.⁴⁴³ In 1925, the three Presbyteries formed a joint conference called “Assembly” that met every year like the original Presbytery. Since 1953, this Assembly meeting was called “Synod”.

⁴⁴⁰ Interview No. I (13).

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Thanzauva, *Report*, 43. A presbytery has been formed for the whole of North Lushai, and as Aijal is a central place for the whole of the District, it met there. As no deacons had been elected, it was decided that each village should appoint two representatives in addition to the regular evangelists. Some important matters were considered.

⁴⁴³ Remthanga, *Synod*, 17.

From the beginning the host (local *Kohhran*) assumed the responsibility for the serving the needs of the conferences by providing accommodation, food and a hall for *Biak In* to meet in. Very often, a *Biak In* could not accommodate all the delegates and as a result they had to extend *Biak In* or prepare the compound to accommodate everyone. Hosting a Presbytery, Assembly or Synod meeting was never easy and was demanding in terms of money, time and effort. But *Kohhran* were neither reluctant nor hesitant to host the conference, rather a considerable number applied to host it and submitted an application every year.

Normally an organizing committee would be formed as soon as the local *Kohhran* was selected to host a Synod conference. The *Kohhran* Committee then divided *Hnatlang* responsibilities among the members, especially sub-organizations such as *Kristian Thalai Pawl* and *Kohhran Hmeichhia*. Upa Lalfala, secretary of the Ramhlun North Presbyterian Church, reports how the latest Conference was hosted by means of the mass *Kohhran Hnatlang*.⁴⁴⁴

Essentially, a mass *Kohhran Hnatlang* is organized for the Synod Conference. One recent Synod Conference was held on 4-11 December, 2008 at the Ramhlun North Presbyterian Church, with 1703 delegates in attendance.⁴⁴⁵

5.5. Kristian Thalai Pawl - Christian Youth Organization

⁴⁴⁴ Upa Lalfala, Personal Interview on 26.12.2008. "In order to organize *Hnatlang* systematically, the *Kohhran* committee made different departments and divided responsibilities namely: Reception and welcoming the delegates, registration, introducing delegates to their appointed hosts, providing information and announcements, recording, updating and publishing the conference programme, and report and news writing. Domestic duties including dishwashing and cleaning the *Biak In* and its compound. Medical checkup prescribing and supplying medicine as required. Ushering- arranging seats, monitoring the sound system and directing the delegates. Besides these duties of *Hnatlang*, the *Kohhran* members contributed in excess of Rs.800, 000/- and each hosted between three and twenty delegates. Despite the cost in terms of hard work, time and money, each member gladly fulfilled their responsibilities."

⁴⁴⁵ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, 2008 Synod *Khawmpui Vawi* 85-Na: Minute, Aizawl: Synod Press, 2008.5. Here after cited MPC, 2008 Synod.

The Christian Youth Organization began with three young Christians named Lalthankima, Vanlalkunga and Saptawni. The Christian Youth Organization (Kristian Thalai Pawl or KTP) was formed on February 22, 1954 only 60 years (1894-1954) after the arrival of Christianity. The formation was under the guidance of a Welsh missionary, Rev. Owen Williams Owen, who worked in Mizoram between 1952 and 1957.⁴⁴⁶ Presbyterian Church youths between 14 and 40 years of age were automatically members of *Kristian Thalai Pawl*, and according to statistics published in 2006, *Kristian Thalai Pawl* had 11,195 members in 738 different branches. The objective of *Kristian Thalai Pawl* had always been to fulfill the mission of the church and preach the gospel.⁴⁴⁷ No one was paid any money to continue work in the youth ministry; it entirely depended upon *Hnatlang* (voluntary service). Every member of the *Kristian Thalai Pawl* volunteered time, talent, and money towards the ministry. In general, young Mizos loved to share news, and so it was no surprise young converts were passionate to reveal their newfound faith and concept of *Hnatlang* to others.

As already mentioned, the survival of the Mizo people within pre-Christian culture depended on the youth. In embracing Christianity, *Kristian Thalai Pawl* brought itself under the umbrella of the church, but as the foundation for the future.⁴⁴⁸ Thus, *Kristian Thalai Pawl* members contributed all that was required to provide for stability, strength and the expansion of the church. The Synod Executive Committee approved the guiding

⁴⁴⁶ Thanzaupa, *Reports*, 231. We had a meeting of the young people and some of the leaders of the church, with the result being that it was unanimously decided to form such a movement called "Kristian Thalai Pawl". (The Young People's Christian Society).

⁴⁴⁷ Synod website: [http:// www. Mizoramsynod. org](http://www.mizoramsynod.org) (Internet accessed on 11.03.2008). Evangelization being one of its major objectives, the KTP alone supported 679 missionaries in 2005 and the number has risen to 781 in the year 2006. The cost of supporting one missionary per month being Rs. 1,000 is not the actual salary but rather a nominal sum. This scheme is introduced by the Synod to promote missionary zeal among church members (Source Synod website: [www. http //: mizoramsynod. Org](http://www.mizoramsynod.org), internet accessed on 11.03.2008).

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid; As KTP is only a fellowship; it does not interfere in Church courts nor question the authority of any decisions taken by the Synod. On the other hand, it tries to be of greater service to the church as well as promoting activities among the youth.

principles and structure. *Kristian Thalai Pawl* has three different organizational layers: the local branch, district level, and central level.

Kristian Thalai Pawl holds varied meetings during the week. The first is a Weekly Worship Service normally held every Monday evening. This service is similar to the Sunday worship service in the church, wherein young people conduct the meeting, preach, and have Bible readings, etc. The second is a Fellowship Service held every Sunday afternoon, which is much more flexible and varied with praying, sharing, solo and group singing, and playing games. In addition, some branches conduct Sunday morning prayer meetings in the local hospital.

The survival of *Kristian Thalai Pawl* depends solely upon the concept and practices of *Hnatlang*. In fact, the *Hnatlang practices* were the major factors in the continuation, growth and development of *Kristian Thalai Pawl* until today. It is also remarkable that no *Kristian Thalai Pawl* branch within the entire Mizoram Presbyterian Kohhran has hired any paid worker to carry on the ministry. There is a variety of *Hnatlang* practices adhered to by the *Kristian Thalai Pawl*, essential to their own survival, all of which are discussed further.

5.5.1. Inkhawmpui- Conference

From its inception, *Kristian Thalai Pawl* initiated two different types of *Inkhawmpui* (conference) for its growth, to build relationships between branches, and for the overall development of the youth ministry. The first, called the KTP Pastorate Conference (exclusive to KTP branches under one pastorate), normally invites three to eight

branches. Generally, one of the branches hosts this conference by organizing several *Hnatlang*. The second is called the CKTP General Conference, including the entire KTP branches under the Mizoram Presbyterian Church held in the state of Mizoram. This meeting annually hosts thousands of people from all areas of Mizoram and depends almost entirely on the community *Hnatlang* for its success.

The 51st CKTP General Conference was held on March 2-5, 2006 at East Lungdar Village (this writer's hometown). As soon as the CKTP conference finalized the time and venue, the CKTP *Inkhawmpui* was hosted not only by the KTP branches, but the entire village population. The village enthusiastically made preparations despite knowing it was a great challenge inevitably requiring several *Hnatlang*. The conference had 14,056 delegates hosted by the 650 families in the village. Presbyterian Kohhran and other denominations worked together without difficulty to host the *Inkhawmpui* delegates. Sangkima says, "Dolianbuaia, a Church elder of the United Pentecostal Church, East Lungdar, hosted 150 delegates, which was recorded as the most hosted by one family."⁴⁴⁹ On average each family hosted at least twenty delegates, but each hosted according to their own capacity and willingness. The minimum recorded was five delegates whereas the maximum was over hundred delegates. Sangkima, one of the family households reported the detail hospitality of his family.⁴⁵⁰

In such a way, each family was engaged in *Hnatlang* before and during this *Inkhawmpui*. They prepared homes, stored water, food, firewood, and other necessities. They served their guests with the highest possible hospitality, serving food and tea,

⁴⁴⁹ Dolianbuaia, Personal Interview on 31.12.2008, East Lungdar, Mizoram.

⁴⁵⁰ Sangkima, Personal Interview on 28.12.2008, East Lungdar, Mizoram. "I am a father of 10 children; my family was greatly privileged to host KTP *Inkhawmpui* delegates. We prepared well ahead of time to host the KTP delegates knowing it would demand money, time and physical effort. By the grace of God, we hosted one hundred delegates with a meal, out of which eighty-two people spent the night, however, due to the limitation of space only thirty slept in my house and the rest were allocated at the Primary School nearby. During the *Inkhawmpui*, my entire family was engaged in serving the guests. We bought five extra full Lorries of water, cooked about 350 kilograms of rice, 140 kilograms of meats (pork, chicken and beef) and a large quantity of different vegetables. We are thankful to God for this event and missed all of our guests greatly." (Translation)

supplying water and enabling them to attend the *Inkhawmpui* programme. In addition to this *Hnatlang*, the remaining responsibilities at the conference were assumed by the host KTP branch. These *Hnatlang* responsibilities included serving tea, coffee and snacks, ushering, reception, sanitation, information & publicity etc. In short, mass *Hnatlang* operated within the village before, during and after the *Inkhawmpui*. To host 14,056 delegates and guests for four days without any labour cost was remarkable. Mizos could be declared the most hospitable community in the world. Sangkima⁴⁵¹ (Secretary of the hosting KTP branch East Lungdar, as well as Chairman of the Information and Publicity, and Reception Secretary of the *Inkhawmpui* Organizing Committee) gave a brief report of the mass community *Hnatlang*:

We started *Hnatlang* on August 24, 2005 by collecting the pandal construction materials. We began the construction *Hnatlang* on December 13, 2005 and finished on February 6, 2006. It took 196 days to complete and 2,973 days labour from the village people. The size of the pandal was 180ft x 220ft; in addition to this, we built a 30ft x 60ft platform. We put 480 benches inside the pandal that could accommodate 8,930 people. After the conference was over, we deconstructed the pandal on March 7, 2006 in which 300 people attended the *Hnatlang*.⁴⁵² (Translation)

The KTP Pastorate Conference and the CKTP General Conference are two different types of *Inkhawmpui*, a function which demonstrates the *Hnatlang* efforts of the Mizo villages and especially the youth. The *Hnatlang* of the *Inkhawmpui* serves to promote growth, build relationships, for the development of the youth ministry, and to enjoy the blessings of the gospel through the ingathering of many Christians at *Inkhawmpui* event.

5.5.2. Bible Chhiar Chhuah- Complete Bible Reading

Kristian Thalai Pawl frequently organize ‘*Bible Chhiar Chhuah*’ (Complete Bible Reading) programmes by means of *Hnatlang*, in which the entire Bible is read within a week or less. Generally, the *Kristian Thalai Pawl* members read the Bible in turn using the church microphone so that all the church members can hear. Sometimes, a collection

⁴⁵¹ Sangkima is the secretary of the hosting KTP branch East Lungdar, as well as Chairman of the Information and Publicity, and Reception Secretary of the *Inkhawmpui* Organizing Committee.

⁴⁵² Sangkima, Personal Interview on 31. 12. 2008, East. Lungdar, Mizoram.

of *Kristian Thalai Pawl* branches would organize non-stop reading in which the Bible is read continually day and night until finished. Other *Kristian Thalai Pawl* branches organize it differently, where the Bible reading takes place only at night. The general idea is to preach and teach the word of God in every year to church and un-church members, following the model of *Hnatlang*. Complete Bible reading continues today, not only in the *Kristian Thalai Pawl* local branches, but also in the church as a whole. Every now and then, the local branch, pastorate or the central *Kristian Thalai Pawl* conference proposes a mass Bible reading. Recent publishing of the *Kristian Thalai* monthly magazine includes the Bible reading *Hnatlang* report:

According to the Central Kristian Thalai Pawl conference of February 2006 resolution, complete Bible reading started on November 12, 2007 in different branches. Most of the Kristian Thalai Pawl branches completed whilst a few branches have yet to. We do hope that both the reader and the listener would equally receive blessing through this program.⁴⁵³

As Mizo youth traditionally shared different task by way of *Hnatlang*, the purpose of the Mass Bible Reading includes sharing, unity, and evangelism.

5.5.3. **Thisen Pek- Donating Blood**

Mention was made in the previous chapter that traditionally Mizo male youth slept in the *zawlbuk* to protect and liberate the community from external intruders either from fierce wild-animal or human enemy. Thus, a typical Mizo male is taught to be ready to die or sacrifice his life for other and be a reliable source of help to people in times of need. These charitable acts appear to be seamlessly transferred from traditional cultural practices into their newfound faith of Christianity.

Thisen Pek (blood donation) occurs when healthy people voluntarily give blood for transfusion to others in need. In Mizoram, most blood donors are unpaid youth

⁴⁵³ Kristian Thalai, December, 2007, 34.

volunteers giving blood for the community supply. When an individual needs a blood transfusion, KTP organize *Thisen Pek Hnatlang*.

A relative or friend would pass the information to the KTP members or leaders and they would quickly inform other KTP members in order for a blood donation *Hnatlang* to occur. In many instances, KTP organize a separate *Thisen Pek Hnatlang* (a community blood donation) where many members donate blood in the hospital for future use.

Kristian Thalai is a monthly magazine published to acknowledge and support those KTP branches that arrange a *Thisen pek Hnatlang*. It is quite common to organize these events on Good Friday, remembering and demonstrating the love of Christ pouring out his precious blood for the ransom of many souls. Fifty-one KTP members of the Chanmari West Branch donated 51 units of blood on March 22, 2008 during Good Friday. On the same day, Venghnuai pastorates organized a *Thisen Pek Hnatlang* at the Presbyterian Hospital, Durtlang, in which 55 males and 22 females donated blood for future use.⁴⁵⁴

This *Hnatlang* practice was common to all KTP branches except for those in remote villages without hospitals. A detailed *Thisen Pek Hnatlang* report is given in *Kristian Thalai*: KTP Lungdai Hmar Veng Branch donated 23 units of blood on May 5, 2008 at the Presbyterian Church Hospital, Durtlang. The Dawrpui Vengthar Branch donated 56 units of blood on July 3, 2008. The KTP Chaltlang South Branch donated 45 units of blood on July 5, 2008. The KTP Selesih Branch donated 30 units of blood on July 19, 2008. The KTP Mualpui Branch, with 39 males and 13 females donated 52 units of

⁴⁵⁴ Kristian Thalai, April, 2008, 34.

blood on July 26, 2008 at the Presbyterian Church Hospital, Durtlang.”⁴⁵⁵ Many similar reports are found in the *Kristian Thalai* monthly magazine demonstrating how extensively KTP involves itself in *Thisen Pek Hnatlang*.

5.5.4. Hnatlang: Mission Fundraising

As mentioned in the previous chapter, survival of the Mizo traditional society was dependent on *Hnatlang*, in which youths played major roles. The Mizo young men and women always shared clearing the *jhum* work, and called themselves *Lawm*, or agriculture partners. However, educational and economic development spread through the land all the way to even the remote villages. Many farmers became schoolteachers, government office assistants, etc. Meanwhile the *Hnatlang* practice was still strong amongst the young people and held a central place in many forms of development.

The traditional *Lawm* or agriculture partners are now used to earn money for use in missionary support and missionary projects, or other financial needs in the local ministry. In this practice, the different wild plants called *Hlo* are cleared away as they hinder the growth of the sown plants. Clearing the weeds is called *Hlo Thlawh* and the *Hlo* are divided into four categories. The first crop of weeds and sprouting wild vegetation on a *jhum* is called *hnuh-pui* as it is the first and most demanding to clear. The second crop of the same is called *hnuh-hram* because the weeds are easier to clear than before. The third crop is called *hnuh-thual* because careful clearing is no longer required. The fourth and the final crop is called *hnuh-thial* because only a few wild vegetations are left to be cleared.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁵ Kristian Thalai, August, 2008, 34.

⁴⁵⁶ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 176. Most of the above Mizo word explanation or translations are taken from this page.

Following the arrival of the British and the introduction of Christianity in the land, Mizoram gradually developed in all areas of life. As already mentioned, more and more roads were built, particularly those fit for cars. Adopting traditional *Feh Kawng Sial Hnatlang*, road making *Hnatlang* was very common among the Mizos. But there was an opportunity to earn money through *Kawng Laih* (road-making) *Hnatlang* and, accordingly, KTP organized *Kawng laih Hnatlang* to construct a village approach road or a motor road. The Secretary report reads:

In 1986, Central *Kistian Thalai Pawl* (CKTP) bought a plot of land to construct a Youth Recreation Centre at Hlimen village, four to five kilometres from Aizawl. The CKTP committee resolved to organize *Hnatlang* on April 2008 to construct the approach road to the Youth Recreation Centre. According to this resolution, the CKTP launched a non-stop *Hnatlang* from April 8-18, 2008, which totalled ten working days. Twenty KTP branches were selected to carry out this *Hnatlang*. The hosting KTP branches took responsibility for serving tea. Altogether, 1,232 (871 males and 361 females) KTP members attended this *Hnatlang*.⁴⁵⁷

Urban and rural KTP branch *Hnatlang* differs because of the nature of the work. Hand labour is more common in the rural areas where KTP *Hnatlang* are organized to raise funds by *kawng sial*-constructing roads, *hlo thlawh*-clearing weeds, *thing phurh*-collecting fire wood, *lo vah*-cutting forest for jhum cultivation, *khel mual laih*-paving public playgrounds, *huan sam*-clearing farm and *buh phurh*- carrying paddy from the *ghum*, etc. These *Hnatlang* are redundant in most developed urban areas, and so alternative *Hnatlang* for fundraising are arranged. These efforts involve domestic work such as *thirchhe khawn*-collecting old irons, motor *sil*-washing cars, and *mut puan suk*-washing blankets, of which the latter is the most prominent.

While every Mizo family commonly uses blankets for sleeping at night, the perennial lack of water in most urban areas makes it a difficult task to wash these blankets. They are washable, but potentially very heavy when wet and it is not possible to wash them by machine. Nowadays, KTP take advantage of this situation for doing *Hnatlang*,

⁴⁵⁷ Kristian Thalai, December 2007, 34.

easing hardship for the Mizos. Giving prior notice to families through the church, the KTP organize *Blanket khawn Hnatlang*- collecting blankets house by house on certain appointed days. This occurs three to four days before the *Blanket Suk Hnatlang* is organized. They usually organize *Blanket suk Hnatlang* by carrying collected blankets to the nearby stream or river. They wash them in the river water and lay the blankets in the sun over rocks. For lunch, they share food and tea together.

Collecting sun grass was common customarily when organizing *Zawlbuk sak*, *Lal in sak* and *Hmeithai in sak Hnatlang*. Typical Mizo houses were built with a thatch or sun grass roof. Usually this roof had to be replaced every two to three years and so cutting a thatch was a common task. Very often, when some *Kohhran* members built a house, they asked the *Kristian Thalai Pawl* to cut thatches for the roof and paid for their labour. Members of the *Kristian Thalai Pawl* gathered at the appointed place and time for the *Hnatlang* with their own food and material for collecting the sun grass. Thus, the purpose and function of this *Hnatlang* includes evangelism, fellowship and sharing.

Nengzakhup recalls this *Hnatlang* investiture and practice:

As Robuanga travelled to South Hlimen from Aizawl, he saw a thick green forest thatch blowing in the wind. He imagined the thatch plants beckoning him saying “Send us as missionaries too. If you do not send us we will soon be burned by wild fire.” So he called the South Hlimen church to cut the thatch in the forest. The whole congregation set up a community ‘working bee’ the next day, cutting thatch in the forest. Church working bees are still common. The sale proceeds support mission.⁴⁵⁸

It is very common in Mizoram particularly in urban areas for large quantities of used iron and steel to be lying unattended in most homes. Mizoram State Government introduced and established an iron or steel recycling depot where people could sell or discard unwanted iron (ferrous) and steel items. Different KTP branches organized *Hnatlang* to take advantage of this opportunity calling it *Thirchhe zawn Hnatlang*

⁴⁵⁸ Nengzakhup, *Amazing*, 55.

(collecting used irons). They announced this in the church and weekly newspaper after choosing a time for the *Hnatlang*. On a day the volunteers gathered and leaders planned the *Hnatlang*. Usually, they divided into groups, each consisting of ten to fifteen members and allocated areas and streets to cover. Each group went to their areas, knocking door to door introducing themselves and collecting unwanted iron and steel. Normally people were pleased to give their used iron or steel to the enthusiastic young people. The iron and steel was then sold to raise funds.

KTP always organized *Hnatlang* selling items such as foods including fresh meats (especially pork and beef), home cooked meats, and homemade pickles etc. To sell fresh meat for the *Hnatlang* they bought a whole pig, cow or oxen in advance and commonly butchered it on Saturday when people were most likely to be buying meat for the weekend and for Sunday in particular. This was announced and publicised beforehand so that people would not buy meat from the shopping centres or other meat sellers. Now KTP members rose early in the morning, butchering the meat to be sold. In this *Hnatlang*, they do not approach the houses to sell the meat, but the buyer collects it except when they haven't sold it all before dusk. Profits go to mission funds or other projects.

Diverse cooked meat selling *Hnatlang* is organized by the KTP branches. The most prominent being *Vawk-Lu Bai* (boiled pig head), *Bawngsa-Bai* (boiled beef), and *Sachek* (entrails of boiled pig or cow). One of the most famous and favourite foods within Mizo is called '*Bai*'. This simply means boiling vegetables in water adding *chi* (salt), *chingal*⁴⁵⁹ (lye, potash solution) and *saum*⁴⁶⁰ (fat pork). *Sa Bai* means boiling

⁴⁵⁹ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 91. This strong alkaline solution, which is leached from wood-ash, often takes the place of soap and soda for washing purposes and is used in preparing and cooking certain articles of food. It is also employed as a depilatory.

meat in water with the addition of *chi* (salt), *chingal* (lye), *saum* (fat pork), *sihneh*⁴⁶¹, *sawhthing* (ginger), *bahkhawr*⁴⁶², *purun sen* (red-onion) and *purun var* (garlic).

When *Sa Bai Hnatlang* is organized, 40-50 Kilograms of meat is purchased and cooked using two or three big cooking pans, the entire ingredients above having been mixed. Then, the KTP members sell the *Sa Bai* visiting door to door, covering different areas in groups. Lalbiakdika reports:

Ramhlun Venglai KTP organized *Vawk-sa Bai (pork bai) Hnatlang* on June 16, 2008. In this *Hnatlang* about 40 members attended, Rs. 4,400 was spent for buying meat, and Rs. 6,200 received creating Rs. 1,800 in profit. *Bawngsa Bai (Beef boil) Hnatlang* was organized on May 10, 2008 with 35 KTP members attending, Rs. 3,230 was spent for buying meat, Rs. 4500 received, creating Ra.1,270 in profit.⁴⁶³

Homemade pickles and candles, Gospel music CDs and DVDs, clothes and other items selling *Hnatlang* are organized with a similar strategy. A *Hnatlang* day is nominated with many KTP members encouraged to attend, gathering at an appointed time. In contrast to the practice of the Young Mizo Association (YMA) a secular youth organization, KTP *Hnatlang* is neither mandatory nor is there any fine for those who do not attend but rather it is optional. Lalmangaiha (one of the active KTP members of Ramhlun Venglai) says: “When a certain YMA *Hnatlang* is called, all the members are informed, if they do not attend without a reasonable excuse, a certain amount of money (usually Rs 50/-) will be fined.”⁴⁶⁴

5.6. Kohhran Hmeichhia: Church Woman

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid, 407. *Saum* simply means fat pork preserved. Mizo used to boil separately fat pork with water and put it into gourds and leave it one to two weeks until it matured.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid, 417, *Sihneh*, n. the name of a tree, the young leaves of which are sometimes boiled with rice and eaten as a vegetable. The fruit is small and is a favourite with birds; it is therefore often used for baiting traps.

⁴⁶² Ibid, 25, *Bah-kawr*, n. a small edible prickly plant with a strong odour, eaten by santhals, Lakher and others.

⁴⁶³ Lalbiakdika, Personal Interview on 22.12.2008, Ramhlun Venglai, Aizawl, Mizoram.

⁴⁶⁴ Lalmangaiha Varte, Personal Interview on 23.12.2008, Selly Oak, Birmingham.

The status of women in Mizo society changed significantly with the arrival of Christianity. Mizo society was traditionally patriarchal, where the actions and ideas of men and boys dominated over those of women and girls. In the sphere of the Mizo family, the father or eldest male is considered the "head of the household". In Mizo society, women were absent from positions of power in the family. F.J. Sandy, one of the Western missionaries, made observation of these phenomena and expressed his view and particular concerns about these circumstances⁴⁶⁵. Hminga also explicitly describes the status of women in early days:

Mizo Society is a patriarchal one; the old sayings imply that women had no status in the society. The English version would run like this: (i) "Women and crabs have no religion," which means a woman simply follows the religion of her husband or her father and could have no religion of her own. (ii) "Women and old fences can be replaced," which means a man is at liberty to replace his wife if he thinks she no longer serves his purpose. (iii) Women's word is no word just as crab meat is no meat" which means women's words should not be taken seriously.⁴⁶⁶

As mentioned earlier, *Hnatlang* was intended to be male only. But as soon as Christianity arrived, the pioneer missionaries attempted to reduce the male dominance to make society better conform to the New Testament perspective of inclusion and equality. J.M. Lloyd's attitude was that the Mizo's paternalistic view of certain cultural practices was simply anti-Christian.⁴⁶⁷ It was not an easy task for missionaries to change the deeply entrenched cultural practices. Ultimately, the relationship between Christian men and women did change with a realization of verses such as Acts 10:34 and James 2:1, where it is impossible to have faith in Christ and simultaneously be partial to individuals or classes.

⁴⁶⁵ Thanzaupa, *Reports*, 61. The people of Lushai have no ardent desire for their daughters to be educated. There, women are the drudge and the burden-carriers. Our Christians (Mizo) are a long way from recognizing in practical life the dignity that belongs to every human soul. In addition, in consequences, there is a strong tendency to keep the girls ignorant and degraded.

⁴⁶⁶ Hminga, *Life*, 27.

⁴⁶⁷ See Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, 2.

Katherine Ellen Williams was the wife of D.E. Jones, in the Welsh Presbyterian Church Pioneer Mission. She arrived in 1904 and, for the first time ever, a white Western woman visited Mizoram. She started a weekly women's meeting on every Friday evening in which she taught how to preach. In this weekly meeting, the participants shared testimonies, prayed together, and sometimes studied John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress". In addition, she also trained *Hmeichhe Tirhkoh* (Bible Women)⁴⁶⁸. Her husband supported her and consequently appointed 'Hmeichhe Tirhkoh', women to be effective in converting more Mizos.⁴⁶⁹ In 1913, the Mission Veng Presbyterian Church sponsored the first two 'Hmeichhe Tirhkoh' Pi Chhingtei and Pi Khuangi, who were supported from the collection of a mere handful of rice⁴⁷⁰ Altogether about twenty-two 'Hmeichhe Tirhkoh' were appointed up until 1923.

In early days, travelling was very difficult for all, including women. A traveller faced many hurdles including narrow rough paths, with many leeches, sand flies, mosquitoes, and wild animals. Despite those risky circumstances, they (the women) would travel to different villages holding to the *Hnatlang* concept and the spirit of *Tlawmngaihna* and one of their main assignments was preaching (*Tlangau*). Their message was: "*Isua hi lo ring ve hram rawh u*" (would you please believe in Jesus) in the *khawlai* (street), *mi leikapui* (private platform), *Biak in* (in the Church) and even in the *Zawlbuk* (Bachelor's dormitory) where women were never allowed to enter.⁴⁷¹

However, from 1923 the Mizoram Presbyterian Church brought "*Hmeichhe Tirhkoh*" (Bible women training) to a halt, despite their fruitful contributions to church growth. Different reasons are given but without explicit evidence. Zomuani, the first Mizo

⁴⁶⁸ Roberts, *Memories*, 154; Zomuani, *Mizoram*, 27-32 'Hmeichhe Tirhkoh' is a married woman who did work with a baby strapped to her back most of the time.

⁴⁶⁹ Lloyd, *History*, 186.

⁴⁷⁰ See Zomuani, *Mizoram*, 155.

⁴⁷¹ See Zomuani, *Mizoram*, pp.160-161; Roberts, *Memories*, 153-156.

female theologian, quotes the Synod Presbytery October 1923 Agenda No. 11 in which two candidates Lalnghinglovi and Mangsali applied but were refused for lack of funds. She also believes it was due to the lack of financial support.⁴⁷² Similarly, the Assembly in 1928 No.11 and 1930 No.6 consecutively refused the request of both the Hmarchhak Pastorate and Aizawl Pastorate's proposal to appoint Bible women citing a lack of funds. The Assembly 1934 resolution number 11 records an apology for not being able to grant a request from Tukkallh Pastorate for Bible women, but with no reason given.⁴⁷³ In 1924, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church ordained new male pastors that would possibly reduce the need for female ministry. Sandy writes:

In June, we were proud to have our first Ordination Service, in which five young men were ordained. Saiaithanga (for Durtlang), Buanga (for the North Eastern District), Bana and Kaplunga (for the South Eastern District), and Hrangang (for the Western District). The new ministers are all men of proved worth, and are welcome additions to the ministry in Lushai.⁴⁷⁴

Bringing an end to the *Hmeichhe Tirkoh* did not mean that the general women's ministry was over. Enthusiastic women persevered by studying the "Synod Preacher" course, for example, to become effective preachers (*Tlangau*). Pi Saptawni finished the course in 1954 and was actively involved in preaching (*Tlangau*) in the Mission Veng Presbyterian Church. Three other women namely- Pi Zolawmi, Pi Biaksiami, and NI R.L. Neihkungi also finished the course and became useful preachers (*Tlangau*) in their respective pastorates.⁴⁷⁵ Yet this course which helped women into ministry was discontinued in 1981. Regardless of this disappointment, the spirit of the Mizo female and the enthusiasm for Christian ministry lived on.

Towards the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21th century, women entered a new era. Until 2003, in the Presbyterian Church alone, eighty female students studied

⁴⁷² See Zomuani, *Mizoram*, 156-157.

⁴⁷³ See Remthanga, *Mizoram*, 121-122.

⁴⁷⁴ Thanzauva, *Reports*, 70.

⁴⁷⁵ See Zomuani, *Mizoram*, 169

theology with the knowledge the church would not ordain them.⁴⁷⁶ However, considerable numbers of these theologians were involved in lay ministry. In spite of their literacy ability and competence working in the church office and church services, their leadership and ministry has yet to be suitably recognized within the church government and pastorate. To this day, a strong debate surrounds the issue of female ordination in Mizoram. As it was throughout the history of Christianity in Mizoram, ordination of women was/is considered culturally inappropriate and theologically unsound.⁴⁷⁷

As mentioned earlier, the women's ministry was initiated by the Presbyterian Church soon after its formation, and *Hnatlang* was immediately a part women's ministry. *Kohhran Hmeichhia* (Women's Fellowship) has a motto, "called to witness" (Acts 1:8). The objectives are: to work for the fulfillment of the ministry, to endeavour to build a holistic Christian home, to help the needy in the name of Christ, and to proclaim the Gospel.⁴⁷⁸ The traditional cultural practice of *Hnatlang* shaped the Mizo women's ministry in their communal service in the ministry. Although in their direct ministry participation, women are still very much behind their male counterparts, but they are under-represented in the church administration decision-making processes. In short, even though *Hnatlang* shaped the Mizo women's ministry, their participation in ministry has always been and is still very much behind men. The analysis of *Kohhran Hmeichhe Hnatlang* practices is as follows.

5.6.1. Thingphurh - Carrying Fire Wood

⁴⁷⁶ See Remthanga, *Mizoram*, 123. See also Zomuani, *Mizoram*, 171-173.

⁴⁷⁷ See Ibid, p123 (General Assembly 1949. No.18)

⁴⁷⁸ Women Fellowship motto and objectives are copied from the Presbyterian Church Website. (Available at <http://www.Mizosynod.org>. Internet accessed on 7.03.2008 at 3:00 P.M.)

Thing-phurh means to carry firewood (Thing=firewood; phurh/phur=carry). Traditionally, Mizos were solely dependent upon firewood for cooking, and women took responsibility for collecting it. When a woman or a girl went to the *Jhum* field, she never came back with empty hands. She would carry *paikawng*, an open workbasket made out of bamboo for carrying firewood and fresh vegetables for the family. Women would either go alone, in couples, or groups to the forest to collect firewood. These trips occurred once or twice in a day depending on the distance, and a hard-working woman or a girl may have gone three times.

Particular days were set aside for *Thingphurh Hnatlang* involving women from each *Kohhran* family. Together, they would collect firewood from the forest whilst some prepared tea. Usually the firewood was stored near the *Biak In*. It was sold to support missionaries and therefore called *Thingfak Missionary* (missionary firewood). Zairema explains: "...another form of raising funds without anybody feeling the pinch is called missionary firewood."⁴⁷⁹ Zomuani, one of the pioneer leaders of *Kohhran Hmeichhia*, states the idea of missionary firewood was discovered by Elder Vanlallawma and Mr. Robuanga.⁴⁸⁰ But Nengzakhup argues: "Many rural churches sell firewood for missionary funds, an idea that was conceived by Elder Thangsiamia in 1971."⁴⁸¹

Some *Kohhran* brought firewood to the entrance of the *Biak In* whilst attending Sunday school and when there was enough it was sold and the income went towards missionaries. Stacks of firewood often stood at the entrances of the villages - people donated it to their hearts desire on return from the forest. Nengzakhup writes, "Every village church has a place for firewood, normally at the entrance of the village, awaiting

⁴⁷⁹ Zairema, *God's Miracle*, 34.

⁴⁸⁰ See Zomuani, *Kum Za*, 124.

⁴⁸¹ Nengzakhup, *Amazing*, 54.

the monthly sale. Women are the main contributors. Some churches go further a field six times a year. Some have done this since 1968. Collecting the forest needs no capital outlay.”⁴⁸² Zomuani writes about her personal experience, “I felt at home and excited to see a stack of firewood while touring to different villages.”⁴⁸³ *Thingphurh Hnatlang* was a practical working out of *Hnatlang*, and was one way in which women from each *Kohhran* family would minister to the collective needs of the Mizos.

5.6.2. **Buhfai Tham- Handful of Rice**

The literal meaning of *buhfai* is ‘cleaned’ or ‘husked rice’, *tham* simply means ‘to clutch or to claw’; *buhfai-tham* then means ‘clutching a handful of rice or to clutch a handful of rice’. *Buhfai Tham* is a strategy for the ministry of giving, which was started soon after the churches were planted. It is still one of the main financial contributors for God’s kingdom ministry.⁴⁸⁴ Rice is the main crop as well as the main food of Mizo people. A family who has plenty of rice is considered a *mi khawsathei chhungkua* (a rich family or one able to manage). Customarily, Mizo eat two or three meals a day-in the morning, noon and evening and rice is compulsory for all of these meals. In a typical family, women were responsible for the cooking and the rice was measured out by hand.

It was said that the *Buhfai tham* ministry model came from the Khasia Jantia Hills Presbyterian Church. There was a debate about its beginnings in Khasia Church, but after careful investigation Zomuani is convinced that Evangelist Joel Gathpoh practiced it first.⁴⁸⁵ Then, Mrs. D.E. Jones was thought to have adopted this practice when Mission Veng Kohhran was considering building a new *Biak In*. Accordingly, she

⁴⁸² Ibid, 54

⁴⁸³ Zomuani, *Kum Za*, 68.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid, 68.

⁴⁸⁵ See Zomuani, *Kum Za*, 69-70.

proposed to begin *Buhfai tham* ministry as a way of raising money for the *Biak In*.

Lloyd clearly recalls this event:

Mrs. D.E. Jones had heard from a Khasi Christian of a mode of collection that was new to her. This was the Handful-of Rice Collection. According to her letter of March 1911, she adopted the idea so as to help pay for the building of the proposed new Chapel. Since this kind of collection has become so important among Khasi, Mizo, Burmese and other rice eating Christians, a brief outline of it should be given.⁴⁸⁶

One single Christian's rice contribution would not contribute much to the fund, but apparently, Mrs. D. E Jones knew the heart of the Mizos, their strong desire to practice *Hnatlang* for the good of the church, and society. Her proposal was accepted and the Kohhran immediately initiated the collection of rice. Normally Mizo families used a basket, box or earthen vessel, which they called *fairel* to contain cleaned or husked rice in the kitchen.

According to the proposal of Mrs. D.E. Jones, the first *Buhfai tham* ministry was launched in 1910 at the local Mission Veng Kohhran. Since 1914 it was introduced to all the Presbyterian Kohhran in Mizoram.⁴⁸⁷ Each Christian family was asked to put aside rice whenever they cooked. Some families made a small vessel, tin or box called *Buhfai Tham bel* in which a portion of rice was put every time they cooked. A particular day was set for *Hnatlang* on which the set aside rice was brought to the *Biak In* and sold.⁴⁸⁸ In some Kohhran, the rice collection *Hnatlang* was organized every week or every month by five to ten women. Between them they visited streets and houses to collect handfuls of rice from every family of the Kohhran. The *Buhfai Tham khawn Hnatlang* (collecting handful of rice) practice differed according to the Kohhran. Right from the outset of *Buhfai tham*, suitable Bible verses or words of a song were

⁴⁸⁶ Lloyd, *History*, 145.

⁴⁸⁷ Zomuani, *Kum Za*, 71-72.

⁴⁸⁸ Lloyd, *History*, 145. In a Christian household, when the rice for the meal has been measured into the cooking pot, the mother takes out as large a fistful as she can and puts it aside into a special bin. The rice thus collected averages about 2 kilos a month and is presented to the church to be sold.

written on the boxes. However, since 1995, the Central *Kohhran Hmeichhia* Committee decided on the words “*Buhfai Tham Lalpa Chanpual*” (Handful of Rice for God’s Kingdom) for all families to be labelled on all boxes. *Buhfai Tham* was introduced by the local church and the income was used locally towards construction of the *Biak In* and supporting women evangelists, including Pi Khuangi and Pi Chhingtei.⁴⁸⁹ Since 1914, *Buhfai Tham* was introduced to the entire Mizoram Presbyterian Church under the supervision of the Assembly, and the income was used to support evangelists. The report of the Lushai hills 1914-15 reads:

All the evangelists and pastors in charge of districts are supported by the churches. Individual members and churches send their contributions to a central fund and the treasurer pays the evangelists. Contributions are often given in rice, which is sold to anyone short of food. Prices vary in different villages according to the crops. The people have been called upon many times during the year, and they have responded well considering the scarcity of money in the country.⁴⁹⁰

In actual fact, *Buhfai Tham* grew so fast that it was one of the most promising and steady financial sources of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church since its inception. The total *Buhfai Tham* contribution according to the first available record was Rs. 80/- in 1914 increased to Rs. 40, 522, 441/- in 2003.⁴⁹¹ Mizos have shown that if one collects enough single drops of water, one makes an ocean. Not only did the amount increase, but the *Hnatlang* system improved; now the Kohhran Hmeichhe Committee took responsibility for scheduling the collection, naming the collectors, appointing the place to store and sell, fixing the selling rate and appointing the recording secretary, etc. According to the latest *Buhfai Tham* report of 2006-2007, the total budget was Rs. 47,000,000 but the actual receipt was Rs. 52, 031,083 exceeding budget by Rs.5, 031,083. According to the *Kohhran Hmeichhe* statistics, 99.56% members actively

⁴⁸⁹ See Zomuani, *Kum Za*, 82.

⁴⁹⁰ Thanzaupa, *Report*, 55. See also Remthanga, *Synod*, 179. The Presbytery Meeting of March 1914 resolved to ask every church to report and submit their income of *Buhfai Tham*. The Presbytery Meeting of October 1914 made a record of *Buhfai Tham* income Rs.80, which was supposed to be used for the support of an evangelist (missionary) and the following year 1915 income, should be submitted to Mrs. D.E. Jones.

⁴⁹¹ See Zomuani, *Kum Za*, 78.

contributed towards *Buhfai Tham*.⁴⁹² It is significant to note that presently Kohhran Hmeichhia pastorates and local branches contribute Rs. 8, 95,000 every month to support missionaries.⁴⁹³

5.6.3. Inkhawmpui- Conference

The earliest record of the *Kohhran Hmeichhe* pastorates meeting is in the year 1946 with four pastorates: Durtlang, Vanbawng, Sawleng and Mualvum.⁴⁹⁴ Like other church *Inkhawmpui* (conferences) it was solely dependent upon *Hnatlang*. Different *Inkhawmpui Hnatlang* included fundraising, cleaning, and preparing the *Biak In*, arranging accommodation for delegates, etc. Local *Kohhran Hmeichhia* assumed most of the *Hnatlang* responsibilities. The Pastorate conference involved four to seven churches and so a lot less preparation was required than for the central meeting that hosted the entire Presbyterian Church in Mizoram. The first *Inkhawmpui lian* (central meeting) was held on 1949 at the Mission Veng Presbyterian Church.⁴⁹⁵ From the inception of the *Kohhran Hmeichhe Inkhawmpui lian*, all the hard work to prepare for the conference was done by means of *Hnatlang*. When such meetings were held in villages, Presbyterian Church women alone could not host the meetings, and therefore almost everyone was involved through a community *Hnatlang*. Since there was not a *Biak In* big enough to host the meeting, large tents or pandals were erected completely by *Hnatlang*. Normally, five to ten thousand delegates attended the conference, which was prepared for a year in advance by means of various *Hnatlang*.

The most recent 44th *Hmeichhe Inkhawmpui* was held at Chhangphut Field on March 2-4, 2007. Five of the local Presbyterian churches jointly hosted this *Inkhawmpui*

⁴⁹² Agape, March 2008, 23.

⁴⁹³ Ibid, March 2008, 16

⁴⁹⁴ See Zomuani, *Kum Za*, 39

⁴⁹⁵ Zomuani, *Kum Za*, 43.

(Champhai, Bethel, Vengsang, Kahrawt and Kanaan). An organizing committee assumed the major responsibility for hosting, and thirteen sub-committees were formed in addition. Ms. Lalrinkimi, the Secretary of Kohhran Hmeichhe Committee reports on the hard work involved: “They built a big Pandal measuring 186 feet in length and 183 feet breadth to accommodate ten thousand people. The *Pandal sak Hnatlang* (pandal construction) began on January 15 requiring thirty-two days and three thousand people”⁴⁹⁶. About nine thousand attended the *Inkhawmpui* with 7,500 being lodged at night. Each family in the hosting village accommodated between five and fifty delegates depending upon their means.

5.6.4. Hnatlang: Fundraising

One of the prominent *Kohhran Hmeichhe Hnatlang* is *thil zawrh*--selling things. Mizo women fellowships were not content with a paucity of financial resources, so they would find any possible way to survive through the spirit of *Hnatlang*. They always found a *Hnatlang* to which any woman was able to participate. Nengzakhup rightly states: “It appears Mizos used every possible resource to raise funds for missionary support. There was no end to their creative search for new ways to raise funds for missions. Some became prominent methods. Others seemed almost insignificant but they all supplied money for mission.”⁴⁹⁷ *Thil zawrh Hnatlang* (selling things) was one of the most common practices both in urban and rural *Kohhran Hmeichhe* branches. First, some members would volunteer to buy daily necessities such as food, salt, cooking oil, or soap from the wholesale market. Then they would organize another *Hnatlang* to sell those items above, and sometimes fish and meat, by visiting door to door.⁴⁹⁸ All profit was used for mission work. Nengzakhup explains: “Commonly the

⁴⁹⁶ Agape, April 2007, 27.

⁴⁹⁷ Nengzakhup, *Amazing*, 54.

⁴⁹⁸ Zomuani, *Kum Za*, 126. In June, the first printed copies of the Gospels of Luke and John, and the book of Acts - in good large type and on the style of the Revised Version - came to hand. About 150

women and young people of a church purchased a full bag of salt and divided it into small packages. Then in groups, they would sell them from house to house. The net profit went to supporting missionaries.”⁴⁹⁹

Traditionally, *Buh thlei*- rice sifting is a woman's job and as a result, men neither know how nor are expected to do it. Customarily, there were a number of occasions when women used to do *Buh Thlei Hnatlang*. Those practices carried over after the arrival of Christianity, and this task manifested itself in different ways and on different occasions. Everyone volunteers for sifting rice, particularly for big church conferences or meetings. *Buh Thlei Hnatlang* was also practiced during Christmas, Good Friday, and New Year celebrations. Women brought *Thlangra*,⁵⁰⁰ used for sifting and winnowing grain, at appointed places and times. On certain occasions, *Kohhran Hmeichhia* organized *Buh thlei Hnatlang* for raising mission funds. This *Hnatlang* was organized when large amounts of rice needed to be husked for hospitals and schools. The hospital or school would give money in return for the works.

Traditionally, it was common for Mizo women as a group to collect snail before the open food markets came about. A group of between five and fifteen would go to the streams to collect snails. Nowadays there are markets in most villages selling produce, but still *Kohhran* often organize a *Hnatlang* to collect and sell produce for missions. Nengzakhup believes Robuanga introduced *Chengkawl Khawrh* (collecting snails) for missions: “To Robuanga, even the snails spoke to him, as if they said, “If people are not willing to go as missionaries, we will go. But once we go, we will not come back. Send

copies were sold before the end of the year. The people say they are difficult to read - not because of any stiffness in the translation, but because it is also different to their mode of thinking.

⁴⁹⁹ Nengzakhup, *Amazing*, 57.

⁵⁰⁰ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 476. *Thlangra*, n. a bamboo tray for sifting and winnowing grain; a Lushai sieve. (The *thlangra* has no holes in it like an English sieve. The sifting process is accomplished by shaking the tray up and down and from side to side in such a manner as to separate the husked rice from the unhusked rice and separate the full grain from the chaff or si.

us. He summoned church members to the rivers to collect snails for missionary support.⁵⁰¹ In 1965, Robuanga travelled to Manipur a neighbouring state of Mizoram and delivered a sermon at Lamka Presbyterian Church about Chengkawl missionary. In his sermon, he challenged people to collect and sell snails for the support of missionaries. In response to this, Lamka Presbyterian Church twice organized *Chengkawl khawrh Hnatlang* with between forty and fifty people attending.⁵⁰²

From the initiation of *Kohhran Hmeichhia*, people worked together as part of a communitarian society. Consequently, many *Hnatlang* were necessary for basic survival. The same is true of collecting for *Lawm Bawm*. The literal meaning of *lawm* is happy, thankful or to be pleased; and *bawm* means box or container. *Lawm Bawm* is also known as *Bawm Leng* meaning a visiting box. *Lawm Bawm* were distributed to every house, whilst in some branches only one box was made and left for over a week in one house, and then transferred to the next house until it reached every member's house.⁵⁰³ In some villages, instead of making boxes or containers, every member was asked to contribute towards the collection, and then twenty to thirty *Kohhran Hmeichhia* volunteers would go to each house to collect the contributions by *Hnatlang*. The storing, collecting, and selling of *Lawm Bawm* varied depending upon the branches of the organization, but *Hnatlang* was practiced annually normally in November or December. The idea of *Lawm Bawm* is giving thanks to God for His guidance and blessing throughout the year and everyone would give according to their means. The gifts normally included vegetables grown in the *Jhum* such as rice, corn, cucumber, pumpkin, spices etc, and many gave money, as well.

⁵⁰¹ Nengzakhup, *Amazing*, 55.

⁵⁰² See Robuanga, *Ka Khualzin*, 241-243.

⁵⁰³ See Zomuani, *Kum Za*, 126.

From the inception of *Kohhran Hmeichhia*, people devoted time, talents and money through the Mizo cultural *Hnatlang* practice. *Kohhran Hmeichhia* chose one day in the month, called *nun pek ni* (life submitting day) for all members to attend. One of the members hosted this special event in her home. They came together in the morning and contributed according to their means towards the food for the meeting, or for the support of a missionary. Some brought vegetables and rice while others donated money equivalent to one day's salary. They sang, prayed, and shared personal testimonies and the word of God. Many benefits resulted from this *Hnatlang* such as fundraising, worship and fellowship that strengthened and unified the believers. The idea was that Jesus Christ did not spare his life, and therefore as believers they should be willing to sacrifice their life, time, or resources for Him.

5.7. Conclusion:

There are many conclusions one can draw about the nature of Mizo churches when we look through the lens of the *Hnatlang* cultural practices. One can conclude that the establishment and growth of the indigenous church was shaped by *Hnatlang*, as well as its mission. From the beginning, young believers took communal responsibilities for building schools, churches, evangelistic outreach, as well as church administration. This led to a strong indigenous church and mission. Even now, Mizo Christians preach, pray, and translate the *Hnatlang* zeal into missionary zeal.

A Mizo indigenous church was established and perpetuated through appropriating *Hnatlang* practices into Christianity. Where a typical Mizo community would perform *Hnatlang* under the direction of a *Lal* (chief) and his *upa*'s (elder's) for the development of society, new Christian communities followed a pastor or church elder performing the same function for the development of the church and her mission. Similarly, a typical

Mizo youth would follow *Val upas* on attending youth *Hnatlang*, but this also translated into Christian *Hnatlang* for youth groups like KTP. Generally, the traditional village administration system became a church administration and led to the growth of an indigenous church and mission.

From this chapter we realise the depth of Mizo creativity to establish a uniquely indigenous church and mission. From the beginning they were self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing. They relied on their burning desire for *Hnatlang* serving, and giving to one another generously. Even their fundraising ideas were their own, adopted from *Hnatlang*. “It is no exaggeration that Mizos leave no stone unturned in seeking ways to raise funds to fulfil God’s plan of salvation for all nations” says Nengzakhup.⁵⁰⁴

Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of indigenous Mizo *Hnatlang* was hospitality, a cultural norm to take care of strangers and foreigners. In Genesis 18 and 19, we see first Abraham and then Lot showing hospitality to strangers visiting them. Jesus, Himself, emphasizes hospitality. When He sent out the disciples, He told them not to take gold or silver, but to find a worthy person and stay in their house while they are in town (Matthew 10:10-13). Similar themes can be found in the stories of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16:19-31), the Great Banquet (Luke 14: 16-24) and Jesus' teachings about the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25: 31-46). This study demonstrates how Mizo Christians followed the Biblical concept of hospitality, giving regardless of caste, person, religion, church, denomination, or number.

⁵⁰⁴ Nengzakhup, *Amazing*. 52.

The Mizoram Presbyterian Church, like Mizo traditional society, depended greatly upon *Hnatlang* for its survival. The Presbyterian Church (Kohhran), Christian Youth Organization (Kristian Thalai Pawl), and Woman Organization (Kohhran Hmeichhia) performed many types of *Hnatlang*. Even without riches or Western missionary financial resources, nothing hindered the establishment, growth and development of the indigenous church. Enthusiastic indigenous leaders engaged people in the process, devoting their own time, talent and money and a self- supporting, self- propagating, and self- governing church was established.

CHAPTER- VI

MIZORAM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FOREIGN MISSIONS

6. Introduction:

One hundred and eleven years (1898-2009) of Christianity in Mizoram has tremendously changed socio-political and religious life for the Mizos. Christianity became the driving force behind the building of a new Mizo society with the church building as the most important institution. The church replaced the importance and function of the *Zawlbuk*, and the church continues to have a strong hold over the collective and individual mind of the Mizos, and influence over daily life at all levels in all age group. In other words the new religion transformed Mizo society, and the church institution dominated daily life.

In previous chapters, we discussed how Mizo culture survived the inception of Christianity, and how early Christians had a heart for evangelism. The *Hnatlang* as the backbone behind the burning desire for witnessing the newfound faith took place on a community level. *Hnatlang* was found within all spheres of life, and Mizo missions were no exception. People were united in the tasks required to serve one another.

Mizo Christians never hesitated to witness their faith, and this desire soon took them beyond Mizoram. They traveled the length and breadth of Mizoram, preaching to their kinsmen and then to non-Mizo who were living inside and outside Mizoram. In 1923, four members of the Welsh Presbyterian Church Mission Commission visited Mizoram. Lloyd quotes from the Commission secretary T.W. Rees's review of the attributes of Mizo Christians:

Throughout the years the church in Lushai has been noted as a missionary minded church. This is the simple explanation of its extraordinary success. They now feel eager to carry out missionary work beyond the confines of their own

land, in a word, to form a Foreign Mission. They will themselves undertake all financial and other responsibilities. They have not fixed on any particular area where they will work, but this project fills their minds these days. I need not say that we gave their intention our unreserved backing. The swiftness with which the Lushai land has become a Christian land is one of the most astounding things in the history of Christ's Church from its inception. Nothing in the whole history of the church is to be compared to the manner in which God has blessed the world of his people on these Hills.⁵⁰⁵

From the above and previous analysis we have considerable evidence of the Mizo missionary zeal. From the beginning, church and mission work grew steadily, in contrast to many other churches in India and abroad. Economically, Mizoram was considered one of the more underdeveloped states of India. They did not produce adequate quantities of food for commercial exports; however, this did not stop them sharing and witnessing the gospel to outside their own territory. Nengzakhup records a conversation of non-Mizo travelers with some Mizo church leaders whilst they traveled up the long hill road from Silchar in Assam to Aizawl:

“Look at this,” commented one of the men, surprised. “Isn’t it obvious Mizoram has to truck in lots of goods? It must be still a very farm-based economy,” “Yes, we’re pretty poor really, no industry, everything manufactured has to come from other parts of India,” replied his friend Rev. Rokhuma, a prominent leader of the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram. “I can’t help noticing the empty trucks. So many have passed us, what does Mizoram export?” asked another. Suddenly an answer popped into Rokhuma’s head. He’d never voiced it before, but now he knew it was true. “We export the Gospel.”⁵⁰⁶

In this chapter, we investigate how Mizo Christians, within the Presbyterian Church in particular, witnessed the gospel to foreign fields. How did *Hnatlang* influence the strategy and structure of foreign missions? How did Mizo missionaries view other cultures? This study is not anthropology though it is using some of its data; not sociology, though it covers about human social behaviour and development of human society; not history, though it analyses and records past events, as of the life or development of a people or institution. Rather, it is a missiological study of a missionary practice.

⁵⁰⁵ Lloyd, *History*, 225.

⁵⁰⁶ Nengzakhup, *Amazing*, 1.

6.1. Development of Foreign Mission

The Mizoram Presbyterian Church took 25 years before officially sending missionaries outside Mizoram. The Mizo foreign mission started in the third decade of Christianity in Mizoram and continued through the *Hnatlang* (voluntary evangelistic activities) of the Mizos outside of Mizoram--in Manipur, Tripura, Haflong, and Cachar area of Assam.⁵⁰⁷

The earliest Mizo foreign mission can be traced back to Watkins Roberts⁵⁰⁸, who sent three Mizo pioneer Christians (namely Vanzika, Savawma and Taitea) to Manipur to preach the gospel there in 1910, and after three years he sent back R. Dala as a missionary to Manipur in 1913.⁵⁰⁹

Mizo Christians who migrated to the neighbouring states became founders of the church, “Mr. Hrangvunga migrated to Tripura⁵¹⁰ in 1911 only fifteen years after Christianity arrived in Mizoram. The motivating factors of their migration were not known, but it was known that the seed of the Christianity started there as a result of their witnesses.⁵¹¹ In 1920, Mr. Thianga migrated to Haflong⁵¹² because of his burden to preach the gospel to the people there”.⁵¹³ In the same year, Pastor Buanga with his friends frequently visited the neighbouring state village Dholai⁵¹⁴ where considerable churches were

⁵⁰⁷ Lalfakzuala, *Synod Mission Board in Mizoram Presbyterian Church: A History of Departments*, edited by Vanlalchhuanawma (Aizawl: Faculty of Aizawl Theological College, 2007, 12). Here after cited as Lalfakzuala, *Synod Mission*.

⁵⁰⁸ Watkins Roberts is one of the American missionaries of North East Indian General Mission (N.E.I.G).

⁵⁰⁹ Saiaithanga, *Mizo Kohhran*, 96.

⁵¹⁰ Tripura is one of the states in North –East India. It is situated on the western side of Mizoram. It is surrounded by Bangladesh in the north, south and west. The Indian state of Assam lies to the east.

⁵¹¹ See Saiaithanga, *Mizo Kohhran*, 98. Rev. K. Lalzuala, *Ramthar Board*, 16.

⁵¹² Haflong is one of the towns in Assam state.

⁵¹³ See V.L. Zaithanga, *From Head-Hunting to Soul –Hunting* (Aizawl, Mizoram: Synod Press, 1981, 18).

Here after cited as Zaithanga, *From Head-Hunting*. Rev. K. Lalzuala, *Ramthar Board*, 16.

⁵¹⁴ Dholai one of the towns in Cachar District, is located in northern part of Assam.

established.⁵¹⁵ In 1941, forty Mizo families serving in government and several students settled in Bangladesh, and erected a church with the help of the missionaries.⁵¹⁶

6.2. The Presbyterian Church Foreign Mission

Mission work continued long before the establishment of the Mizoram Presbyterian Synod Mission Board. Several volunteers worked in neighbouring states to witness the gospel and establish the church. With the increase in mission, a separate committee (Synod Mission Committee) was formed in 1953 functioning in policy making, surveillance of and selection of fields, recruitment of workers and making budgets, etc.⁵¹⁷ The Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod which met in 1961 formed the Synod Mission Board (SMB). The initial activities of the Synod Mission Board were overseen by the Synod Mission Board Committee.

In 1966, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church appointed Rev. V.L. Zaithanga as the first full time secretary of the Synod Mission Board.⁵¹⁸ The Board's ministry grew rapidly and within a few years many foreign mission fields opened up. It soon became the largest department of the Synod. Its annual mission budget never decreased but rather doubled almost every year. Mizos gave so generously to the mission activities that sometimes the Synod had to borrow mission funds to manage other Synod departments. In other words, the Synod sometimes had to borrow mission budget because the Mizos were giving primarily to missions.

In 1981 more than one third of the total income of the Synod had gone for evangelization of non-Christians.⁵¹⁹ The total Synod Budget for 2005-2006 was Rs.

⁵¹⁵ Saiaithanga, *Mizo Kohhran*, 97.

⁵¹⁶ See Vanlalchhuanawma, *Historical*, 192.

⁵¹⁷ See Saiaithanga, *Mizo Kohhran*, 12-13

⁵¹⁸ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Historical*, 213.

⁵¹⁹ Lalfakzuala, *Synod*. 32.

432,947,000 out of which Rs.155, 035,823 more than 36% was used for the mission.⁵²⁰

The proposed financial budget for the year 2007-2008 amounted to Rs. 188,998,000 which is 38.05% of the whole Synod Budget.⁵²¹ Beyond the mission budget, many groups and individuals shared the mission burden by contributing additional money and materials.

During 2006 more than 90 local churches, youth and women's organizations and individuals contributed Rs. 807, 587, for the church buildings, school buildings, missionary quarters and other miscellaneous needs in the mission fields.⁵²² By 2006, there were a total of 1,457 personnel working under the Mission Department. There are 230 Churches, 126 Preaching Stations, and 441 Fellowships (Home Churches) under the care of the Synod Mission Board with the combined churches having a total membership of 53,534 and having new converts in 2005 totaling 6,072 persons.⁵²³

6.3. Foreign Missions in North East India

The period 1961-1988 saw the Mizoram Presbyterian Church begin its foreign mission to the neighbouring states, officially starting in 1961 in "North East India". "North East India" is a term that usually refers to the seven states of Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh. These states have international borders with Tibet, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh and hence have had significant influence on their religious profile during the last century. A powerful movement of conversion towards Christianity has taken place over the years; without a doubt, in some of these states, the entire population has been converted. The percentage of

⁵²⁰ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, *Ramthar Enthatu Commission Report* (Aizawl: Synod Office 2007, 3), Here after Cited as M.P.C, *Commission Report*.

⁵²¹ Lalfakzuala, *Synod*, 33.

⁵²² See Appendix II.

⁵²³ Rev. Zosangliana Colney, *Synod Ramthar Rawngbawlina Chanchin Tlangpui* in Ramthar October 2006. 14. Here after cited as Zosangliana *Synod Ramthar*.

Christians as showed by the census of 2001 in these states is clear evidence of these conversions.⁵²⁴

In fact, the Synod Mission Board's initial activity was to take over the missions started by the European and American missionaries. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church operated seven mission fields in states such as (1) Barak Mission Field in Assam (2) Karbi Anglong Mission Field in Assam and (3) Assam Mission Field in Assam (4) Tripura Mission Field in Tripura (5) Manipur Mission Field in Manipur (6) Arunachal East Mission Field in Arunachal Pradesh and (7) Arunachal West Mission Field in Arunachal Pradesh. As mentioned above, Christianity was already introduced in these places by the missionaries prior to arrival of Christianity in Mizoram.⁵²⁵ However growth in these areas was rather slow compared to Mizoram, Nagaland, and Meghalaya.⁵²⁶ Credit could be given to the tribal culture or communitarian culture for the factor of growth in Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya whereas considerable other factors are inevitable. In the meantime, Assam and Tripura were dominated by the Bengali-s and Assamese (Indo Aryans) who shared completely different language, and culture (non communitarian) and the entire population of Manipur were converted into Hindu religion prior to arrival of Christianity. However, we are not going to study the detailed history of these people and cultures or the story of Christianity and mission

⁵²⁴ Nagaland 90%, Mizoram 87%, Meghalaya 70.3%, Manipur 35% and Arunachal Pradesh 18.7%, Assam 3.7% and Tripura 3.2%. Available at <http://www.censusindia.net> [Internet accessed on 15.10.2008]

⁵²⁵ Historians and Scholars recorded that Christianity was already introduced in these regions - Cachar (Assam) – In, 1856 Welsh Presbyterian Church established mission in Cachar (Vanlalchhuanawma, *Historical*, 227). Arunachal Pradesh- Tripura- “the earliest mention of Christianity in Tripura can be traced back to 1678-1685 when the Maharaja of Tripura invited the Jesuits”. (Debbarma, S, *Christianity in Tripura Before the Coming of the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society in Impact of Christianity in North East India* edited by J. Puthenpurakal, Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publication, 1996, 139). Manipur- “The first missionary who came to Manipur was Rev. William Pattigrew of Arthington Mission. He landed in Imphal the capital of Manipur on January 6, 1894.” (Vanlalchhuanawma, *Historical Study*, 43). Karbi Anglong- “The first Christian Mission to enter the Karbi area was the American Baptist Mission which baptized its first convert at Noagong in October 1863.” (Vanlalchhuanawma, *Historical Study*, 238).

⁵²⁶ Percentage of Christianity in these three states of Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalayas are above 70% whereas other states Tripura, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur are less than 35%. Available at <http://www.censusindia.net> [Internet accessed on 18.10.2008].

activities prior to Mizo mission. In fact, the history of the North East Indian states has been studied and written about by several scholars already.⁵²⁷

Within the context of the particular Mizo form of Christianity brought by the Mizo missionaries to these regions, two parallel expansions were taking place. The first was *Hnatlang*, an important determinant in evangelism and church planting. The second was the formation of the church within their culture, based on Mizoram Presbyterian Christianity: the development of district and presbytery administration (and the like), and the organizations unique to this particular organization of the church, including women and youth groups. We will analyze these matters while discussing the detailed history of the Barak Mission Field. Towards the end of this chapter, a brief history of the rest of the mission fields in North East regions between 1961 and 1988 will be highlighted.

6.3.1. Barak Mission Field

Barak, which is also known as Barak Valley, is situated to the north of Mizoram, in the southern part of the Indian state of Assam. It is named after the Barak River which rises in the Manipur hills and enters the plains downstream of Silchar⁵²⁸ town, before entering Bangladesh. The Barak Valley mainly consists of three districts namely

⁵²⁷ Downs wrote a brief history of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India covering about 114 years starting from the period of 1836 which was operated by the Baptist Missionary Society (Downs, Frederick, *The mighty works of God: a brief history of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India: the mission period, 1836-1950*, Assam: Christian Literature Centre, 1971). Rao covers history of Christianity in North East India in his book (O.M. Rao, *Focus on North East Indian Christianity*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1994); Saral K. Chatterji edited a book called "*Society and Culture in North-East India*" in which thirteen scholars contributed articles concerning Christian perspectives to Society and Cultures of the North- East India (Chatterji, Saral K, *Society and Culture in North- East India: A Christian Perspective*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1996). Another book called "*Impact of Christianity on North East India*" edited by J. Puthenpurakal is a wealth of information on a wide range of issues concerning impact of Christianity. In this book, more than thirty scholars contributed articles. Aizawl Theological College organized consultation to study on Gospel and culture, particularly focusing Christianity in North East India (Dr. Zaihmingthanga, Ed. *North East India Regional Consultation on Gospel and Culture*. Aizawl: Theological committee Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, 1995).

⁵²⁸ Silchar is the capital of Barak Valley or Cachar District of Assam dominated mostly by the Bengali-s.

Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. The majority of people in Barak are Bengali,⁵²⁹ but minorities include Kachari, Meitei and different Mongoloid tribes in the region. Barak is completely different in its language, culture, history, religion, ethnicity compared to Mizoram. The mission work in Barak had been launched long before Christianity arrived in Mizoram.⁵³⁰

The mission work had been initiated by Mizo volunteers long before the Mizoram Presbyterian Church officially opened a mission field there. In 1925, the Mizoram Synod sent Saizinga and Lalbuaia to Langrawng, which is under the Karimganj district of Assam. Rev. Zairema was appointed in 1959 as a missionary by the assembly of the Presbyterian Church of North East India for the Bengali people around Silchar. Accompanying their fellow Mizo, these pioneer Christians operated a mission in the area by using the traditional *Hnatlang* approaches.

Saiaithanga wrote a detailed record of how *beihruai* (Hnatlang) operations were launched in the Barak area. In 1961, North West Youth Presbytery meeting, which was held at Mualvum, decided to launch *beihruai* at Alexandrapur⁵³¹ to ask forgiveness from God and to light the fire of the Gospel.⁵³² Accordingly, the first *beihruai* which he called *Alexandrapur Kristian Rammut* (Alexandrapur Christian Expedition) was launched in January 23, 1963. After walking several miles, 180 people arrived in

⁵²⁹ Bengali are an ethnic community native to the historic region of Bengal in South Asia. Bengal is now divided between Bangladesh and India. Most Bengali are Indo Aryan origin and they speak Indo Aryan language called Bengali/Bangla.

⁵³⁰ "The mission was launched in 1856 when the British Administration had been consolidated in Cachar. The first missionary Rev. William Pryse proposed to open a mission station at Silchar to the Welsh Presbyterian Church and accordingly the mission station was established at Silchar and the first mission school was opened. In 1872, after seventeen years of expansion of the work, there were only forty five Christians. Without much success the western missionaries left in 1972 and handed over the church and mission work to the Assembly of Presbyterian Church in Northeast India (now known as Presbyterian Church of India)." Vanlalchhuanawma, *Historical Study*, 270; See also Rev. Vanlalchhunga, *A Brief History of the Presbyterian Church of Wales Mission Works in Cachar Plains: From 1893-1958 in 25 Years of Barak Presbytery & Mizoram Synod silver Jubilee Celebration 1st March, 2002: Souvenir* (Silchar: Silver Jubilee Committee Barak Presbytery, 2002, 17-36)

⁵³¹ 'Alexandrapur' is a name of the tea garden established by the British. In January 23, 1871, Mizo warriors killed Mr. James Winchester and captured his daughter Mary Winchester.

⁵³² Saiaithanga, *Mizo Kohhran*, 107.

Katlicherra⁵³³ to attend the *beihruai* under the leadership of Rev. J.M. Lloyd and Rev. Liangkhaia. While returning home they visited Tukuk village, distributing gospel tracks and clothes to the poor and organized *Hnatlang* by constructing Buhchangphai church building. Zairema made comments about this *beihruai*:

This campaign was held on 23rd January 1963, the 92nd anniversary of the capture of Mary Winchester. This was a type of pilgrimage to over 600 Mizo young men and women who marched on foot from their homes following on the trails of their forefathers. Ever since there occurred a distinct change of Mizo attitude towards the people of Cachar.⁵³⁴

In 1965, the northwest presbytery of Christian youth organized a series of *beihruai* (in April, July and October) at Bhaga Bazar amongst the Muslims to witness the gospel by preaching and distributing gospel tracks. Several enthusiastic Mizo Christians participated. Ninety people attended the *beihruai* in the month of April, 34 people in July, and 50 people in October. In 1968, the Mizoram Synod Mission Board officially took over the work of mission and that of strengthening the existing church.⁵³⁵ Thus, a *Hnatlang* mission approach was initiated prior to the Synod Mission Board's official inauguration of the mission enterprise.⁵³⁶ From the start of foreign mission, *Biak in sak Hnatlang* (construction of church building) was utilized as one of the prominent methods of church planting. Saiaithanga wrote the details:

Under the guidance of Rev. Zairema, they (Mizos) have decided to organize Quabari Desuali Christian *Biak in sak Hnatlang* while having Bagha Bazar *beihruai*. According to the decision, 35 people from 18 different churches left Aizawl on January 13, 1966. Pu. Hrangchhuana contributed his vehicle (three-toner) for their use. On the way, they collected woods collected by the Bilkhawtlhir and Vairengte churches to be used for the church building wooden posts. On the next day, they reached Quabari, and started church building construction on a land donated by Mr. Madu Sudan Mala, a Desuali Christian.

⁵³³ Katlicherra is the name of village situated near Alexandrapur tea garden. The village name is called after the killing of the tea garden manager Mr. James Winchester. (Katli = chop off/ cut; Cherra = village)

⁵³⁴ Rev. (Dr). Zairema, *The Presbyterian Church in Barak Valley 1959-1974* in 25 (1975-2001) Silver Jubilee Celebration 1st March, 2002, Souvenir, Presbyterian Church Silchar (Silchar: Silver Jubilee Committee Barak Presbytery Silchar, 2002. 42. Here after cited as Zairema, *Presbyterian*.

⁵³⁵ See Vanlalchhuanawma, *Historical Study*, 23.

⁵³⁶ See Saiaithanga, *Mizo Kohhran*, 107-108.

They finished Church building of size 18 x 12 feet length and breadth after working two days.⁵³⁷ (Translated)

Lalfakzuala says, “In 1974, the Assembly handed responsibility to the Mizo Synod to look after the churches around Silchar. After ten years, in 1984, the Mizo Synod declared Cachar as their mission field”.⁵³⁸ In contrast to these dates, Lalfakzuala makes some revisions in his article called “Synod Mission Board” that Barak Mission Field was inaugurated in 1975 and taken over in 1985 by the Synod Mission Board.”⁵³⁹ It seemed that Lalfakzuala got the wrong dates and later confirmed the correct dates.

The Barak mission station is located at Silchar, the main city of the Barak valley. The Synod Mission Board has taken responsibility for the mission and church administration. The mission work is operated mainly amongst five different tribes of Bengali Hindu,⁵⁴⁰ Bengali Muslim,⁵⁴¹ Meitei, Brisnuprya, Cachari and Deswali within three districts namely Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. The ministry includes church administration, evangelism, church planting, education, medical ministry, literature and social development. The writer worked in this mission field for eleven years as a missionary evangelist during 1986-1997.

As mentioned earlier the Barak Mission Field was the continuation of the work done by the Presbyterian Church of Wales who had been actively involved in mission during

⁵³⁷ Saithanga, *Mizo Kohhran*, 111.

⁵³⁸ Lalfakzuala, *Theological*. 45.

⁵³⁹ Lalfakzuala, *Synod*, 26.

⁵⁴⁰ John Edgar I.C.S. succeeded Capt. Stewart as the first British Civil Administrator of Cachar as Deputy Commissioner. Before coming to Silchar he was assuming a similar responsibility in Commissary of Dacca. He had many acquaintances of Bengali merchants there. He invited many such merchants to settle down at Silchar and also at another commercial centre in Cachar (Ranjit Goala, Geography, “History & Political Background of Barak Valley” in Presbyterian Church Silchar, 25th (1975-200) Silver Jubilee Celebration 1st March 2002: Souvenir (Silchar: Silver Jubilee Committee, Barak Presbytery Silchar, 2002, 9). Here after cited as Goala, Geography.

⁵⁴¹ See Goala, Geography, 8-9. Stewart invited a large number of Bengali Muslims from Sylhet, Mymensing and Kommila to come to Cachar and settle in the interior parts for wet-cultivation. Muslims were granted lease of mirashdaris (landlordship) in Cachar for agricultural purpose for which they were quite gifted people. During the sixties of 19th century such migration of Muslim cultivators took place in Cachar District.

1886-1955.⁵⁴² It had commenced mission and church planting in Silchar and Karimganj, the two capitals of the districts. In addition, several rural churches were planted mainly in the Tea Garden, established by the British Government at that time.

On commencement of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church mission, an attempt had been made to train indigenous leaders, pastors and evangelists to look after the existing believers. In 1975, the Synod Mission Board selected two native believers, namely Ranjit Goala and Dependra Nandi, and sent them to the Aizawl Theological College. Both of them successfully completed their courses and the Synod nominated them for ordination in 1979. But Ranjit Goala had chosen to work as a lay worker instead. In 1983, Dependra Nandi was ordained, but died five years later and this left the indigenous church again without an indigenous pastor.

In 1976, the Synod proposed to organize a mass evangelism *Hnatlang* in which John's gospel would be purchased and distributed to every household in Cachar.⁵⁴³ The Synod put forward a budget of Rs. 200,000, estimating a contribution of Rs. 2.50 from every adult member of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church. The Synod Mission Board appointed ten missionaries to operate this program. In 1977, the distribution was launched whereby a group of ten selected people distributed written copies of 'The Gospel According to John' house to house.

Given the momentum of these early programs, the Synod Mission Board felt the need to appoint more missionaries in this region. In 1978, two Mizo missionaries Ramhnehzauva and R. Lalthanhima joined other six new native evangelists--Jyotish

⁵⁴² See Rev. Vanlalchhunga, *A Brief History of the Presbyterian Church of Wales Mission Works in Cachar Plains: From 1893-1958 in 25 Years of Barak Presbytery & Mizoram Synod silver Jubilee Celebration 1st March, 2002: Souvenir* (Silchar: Silver Jubilee Committee Barak Presbytery, 2002, 17-36)

⁵⁴³ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Synod Minutes, 1976, 56.

Christian, B. R. Sinha. D.R. Patra, Manindra Biswas, Sion Chandra Das, Bijon Senapati. Their main assignment was to look after the existing believers, witness the gospel to the non Christians and plant a new church. In addition, three *Kraws Sipai*⁵⁴⁴ (soldiers of the cross) Bankim Biswas, Sushadhar Dev and Bira Christian were also appointed to part time positions.⁵⁴⁵

After 1980, four Mizo missionaries were recruited to work among the Kacharis/Cacharis⁵⁴⁶, Lalthiana, Lalzuiliani, late Robert Thangchungnunga and Chawikunga (now dismissed). Apart from these, a dedicated staff nurse Miss Lawmsangi of Venghlui offered herself to work among the Kacharis. Kachari mission started in three stations, namely Dholaicherra, Borban and Kalahore villages. By 1985, an English medium school was established in Dholaicherra, which was converted into a Bengali medium after five years due to lack of Kachari pupils, particularly those wanting to be educated in English. As Hrangchungthanga, the Kachari evangelist proposed to the mission office, a mission worker's *Hnatlang* was organized to build a church building for the Kachari people. This church building was soon demolished due to lack of new believers among the Kacharis.⁵⁴⁷

From the beginning, *Hnatlang* was comprehensively applied for the establishment and development of the mission. The school building, staff quarters and church building were built by *Hnatlang* in which different Mizoram Presbyterian local church were

⁵⁴⁴ Lloyds, *History*, 152, *Kraws Sipai* (soldier of the Cross) -their practice was to go from village to village telling the Good News to others. This ardent group continued its work for a number of years, and if remained unpaid and voluntarily band, depended on food and support on the villages which they visited.

⁵⁴⁵ Lalpianga, *Brief Report*. 45.

⁵⁴⁶ Goala, *Geography*, 1. "The word 'Cachar' is derivation of the Sanskrit term '*kaccha*' meaning Lower region of mountains. 'Cachar' is also related with the name of a 'Bodo' group of people. The Bodo Kacharis living in the regions comprising Goalpara & North Bengal on Assam and West Bengal border. They are held as 'Indo-Mongoloid' tribe. Most probably their inhabitants were built in the foothill regions of Himalayas; they were called 'Bodo Kacharis' by the neighbouring Aryans. To designate Barak Valley as 'Cachar' was also due to the fact of the history of Kachari Kingdom in the valley in the past.

⁵⁴⁷ This information is taken from the writer's own knowledge while working in this mission field.

involved at different times. This approach is still in practice. On January 2-8, 2004, Kawnpui Hmar Veng Presbyterian Church organized *Hnatlang* to build a new Kachari Church building. During 2005 and 2006, five different *Hnatlang* were organized for clearing and cleaning the mission compound, repairing school buildings, constructing kitchens, fencing the mission compound. Sixteen days were spent by 15 different churches and more than 200 church members were involved.⁵⁴⁸

Kachari mission in Borban village was discontinued due to lack of new believers among them. Nevertheless, some new Kachari believers were baptized in Kalahore and consequently the Kachari churches were becoming more and more established on their own; in fact, two church buildings were erected by *Hnatlang* by the Mizoram Presbyterian local churches Vairengte and Dawrpui. Growth of Christianity is still rather slow among the Kachari people.

In 1986, Rev. R. Lalpianga was replaced by Rev. R. Lalengkima, and in the same year the Synod Mission Board formulated a new project called “Cachar *Beihpui*” (Cachar great effort) in which four evangelists Zaichhawna Hlawndo, D. P. Chhingvunga, Lalauruaia and Vanlalthuama were appointed. They were given Bengali language training for about five months in Silchar and were then posted to different locations to tend the existing Bengali churches while engaging in evangelistic projects. After 1988, the Synod Mission Board recruited more Mizo missionary evangelists including C. Roluta, Zonunsanga, Hmangaih Johana, Rohmingliana, Lalnghinglova (now dismissed), Vanlalfinga (now dismissed), Lalruatlana, Robert Lairotluanga (now retired) and Lalthansanga (now discharged).

⁵⁴⁸ The name of the churches and dates of *Hnatlang* initiators are as follows: Electric Presbyterian Church KTP Pastorate-November 24-28, 2005, Ramhlun Vengthlang Presbyterian Church-October 31, 2005, Electric Presbyterian Church Youth Pastorate November- 29-December 3, 2005, Nursery Veng Presbyterian Youth November 17-22, 2006, Aizawl Venglai KTP Branch October 24-28, 2006,.

In 1991, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church resolved to divide this ministry into two sections--the Church court section and Mission section. Accordingly the church sent Rev. S Lalkhuma, who was appointed the first Field Secretary, to look after the Mission, whereas Rev. R Lalengkima continued church court section administrative responsibility. But in the same year, the Synod Executive Committee resolved to reapply the same method and eventually withdrew its policy. Rev. S Lalkhuma took over the responsibility when Rev. R Lalengkima's contract completed in 1992. Rev. S Lalkuma was transferred to Mizoram after his successful mission work. In 1999, a new administrator, Rev. K Lalhmingliana, took the Mission endeavors and administration of the Church court until 2001. Rev. Vanlalchhunga replaced him in 2002 after he had served his requisite three year contract. The present administrative secretary, Rev. Ralthansanga assumed responsibility in 2006. There has been gradual growth of the church and development of the mission work during 1988-1998.

6.3.2. Mizo Missionary Attitudes toward Indigenous Cultures

Are Mizo missionaries sympathetic towards indigenous culture? Attitudes towards indigenous culture, Bengalis in particular, can be best witnessed in the development of the mission work and the formation and manifestation of the indigenous church. As mentioned before, existing believers were converted by the Welsh Presbyterian missionaries, those who were also responsible for bringing Christianity to the Mizos. Thus, the first experience of Christian music was Welsh and English hymns translated by the missionaries and indigenous believers. At the same time, there were many songs composed by the indigenous Christians using traditional tunes. In some churches, classical musical instruments (Harmonium and Congo) were used in the worship services.

Now the Mizos, who were known as singing tribes, took over the work of the Western missionaries and continued planting the Bengali churches. This study so far demonstrates that the Mizo missionaries made the least attempt to develop Bengali traditional tunes and music for the worship services. The writer is one of the missionary song leaders in the worship service while working among the Bengalis during 1986-1997.⁵⁴⁹ Thus, the worship was characterized largely by the Mizoram Presbyterian Church worship pattern and widespread use of English, Welsh and Mizo hymns. The entire form of their proclamation and the whole ecclesiastical inheritance had been brought from the Mizos. This meant that the Mizo missionaries had brought their own 'foreign' character to the mission fields.

Likewise, the church buildings had very little similarity with the familiar religious buildings of the area (Hindu Temples & Muslim Mosques). They were built mostly with a similar structure similar to the Mizoram Presbyterian Churches, which in turn were copied from the Welsh Presbyterian churches.⁵⁵⁰ Normally, the Synod Mission Board did not set aside a budget for church buildings, but provision was made through Mizoram Presbyterian local churches and individuals donating millions of rupees and organizing hundreds of *Hnatlang* annually.

Thus, Mizo *Hnatlang* approach has been a vital tool in evangelism, church planting, church institutionalization and mission development as a whole. During the last six years (2004-2008), 83 different types of *Hnatlang* were organized in Barak Mission

⁵⁴⁹ When I was working as a missionary in Silchar, I used to lead the congregation singing by playing the Mizo drum which is made out of wood and cow skin. Unfortunately, one of the indigenous church leaders Mrs. P.P.Roy did not like it at all, and she used to hide the drum and put harmonium to be used before I came to the church. But I knew exactly where she hid the drum, and took it out and used it deliberately but without realizing the damage. Even while I was looking after Mohanpur (Bengali) church during 1987-1989, the only music instrument I used and even taught the believers to play was none other than the Mizo drum.

⁵⁵⁰ I did realize when I visited the churches in north and south Wales a number of times that the Mizo church building structures are similar to the Welsh Presbyterian Church building structures.

Field; about 1200 people spent more than 300 days in these tasks.⁵⁵¹ However, the question is whether or not Mizo *Hnatlang* was appropriate to the indigenous culture, Bengalis in particular. Do Bengali people traditionally practice *Hnatlang*? Did they ever build their religious buildings by way of *Hnatlang*? How can these ‘foreign’ elements be reconciled in the Barak Mission Field?

6.3.3. Expansion of Education Ministry

Certainly, education was the main tool for evangelism among the Mizos in early days. As mentioned earlier, Mizos were neither able to read nor had they a written language of their own. This ultimately led the pioneer missionaries to create a Mizo script. Missionaries opened schools where they taught reading and writing and gradually translated the Bible into the Mizo language. This was so successful that within a few decades Mizoram had the highest literacy in India. This may have contributed to the idea of ministry through education being introduced to the foreign mission fields.

Since its inception, the Synod Mission Board has placed a great emphasis on education ministry by establishing primary, middle and high schools in the foreign mission fields. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church is now running 46 schools in the mission fields, believing that this ministry is vital for the lifting up of the poor, strengthening family dynamics and relationships, and witnessing the gospel to the students.⁵⁵² More than 50% of the mission workers are involved in the educational ministry. Mizoram Presbyterian church educational ministry seeks to enable pupils to be biblically informed and to participate in the life of the Christian community, as well as worshipping and following Christ.

⁵⁵¹ See Appendix –III

⁵⁵² See Zosangliana Colney, *Synod Ramthar Rawngbawlina Tlangpui* in Ramthar, October 2006. 8. Here after cited as Colney, *Synod Ramthar*.

The question is how *Hnatlang* contributed to the educational ministry in the foreign mission fields. Traditionally, Mizo built *Zawlbuk* (social institution), *Lal In* (a chief house), *Pum* (a blacksmith house) and *Hmeithai in* (a widow house) by means of *Hnatlang*. After the Mizo people fully embraced Christianity, each and every village community used *Hnatlang* to build school and church buildings. It is significant to note from this study that no foreign mission school building is built without the input of *Hnatlang*. Mizoram Presbyterian local churches have organized different kinds of *Hnatlang* over the years to construct the schools, and this includes leveling and digging the site, constructing the building, making school furniture, etc. Missionaries provided the *Hnatlang* requirements to the Synod Mission Board or directly to the local home churches. On many occasions, Mizoram Presbyterian local churches enquired about *Hnatlang* requirements through the Synod Mission Board office or directly through the foreign mission field office.

In 1972, the Winchester school was opened at primary level, at Ramhlun village near Alexandrapore, where James Winchester was killed by a Mizo warrior in the 19th century. In 1980, this school was upgraded to middle school level. At present there are 134 students and 12 teachers. The Synod Mission Board not only provided full financial support but also applied *Hnatlang* approach for the development of the mission.

In 1977, another English medium school was opened at Silchar. Up to that time, the Welsh Presbyterian Church missionaries had only established a Bengali medium school. The new school grew rapidly, and within a few years became one of the best secondary schools in Silchar. In 2008, there were 600 students and 14 teachers, 8 of which were Mizos and 6 non-Mizos. More than 90% of the students followed the Hindu religion.

In January 2, 1986, another English medium school called Rowland's Memorial High School was opened at Karimganj, in memory of Dr. Hellen Rowland who served as missionary at Karimganj beginning March 15, 1936. From its inception, this school maintained a good reputation and is now considered one of the best schools in the Karimganj District.⁵⁵³ In 2006, when the school celebrated its tenth anniversary, the school achieved a 100% passing record since students began to take the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) equivalent to British GCSE examination during 1997-2006.⁵⁵⁴ Apart from these English medium schools, Barak mission is operating six schools in different locations.

6.3.4. Growth of the Churches

Prior to the Presbyterian Church taking complete responsibility for its own affairs, a report from the missionaries of the Presbyterian Church of Wales showed that there were only 14 churches and 463 members including preaching stations in Cachar district.⁵⁵⁵ In 1974, when the Synod Mission Board sent Rev. Lalpianga to assume full responsibility for mission and church administration, there were eleven churches and 734 church members.⁵⁵⁶ In a ten year period (1974-1984), church membership doubled; indeed by 1984, prior to Rev. Lalpianga being replaced by Rev. Lalengkima as the new Cachar officer, there were 51 workers (32 non-Mizo, 19 Mizo) and 1,205 church members in the mission field.⁵⁵⁷ According to Rev. Lalengkima the Barak Mission continued to see a steady growth in new believers under his leadership:

⁵⁵³ See Rev. Lalpianga, *Brief Report*. 46.

⁵⁵⁴ Vanlalthawmi, *Rowlands Memorial School: Karimganj HSLC Exam Result 100% Kum 10 Tlin Lawmna*, in Ramthar December 2006, 31-33. Here after cited as Vanlalthawmi, *Rowlands*.

⁵⁵⁵ Vanlalchhunga, *Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Churches of Wales on Syhlet-Bangladesh and Cachar-India 1886-1955* (Silchar: Shalom Publications, 2003, 517). Here after cited as Vanlalchhunga, *Reports*.

⁵⁵⁶ Rev. Lalpianga, *A Brief Report of Cachar District Meeting for a Period from 1974 April to 1986 in Cachar Plains: From 1893-1958 in 25 Years of Barak Presbytery & Mizoram Synod silver Jubilee Celebration 1st March, 2002: Souvenir* (Silchar: Silver Jubilee Committee Barak Presbytery, 2002, 43-49). Here after cited as Rev. Lalpianga, *Brief Report*.

⁵⁵⁷ Rev. Lalpianga, *Brief Report*, 49.

God blessed our works and a good number of new believers were added to the Church subsequently. I baptized as many as 308 people during my six years service in the Cachar area. My colleagues, the other pastors also baptized a good number of new believers. We were often surprised at the easy response of those to whom the Gospel was preached in spite of the several problems they had to face from their families and relatives.⁵⁵⁸

In 1987, a new Presbytery was formed consisting of the three pastorates of Silchar, Karimganj and Konakpur. These were formed in anticipation of the church growing at a faster rate and supporting itself. However, growth in giving, administration, volunteering and growth of the institutional church towards maturity was rather slow. Eighteen years (1987-2005) after the inauguration of the Barak Presbytery, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod had to contribute more than 90% of the finances for the Barak Pastoral ministry. The Barak Area Pastoral Budget for 2005-2006 was estimated at Rs. 3,922,000/- in which indigenous church contributions were around Rs. 322,100/- The Synod grant total was Rs. 3,599,900/-⁵⁵⁹

By 1986, the Meitei mission was started, and the first joint gospel campaign with Manipur Mission Field was held at Kamranga (Meitei village is about twenty miles away from Silchar). There were Manipur evangelists, in which the writer was one of the campaigners. In this village, there was a man who had a dream long before Christianity was brought by the Mizos. In his dream someone told him that “One day an unknown religion will be preached in our village, and the village will embrace that religion.” Few village people believed the dream, but to the village people’s surprise, four people embraced Christianity and received baptism at that time.

⁵⁵⁸ Rev. R. Lalengkima, *A Short Account of Cachar Plain Churches and Mission Activities During 1986-1992 in 25 Years of Barak Presbytery & Mizoram Synod silver Jubilee Celebration 1st March, 2002: Souvenir* (Silchar: Silver Jubilee Committee Barak Presbytery, 2002, 50). Here after cited as Rev. R. Lalengkima, *Short Account*.

⁵⁵⁹ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Synod Budget 2005-2006, 32.

The receptiveness of the Meiteis to the Gospel encouraged the Synod Mission Board to transfer four missionaries (two Mizos and two Meiteis: M.S. Dawngliana, R. Vanlalbiaa, Mangi Singh and M. Rajen Singh) from Manipur in August 1986. M.S. Dawngliana and M. Rajen Singh were posted at Lalabazar whereas R. Vanlalbiaa and Mangi Singh were posted at Kamranga. Plots of land were purchased where missionary quarters were erected. Not long after the evangelists arrived, the Mizoram Presbyterian churches organized *Hnatlang* for a church building. Aizawl Melthum Presbyterian Church built and inaugurated a church building at Kamranga in the same year. But the old church building was demolished and again in 2001, the Dawrpui Presbyterian Church organized another *Hnatlang* to build a new church building.

Christianity was growing faster among the Meiteis than in the other tribes (Bengali, Cachari and Brisnuprya). Within a few years, many more Meiteis embraced Christianity. More missionaries (Mizo and indigenous) were recruited to plant churches in different Meitei villages such as Lalmargram, Lalangpar, Lantukgram, Jiribam and Jarultola.⁵⁶⁰ Meitei Missionaries were transferred from Manipur to work among their own kinsmen in Cachar areas from 1990 onwards.⁵⁶¹ Due to this rapid growth, a separate pastorate was required. Thus, the first Meitei Pastorate District meeting was held at Jiribam.⁵⁶² Meitei believers Surjo Kumar Singh and Benoy Kumar Singh received theological training and ordination by the Synod, and soon after began working as pastors in the mission field. In December 2008, 74 Missionaries (62 Meiteis and 12 Mizos) were working in evangelism, church planting and medical ministry whilst overseeing fifteen churches with 1,075 believers.⁵⁶³

⁵⁶⁰ Rev. R. Lalengkima, *Short Account*. 52.

⁵⁶¹ Rev. R. Lalengkima, *Short Account*. 52.

⁵⁶² K. Lalzuala, *Ramthar Board*. 23.

⁵⁶³ Rev. Ralthansanga Ralte, *Field Report*, December, 2008.

Taken as a whole, the quantitative growth of mission and church in Barak area is significant especially for the fact that the rate of growth continues to increase. At the end of 2008, 245 individuals (71 Mizos and 174 non-Mizos) are working, and the total number of believers has increased to 7,281.⁵⁶⁴

6.4. Overview of the other Foreign Mission Fields in North East India:

The Synod Mission Board applied a very similar strategy across the other mission fields of Manipur, Arunchal Pradesh, Karbi Anglong and Tripura, with few differences. The ethnic composition of the population is extremely complex in these regions. Though it is difficult to determine a precise percentage, the great majority of the inhabitants of these regions are of Mongolian racial stock that is similar to Mizo. However, there is an enormous dissimilarity of cultures, languages and religions between another.⁵⁶⁵ In other words, these regions are comparatively foreign for the Mizos. But a detailed study of these mission fields in northeast India will not be conducted. We will discuss a short history of the mission fields by analyzing when and how the mission began and how *Hnatlang* played an important role during the work in these northeast foreign mission fields.

Christianity arrived in these regions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, whereas the Mizoram Presbyterian Church mission was started only from the middle of the twentieth century. Manipur,⁵⁶⁶ one of the states in North East India is bounded Nagaland in the north, Burma and Mizoram in the east, Cachar District of Assam in the west. About one third of the population is tribal of various kinds among

⁵⁶⁴ Rev. Ralthansanga Ralte *Field Report*, December, 2008.

⁵⁶⁵ Each of the many small tribes has traditionally lived in isolation from the others, and each has its own distinct history which is often quite different from that of the other tribes. Consequently each tribe has its own culture and social structure (Downs, *History of Christianity*, 5).

⁵⁶⁶ Detailed study about Manipur is available from R.K. Saha, “*An Ethnic Movement in Manipur Valleys*” in *Tribal Movement in India* edited by Suresh K. Singh (New Delhi: Manohar, 1982); A.R.Das, “The Manipuri Script Movement” in *Tribal Movement in India* edited by Suresh K. Singh (New Delhi: Manohar, 1982). Frederick Sheldon Downs, *History of Christianity in India*. Vol. 5, pt. 5, North East India in the nineteenth and twentieth century’s (Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 1992)

whom the Gospel has already been preached. But majority of the people in the valleys are Manipur Hindus known as the Meiteis.⁵⁶⁷ The first missionary who came to Manipur was Rev. William Pattigrew of Arthington Mission. He landed in Imphal the capital of Manipur on January 6, 1894. He worked among the Manipuri for two years. However, the maharaja of Imphal would not let him preach among the Manipuri's and Pettigrew finally left the region in 1896.⁵⁶⁸

The evangelization of Manipur was started by the Mizoram Presbyterian Christian Youth Fellowships of Phuaibuang⁵⁶⁹ and Vanbawng.⁵⁷⁰ In 1964, Mr. Bungkhawthanga was sent as an evangelist. Khawbung⁵⁷¹ church also sent Upa Thankhuma to work as an evangelist at Moirang.⁵⁷² This was done with the consent of the Synod. The Synod Mission Board took over the mission work from the youth fellowship in 1965. In the same year, Zaingen Pastorate Christian Youth Fellowship sent Thangzakhama to accompany his fellow Mizo missionaries in Moirang.⁵⁷³ This was done in cooperation with the Tuithaphai Presbytery of South Manipur. The first mission centre was established in 1965 at Moirang, thirty five miles away from Imphal capital of Manipur. At first, the mission work was started by some Mizo volunteers including M.S. Dawngliana,⁵⁷⁴ Rorelliana,⁵⁷⁵ Lalsangliana and S. Lalkhuma. On Christmas day of

⁵⁶⁷ Vanlalchuanawma, *Historical*, 39

⁵⁶⁸ See *ibid*, 43.

⁵⁶⁹ Phuaibuang is a small village situated in the eastern part of Mizoram.

⁵⁷⁰ Vanbawng is a neighboring small village of Phuaibuang.

⁵⁷¹ Khawbung village is situated in the eastern part of Mizoram.

⁵⁷² K. Lalzuala, *Ramthar Board Rawngbawlina Tlangpui* in *Welsh Presbyterian Mission in Mizoram Centenary (1897-1997)* edited by K. Lalzuala (Aizawl: The Synod Literature and Publication Board, 1997, 19). Here after cited as Lalzuala, *Ramrhar Board*.

⁵⁷³ K. Lalzuala, *Ramthar Board*, 19.

⁵⁷⁴ M.S. Dawngliana was appointed later as a full time missionary by the Synod Mission Board and worked in different mission centres with his family faithfully until he retired in 2004.

⁵⁷⁵ Rorelliana left the mission field and returned to Mizoram where he was recognized as a well known evangelist. .

1967, the first two converts were baptized at Ningthoukhong. Gradually, the whole family of these converts became Christians.⁵⁷⁶

From 1968 until 1972, the Synod Mission Board financially supported the Tuithaphai Presbytery mission in Manipur. Tuithaphai Presbytery encouraged the Synod Mission Board to take full responsibility of the mission in Manipur. Since 1972, the Synod Mission Board committed itself fully by both appointing native missionaries and sending missionaries from Mizoram, whilst abiding in partnership with the Tuithaphai Presbytery.⁵⁷⁷ In 1976, the Synod Mission Board and Tuithaphai Presbytery jointly formed the “Manipur Presbyterian Mission Committee” (MPM).

From its beginnings until the present day, Manipur has been one of the more successful among the Presbyterian Church Missions in terms of church growth. In 1985, Meitei Singlup (Meitei Church) was approved by the Mizoram Presbyterian Church as the Presbyterian constitutional Church; and after its first ten years, a new Meitei Presbytery was established in May 5, 1991.⁵⁷⁸ The Synod Mission Board continued its attempt to plant a “three self” church (self-support, self-propagate, self-sufficient) in this field. Up until December 2008, eleven indigenous pastors were ordained by the Synod, out of which six pastors are working in the field presently. The present ministry includes church administration, evangelism, church planting, medical, literature, education and social development.

In 1964, Mizoram Presbyterian Church sent Rokhuma and his family to be the first Mizo missionaries amongst the people in Arunachal Pradesh. Arunachal Pradesh is one of the states in north east India. It borders with the state of Assam to the south and Nagaland to the southeast. Burma is in the east, Bhutan towards the west, and Tibet to

⁵⁷⁶ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Historical Study*, 264.

⁵⁷⁷ K. Lalzuala, *Ramthar Board*, 19.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 20.

the north. Arunachal Pradesh can be roughly divided into a set of semi-distinct cultural spheres, on the basis of tribal identity, language, religion, and material culture. According to the 2001 census the majority of the people followed traditional religion and about 19% of the populations followed Christianity.⁵⁷⁹

Missionaries were stationed at the village of Anglong. However, only three years later in 1967, they had to leave the region due to the Arunachal Government's restriction of spreading Christianity in the region⁵⁸⁰. But it was known that Mizos continued as underground missionaries voluntarily, and their evangelistic zeal and works were commendable.⁵⁸¹ In 1991, Mizoram Presbyterian Church officially inaugurated the Arunachal Pradesh Mission field. Since its inception, education ministry was introduced as one of the most effective evangelism tools. As in other mission fields, *Hnatlang* played an important role in the inception and continuation of the efforts there—church planting, evangelism, medical and literature ministry were fundamental to the mission.

In January 6, 1968, the Mizoram Presbyterian church sent two missionaries Rev. Rokhuma⁵⁸² and Mr. Saibela⁵⁸³ to Karbi Anglong to work with the 'Karbi Anglong Joint Council' (KAJC).⁵⁸⁴ These two missionaries worked as pastors and school teachers respectively. Karbi Anglong is the largest amongst the 27 administrative districts of Assam state bounded by Golaghat district on the east, Meghalaya state and Marigaon district on the west, Nagaon and Golaghat districts on the north and North

⁵⁷⁹ Detail history of Christianity in Arunachal Pradesh is available from Frederick Sheldon Downs, *History of Christianity in India. Vol. 5, pt. 5, North East India in the nineteenth and twentieth century's* (Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 1992)

⁵⁸⁰ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Historical*, 33.

⁵⁸¹ See Lalchhuanmawia, *Evaluation*, 27.

⁵⁸² Rev. Rokhuma one of the well-known Mizoram Presbyterian ordained ministers finished his Bachelor of Divinity in 1964 from the Serampore College and was ordained in 1966 by the Mizoram Presbyterian Church. He worked three years in Along (Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh) as a missionary pastor in Anglong before he worked at Karbi Anlong.

⁵⁸³ Mr. Saibela is an experienced teacher and an ordained elder of the Biate Presbyterian Church.

⁵⁸⁴ Lalfakzuala, *Synod*, 27.

Cachar Hills District and Nagaland state on the south. Until recently the Karbis are popularly known as the Mikirs and their district was called the North Cachar and Mikirs Hills District.⁵⁸⁵ Until recently the Karbi were popularly known as the Mikirs but they themselves prefer the names “Arleng” or “Karbi” to be called.⁵⁸⁶

The Mizoram Presbyterian Church intended to withdraw from the joint mission after a considerable involvement, but instead inaugurated its own mission fields in 1989.⁵⁸⁷ The reason for opening an independent mission (including a withdrawal from the joint mission) is a questionable matter. Some individuals contend that, first; the mission work was resumed and officially inaugurated as a new mission field due to the strong pressure from the indigenous Christians.⁵⁸⁸ Second, Rev. K. Lazuala⁵⁸⁹ asserts that, “KAJC mission was not functioning properly due to the bias financial contribution among the mission partners for the mission work. Other mission partners, Baptist Church in particular, did not want to contribute their financial share towards the work.”⁵⁹⁰ Third, the native Christians established a new Karbi Anglong Presbyterian Church.⁵⁹¹ From the above analysis, it is significant to note the fact that the Karbi Anglong Mission was the outcome of conflict between the churches (C.B.C.N.E.I, K.J.P.Synod, Nihang Baptist Association, Puta Baptist Association and Mizoram Presbyterian Church) over financial issues, denominationalism and exercising power, etc.

⁵⁸⁵ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Historical*, 234

⁵⁸⁶ About history of Christianity in Karbi Anglong is available from Frederick Sheldon Downs, *History of Christianity in India. Vol. 5, pt. 5, North East India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 1992) and Suresh K. Singh, *tribal Movement in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1982).

⁵⁸⁷ Rev.K Lazuala, *Ramthar Board*, 26.

⁵⁸⁸ Lalfakzuala, *Synod* 27-28.

⁵⁸⁹ Rev. K. Lazuala is one of the most well-known ordained ministers under the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram. He is Ex-Moderator and Ex-Board Secretary of the Synod.

⁵⁹⁰ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Historical*, 36. The K.A.J.C.C financial contribution report of 1982 showed that the Mizoram Presbyterian Church was the highest contributor with an annual contribution of Rs. 247,131. The next highest contribution was Rs. 10, 747, and the lowest was Rs.200. However, all the contributing churches had the same status in the administration of K.A.J.C.C. ().

⁵⁹¹ See Rev. K. Lazuala, *Ramthar Board*, 25.

After taking its own initiative in the mission, the Synod Mission Board sent more missionaries to broaden the scope of its mission work. By the time the church court was opened in March 20, 1996, there were three pastorates, 23 churches, five preaching stations, and 1,800 believers in the mission field.⁵⁹² The ministry activities included evangelism, church planting, medical work, education initiatives, and the publication of supporting literature. After 12 years, church membership was more than doubled, up to 5,260.

The Synod of 1985 recognized the Presbyterian Church⁵⁹³ in Tripura as an affiliated church.⁵⁹⁴ Thus, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church's Executive Committee began to oversee the activities of the existing churches in Tripura. Tripura, one of the northeastern states of India lies in the north west of Mizoram. The original inhabitant tribes are known as Tripuri's. But Bengali assimilated the inhabitants and composed majority in the state. Beside this, several Mongolian tribes also lived mainly in the hilly region. Christianity arrived in this region long before Mizo embraced Christianity. In the 2001 census of India, Bengalis represent almost 70% of Tripura's population and the native tribal populations represent 30% of Tripura's population. Hinduism is the majority religion in the state, with 85.6% of the population following the religion. Muslims make up 8.0% of the population, Christians 3.2%, and Buddhists 3.1%.⁵⁹⁵

In 1988, after three years of its involvement, the Synod felt additional needs of opening new foreign mission fields in northeast India.⁵⁹⁶ According to the Synod 1988 proposal,

⁵⁹² Ibid, 26.

⁵⁹³ Lalthuanmawia, *Evaluation*, 26, see also Lalfakzuala, Synod, 30; K. Lalthuala, Ramthar Board, 24. "In the year 1975, some 9 Evangelists formed a Presbyterian Church with 776 members. Among them was Rev. Lalthunglura, who acted as their pastor. They sought the recognition of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church.

⁵⁹⁴ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Synod 1985, General, 30

⁵⁹⁵ About history of Christianity in Tripura is available from Frederick Sheldon Downs, *History of Christianity in India*. Vol. 5, pt. 5, North East India in the nineteenth and twentieth century's (Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 1992) and Suresh K. Singh, *tribal Movement in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1982).

⁵⁹⁶ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Synod 1988, General, 36.

the Synod Mission Board inaugurated a mission field in Tripura, and its headquarters was established at Noagang.⁵⁹⁷ In 1989, the first Field Secretary Rev. Thangdela and his family arrived to start the work which included evangelism, church planting, medical and educational ministry. Tripura is one of the fastest growing among the Mizoram Presbyterian Church mission fields.

In 2000, the Mission Board proposed to the Synod to seek an opportunity to open a new mission field among the Assamese.⁵⁹⁸ This was accepted and accordingly the Synod Mission Board sent Lalnuntluanga⁵⁹⁹ to make a two-year preliminary survey. He spent a year at Dibrugarh and Guwahati respectively and recommended a new mission field to the Synod Mission Board. In 2006, three Mizo missionaries (Lalmangaiha, R Lalchhanhima, and Lalramzauva) were sent to begin evangelism at Dibrugarh as part of the Arunachal and Assam Field East. On April 17, 2006, the first Asomiya Fellowship was inaugurated in which 27 members were registered.⁶⁰⁰

Most of the northeast mission fields contain churches aspiring to become ‘three-self’ churches. If and when this goal is attained, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church will withdraw its governing authority. There are 921 missionaries (365 Mizo) overseeing 38,155 believers, 24 schools, 34 medical centres, and nine craft/tailoring centers. In the year of 2000 alone, 2,306 embraced Christianity.⁶⁰¹

6.5. Mission in North India

Following a 27 year period (1961-1988) focusing on neighbouring states, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church extended her mission into northern India, opening six mission

⁵⁹⁷ Lalfakzuala, Synod, 31. Lalzuala, Ramthar Board, 24.

⁵⁹⁸ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Synod 2000, General 42.

⁵⁹⁹ Lalnuntluanga is one of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church missionaries. After he completed Master degree in Missiology he taught mission subject at the Mission Training Centre, Aizawl Mizoram for several years.

⁶⁰⁰ See Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Ramthar Commission Report 2006. 55.

⁶⁰¹ See Table One.

fields in West Bengal, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Jarkhand. The various mission headquarters are located in Kolkata, New Delhi, Siliguri, Patna, Lucknow and Jarkhand.⁶⁰² This study shows the mission stations were isolated from one another geographically, but relatively diverse in economical, political, and religious terms. Most importantly, the cultures were a significant departure from those mission fields with which the Mizos were accustomed, including the Mizoram churches themselves and the other Mizoram Presbyterian Church mission fields in North East India.

These new mission extensions were a tremendous challenge for Mizos. It was especially difficult to start missions in northern Indian urban areas where most of the Western missions had already failed to plant indigenous churches, particularly the so-called ‘three-self’ churches. In metropolitan cities like Calcutta, New Delhi, Patna and Siliguri, the population and standard of living were comparatively different from Mizoram, as well as the North East Mission Fields. North East Missions were more or less based within tribal areas, where standards of living are lower and less demanding. On the other hand, in northern mission fields, mission stations were based in a city where political and economical factors have a competing impact on the lives of individuals.

It is generally agreed that Christianity in India is almost as old as Christianity itself and spread in India even before it spread in many, predominantly Christian, nations of Europe. It was said that St. Thomas came to Kerala in south India in the year 52 AD and

⁶⁰² **New Delhi** is the capital of Union Territory of New Delhi. **Siliguri** is one of the towns of West Bengal. **Patna** is the capital of the Indian state of Bihar lies on the southern bank of the Ganges, which is the sacred river for Hindu religion. Patna is noted for its religious monuments as it is one of the sacred City of Sikh. The Buddhist and Jain pilgrimages are also located nearby the city. **Lucknow** is the capital city of Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state of India. It had a population of more than 250 thousand people. Lucknow is famous as the City of Nawabs. It is also known as the Golden City of the East, Shiraz-i-Hind and The Constantinople of India.

converted many local Indians. But Christianity predominately came to central India through the European powers from the 15th century. Various scholars have written about the history of Christianity and mission activities in these regions.⁶⁰³ Several European churches and missions were involved in bringing Christianity particularly to the Northern part of India, up to the mid-twentieth century.⁶⁰⁴ After European missionaries left the country, the indigenous churches, para-churches and mission organizations took over the evangelistic work. However, the growth of Christianity was very slow compared to other parts of India. This is demonstrated by a census in 2001, showing the low percentage of Christians despite an enormous effort to convert people.⁶⁰⁵

The Mizoram Presbyterian Synod is part of that effort. We will investigate here why the Synod Mission Board in particular began its mission in North India and how *Hnatlang* played an important part, particularly in evangelism. Another consideration is whether the mission approach differed in these regions. To investigate this, the Delhi Mission Field will be examined. A brief discussion of the twenty year history (1988-2008) of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church's work in the remaining mission fields will follow.

⁶⁰³ Stephan Neill. *A History of Christianity in India 1707-1858* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); E. R Hambye. *History of Christianity in India: Volume III: Eighteenth century* (Bangalore: The Church History Association of India, 1997); Cyril Bruce Firth.: *An Introduction to Indian Church History* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1961); Timothy George.: *Faithful witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1992); Harold, A., Wood. *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church* (Melbourne, Australia: Aldersgate Press, 1980); William Bolton. *North India* (London: London Missionary Society, 1909); C. F Andrews. *North India*, London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., 1908.

⁶⁰⁴ Roman Catholic, Pentecostal Church, Methodist Church, Nazarene Church, Augustinians, Armenians, Jesuits, Jacobites, The Methodist Episcopal Church, Capuchin, Cambridge Mission, Church Mission Society, London Baptist Missionary Society and Lutheran Gossner Mission etc. (From the middle of seventeenth century up to the twentieth century, these churches and mission organizations were heavily involved in mission)

⁶⁰⁵ Delhi 0.9%; Bihar 0.5%; Jarkhand 4.1%; Madhya Pradesh 0.30%;

In 1982, the Synod Meeting proposed to investigate starting a mission in the Northern part of India, and had contacted the existing churches such as Church of North India (C.N.I.), Church of South India (C.S.I) and other Lutheran churches to this effect.⁶⁰⁶ In 1983, the Synod established a Mission Commission which suggested Calcutta as an ideal place for a mission centre. Calcutta was ideally located for the different fields in India and those abroad. This Commission also suggested starting a mission immediately in Calcutta.

The Synod Mission Board committed a budgeted of Rs. 10,000,000 (ten million rupees) to buy a plot of land in Calcutta. It also determined that missionary pastors should be sent to Delhi and Calcutta, this having been proposed to the Pastoral Committee.⁶⁰⁷ The proposal was approved and forwarded to the Synod Meeting held on December 5-13, 1987. The Synod meeting unanimously agreed to send three pastors to the cities of Calcutta, Delhi and Siliguri to commence mission work.⁶⁰⁸ To study the Synod Mission Board's mission in north India and the Delhi Mission Field in particular, we will demonstrate examples of how *Hnatlang* played an important part in the establishment and expansion of the evangelism efforts.

There were significant differences in the methods used in the North, as opposed to North East India. First, there was no plan to formally establish a Presbyterian Church, and no such congregation had been organized. However, some Presbyterian Church Pastorates have opened since the commencement of the efforts and some Fellowships have begun. Secondly, the Synod Mission Board's attempt to operate a networking ministry was effective. Thirdly, no attempt was made to set up formal education.

⁶⁰⁶ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Synod Meeting, December 1982, Resolution No, 38 section 82:37,

⁶⁰⁷ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Synod Mission Board Committee, Date 22.10.1987, Resolution No, 67.

⁶⁰⁸ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Synod Meeting, Date 5-13/12/1987, Resolution No, 7 (5).

Fourthly, there was a plan to recruit more native than Mizo missionaries. Finally, the Mizoram Presbyterian local churches could not organize frequent *Hnatlang* in North India because of the long distances involved; and, consequently, numbers of mission fields, workers and believers were much fewer in the north, making *Hnatlang* efforts much more difficult to organize and execute.⁶⁰⁹

Table One

North East India Mission Statistics: 2008

Mission Fields	Estd. Years	Mizo Missionaries	Non-Mizo Missionaries	Total	Formal Schools	Medical Centre	Craft Centre	Believers Baptized 2008	Total Believers
Manipur	1967	25	70	95	1	1	1	332	6,131
Barak	1974	71	174	245	9	11	2	199	7,281
Tripura	1986	90	112	202	5	10	3	1,216	12,703
Karbi Anglong	1989	88	85	173	6	8	1	168	5,260
Arunachal (E)	1991	48	48	96	3	3	1	122	3,245
Arunachal (W)	2001	24	45	69	1	1	1	253	3,261
Assam	2008	19	22	41	1	-	-	16	274
Total		365	556	921	24	34	9	2,306	38,155

Table Two

North India Mission Statistics: 2008

Mission Fields	Estd. Year	Mizo Missionaries	Non-Mizo Missionaries	Total Missionaries	Non-Formal Schools	Medical Centre	Craft/Tailoring Centre	Believers Baptized 2008	Total Believers
Calcutta	1988	07	89	96	11	10	1	241	5432
Delhi	1988	12	17	29	6	1	1	221	1397
Siliguri	1988	13	30	43	3	1	1	036	1031
Patna	1999	04	20	24	5	1	5	103	270
Lucknow	1999	12	47	59	3	2	3	295	3276
Jarkhand	2008	09	32	41	1	1	1	295	2500
Total		57	235	292	29	16	12	1391	13906

6.5.1. Delhi Mission Field

⁶⁰⁹ See Table One and Two.

In 1988, the Synod Mission Board sent Rev. V.L. Zaithanga⁶¹⁰ to seek a mission opportunity in Delhi. He and his family arrived in Delhi on April 9, 1988 and were stationed at B-2/171 Safdurjang Enclave. He made sincere attempts to start mission work. He met different churches and mission leaders whilst studying past and present mission endeavors in Delhi and covering Delhi neighbouring states.⁶¹¹ This mission field includes eight states in central India: Jammu, Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.⁶¹² However, according to Lalfakzuala, this field covers only five states.⁶¹³ The Synod Mission Board Commission Report 2006 suggested that the mission work should be concentrated in Delhi, Uttaranchal and Haryana.⁶¹⁴

V.L. Zaithanga met Rev. P.B.Satra, General Secretary of the Church of North India (CNI) on May 10, 1988 and shared the Synod Mission Board's vision. The CNI officials were grateful that the Mizoram Presbyterian Church wished to work collaboratively. Thus, in June 8, 198 Rev. V.L. Zaithanga and Rt. Rev. Magbul Caleb, Bishop of the CNI agreed to five mission goals, and these goals were fulfilled during his term.⁶¹⁵

Right from the outset, the Delhi Mission focused on the slums in Delhi city despite the fact that the Synod Mission Board had a vision to extend the urban ministry, particularly

⁶¹⁰ Rev.V.L.Zaithanga is one of the most influential ordained minister and leader under the Mizoram Presbyterian Church. He held different positions-he was the Synod Moderator, the first Synod Mission Board Secretary and the first Field Secretary of New Delhi Mission Field.

⁶¹¹ Rev. Pritam B. Santram CNI General Secretary (10.05.1988); Dr. V.K. Singh, District Superintendent, Church of Nazarene (31.05.1988); Rev. M.P. Singh, Pastor, Methodist Church, R.K. Puram (04.06.1988); Rt. Rev. Magbul Caleb, Bishop, CNI (08.06.1988);

⁶¹² Rev. K. Lalzuala, *Ramthar Board*, 31.

⁶¹³ Lalfakzuala, *Synod*, 26. 'Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal and Punjab.'

⁶¹⁴ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Commission Report 2006, 43.

⁶¹⁵ Rev. V.L. Zaithanga, *Mission Diary*, (1) The church leaders meeting will be organized (2) Mizo choir will be invited (3) No new Church (Presbyterian Church) will be established. (4) Missionary nurses will be provided for the orphanages and hospitals (5) The CNI Bishop will be invited to attend the Synod meeting.

among the high class and middle classes. On 17 September 1988, Rev. V.L. Zaithanga and his family began distributing gospel tracks with the help of Babeer, a native believer in the Mahhamedpur slum area. On 15 February 1990 the Mizoram Presbyterian Church sent another Mizo missionary P.C. Rohlira to assist. In 1991, two native evangelists, Vijay John and Patras Prem were appointed.⁶¹⁶ In 1992, Synod Mission Board sent another Mizo missionary, D.P. Chhingvunga, who had completed his Bachelor of Theology in the Hindi language.

The Synod Mission Board decided to begin an evangelical campaign lasting 30 days from October 13 to November 12, 1989, under the leadership of Vanlalbela. A considerable number of Mizo youth volunteers accompanied him, singing in different Christian schools and churches, and also in the streets, giving opportunity for distributing gospel tracts. Aware that the Mizoram Presbyterian church had opened a new mission field, the Mizo Christians already in Delhi joined the efforts. On October 17, 1990, the first gospel tract distribution *Hnatlang* effort was launched by Delhi Mizo Inkhawm (DMI) and about 25 Mizos attended.⁶¹⁷ They were divided into two groups--some of them distributed in the street whilst others visited private residences.

On April 26, 1991, the Delhi Mission began witnessing in railway stations, markets and other places in which field workers such as Patras Prem, Vijay John and Rajan preached. In 1992, serial gospel preaching began in the city streets, markets and fields.⁶¹⁸ Thus, an evangelism approach by way of *Hnatlang* and *Tlangau* was actively

⁶¹⁶ Vijay John and Patras Prem joined the Mizoram Presbyterian Mission leaving their evangelism work under the mission organization called "Every Home Crusade".

⁶¹⁷ Delhi Mission Field, Report, 1990.

⁶¹⁸ Badarpur Thana (04.09.1992); Badarpur Sabji Mandi (25. 09.1992); Lalkuan (09.10.1992); Sangam Vihar (23.10.1992); Tuklakabad (06.11.1992); Railway Colony Jhugi (20.11.1992); Railway Station (04.12.1992); Pulpehladpur (04.12.1992). Rev. V.L. Zaithanga, Delhi Mission Field Diary, 1992.

carried out. Four years after the start of the mission, the first two new believers, Roshan Lal⁶¹⁹ and Akbar, were baptized on Christmas day 1992.⁶²⁰

Rev. V.L. Zaithanga continued his quest to operate a medical ministry in Delhi, particularly amongst the poor people in the slums, who were unable to afford medicine or access to private medical doctor or nurses.⁶²¹ In 16 June 1988, the first medical ministry was launched at Dr. Ambedkar's camp slum area, R.K. Puram. Given the success of the gospel tract distribution, public witnessing, and the medical ministry, the first committee was held to discuss further evangelism in the Delhi slum area on 10 August 1988.⁶²²

On 18 May 1990, the first Mizo missionary nurse Darthuami arrived in Delhi. She immediately began work in the slum areas visiting patients, distributing medicine and giving treatment. Upa Chalhuna inaugurated Ebenezer Health Centre on 19 May 1994, which was accompanied by Lalnghakliana and Roenga, members of the Presbyterian Church Mission Veng. On 17 April 1995, the Synod Mission Board transferred Lawmsangi from the Barak Mission Field to start a medical ministry at Tameri Mission Station. In January 1998, Rohlupuii was also transferred from the Barak field to replace Darthuami. In 1999, a new medical centre opened in the Lalkuan slum area and the Synod Mission Board appointed a nurse native to the area, Sarajini Prem, to look after this medical centre.

⁶¹⁹ Roshan Lal was appointed as evangelist later and he finished his Bachelor of Divinity from Allahabad Bible Seminary. The Synod selected him for ordination and posted at Chaltlang Pastorate, Mizoram. But he abandoned this opportunity for his personal problem, and ultimately left the Mizoram Presbyterian Church.

⁶²⁰ "We had Christmas Service in the morning at 10:30. About 35 have attended, Akhbar (Muslim) and Roshan Lal (Hindu) received baptism. We gave them both a new additional name Akbar as Daniel, Roshan Lal as Stephan. About 50 people shared Baptismal feast at Sharma residence." (translated). V. L. Zaithanga, Field Report, 1992.

⁶²¹ There are government Hospitals in Delhi city, but majority of these people could not afford transport to go to the Hospital.

⁶²² This meeting was attended by Mr. Lalchuangliana, Dr. M.S. Kiran and Rev. V.L.Zaithanga.

Mizos almost exclusively applied a *Hnatlang* approach in evangelism within the medical ministry. When the Mizoram Presbyterian Church started the medical ministry in Delhi, Mizo doctors, nurses and medical students who lived in Delhi began to organize *Hnatlang* which they called “medical camp”. This usually took place at the weekend when most of the medical personnel were free. Most often, they would gather at a certain time and place to contribute their skills to help the patients. Several *Hnatlang* of this kind were organized during those twenty years (1988-2008).⁶²³

Even though the Mizoram Presbyterian Church had no prior plan to plant a church, it became necessary. On 10 November 1988, the first fellowship meeting was held at Rev.V.L. Zaithanga’s house with six people attending, including himself, Vijay John, Babeer, Zotea and Marema.⁶²⁴ Fellowship meetings continued until the first Sunday worship service was launched on February 1992 at the Nav Jiyoty Public School, Pul Pahalatpur, New Delhi-44. On Christmas day 1995, for the first time, the church was occupied for worship service and 200 hundred people attended.

As mentioned earlier, the Synod Mission Board planned to establish a mission station at the inception of its work in the city. Rev. V. L. Zaithanga found a suitable place in South Delhi, called Charmwood Village which lies on the outskirts of Delhi and inside the Haryana state. The Synod Mission Board agreed to buy flats and accordingly booked four flats there. On 7 September 1991, Rev. K. Lalzuala, the Secretary of the Synod Mission Board, inaugurated the Mission House at Charmwood Village, Suraj Kunj. This flat was occupied by V.L. Zaithanga and his family on 29 May 1992.⁶²⁵

⁶²³ Rev. Vanlalbela, Delhi Mission Field Report in Synod 2005 (Aizawl: Synod Publication 2005, 201). “During 2005, we organized medical camp twice at Durga Vihar and Gurukul”

⁶²⁴ This meeting was presented by six people – Rev. V.L. Zaithanga, John, Babeer, Zotea and Marema

⁶²⁵ Rev. Lalthanmawia, Field Report, 18 February 2002. In April 1989, Rev.R. Lalthanmawia, Synod Moderator and Dr.L.N.Tluanga and myself booked 4 flats in Charmwood village, to be constructed by Ajay enterprises Ltd. Rs, 5, 000 was paid as an advance, and subsequent payments were made by

To extend the mission operation, Rev. V.L. Zaithanga and Mr. Lalchuangliana visited Tameri village on 7 September 1988, situated in Uttar Pradesh. There were a few believers converted to Christianity through the work of another mission organization called Emanuel Hospital Association (EHA). EHA had requested the Synod Mission Board to partner with them. The Synod Mission Board took advantage of this and decided to assist the EHA and accordingly Rev. V.L. Zaithanga opened a new mission centre. P.C. Rohlira was posted to continue the mission work from 15 February 1990. As soon as the Delhi Mission assumed control, *Hnatlang* began by the Delhi Mizo Inkhawm on 12-13 April 1990, in which 14 members were involved.⁶²⁶

In 1995, Rev. V.L. Zaithanga was replaced by Rev. Lianbuanga for taking charge of the Delhi Mission. Church growth and development were seen and a number of new believers were baptized. There was significant change under Rev. Lianbuanga, which involved several changes at mission headquarters. In 1996, The Synod Mission Board commission proposed a change from Charmwood to the city for greater convenience. The reason given was that Delhi was supposed to be a focal point for all other Mizoram Presbyterian Church foreign mission fields, partnerships with other mission organizations, and communications with abroad.⁶²⁷ Accordingly, the headquarters were shifted to Greater Kailash I, New Delhi at a rented house. During this time, some new indigenous workers were recruited: Ms. Jayanam (medical helper), Mr. Wilson Robert (evangelist), and Mr. Deepak Singh (driver).

installment of about 1, 50,000 . On 3 September 1991, Mr. Lalchunagliana, Mr. Lalfakzuala, Dr. LN. Tluanga and I took possession of the building in the name of the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram. The total area of 4 flats is 2980 sq. ft and total cost of building is Rs 1,662,600

⁶²⁶ Rev. V. L. Zaithanga, *Report*, 1990.

⁶²⁷ See Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Mission Commission Report 1996, (2), 67.

In January 1998, the Synod Mission Board transferred Zaichhawna Hlawndo and his wife Rohlupuii from Barak to Delhi to continue the mission work. Zaichhawna Hlawndo worked as an evangelist as well as office assistant, and after one year, the Synod Mission Board promoted him to Field Promoter.⁶²⁸ Rohlupuii, a staff nurse, replaced Ms. Darthuami to look after Ebenezer Health Centre.

In January 7, 1999, Rev. C. Lalsangliana arrived to replace Rev. Lianbuanga. By December 1999, there were 12 missionaries (three of which were Mizos), and two preaching/fellowship stations. Following the findings of the Mission Commission Report 1996 (6), church planting continued in this mission field.⁶²⁹ As it was a common strategy for church planting within the Mizoram Presbyterian Church to construct a building, Delhi Mission missionaries attempted to do the same in Delhi, and enquired into suitable sites. The writer played a leadership role in this enquiry.⁶³⁰ Finally, a suitable site was found at Dayal Bagh near the mission centre and the land was purchased in 2000. The Delhi Mission organized a *Hnatlang* to clear the site as soon as it had been purchased.⁶³¹ The Synod Mission Board put forward a budget of Rs, 1,400,000 for the construction. On 2 October 2001, Delhi Mizos assisted the missionaries in the building of the Dayalbhag *Biak In* (church building), doing so by organizing *Hnatlang*, so that more than 150 people attended.⁶³² During his three years term, Lalsangliana baptized about thirty new believers.

By the time Rev. Lalthanmawia, the fourth Field Secretary, arrived Delhi on 15 January 15 2002, there were twenty-one workers (including those part time), nine fellowships,

⁶²⁸ Rev. C. Lalsangliana, Report, February 27, 1999.

⁶²⁹ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Mission Commission Report, 1996 (6), 67.

⁶³⁰ Mission Field Committee, 20 September 1999. Res. No.6.

⁶³¹ I was the organizer as well as leader of this *Hnatlang*, about 8-10 church members including mission workers were attended in this *Hnatlang*.

⁶³² Rev. Lalsangliana, Report, September 2001.

and 295 believers.⁶³³ On 30 January 2002, the mission headquarters were shifted back to their original location at Charmwood Village. During the ministry term (2002-2005), evangelism employed a twofold strategy in which firstly, no new fellowships or churches (Presbyterian Church) were planted, and secondly, the mission helped and encouraged the existing field workers to plant an independent church.⁶³⁴

It would be true to say the mission method was somewhat different than that of his predecessor. Now, the Mission emphasized ministry in partnership with existing organizations and churches rather than establishing a new Presbyterian church. Delhi Mission Field Committee discussed Rev. Lalthanmawia's new draft plan (based on the Synod Board Executive Committee resolution No 9 of 15/03/1999) for Delhi Mission.⁶³⁵ The working committee eventually resolved not to continue church planting for the Presbyterian Church in particular.⁶³⁶ With the new method of evangelism and church planting, the field workers Patras Prem and Sarojini Prem were transferred to Pathankot (Punjab), Vijay John to Uttar Pradesh, Mangat Masih to Ludhiana (Punjab).⁶³⁷

There were twenty-three mission workers by the time Rev. Vanlalbela, the fifth Delhi Mission Field Secretary, arrived in January 2005 to replace Rev. Lalthanmawia.⁶³⁸ The actions taken were much different; in that, ideas of church planting which had been mostly abandoned came again to the fore. Not long after Rev. Vanlalbela took charge, several new fellowships were opened and the working committee resolved to open two new pastorates in south Delhi and Rohini respectively to develop the church

⁶³³ Rev. Lalsangliana, *Report*, December, 2002.

⁶³⁴ See Delhi Mission Field Committee, Minutes July, 2002, Resolution No. 3.

⁶³⁵ See Field Committee Minutes, March 14, 2002, Resolution No. 5.

⁶³⁶ See Delhi Mission Field Committee, Minutes, July 2002, Resolution No. 2 (1). See also Working Committee Minutes July, 2004. Resolution No. 3.

⁶³⁷ See Delhi Mission Field, Committee Minutes, 2002, Resolution No.

⁶³⁸ Rev. Vanlalbela, DMF Report, January 2005.

institutionalization of the mission.⁶³⁹ It was, in fact, Vanlalbela's personality and policies that gave a diverse strategy to the mission. Consequently, the Synod Mission Commission of 2006 recommended both rural and urban church planting in the fields.⁶⁴⁰

During this time, there appears to have been a significant increase in the number of missionaries and Christian fellowships. During 2005-2006, new field workers were recruited to start new fellowships mostly in the slum areas: Rajender Singh at Rohini, Sunil Masih at Gautam Puri, Indu Massey at Shiv Durga Vihar, Sanjay Massey and Kavita at Jhangirpuri, Sunder Singh at Rohini, Vijay Massey at Sahabad. These individuals had been previously working as missionaries in different organizations and churches. One of the fellowships, Uttam Nagar, closed in February 2006, because there was no one to attend. Apart from these fellowships, Delhi Mission rented three houses, one in Srinagar (Kashmir) and another two in Faridabad.⁶⁴¹

Rev. Lalchhuanmawia, the sixth Field Secretary, arrived in Delhi on 13 January 2007. In April 2007, not long after his arrival, the Delhi mission headquarters moved back to the New Delhi station at Lajpat Nagar away from Charm wood Village. This was according to the suggestion of the Mission Commission in 2006.⁶⁴² In 2008, the Synod Mission Board sent two new pastors Rev. Lalchawimawia and Rev. Laltharzuala to oversee the believers and promote church institutionalization. Now, Delhi Mission fully focuses on church planting whilst continuing medical, non-formal school and other social development projects.

5.2. Mizo Missionary Attitudes toward other Cultures

⁶³⁹Delhi Mission Field, Committee Minutes, August 2006, Resolution No. IV.

⁶⁴⁰ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Commission Report 2006. 44.

⁶⁴¹ Rev. Vanlalbela, DMF *Report*, March 2006.

⁶⁴² Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Commission Report 2006, 43.

There are no known incidents of cultural disagreements causing tension between Mizo missionaries and native workers. However, from the very beginning, the mission Field Working Committee and Field Committee were dominated by Mizo missionaries, along with selected Mizos living under the jurisdiction of the Field Secretaries. These committees control the mission over administration, appointment of native missionaries, budget making and budgeting and finance, placing of mission workers, control of churches and mission stations, major buildings and major policy decisions such as the expansion into new areas.

Significantly there were no non-Mizos on either committee. The indigenous missionaries had little to do with administration; they merely followed rules and regulations set out by the Mizos. They were not counted as missionaries, but “native” or “field” workers.

Questionnaires were distributed to the indigenous workers in order to evaluate their point of view and reveal their experiences of the Delhi Mission.⁶⁴³ The questionnaire asked the indigenous workers whether or not the Delhi Mission was so successful in their opinion. Forty-seven percent believed it was; 32% believed not and 21% that it was averagely successful. This showed that Mizoram Presbyterian mission development was to some extent moderate. This study also showed that Mizo missionary attitudes toward the indigenous workers somewhat undermined the indigenous workers' sense of responsibility.

This indicated a sense of dissatisfaction amongst indigenous workers, most likely because they were not included in the administration. There is no doubt that the population of Mizo missionaries in the mission fields wielded far more power and

⁶⁴³ See Appendix IV.

responsibility than the native workers. The Mizo missionaries owned the mission since 100% of the finances came from Mizoram.

Lalchuangliana, one of the Delhi Mission Committee members and founder of the mission organization “CONCERN”, has been working as a missionary for many years in Delhi and its surrounding area. He writes about the Mizoram Presbyterian Church missions, the Delhi Mission in particular:

The strategy of mission enterprise is imitation of colonial mission agencies- Churches sending their own mission personnel, under their control, teaching their own customs and practices and of course their own brand of doctrines. Mission enterprises from Mizoram also adopt the same strategy. We must send our own Mizo missionaries and they must set up churches in Mizo pattern and somehow maintain the “Mizoness” wherever we go, much as the foreign missionaries maintain their distance from us...⁶⁴⁴

Overall, considerable non-Mizo workers and indigenous Christians were not satisfied, Mizo missionary attitudes towards the natives needed to be developed to encourage indigenous workers and Christians to work out their own response to Christianity within their culture. Although the congregations were encouraged to sit on the floor crossing their legs in the worship service⁶⁴⁵ and no Mizo drums were introduced in the church music, the liturgical structure remained the same as the Mizoram Presbyterian Church.

6.6. Overview of other Northern India Foreign Mission Fields

In May 1988, Rev. Lalrinmawia and his family arrived in Calcutta (now known as Kolkata) to start a mission in North India. This mission field currently covers five states of West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharastra.⁶⁴⁶ Majority of the population in these states followed Hindu religion. The cultural backgrounds of these people are completely different from Mizoram.

⁶⁴⁴ Lalchuangliana, *Mission Enterprise by the Mizo Church: Random Observation* (New Delhi: September 16, 2006 (unpublished). Here after cited as Lalchuangliana, *Mission Enterprise*.

⁶⁴⁵ This is a style of traditional Hindu worship practice.

⁶⁴⁶ Lalzuala, *Ramthar Board*, 29.

The Synod Mission Board had no plan for its own mission, so Rev. Lalrinmawia contacted several churches and mission leaders to find possible ways of partnering in mission.⁶⁴⁷ In the first three years (1988-1990), he became heavily involved in partnership preaching in services, taking administrative roles in mission organizations, and attending various committees.⁶⁴⁸

From 1990, the Mizoram Presbyterian Mission gravitated towards an independent ministry, whilst continuing to partner churches and missions in West Bengal. In 1990, the first indigenous missionaries (evangelists), Nagen Narjinary and Bidyut Dey, were appointed. The Synod Mission Board sent the first Mizo missionary, Lalhmingthanga⁶⁴⁹ and his family to the mission field. They arrived in Calcutta on 11 September 1990 and witnessed numerical growth during their ministry.

In the same year that the Delhi and Calcutta missions began, the Synod Mission Board opened the Siliguri Mission. Siliguri Mission mainly covers Darjeeling District of West Bengal. Scheduled castes Rajbansi, Namasudra, Kami (Nepali) and Scheduled tribes Oraon, Bhutia, and Lepchia are now the most prominent communities in this region.

⁶⁴⁷ Lalrinmawia, Report, February, 1992. "I started the work at Calcutta as Mission Field Secretary from May 1988 and I am now having 5 evangelists (1 Mizo and 4 Bengalis) and 10 part time workers working with me. The Rt, Rev, D.C. Gorai, the Church of North India (CNI) Bishop of Calcutta Diocese gave us a warm welcome and we are now working in close touch with the CNI and the other mainline churches. The Para-Church groups and the Evangelical organization at Calcutta are also very co-operative."

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid, "Most of the Protestant Churches in the city are opened for our ministry. From 1988 till date I have been preaching assignments in the various churches almost every Sunday... I have few responsibilities held in the Christian organizations some of such are: (i) Chairman, Calcutta Youth for Christ; (ii) Vice Chairman, Jatyo Kristtyo Prachar Samity (Christian Nationals' Evangelism Commission); (iii) Council member of the Scottish Church College; (iv) coordinating member of Scripture Gift Mission; (v) Member of Seaman's Welfare Association etc..."

⁶⁴⁹ Lalhmingthanga has been working as missionary among the Bengalis in Assam several years under the Synod Mission Board before he was transferred to Calcutta. He is now working as Mission Promoter at Aizawl, Synod Mission Board headquarter.

Mission headquarter Siliguri town is dominated by Marwari'ss, Punjabi's, Biharis, and Bengalis. Majority of the population followed Hindu religion.⁶⁵⁰

The Mizoram Presbyterian Church made provisions ahead of time to support the Siliguri Mission. In 1986 the Synod Mission Board committee resolved to buy a plot of land in Siliguri for mission work.⁶⁵¹ In 1987, the Synod Mission Board committee budgeted Rs 350,000 for this purchase. It also resolved to send a pastor and an evangelist to start the work.⁶⁵² Accordingly, the MPC sent Rev. Sangkhuma in 1988 to investigate the potential for success and possibilities for the establishment of a permanent mission station. In the beginning, Siliguri Mission Field covered Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Darjeeling.⁶⁵³ The ministry in this area included evangelism, church planting, medical and informal education.

In 1990, the Synod Mission Board sent Rev. Sangthanga and his family to start a mission in Bihar state, which is one of the largest and most populous states in India. Hinduism is practiced by 83.2% of the population and forms the majority religion in the state and Islam is practiced by 16.5%, and other religions represent less than 0.5% of the population.⁶⁵⁴ Different ethnic group of Aryans, Bengalis, Turks, Persians and Punjabis lived in this state.⁶⁵⁵

The mission headquarters is located at Patna, capital of Bihar. In 1996, three indigenous workers, one pastor and two evangelists, were posted in Dumka.⁶⁵⁶ This

⁶⁵⁰ Census of India 2001 available at <http://www.censusindia.gov.in> [Internet accessed on 22.8.2008]. Here after cited as Census 2001.

⁶⁵¹ Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Synod Mission Board Committee 11.06.1986, Resolution, 134.

⁶⁵² Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Synod Mission Board Committee 22.10.1987, Resolution, 106.

⁶⁵³ Lalzuala, *Ramthar Board*, 31.

⁶⁵⁴ Census India, 2001.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Lalzuala, *Ramthar Board*, 29.

mission covered the entire state of Bihar. The ministry included evangelism, church planting, medical, informal education, tailoring and training in craft.

In 1999, the Synod Mission Board opened the Lucknow Mission. The Mission headquarters is located at Lucknow city in Uttar Pradesh. Lucknow Mission covers the Uttar Pradesh which is the most populous state in India. As of the 2001 census of India, over 80% of Uttar Pradesh population is Hindu, while Muslims make up 18% of the population. The remaining population consists of Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians and Jains.⁶⁵⁷

Rev. Vanlalbela and his family arrived there in September 1999. From the very beginning, the mission concentrated on evangelism and church planting. Prior to its opening, oversight of the mission in this area had been part of the Delhi Mission Field.

Rev. Lalmachhuana and his family arrived in Dumka, the capital of Jarkhand on 29 March 2008, where the mission headquarters is based. Mission field covers Jarkhand state which is thickly populated by several tribal groups. Around 10% of the population is Bengali speaking and 70% speak various dialects of Hindi. 68.5% of the population followed Hinduism, 38% followed Islam, 13% followed Animistic Sarna religion, 4.1% followed Christianity and the rest followed Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism.⁶⁵⁸

The new Jarkhand Mission Field was inaugurated on 1 April 2008. As mentioned before, hundreds of believers had already been baptized under the Patna Mission Field, before it was officially opened. Church institutionalization and planting was effective in

⁶⁵⁷ Census India, 2001.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid.

this field, and the efforts of education, medical and social development works continued as well.

6.7. Overseas Mission

Respecting the international principles of mission, the Synod Mission Board provides for important partnerships, facilitating mutual support, encouragement, prayer and fellowship. The Synod Mission Board has worked in collaboration with several overseas churches and mission organizations. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church sent eighteen missionaries who are now working abroad.⁶⁵⁹

In 1989, the Synod Mission Board opened an independent mission field in Nepal with its headquarters in the capital Katmandu. The mission involved evangelism, church planting and medical ministry. From the very beginning, the Synod Mission Board was actively involved in church planting, and there are now many churches planted under the three pastorates in Kathmandu, Kakarvita, and Dharan.

Other missionaries were working in Burma, China, Papua New Guinea, Taiwan, United State of America, Wales, Samoa Island, Kiribati, and Solomon Islands in partnership with other churches and mission organizations. It is significant to note that the Mizoram Presbyterian Church, after the gospel was received from Wales more than hundred years ago, is now sending back missionaries to the land of its mother church.

Rev. Sangkhuma and his family arrived in Swansea, Wales on 19 May 1998 to work as a Mission Enabler, working at the Union of Welsh Independents (congregational) for four years. They are now overseeing two churches, in Pencoed and Maesteg in south Wales, and working in the community, e.g. school assemblies, etc. On 30 June 2006,

⁶⁵⁹ Zosangliana, *Synod Ramthar*, 10.

Rev. Z. John Colney and his family arrived in Wales to evangelize communities, based out of the local congregation in Abbwvale in south Wales. On 7 September 2008, the CWM sent another Mizoram Presbyterian pastor, Rev. Remlalfaka, to work at Penrhys Community Centre in south Wales to do social work in the community.

6.8. Conclusion

Why were the Mizo people so focused on missions' right from the beginning of Christianity's arrival in the land of Mizoram? What makes the Mizos so devoted? How did they export the message of the gospel and what was the role of *Hnatlang* in the establishment and development of the foreign mission fields?

After the arrival of Christianity in Mizoram, the church became the principle institution of the society, and the desire to share this newfound faith took place at the community level by means of the existing cultural phenomenon called *Hnatlang*. The manifestation of *Hnatlang* within the Christian context was the desire for evangelizing those who had not yet heard the gospel. This took place, not only within the land of Mizoram, but beyond its borders. *Hnatlang* was found within all spheres of life of the Mizos, and the carrying of this phenomenon beyond Mizo culture and locale was inevitable. The desire was to bring the gospel to all, worship and follow Christ, and have fellowship with other Christians in the community.

The establishment of missions was the focus soon after the arrival of Christianity. Often, the Mizos took over the work of the Western missionaries and continued the witness of the gospel and the planting of the churches. The Synod Mission Board continues today to place a significant emphasis on the foreign mission fields. First, the sponsoring of the education ministry in particular works by establishing primary,

middle and high schools in the foreign mission fields, believing that this ministry is vital for the uplifting of the downtrodden, strengthening families, and witnessing the gospel to the students. As stated earlier, more than 50% of the mission workers are involved in the educational ministry. Second, the use of *Hnatlang* approach in evangelism was also applied within the medical ministry. In Delhi, for example, Mizo doctors, nurses and medical students organized a *Hnatlang* at which they would voluntarily gather on the weekends to contribute their skills and resources to help the poor and needy in the city.

Now, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church exports Christianity, by extending its foreign mission to North Eastern India (Barak, Karbi Anglong, Manipur, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam) carrying out evangelism, church planting, education, and ministry through education and medicine. Churches were planted as part of the directive of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod. Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod administered and financially supported all these missions.

By 1988, the Synod extended its mission towards North India, establishing headquarters at Delhi, Kolkata, Siliguri, Lucknow, Patna and Dumka. The methods of evangelism were somewhat different to those in the Northeastern fields. In the beginning, the Synod Mission Board preferred to cooperate with existing churches and organizations. Partnership and networking ministry were initially the most dominant strategy, and there was no intention to plant churches. But as time passed, thousands of new believers were baptized and church planting became a necessity.

Mizos brought the gospel to many foreign lands, as well. *Hnatlang* was a motivating factor in the theory and practice of foreign missions. The missions were extended regionally, nationally and even internationally. *Hnatlang* is a major motivating factor in

the theory and practice of foreign mission. Most importantly, Jesus commanded his disciples to go and preach the gospel to the whole world (Matthew 28:16). Mizo zeal for missions extended to different parts of the world. Missionaries are working in Nepal, China, Taiwan, Wales, United States of America, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, *et al.*

Without a doubt, Mizos widely exported the gospel, and provided all the manpower, finance, time and talent by way of *Hnatlang*. They built churches, schools, and headquarters; dug wells, made roads, cleaned agricultural farms and graveyards, and built compound fencing, etc. The Mizo church is unique in the importance it gives to mission work. There are 14 different departments in the Mizoram Presbyterian Church in which 2,399 personnel are working, and 74% (1,784) of whom are working in missions. As mentioned earlier 38% of its total finances go towards mission.

Were Mizo attitudes towards other cultures sympathetic whilst doing foreign missions? Critical evaluation was made of the development of the work and institutionalization of the indigenous church in the mission fields. The study showed that Mizos are no exception to the fact that missionaries tend to import their own culture with them. Mizo culture and *Hnatlang* especially were appropriate to foreign fields, and they continue to have a major influence on the mission work.

Mizos understood missions as a community and voluntary task in which every individual would share responsibility. Mizo Christians migrated to neighbouring states to spread the gospel even before the Presbyterian Church officially started the mission. They volunteered their time, talent and money. Groups of people frequently traveled to the foreign mission fields organizing different types of *Hnatlang*. They did everything together for the development of foreign mission.

CHAPTER VII

HNATLANG AS THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF MIZO CHRISTIANITY

7. Introduction

The basic assumption of contextual theology is that the way people of different cultures confess Christ has never been uniform, but has differed from one culture to another. The primary questions of this thesis are the following: What is the primary factor behind the growth of Christianity in Mizoram? How does Christianity relate to pre-Christian culture in Mizoram? Did pre-Christian cultural practices disappear or given new significance? Which elements of these cultural practices were abolished and which Christianized? Did Christianity prevail only by incorporating much of what had previously existed?⁶⁶⁰

In the previous chapter, it was explained that when Christianity came to Mizoram (which was culturally different from other parts of India) the real manifestation of a significant cultural process took place. Christianity was expressed with the language and thought form of the Mizo. As its influence spread, it was formed and shaped by the *Hnatlang* traditional cultural practices. Christianity in Mizoram, as we have seen, depended on *Hnatlang*. Most church buildings were built without the aid of missionaries much like the *Zawlbuk* had been the traditional building. Believers regularly met in the church to hear the word of God, just as the young men had gathered every night in the *Zawlbuk* to listen to elders' story telling. Church committee meetings replaced village committee meetings as a means of communicating with the village residents. Therefore, traditional *Hnatlang* characteristics mentioned in chapter III (e.g.

⁶⁶⁰ See Wessel, *Europe*, These questions are taken from Wessel's observation of Christianity in Europe.

Zawlbuk sak, Tuikhur hiah, Hmeithai in sak, Zualkova tlan, Thlan laih, Miruang zawn, Mibo zawn, Kang thelh, Lo neih, Pum sak, Sanghal rual zim, Lal in sak, Kuli, Raldai theu and Hridai theu) shaped the identity of Mizo Christianity and its missions. A rediscovery of *Hnatlang* for theology is not only necessary but inevitable.

7.1. Thanzauva's Theory of Communitarianism

"Communitarianism is a concept and life principle of tribal community in which a homogenous people live together sharing their joy and sorrows in mutual love and care".⁶⁶¹ Thanzauva also states that "communitarianism is an organizing principle of tribal theology." This organizing principle is key to understanding a tribal society such as that found among the Mizo-s. To be human, in a tribal sense, is a communitarian existence, *Zawlbuk* a community home, and *Tlawmngaihna* a communitarian ethic.⁶⁶² Despite the fact that Thanzauva understood the meaning of the English word "communitarianism", he failed to identify it with *Hnatlang*, which is the foundation of Mizo culture and equivalent to the concept of communitarianism. Thus, in order to rediscover a Mizo theology, *Hnatlang* must be understood as its organizing principle. Thanzauva also believes that Christian theology is primarily a theology of community.⁶⁶³ And he rightly portrays Mizo community life as entirely shaped or undergirded by the *Hnatlang* cultural practices, without specifically naming *Hnatlang* as its organizing principle. He states:

A sense of security among the members goes on healing and bidding the community together. The widow, the sick and the handicapped, all are taken care of by the community. As a community they build their houses together, laboured together in their *jhum*, mourn together and celebrate together if there is anything to celebrate".⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶¹ Thanzauva, *Theology of Community*, 136.

⁶⁶² Ibid, 286.

⁶⁶³ Ibid, 144.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid, 143.

There are three fundamental bases of the theology of community which can be derived from Thanzauva's descriptions: the doctrine of the trinity, i.e. the divine community; the doctrine of the human person who is created to live in the community; and the doctrine of the church, i.e. the community of believers.⁶⁶⁵

Thanzauva argues that the Biblical concept of human existence is essentially communitarian. He explains the doctrine of trinity based on communitarianism and states:

The doctrine of trinity is an affirmation of the idea that living in a community is the fundamental nature of all living beings including God himself. It tries to elucidate the picture of God who lives in unity with others. The divine community known as trinity is a symbolic expression of the reality of life.⁶⁶⁶

Living the communitarian humanity is a theological exercise, and it involves action towards realization of God-intended life of human community. Thanzauva seems convinced that tribal communitarian life can be seen as a prerequisite to introduction of the doctrine of the trinity. He mentions how Mizo communitarian life portrays the biblical concept of trinity:

A sense of security among the members goes on healing and binding the community together. The widow, the sick and the handicapped, all are taken care of by the community. As a community they build their houses together, labour together in their jhum, mourn together and celebrate together if there is anything to celebrate.⁶⁶⁷

Although Thanzauva does not use the word *Hnatlang* for his explanation, he has essentially described the fundamental nature of *Hnatlang* which is the foundation of Mizo sociocultural, political, economical, and religious development and identity. Here he emphasizes the importance of a communitarian life to build a theological concept of Trinitarian doctrine.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid, 144.

⁶⁶⁶ Thanzauva, *Theology of Community*, 144.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid, 145.

We are called to build a community where love dominates human relationship, where the widows and weaker section of the community are taken care of, where the poor have hopes for future emancipation and living with dignity. The primal reality here is not the individual, but the group, the enduring entity in which the individual has his root. Therefore we must delight in each other, make others condition our own, rejoice together, always having before our eyes our community as members of the same body.⁶⁶⁸

Thanzauva's statement is clearly seen in *Hnatlang*. By *Hnatlang*, Mizo's build homes for widows and weaker section of the people. By providing for their needs, hope is gained for future emancipation and living with dignity; in other words, they did not allow for any homeless and poor. The primary focus of *Hnatlang* is not the individual, but the community in which the individual has his root. Through *Hnatlang*, they help each other and share their joy and sorrow. The individual has nothing to worry about in knowing that the community supports everyone. We will return to this issue while analyzing constructive aspects of *Hnatlang* theology particularly with the doctrine of the Trinity.

Thanzauva also analyzes the doctrine of the church and the community of believers, with a particular focus on the Mizo community home called the *Zawlbuk*. Thanzauva asserts that this community home, *Zawlbuk*, is an institution of *tlawmngaihna*, which has since been replaced by the church--the new Christian community home. There are many reasonable comparisons made between the Christian church and the *Zawlbuk*. In particular, he observes that the institution of *Zawlbuk* did not make a singular contribution, but its value in promoting the harmony, welfare, and peace of the village community was greater than the contribution of the church. Thanzauva concurs that the institution of a community home should be considered the forerunner of the Christian Church. I agree with Thanzauva that *Zawlbuk* can be seen as a forerunner of the Christian church, but the foundation of this *Zawlbuk* is *Hnatlang*. As we have discussed

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid, 144.

in the previous chapter, *Zawlbuk* was entirely built by *Hnatlang*: children collected firewood by *Hnatlang*, men slept to protect a village, and elders volunteered their time and talents for its administration. In short, the very existence of *Zawlbuk* was entirely dependent upon *Hnatlang*.

Thanzauva and several other writers⁶⁶⁹ have treated traditional *tlawmngaihna* largely as a personal or an individual's responsibility rather than a necessity in Mizo society. Thanzauva suggests that "the issue of *tlawmngaihna* has to be shifted from personal *tlawmngaihna* to social *tlawmngaihna*" which means creating a social economic system which should do the function of *tlawmngai* people to take care of the poor and needy.⁶⁷⁰ However, *Tlawmngaihna* has never been considered a personal achievement alone or a given title to an individual. *Tlawmngaihna* is rather the outcome of *Hnatlang* cultural practices. It was neither a choice nor was it achievable by an individual; it was a norm for the life of the Mizo people. However, when people practice *Hnatlang*, there are certain individuals who are considered to be doing more or better than the others whom the people called *tlawmngai zual* (most *tlawmngai*). In theory, every individual must possess *tlawmngai* to some degree.

Thanzauva believes that *tlawmngaihna* is a communitarian discipleship, a commitment to the cause of community:

It is a community which called the people to be *tlawmngai* or to be self sacrificing for the sake of the community. Today in the Christian community, it is Jesus Christ who calls people, the believing community, to follow him in the mission of God-the establishment and extensions of the reign of God. The call to be *tlawmngai*, before the advent of Christianity in Mizoram, was also the call to that same mission through the community.⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁹ Kipgen, *Christianity*, 182-187; Lalrinawma, *Mizo Ethos*, 124-136; Nengzakhup, *Amazing Mizo Missions*, 63.

⁶⁷⁰ Thanzauva, *Theology of Community*, 162.

⁶⁷¹ Thanzauva, *Theology of Community*, 167.

Thanzauva clearly understood that *Hnatlang* did not come out of the blue. Mizo people are very much aware of the importance of keeping *Hnatlang* for the development and integrity of their community in the past and the present. This proves the fact that there was never a period or situation when *Hnatlang* was non-existent or has discontinued for a time. Accordingly, *tlawmngaihna* did not have to be re-informed or re-enforced for the development of the Mizo society. *Hnatlang* was/is a norm for every sphere of life. Every individual is obliged to attend a *Hnatlang* for the development of society as well as the individual. Those who failed to attend *Hnatlang* without an excuse were disciplined. However, there is always room for *Hnatlang* exemption for certain cases. Every individual possessed a sense of responsibility to attend *Hnatlang*. In other words, everyone was made *tlawmngai*, and thus, the spirit of *Hnatlang* (*tlawmngaihna*) was not an option but a norm for every Mizo.

Thanzauva writes, “*Tlawmngaihna* is the essential characteristic of divine nature from which the tribal *tlawmngaihna* is derived from...the act of love is what the Mizo called *tlawmngaihna*”.⁶⁷² Lianzuala believes that several Mizo cultural practices were annulled in the process of change by Christianity, but *tlawmngaihna* has remained and survived as the guiding principle of society.⁶⁷³ Kipgen states, “Its (*tlawmngaihna*) survival, to a great extent, ensured the preservation of ‘Zo’ identity and progress”.⁶⁷⁴ *Hnatlang* conception and spirit (*tlawmngaihna*) is the unity, love, sharing, caring, commitment and sacrifice for the cause of others. It is an encapsulation of the message of Jesus Christ that has persisted in the Mizo culture, even prior to the introduction of Christianity. If love is the essence of the Gospel teaching, *Hnatlang* is a hidden gospel written in the hearts of the Mizo people even before they embraced Christianity.

⁶⁷² Thanzauva, *Theology of Community*, 167.

⁶⁷³ Lianzuala, *Tlawmngaihna*, 56.

⁶⁷⁴ Kipgen, *Christianity*, 182.

Hnatlang is formed with a sense of devotion for the interest of others. It is not simply an altruistic exercise in which individual freedom is neglected; rather it embodies the gospel's message of God's divine love in Jesus Christ for the redemption of sinners. Thanzauva asserts, "If Jesus Christ is the expression and embodiment of God's love, the incarnation, the ministry and the cross of Jesus Christ may be perceived as paramount act of *tlawmngaihna*."⁶⁷⁵

From the above statements, Thanzauva, Lianzuala and Kipgen believe that Mizo *Hnatlang* is the foundation of Mizo theology. If the community life mentioned in the New Testament (cf. Act 2: 42-47⁶⁷⁶) is a paradigm of the Christian community, *Hnatlang* is the unseen Christian community in the hearts of the Mizo people, even before they embraced Christianity. *Hnatlang* involves sharing: sharing of work, time, food, wealth, word, joy, sorrow, and sharing of talents with one another. *Hnatlang* implies equality of being--it has no room for a caste or class system. It also implies caring: caring of widows, disabled, sick, poor, and the families of the deceased.

Thanzauva believes a communitarian understanding of God reflects most accurately the biblical model. He states, "Tribal perception of the relationship between God, Human and the World is at the core of their cosmology."⁶⁷⁷ He further argues that most of the tribal groups in India believed in the existence of a supreme being, a god of all

⁶⁷⁵ Thanzauva, *Theology of Community*, 164.

⁶⁷⁶ NIV: **42** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. **43** Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. **44** All the believers were together and had everything in common. **45** Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. **46** Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, **47** praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

⁶⁷⁷ Thanzauva, *Theology of Community*, 186.

humanity and goodness despite the fact that they also believed in malevolent spirits that caused suffering and required appeasement through sacrifice.⁶⁷⁸ The reason why sacrifices were offered to the spirits is because they viewed their existence as living in the midst of these spirits. He also argues that the tribal concept of the God-Human-World relationship is derived neither from strict ideas of transcendence and immanence, nor monotheism and polytheism. However, the most common belief is that God is in all, and all is in God. God is never perceived as wholly other but as the one who participates in and interacts with the life of the world.⁶⁷⁹ Within the Mizo context, this idea demonstrates that Mizo communitarian existence (which is based on *Hnatlang* cultural practices), coupled with their general tribal deistic beliefs, shaped their worldview. Thanzauva is convinced that “The understanding of God-Human-World as belonging to one community helps the tribal Christians to rediscover a holistic concept of reality from their tradition”. This also implies reconstruction of theology in order to re-orient the churches toward a holistic approach in mission and ministry.”⁶⁸⁰

Thanzauva also deals with the issues of the human attitude towards land, community land, the rediscovery of the tribal concept of land, and theological validity of the tribal concept of land. He asserts that land is a common theme of the biblical faith, particularly of the Old Testament.⁶⁸¹ He believes that land, for a tribal group like the Mizo, is sacred because their religion does not center on a temple or a church or a particular shrine, but the whole earth is sacred, holy and animated by the spirits.⁶⁸² According to the traditional concept, the land belongs to the community; thus, the individual must become a member of the community to own the land. We mentioned in the previous chapter how *Hnatlang* played an important role to the ownership and use

⁶⁷⁸ See Ibid, 190.

⁶⁷⁹ See Ibid, 195.

⁶⁸⁰ Thanzauva, *Theology of Community*, 206.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid, 228.

⁶⁸² Ibid, 218

of the land. Thanzauva believes that this communitarian ownership of land has disappeared, and he laments:

The land which were owned by the community and freely used by all members of the community have now gone into the hands of the rich and privileged people. The common people are landless, victimized by the system, and life became harder and harder for them. The surplus products of the land are no longer distributed within the community; they are transferred to rich people within and outside the state. Because of this system people began to lose their sense of belonging to the land and developed dependent and destructive use of land.⁶⁸³

At present, and to a significant extent, the communitarian ownership of land is heavily shifted towards an individual particularly in urban area. But Thanzauva's claim is not necessarily true for most of the rural areas. However, there is no doubt that communitarian ownership of land is decreasing and is gradually reducing the unity of the people. To meet this challenge Thanzauva suggests, "the traditional concept of land must be theologically rediscovered and reclaim to make the local community responsible for their land."⁶⁸⁴

7.2. Kipgen: Salvation and Thangchhuah

It has been briefly explained in the previous chapter that the Mizo had a previous knowledge of God (*Pathian*) who is the creator of everything. The cultural precedent that aided in the comprehension of Christ's sacrifice and his forgiveness is based on the tradition of *Lal Sutpui*. The Mizo understanding of heaven and hell is based on *Pu Pawla's* imaginary tale. Their understanding of the life after death is mainly based on one of the aspects of *Hnatlang* which is called *thangchhuah*. The attainment of *thangchhuah* assured a man of safe passage to *pialral* (heaven). Kipgen states, "*Thangchhuah* was a title given to a man who distinguished himself by killing a certain

⁶⁸³ Ibid, 229-230.

⁶⁸⁴ Thanzauva, *Theology of Community*, 230.

number of animals in the chase, performing the *Sa-ai* ceremony for each kill, or by giving a certain number of public feasts.”⁶⁸⁵

Kipgen continues, “The attainment of *thangchhuah* not only assured a man of safe passage to *pialral*, but at the same time gave him a position of honour and respect in the present life.”⁶⁸⁶ According to Kipgen, *thangchhuah* can provide the attainment of salvation even here on earth.⁶⁸⁷ Although Kipgen does not directly mention the importance of *Hnatlang*, he believes that *Thangchhuah* requires sharing and contribution and states, “*Thangchhuah* main purpose was to distribute the wealth of the rich among those less fortunate without the receivers feeling guilt or shame. It also meant that one’s wealth was not simply for one’s own self indulgence.”⁶⁸⁸ It is clear from Kipgen’s point of view that the Mizo understanding of a salvific attainment in this life was not strictly dependent upon the individual achievement alone. Kipgen writes, “The doctrine of salvation, as held by the Mizo was neither wholly other-worldly nor individualistic.”⁶⁸⁹ He also says, “For the Mizo there was no virtue greater than an act of bravery or generosity that serve the welfare of his community if that were to cost him dearly, as it did in the *Thangchhuah* feasts and *Sa-ai* ceremonies.”⁶⁹⁰

Kipgen argues that *Thangchhuah* feasts are not simply obtained for a life of virtue, but it was solely instituted as a religious act. The animals killed for the feasts were offerings to deities. The ceremonial sacrifice was always conducted by the priest (*sadawt*) who petitioned the god to accept the offering and solicited his blessings.

⁶⁸⁵ Kipgen, *Christianity*, 120.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid, 122

⁶⁸⁷ See Ibid, 122, *Thangchhuah* was entitle to put a window in the side wall of his hose, build an enclosed back veranda, and proudly wear the *Thangchhuah Puan* (shawl) together with a special head gear called *diartial*-all symbol of his position in the society, Salvation thus began on earth.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid, 123

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid, 122.

⁶⁹⁰ Kipgen, *Christianity*, 124.

Thangchhuah concept was quite distinct from the sacrifice to the evil spirits that cannot really be called an act of worship.⁶⁹¹ From this point of view, the primary factors for attaining *Thangchhuah* was not simply for a life of virtue but to earn favour and worship of the divine spirit.

I agree with Kipgen that the attainment of *thangchhuah* also assured a man of safe passage to *pialral*. Kipgen clearly displays how traditional *thangchhuah* became the predecessor of the Christian doctrine of salvation even before Mizo people embraced Christianity. However, Kipgen did not clearly identify the *Hnatlang* contribution or requirements to achieve *thangchhuah* which are already mentioned in the previous chapter. He is however, convinced that *thangchhuah* required the acts of charity or sharing of one's riches with the poor and was instituted as a religious act. This study shows that no one attained *thangchhuah* without *Hnatlang* cultural practices. Thus, surely, *Hnatlang* was a key tribal precedent for understanding God, forgiveness of sin, salvation, life after death, heaven, and hell.

7.3. **Hnatlang and Contextual Missiology**

As already mentioned in chapter II, the term "Missiology" in this study includes the critical investigation of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church's mission theory, method and practical base in term of the impact of *Hnatlang* cultural practices. To critically investigate the interaction between Christianity and Mizo culture, it following must be asked: What processes are involved in an encounter between evangelism and the pre-Christian culture of the Mizo-s? What are the current motivating factors for Mizo missions? How did *Hnatlang* shape Mizo missions to local and foreign peoples in theory as well as in practice?

⁶⁹¹ See Ibid, 124.

Bevans writes, “A contextual approach to theology is in many ways a radical departure from the notion of traditional theology, but at the same time it is very much in continuity with it. To understand theology as contextual is to assert something both new and traditional.”⁶⁹² We observed in the previous chapters that Bevans proposes to study how the Gospel message interacts with cultures, chiefly focusing on how to honour tradition while responding to social change. In the history of these interactions, the choice of method for contextual theology has differed widely among theologians depending on the socio-political, economical, religion and historical context in which theology is constructed. Thanzauva discusses six models of contextual theology seemingly out of Bevan’s nine models of contextual theology. He neglected to consider three models such as anthropological, transcendental, and the countercultural model. It is not immediately known which methods are most effective for Mizo missions. However, a single method does not require agreement, but a study of the cultural factors of Mizo society will show that several significant cultural practices eased the interaction between the gospel and pre-Christian society.

This study clearly shows that *Hnatlang* stands out as one of the most important cultural factors that contributed to the growth of Christianity in Mizoram. Other factors may include: revival, isolation of the land, missionaries, British administration, dream and visions, etc. Thanzauva believes that it was the revival movement that enabled the new Mizo converts, a marginalized group of society, to accept themselves with self-esteem and to take up their mission.⁶⁹³ Lalsawma also gives credit to revival for rapid growth of Christianity, believing that there has been a very skilful and effective assimilation of

⁶⁹² Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 3.

⁶⁹³ Thanzauva, *Theology of community*, 132.

Mizo culture for revival expression.⁶⁹⁴ He also believes that in the revival movements Mizo cultural tendencies were successfully exploited and sublimated.⁶⁹⁵ To sum up Lalsawma's observation, revival among the Mizo was manifested in a unique Mizo way. I agree with Thanzauva and Lalsawma to some extent that revival contributed to rapid growth of Christianity and enabled the Mizo believers to take up their missions. However, considerable evidence in this study demonstrates that most of the new converts preached the gospel even before the revival broke in Mizoram. According to Hminga's report, in the year 1905 (before revival)⁶⁹⁶ hundreds of Mizo people already embraced Christianity in Mizoram and there were Christians in thirty-four different villages in South Mizoram alone.⁶⁹⁷ In 1904, the indigenous church in South Mizoram appointed four evangelists (Parima, Thankunga, Lengkaia and Zathanga) and their salaries were paid without seeking help from the missionaries.⁶⁹⁸

Nengzakhup rightly asserts, "Most Mizo converts felt compelled to tell about the new found faith to friends and relatives."⁶⁹⁹ He tries to identify several motivating factors of Mizo missions such as: 1) the theological motivations (obedience to Christ, constrained by love; 2) the second coming of Christ (the urgency, need, gratitude, triumph, and the ambassador of Christ); 3) and socio-cultural factors (conversion, chosen people, continued revival, competitiveness and education) etc.⁷⁰⁰ In my point of view, Nengzakhup fails to identify the principle motivation for Mizo missions and fails to provide convincing evidences to support his claims, particularly about the *Hnatlang* cultural factor which I believe is the primary motivating factor for Mizo missions. However, he seems to agree that socio-cultural factors have a central place in his claim.

⁶⁹⁴ Lalsawma, *Revivals*, 5.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid, 6.

⁶⁹⁶ The birth of the first revival took place at Mission Veng, Aizawl on April 9, 1906.

⁶⁹⁷ Hminga, *Life and Witness*, 83.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid, 82.

⁶⁹⁹ Nengzakhup, *Amazing Mizo Missions*,

⁷⁰⁰ See Nengzakhup, *Amazing Mizo Missions*, vii.

After quoting a few definitions of *tlawmngaihna* written by others, he basically concludes, “This Christianized *tlawmngaihna* principle may be one of the most appealing dynamics propelling the Mizos out to ‘help’ those who have never heard the gospel.”⁷⁰¹ He also says, “One outstanding feature of pre-Christian culture is to generously share with others whatever one has”⁷⁰², but he makes no further attempt to analyse the pre-Christian culture.

Thanzauva considers tribal society, including Mizo, as marginalized and oppressed where social injustices and corruption are endemic.⁷⁰³ He views the tribal culture as something which needs to be transformed and states, “We need the praxis model of contextual theology with its concern the transformation of these social realities towards the realization of the Reign of God”.⁷⁰⁴ He believes that in the process of interaction, both Christianity and tribal culture are mutually reshaped and transformed. He also believes that the combination of praxis and synthesis model is important to construct a tribal theology, because “these models take the culture of the tribal people seriously and emphasizes social transformation”.⁷⁰⁵ He further asserts that the synthetic model succeeds in regards to composing new indigenous songs as method of doing theology.⁷⁰⁶ I agree with Thanzauva to a great extent that a synthetic praxis model is an effective choice of contextual methodology for Northeast India. However, he only analyzes Mizoram among the Northeast Indian states, and I strongly believe other states must be seriously considered to make a fair analysis.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid, 64.

⁷⁰² Ibid, 65.

⁷⁰³ See Thanzauva, *Theology of Community*, 104.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁵ See Ibid, 103.

⁷⁰⁶ See Ibid, 95, “*Mizo converts who used to sing only the translated hymn started composing songs and hymns of their own. The most interesting characteristic of these new songs and hymns is the tune which is neither exactly the Western tune nor the traditional Mizo tune; a synthetic new tune has emerged which really satisfies the Mizo believers.*”

Thanzauva believes that the many tribal groups, including the Mizo-s, were rapidly and radically deculturalized to the extent of creating a crisis of identity. He holds Christianity responsible for the alienation of tribals from their culture. He also believes that rediscovery, reconception, and transformation of tribal culture are necessary to construct an authentic indigenous Christian theology.⁷⁰⁷ This study, in contrast to above views, makes an attempt to discover the reality of pre-Christian culture from an insider perspective believing that rediscovery of traditional values is necessary to construct an authentic contextual theology.⁷⁰⁸ I believe, there are many elements in Mizo culture as well as in the Occident culture which must be adopted, transformed, or rejected in the contextual theology. We saw in the previous chapters several Mizo traditional values that are adopted and affirmed in Christianity. However, we do not propose simply to adopt, transform, or reject traditional culture, but carefully examine the Mizo culture from an insider perspective to construct an authentic indigenous Christian theology. In other words, we do not make an attempt or propose to romanticize or uncritically accept *Hnatlang* cultural practices *carte blanche*. Some elements of Mizo culture, those that are not compatible with the gospel must be rejected. For example discrimination against women, sacrifices offered to evil spirits, and black magic, to name a few.⁷⁰⁹ However, neither detailed study of these cultural practices is conducted nor is it a subject of concern in this study.

Generally, the choice of contextual method depends on the theological vision of a theologian and the situation in which theology is constructed. I am compelled to choose a Synthetic Model on preference to the other models despite the fact that all other models can elucidate some aspects related to Mizo mission theology. Thanzauva

⁷⁰⁷ See Thanzauva, *Theology of Community*, 106.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid, 108.

⁷⁰⁹ These traditional cultural practices are not compatible with the gospel.

writes, “Synthetic model concerned with the development of a new and relevant theology from a synthesis of Gospel and culture in a particular context for the purpose of preserving the cultural identity of the people.”⁷¹⁰

This study clearly shows that Christianity came to be understood in terms of many aspects of pre-Christian Mizo culture. It was not swept away or fully transformed but just given a new emphasis in Christianity. In other words, Christianity prevails by incorporating much of what had previously existed in Mizo society. We investigated and analyzed the theological validity of *Hnatlang* cultural practices such as the understanding of the “Great Commission,” in which the resurrected Jesus Christ instructs his disciples that they spread his teachings to all the nations of the world. This is precisely a function of *Tlangau* (Gospel herald) and *Zualko* (Gospel messenger). Their understanding and practice of Church and its administration is based on their traditional institution *Zawlbuk* and its administration.

7.4. Re-construction of Hnatlang Theology

Eventually, when Christianity reached the other tribal groups in Northeast India, it was flavoured with Mizo culture, which had already been blended with western culture. *Hnatlang* was extensively applied to the foreign mission fields. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church as an institution and Mizo *Hnatlang* shaped the newly formed churches in these areas. Mizo music with western influences was introduced, including Mizo drums in most of the mission fields, the Northeast mission fields in particular. Mizo personnel played a leading role in the missions, and local culture was often disregarded or unincorporated into the new Christian identity. Aspects of these cultures could have been of great value and compatible with Christianity. However, this study

⁷¹⁰ Thanzauva, *Theology of Community*, 104.

shows that Mizo missions often did not take sufficient account of their context. Limited efforts towards the study of indigenization or contextualization have been made for Mizo missions to non-Mizos since its inception.

Scant attention has been paid to evaluate the reality (success and failure) of Mizo missions. As mentioned in previous chapter, Nengzakhup's book 'Amazing Mizo Mission' is the only book available that evaluates Mizo missions in which the Mizo zeal, commitment, and contribution to missions is identified and evaluated. However, the mission strategy is not identified or evaluated, nor is the success and failure of the Mizo missions. This study shows that *Hnatlang* concept and practices have several negative results rather than all positive results for Mizo missions in a foreign field. In other words, *Hnatlang* cultural practice was a factor that hindered some growth, in my opinion. Nonetheless, *Hnatlang* concept in itself was not a problem, but the Mizo *Hnatlang* introduced and practiced by Mizo-s among or for the non-Mizos was problematic in some respects.

It was the Mizo missionaries that desired to do *Hnatlang*. They possessed the devotion for the work, desired to build up native church, desired to promote education, and desired to provide for the financial needs. The missionaries consequently were driven to look beyond their home church for support, motivated by a *Hnatlang* spirit. The average Mizo assisted them in any work that was proposed or started by them. They contributed money and labour, and in due course the church and school buildings were built by Mizo *Hnatlang*.⁷¹¹ Missionaries were anxious to have a church building that resembled that with which the missionaries were most familiar, not only on the exterior but also in the internal furnishings. With the help of Mizo churches, they provided

⁷¹¹ See Appendix II and III.

church pews, lecterns, and pulpits. They introduced Mizo worship, used Mizo drums, and taught them to sing translations of Mizo and English hymns. In short, *Hnatlang* conception or *Hnatlang* spirit prompted them or compelled them to do almost everything for them. As a result of this, Mizoram Presbyterian Church foreign mission endeavour failed to establish “three-self” churches (self- supporting, self-propagating and self-governing) after so much commitment and contribution had been made during these 80 years.⁷¹²

From this study, we see much evidence that demonstrates *Hnatlang* was/is the root of Christianity in Mizoram. We also see how *Hnatlang* also shaped Mizo Christian missions within their own territory. We have also studied on the other hand, that, when Mizo people brought Christianity to the non-Mizo people, Christianity was/is clothed with Mizo Christianity particularly with *Hnatlang* conception and practice. Therefore, analysis of the constructive and destructive aspects of *Hnatlang* for theology as well as missiology is urgent in order to construct an authentic indigenous contextual theology/missiology both in Mizoram and outside Mizoram.

7.4.1. Constructive Aspects of Hnatlang for Theology

Mizo practice *Hnatlang* because they believe it can unite and liberate the community, making positive difference to people's lives. It gives every individual opportunity to develop a wide range of skills such as interpersonal skills, team working, taking responsibility for the community, improving self-confidence and self-esteem. From previous chapters, we discovered how *Hnatlang* is essential socially and economically, in religion and politics, and also in its impact on missions. Thus, it continually evolves to meet needs and is a significant source of physical, spiritual, and financial strength. In

⁷¹² See Chapter VI.

the following we discuss the missiological validity and constructive annotations of *Hnatlang*.

7.4.1.1. **Hnatlang: Three Self Principles**

It was Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson, the pioneer missiologists in the mid-19th century, who introduced a new understanding of the indigenous local church as being different from the missionaries in order to develop churches that were self-governing, self-sufficient, and self-reproducing. This is called the three-self principle. They hoped to see the growth of indigenous faith communities that were neither shaped by the missionaries' culture or dependent on their ongoing support.

As discussed earlier, this was consistent with Roland Allen's (1912) work to apply indigenous church principles to the missions of his day.⁷¹³ Anthony Norris Groves attempted to avoid any form of dependency on missionaries. He worked as a missionary in Iraq and India for several years. His goal was to help converts form their own churches without dependence on foreign training, authorization, or finance.⁷¹⁴ John Livingstone Nevius criticized the missionaries' practice of paying national workers out of mission funds.⁷¹⁵ Melvin believed that a healthy local church should be able to support its own local workers.⁷¹⁶ Hudson Taylor wanted to distance himself from any paternal organizations or denominations.⁷¹⁷ In July 1950 the *Chinese Christian Three Self Patriotic Movement* (self-support, self-government and self-propagation) was

⁷¹³ See Allen, *Missionary Methods*.

⁷¹⁴ See Robert Bernard Dann, *Father of Faith Missions: The Life and Times of Anthony Norris Groves*, (Authentic Media, 2004). Here after cited as Dann, *Father of Faith*. See also Anthony Norris Groves, *The Present State of the Tinnevely Mission* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1836).

⁷¹⁵ John L Nevius. *Planting and Development of Missionary Churches* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958).

Here after cited as Nevius, *Planting and Development*,

⁷¹⁶ Melvin L Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and its Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1977). Here after cited as Hodges, *Theology of the Church*.

⁷¹⁷ James Hudson Taylor, *After Thirty Years: Three Decades of the China Inland Mission* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1895). Here after cited as Taylor, *Thirty Years*,

launched calling for complete independence from western churches and mission boards.⁷¹⁸

Despite similar efforts, just a few ‘three self’ churches were established in India. Mizo traditional society was self-supporting and governing, with no one left destitute. Through *Hnatlang*, village communities were united under their chief, and everything was shared including joys and sorrows. *Hnatlang* was a major factor in the success of the indigenous church and mission, and the three self principles were present from the very beginning among the Mizo-s. Everyone volunteered in the spirit of traditional *Hnatlang*.

Togetherness and unity led to a stable church. They supported one another. They resisted missionary or foreign support, for example, when the *Biak in* had no lanterns.

Lloyds writes:

In 1903 there were 46 communicant members in the North and South...Naturally, being so few, there was a strong bond between them. As far as possible they celebrated Christmas together as one family...Each member brought his own lantern to chapel. Later on they had a communal lamp and each gave towards the paraffin.⁷¹⁹

To support each other was normal in Mizo traditional society. Every year, each and every family gave rice (the only wealth they could share) to the Village *Lal* (Chief), *Thirdeng* (Blacksmith), *Puithiam* (priest) and *Tlangau* (Herald), all of which were full time workers in the village community.⁷²⁰ Pioneer Christians would not wait for the missionaries to recruit and support evangelists but witnessed their new found faith to

⁷¹⁸ See Francis P. Jones, *Three-Self Movement in Concise Dictionary of the Christian Mission* (London: United Society for Christian Literature Lutterworth Press, 1970. 599). Here after cited as Jones, *Three Self Movements*.

⁷¹⁹ Lloyds, *History*, 57.

⁷²⁰ See Hminga, *Life and Witness*, 30.

their fellow Mizos⁷²¹ Poverty or material need did not stop them following their desire and they would repeat a Mizo proverb, “*Thih leh ruam khatah than leh tlang khatah*” (togetherness in death and fame). Poverty does not prevent Mizo-s from giving. They tithe, sell firewood and donate their material, labour to support their church, evangelists and missionaries,” says Nengzakhup.⁷²² They believed just twenty Christians could support four evangelists as long as they maintain *Hnatlang*. The Welsh missionaries could not deny this fact and proudly reported the incidents:

Moreover, this church supported its workers from the first. As early as 1900 the Christians agreed to provide for their evangelists. Four were appointed on a salary of Rs. 3 each per month. To ensure this the Christians gave a tenth of their income, and a great many have continued to do so to the present day. The evangelist salary was certainly small, but it was given by people who were extremely poor and it served the purpose of relieving the evangelists of financial worry. In those days the only wealth in many homes was the annual crop of rice stored in the bamboo bin. Money was a foreign element, and the Mizos may be said not to have entered the era of money-economy till after World War II. The Mizo word for wealthy (*hausa*) indicates having enough rice for the family for a year.⁷²³

As the very nature of *Hnatlang* was self giving, typical Mizos had no difficulty giving to church and missions. Upa Khuanga, one of the church elders said to his fellow believers, “Did you say that it is hard to contribute one tenth? For me it is harder not to contribute than to contribute”⁷²⁴ Missionaries also encouraged and taught them to contribute a tithe of their earnings from the beginning.⁷²⁵

The last day of 1898 saw the arrival of the second Welsh missionary Rev. Edwin Rowlands bringing teaching experience from the USA.⁷²⁶ He was assigned to teach education whilst continuing an evangelism tour. In 1901, he established three mission

⁷²¹ Mrs. Jones, wife of Rev. D.E.Jones acknowledged in her letter about this - In a letter written in September, 1904, Mrs. Jones notes admiringly that the Christians had a plan for regular giving and that most of the tithed from any money (which would be very little) that they actually obtained, e.g. a teacher had recently sold a pig for twenty rupees and at once brought two rupees to give to the work of the Kingdom. (Lloyds, *History*, 81).

⁷²² Nengzakhup, *Amazing Mizo Missions*, 52.

⁷²³ Lloyds, *History*, 57. See also Nengzakhup, *Amazing*, 52.

⁷²⁴ Lalhmuaka, *Zoram*, 244.

⁷²⁵ Thanzauva, *Report*, 25.

⁷²⁶ See Hminga, *Life and Witness*, 52.

schools in separate villages depending solely on help from the local people. The Welsh Presbyterian mission, supported by a small Church, could not afford to establish mission schools, but the Mizo communities built school buildings themselves and supported their own teachers. Lloyds reported this incident:

Towards the end of 1901 teachers were sent out to three villages. The school which Saphthara had established in Chhingchhip had Tawka as its teacher. Thanga went to Khawrihnim, a village in the west, while Chawnga went to a village in the east. Again it was experimental and only for three months. All three were back in Aizawl before the end of February. None of these teachers was paid, the villagers gave them rice.⁷²⁷

Education ministry was a great success due to the unfailing commitment of the village people and teachers wherever a new school was proposed. More than twelve new schools were opened in 1903 alone⁷²⁸ Missionaries had little to do except encourage and validate the work, whilst giving instruction and conducting centralized administration from the Aizawl headquarters. There was no money available for with the buildings or the salaries; nevertheless, the education ministry continued to grow through *Hnatlang*:

They were not promised any salary; they were told that we were feeling our way, but that would not need food and clothing, and that it would not be forgotten that they had families. They went out gladly. Rice was given to them through the chiefs in all the villages, save one and the young men built school houses.⁷²⁹

Acknowledging the good work done by the Mizo-s and the missionaries, the British government approved the mission school and gave an annual grant of five rupees monthly (£4 annually) and all the teachers except one received rupees 65 (£4.6s.8d) each for the work they rendered in 1904. They all gave a tithe towards the work.⁷³⁰

In addition to the main school, Sunday school was opened to teach the Bible as well as to help everyone learn to read and write. This presented a great opportunity for the

⁷²⁷ Lloyds, *History*, 66.

⁷²⁸ See Thanzauva, *Report*, 20.

⁷²⁹ Thanzauva, *Report*, 20.

⁷³⁰ See Thanzauva, *Report*, 22

missionaries to reach people who could not attend the main school. It was a useful method to preach the gospel, the primary aim of the early Sunday school being to disciple new Christians.⁷³¹ All ages were taught to read and write, an essential activity for the elevation of Mizo society.

The Mizos had started on their own way to literacy and to the intensive study of the Scriptures. Families went together to Sunday school. Many grownups learnt to read in the classes there. In many villages it is given pride of place by being held on Sunday morning. The Mizo church was thus on its way to taking full care of itself and becoming self supporting and self- propagating.⁷³²

Without doubt, *Hnatlang* played a key role in education. Missionaries could not afford to erect buildings, themselves. The school could not open without the teachers volunteering, nor could it continue without the people providing food. Equally, the schools and Sunday schools would not have succeeded without the community participating in the teaching and the learning.

Such educational development helped, within a few decades, an illiterate society attain highest literacy rate for India, but now standing as the second. The Mizoram literacy rate according to the 2001 census was 88.49%, 90.69% for males and 86.13% females. All the education (including elementary, secondary, and post-secondary) came about through *Hnatlang* in Mizoram because it was in the hands of the missionaries until 1952.⁷³³

From the very beginning, indigenous leaders oversaw the emerging churches. Utilizing traditional administration practices, the Mizo leaders were able to exercise all of the necessary functions of power in the church without intervention or oversight from the

⁷³¹ See Hminga, *Life and Witness*, 96.

⁷³² Lloyds, *History*, 122.

⁷³³ See Hminga, *Life and Witness*, 299.

missionaries.⁷³⁴ Thus, the Mizo churches became self governing. It is significant to note that every local church usually only had two employees--one pastor⁷³⁵ and one chowkider⁷³⁶ working full time and the rest of the church work was done by volunteers until this day.

As already discussed in the previous chapter, the most significant result of the Mizo church was a self-propagating gospel. The first believers Khuma and Khara voluntarily shared the gospel not only to their family and neighbours but witnessed to other villages.⁷³⁷ Mizo traditional culture compelled a typical Mizo to share, and if anyone had good news he or she would not withhold it, but rather immediately share with others.⁷³⁸ It was not only good news that was shared but also any news likely to grab attention.

Christianity grew rapidly due to consistent *Hnatlang* evangelization. Some new converts formed a group called *Kraws Sipai*⁷³⁹ that went out preaching from time to time.⁷⁴⁰ In 1901, the first ever census was conducted in Mizoram and there were forty-five Christians altogether (in North and South).⁷⁴¹ There were about twenty-four (including children) members of the Church at the beginning of the year (in the North). In the 1902 report, there were thirteen who preached in North Lushai alone, and most of

⁷³⁴ Each village was a sovereign dependent state ruled by its *lal* (chief) who was assisted by a cabinet of 'upas' (elders). *Zawlbuk* (social institution) also has sovereign dependent ruled by the 'val upas' (oldish young men).

⁷³⁵ Pastor usually looks after 4-7 local churches. He is the head of the churches taking responsibility of presiding the church committees, conducting marriages and funerals, visiting sick people, conducting the worship service, preaching and sacraments etc.

⁷³⁶ Each local church employ one chowkider, who is responsible for cleaning the church building, ringing the church bell, opening and closing the church building etc.

⁷³⁷ Lloyds, *History*, 55; 59, Thanzauva, *Report*, 9.

⁷³⁸ See Saiathanga, *Mizo Kohhran Chanchin*, 22-23.

⁷³⁹ Kraws Sipai (soldier of the Cross)-their practice was to go from village to village telling the Good News. This ardent group continued its work for a number of years, and if remained an unpaid, voluntarily band, dependent of food and support on the villages which they visited (Lloyds, *History*, 152).

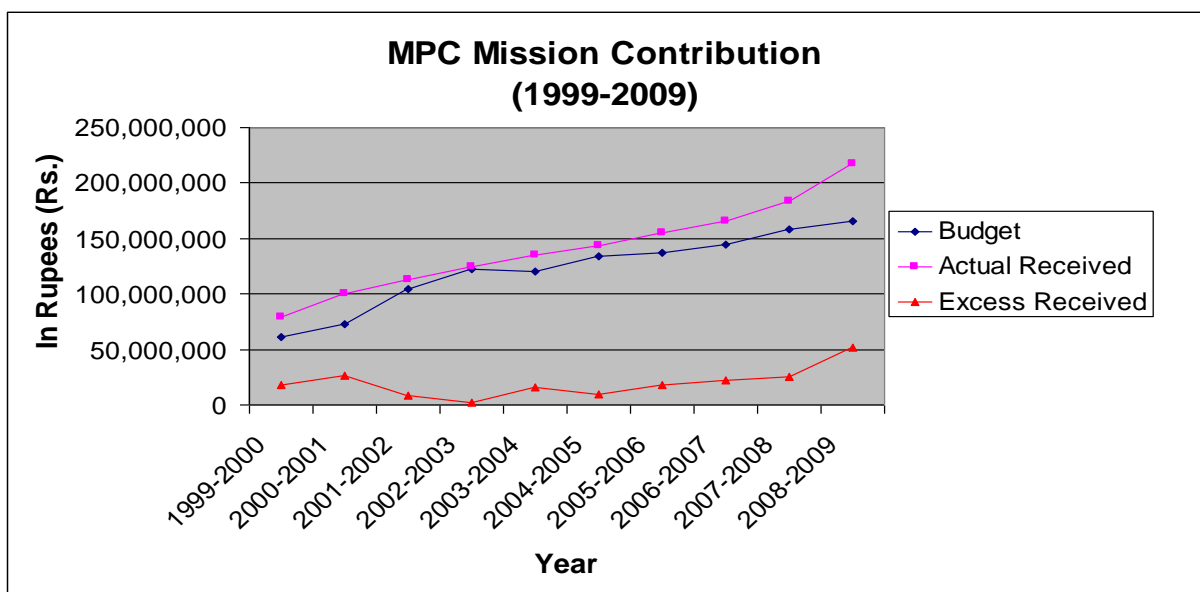
⁷⁴⁰ Lloyds, *History*, 123.

⁷⁴¹ Hminga, *Life and Witness*, 61.

them had reported being on preaching journeys.⁷⁴² Considerable evidence is already apparent from the above report that the pioneer Christians became self-supporting despite not being born of missionaries. In other words, those who became Christians eventually became active evangelists. As mentioned earlier, the entire population embraced Christianity within a few decades due to the *Hnatlang* evangelism -*Kraws Sipai, Beihrual, Fangrual, and Chanchintha Dak*.⁷⁴³

Hnatlang evangelism continued in Mizoram with unpaid evangelists preaching the gospel to neighbouring states. Many of them even migrated for this purpose, compelled to witness to non-Mizos (foreigners). Mission contributions were ceaseless despite Mizos being grouped among the Sixth Scheduled tribal people of India--considered backwards and economically poor.⁷⁴⁴ The Mizoram Presbyterian Church exceeded its budget for missions every year over the last ten years.⁷⁴⁵

Table C



⁷⁴² Thanzauva, *Report*, 16.

⁷⁴³ See Chapter III.

⁷⁴⁴ See Hrangkhuma, *Transformational*, 339.

⁷⁴⁵ See Appendix VI for the detail statement.

“It is not their economic insecurity that matters, but their zeal and passion to bring lost people to Jesus” says Nengzakhup.⁷⁴⁶

7.4.1.2. Doctrine of Trinity and Hnatlang

The Trinity is a Christian doctrine that teaches the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as three persons in one Godhead. It was articulated by Tertullian in the second century and towards the end of third century Council of Constantinople declared that the orthodox view of God could be summarized as “Three Persons in one God”. Historically, the Trinity takes into account questions of scriptural interpretation, theological synthesis, and philosophical reasoning. Vast amounts of literature have been written about the Trinity. Edmund J. Fortman traced the historical development of Trinitarian doctrine from its written beginnings to its contemporary status among the Protestant, Orthodox, and Catholic Theologians.⁷⁴⁷ Jung Young Lee’s book ‘The Trinity in Asian Perspective’ gives an excellent understanding of the Trinity from the Asian perspective. He reinterprets the implications of Trinity for our lives particularly in church life, family life, and community life.⁷⁴⁸ Leonardo Boff, the well known Brazilian theologian, treats the Trinity from the liberation theological perspective. The central idea of his book *Trinity and Society* is that the union of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Trinity constitutes the model of the human community imagined by those who want to build a better society.⁷⁴⁹ Studying the Trinity as the principle of self giving, Peter Mey asserts that:

The dominating principle which binds together the Three Persons of the Trinity in One is the principle of self giving in love. Self giving in love for the whole is

⁷⁴⁶ Nengzakhup, *Amazing Mizo Mission*, 69.

⁷⁴⁷ Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (London; Philadelphia: Hutchinson, Westminster, 1972). Here after cited as Fortman, *Triune God*.

⁷⁴⁸ See Jung Young Lee, *The Trinity in Asian Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996, 180-211). Here after cited as Lee, *Trinity*.

⁷⁴⁹ Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Sao Paulo: Burns & Oates, 1986). Here after cited as Boff, *Trinity*.

the only principle on which in Christian thinking men and women can live together in community, and therefore in this too the pattern of community living is the *koinonia* of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Trinity.⁷⁵⁰

For the purposes of this study the Trinity is understood to be the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit unified as three persons in the Godhead. Living in community is the fundamental nature of God, and all living beings exist together in an interwoven network of life. It should be viewed as a manifestation of one integral whole and *Hnatlang* being the centre of Mizo life and community might be seen to reflect this. In the Trinity, three Divine Persons share everything and are one, engaged in eternal perfect communion. This relationship is shared with all Christians who have been baptized into the Triune name.⁷⁵¹

In 1981, the Conference of European Churches met at Geneva to explore the implications of communion in the Trinity, the church and creation, and to discover the authentic dimensions of Christian spirituality in light of the Trinity.⁷⁵² Several theologians write about the attributes of God in the book called '*Naming and Thinking God in Europe Today: Theology in Global Dialogue*' edited by Norbert Hintersteiner. Focusing particularly on the Trinitarian community Ionnis Kourembeles quotes Boff's views:

Boff stresses that each divine person is asserted to the other divine persons and points out the significance of unity in combination with the otherness of the persons; He considers that community is achieved by means of participation and mutual emptying.⁷⁵³

⁷⁵⁰ Peter May, *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1955, 72). Here after Cited as May, *Trinity*.

⁷⁵¹ See Thomas J. Scirghi " *The Trinity: A Model for Belonging in Contemporary Society*" in World Council of Churches, *Ecumenical Review*, July 2002. Here after cited as Scirghi, *Trinity*.

⁷⁵² D. Popescu, *Introduction in 'the Communion of the Holy Spirit Today-Trinity, Church, Creation: Report of the Conference of European Churches 24th- 28th March*, Cardiff, Great Britain (Geneva: Conference of European Church, 1981, 19). Here after cited as Popescu, *Introduction*.

⁷⁵³ Ionnis Kourembeles, *Christian Monotheism: Exclusive or Openness to Otherness? In Naming and Thinking God in Europe Today: Theology in Global Dialogue*, edited by Norbert Hintersteiner (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2007, 311). Here after cited as Kourembeles, *Christian Monotheism*.

Boff asserts that only human beings can engage in communion, meaning that while two persons are distinct from each other they may still be present to each other, opening themselves in radical mutuality. Communion leads to community through mutual surrender and reciprocity. Each person is open to the other, accepting the other unconditionally, giving the best one has to offer and receiving from the other in kind.⁷⁵⁴ J.D. Godsey in his article '*Karl Barth's Table*' quotes the subject's views on how togetherness applies to God and Man in that:

God lives in togetherness with himself, then God lives in togetherness with men, then men live in togetherness with one another.⁷⁵⁵

Lee asserts that, "in Trinitarian thinking, everyone works together for the whole, just as every member of the family works together as a single unit of life and he believes that in the society which reflects the image of the divine Trinity, everyone must work together, as family members do, to fulfill the tasks of their common interest."⁷⁵⁶

Christopher Mwoleka in his article *Trinity and Community* argues that many Christians do not understand the Trinity. They perceive it as dogma inapplicable to daily life. But he believes, through the Trinity, God is revealing to us life...if we once begin to share life in all aspects we would soon understand the Trinity and rejoice.⁷⁵⁷ Many people understand God as one who only gives commandments without realizing that God wants to reveal His intimate life with us. Mwoleka suggests:

What we should do is to present the Trinity to people, not in abstract ideas, but in concrete facts of our human life: present the life of the Trinity as shared and lived by as Christians here and now.⁷⁵⁸

⁷⁵⁴ See Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community* (Maryknoll New York: Orbis, 2000, 3) Here after cited as Boff, *Holy Trinity*.

⁷⁵⁵ J.D. Godsey, (Recorded & Edit), *Karl Barth's Table Talk* (Richmond Virginia: John Knox Press, 1962, 57). Here after cited as Godsey, *Karl Barth's Table*.

⁷⁵⁶ See Lee, *Trinity*, 206.

⁷⁵⁷ Christopher Mwoleka, *Trinity and Community in Mission Trends No.3: Third World Theologies*, edited by Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stansky, C.S.P. (New York/Ramsey/Toronto/ Grand Rapids: Paulist Press and WM B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1976, 152). Here after cited as Mwoleka, *Trinity*.

⁷⁵⁸ Mwoleka, *Trinity*, 153.

Bosch defines missions (plural) as *missio Dei* (God's mission) asserting that missions means the activity of God in which God reveals himself fully engaged with the world.⁷⁵⁹ Mission is incomplete without sharing: God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit share the work of saving the world. Luzbetak agreeably asserts the importance of sharing, in that:

Actual sharing of one's time and talent in service of one another was routine; in any case, good wishes were never enough.⁷⁶⁰

Many Christians believe in two types, or rather dimensions, of the Trinity. The Economic Trinity is united in its work within creation, history, salvation, the formation of the Church, the daily lives of believers, and so on. Through the Persons of the Trinity and their roles, God is in relationship with creation. The other type or dimension, the Ontological Trinity, refers to the Trinity in all its intimacy (John 1:1-2) - the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit to each other, without reference to God's relationship with creation. The Nicene theologians responsible for articulating the Ontological Trinity argued that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work together in one accord. The three Persons are inseparable and their work is that of one God. The first Christian community seemed committed to an identical model of Trinitarian community life.⁷⁶¹

Hnatlang has much in common to the dimensions of the Trinity, particularly in regard to unity and the sharing of work. As we have seen it was never an option but rather an inherent part of life. Mizo-s are aware of the importance of keeping the cultural and social integrity of their own community for their existence and development.⁷⁶² In

⁷⁵⁹ See Bosch, David J, *Transforming Mission*, 10.

⁷⁶⁰ Luzbetak, *Church and Culture*, 379.

⁷⁶¹ They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (New International Version Acts 2:42-47).

⁷⁶² Thanzauva, *Theology*, 146.

Hnatlang, there is unity of spirit and everything is shared for the sake of the individual and community. Thus, *Hnatlang* informs a Mizo interpretation of the Trinity.

As discussed earlier, the Mizo tribe (a nomadic group) would traditionally migrate from one village to the next every 5-10 years.⁷⁶³ This process demanded different *Hnatlang*: spying out land for a settlement, forming a new village and preserving the harmony of daily life. Everyone worked together for the benefit of a migrating group of people. Prior to individual houses, the *Lal* (chief) house was built along with the *Zawlbuk* (social institution), premises for widows and the disabled, and then village roads, wells, and fencing and *jhum* paths. The work of cultivation (*lawm rual*), hunting (*sanghal zim*, *sangha vuak*), festival celebrations (*Mim Kut*, *Chapchar Kut*, *Pawl Kut*,) and religious ceremonies (*Thangchhuah*, *Raldai Theu*) was all shared.⁷⁶⁴

With respect to the economic Trinity and ontological Trinity, believers have all in common, much in the same way as a traditional communitarian society lived. The new faith community ‘*Kohhran*’ mirrored the first community found in the Bible (Acts 2: 42-47).⁷⁶⁵ The followers of Christ shared their wealth and crossed lines of discrimination: Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female (Gal. 3:28); all were heirs of Abraham's promise and one in Jesus Christ.⁷⁶⁶ Whenever the numbers of Mizo believers increased, they would buy a plot of land, and erect a church by *Hnatlang*. Each individual felt responsibly to witness the Gospel by way of *beihrual*, *fangrual*, and *chanchintha dak*. Meeting in the church building, normally 5-7 times a week, they devoted themselves to the teaching of evangelists, elders, and pastors. Every night

⁷⁶³ In the past Mizos lived semi-nomadic life. Before the land which is now named Mizoram came under the British Raj in 1890 the people were always on the move...before the British Rule, a village remaining ten years on one place would be very rare because their method of *jhum* cultivation made constant moves necessary. (Lalsawma, *Revivals*, 19).

⁷⁶⁴ See these traditional *Hnatlang* discussed in Chapter III.

⁷⁶⁵ See above the scripture taken from the said verses.

⁷⁶⁶ Boff, *Holy Trinity*, 63.

during the *beihruai* month, they ate and drank together in their homes with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.⁷⁶⁷ They celebrated Good Friday, Easter Sunday, and Christmas in place of the traditional festivals of *Mim Kut*, *Chapchar Kut* and *Pawl Kut*.

The early Mizo community was of one heart and soul. Each individual was enabled to contribute to the new community (*Kohhran*), committing his time, money or talents unconditionally. In other words, the social significance of *Hnatlang* fosters a feeling of belonging to a community. Belonging to community simply meant some form of greater connection, being a part of something bigger than the individual. Scirghi and Boff believe that “Trinity” is one such community; within it we find three different entities or “Persons.” Each one is distinct, yet cannot be defined without the others. Each divine person is affirmed by affirming the others, and through surrendering to the others.⁷⁶⁸ Scirghi believes that the community of the early church (based on scriptural accounts) reflected the Trinitarian model of communion, and he writes:

“The communion of the divine Trinity provides a model for belonging which is faithful to the dignity and purpose of human beings as intended by God”⁷⁶⁹

7.4.1.3. **Hnatlang: Diakonal Services**

The word “*diakonia*” in the original Greek, means care, work, ministry and service. Some Christian scholars define *diakonal* service as the Church or mission involvement in socio-economic welfare activities for the people. T.K. Thomas defines *diakonia* as the charitable services the church renders in society, whereas Maso Takenaka of Japan

⁷⁶⁷ See Acts Chapter 2 and *beihruai* in the previous Chapter.

⁷⁶⁸ See Scirghi, *Trinity*, 2. See also Boff, *Holy Trinity*, 54.

⁷⁶⁹ Scirghi, *Trinity*, 1.

used the term “social diakonia” to distinguish it from charitable *diakonia* at the 1961 New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches.⁷⁷⁰ A related word “deacon” (in Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox Churches) describes ordained ministers of a ranking below that of priest or, in some Protestant Churches, a lay officer assisting a minister is commonly used in the Churches.⁷⁷¹ James Monroe Barnett in his book⁷⁷² provides valuable insights into the development of the office of deacon in the early church and situates diaconry within the context of the church's total ministry.

Anto Karokoran, in his book *Evangelization and Diakonia* undertakes the question: what is the relation between evangelization and social engagement of the church according to the evolving Indian theology?⁷⁷³ The aim of *diakonia* is to be at the service of those who need help, to reform, develop or change socio-economic status of the individual as well as community. *Diakonal* services are more than those service for individuals who need help but it must be the servanthood of humanity.⁷⁷⁴ In other words, it concerned more than just the service itself, but rather the service of humanity. Humble *diakonia* is essential for the unity of the church. Gregorious proposes four necessary conditions for authentic Christian *diakonia*:

- (1) The willingness to suffer with those whom one serves and to gives of oneself;
- (2) humility as opposed to superiority about oneself, and respect as opposed to condescension towards those to be served;
- (3) not using *diakonia* as an occasion for domination, privilege and rank;
- (4) Willingness to identify with the served to the point of laying down one's life for their sake.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷⁰ See Thomas, M. M, *A Diaconal Approach to Indian Ecclesiology* (Tiruvalla: Rome: Christava Sahitya Samithy; Centre for Indian and Inter-religious Studies, 1995, 9). Here after cited as Thomas, *Diaconal Approach*.

⁷⁷¹ Soanes, *Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, 277.

⁷⁷² James Monroe Barnett, *The Diaconate--A full and Equal Order: A Comprehensive and Critical Study of the Origin, Development, and Decline of the Diaconate in the Context of the Church's Total Ministry and the Renewal of the Diaconate Today with Reflections for the Twenty-first Century* (Minneapolis : Seabury Press, 1981). Here after cited as Barnett *Diaconate*.

⁷⁷³ Karokaran, Anto. *Evangelization and Diakonia: A Study in the Indian Perspective* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1978). Here after cited as Karokoran, *Evangelization and Diakonia*.

⁷⁷⁴ See Luzbetak, *Church and Culture*, 386.

⁷⁷⁵ Gregorious, Paulos Mar. *The Meaning and Nature of Diakonia* (Geneva: WCC Publication, 1988. 4). Here after cited as Gregorious, *Meaning*.

According to Scripture, the Son of Man (Jesus Christ) came not to be served but to serve (Matthew 20:28). If Christ is the ultimate model of *diakonia*, a Mizo *Hnatlang* which involves no personal cost beyond “sharing money or personnel”, can hardly be authentic but a valid local, contextual Mizo interpretation of the New Testament *diakonal* model. Mizo *Hnatlang* involving relatively little cost for personnel pails in comparison to what He has done, but it may still reflect the concept. Still, the willingness to suffer in the way Gregorious described is a fundamental factor of *Hnatlang*. As analyzed in the second chapter, some *Hnatlang* demand suffering and sacrifice (*Kang thelh- Fire fighting; Zual kova tlan-Delivering a message; Thlan laih-Digging grave; Mi ruang zawn- carrying dead body; Hmeithai in sak- Building a widow house, etc.*). These came out of a strong determination to serve.

Mizo traditional *diakonal* services empower individuals and groups to effect change in their own communities. *Hnatlang* often concentrated on political, economical and religious goals that developed stability and strength within the context of larger social institutions (*Lal in sak- Constructing a village chief house; Zawlbuk sak- Constructing Zawlbuk; Pum sak- Constructing a blacksmith shop; Nghal rual zim- Hunting wild pigs; Hridai theu- Erecting a disease fence, etc.*).

The Hebrew word *abodah*, similar to the Greek word *diakonia* appears frequently in the Old Testament. Meaning work, service, cult, etc., its derivatives occur more than 1,000 times in the Old Testament.⁷⁷⁶ Therefore, we understand that the Old Testament *abodah* reflected the New Testament *diakonia* to a high degree. The tabernacle and its successor, the Temple in Jerusalem, occupy a central place throughout the Old Testament; that is, the setting up of the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:1, Joshua 18:1, I Samuel

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid, 8.

1:21), construction of the Temple (I King 6, I Chronicle 13-17) and re-building of the latter (II Kings 12, II Chronicle 29, books of Ezra and Nehemiah). The 'Levites' had the specific responsibility for *diakonal* service, beyond the usual public *diakonia*⁷⁷⁷

Both traditional and contemporary *Hnatlang* mirrors this Old Testament *abodah* that meant work or service for the benefit of the community. The former focuses on the community of *Kohhran* (Church). *Biak In* are built giving emphasis to the service over and against the building of individual houses.⁷⁷⁸ Each community had *Biak In* which was the dominant building normally standing in the centre of the village. Pastors and *Kohhran upas* took local church *diakonal* services with *Kohhran* members in active attendance.

Hnatlang diakonal service faces crucial questions: whether it sufficiently responded to the call to spread the evangelical message of salvation (holistic) to a wider community particularly to the foreign mission fields. Did the Mizo missionaries do anything other than preaching, converting, planting the church, and thus bringing salvation?

This study has shown that *Hnatlang* targets the poor, widows, sick and all in need. The Presbyterian Church foreign mission *diaconal* services responded to the call not only by spreading the word of God, but also extending these efforts and sentiments to the world beyond just the benefit and comfort for the Mizo community. The mission could be described as "hungry to help" the new believers. They built Churches, schools, staff quarters, medical centers, etc., digging soil and wells and erecting roads. They provided Bibles and hymn books, school teachers with full financial support, nurses to look after

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid, 19. The Temple is at the heart of the Old Testament. It is the service of the Temple that is pre-eminently called *diakonia* of *Obadiah* in the Old Testament. One whole tribe (The Levites) from among the twelve tribes of Israel is set apart for the work of the service of *diakonia* of the Temple.

⁷⁷⁸ Lloyd, *History*, 112. Hauzika was a Christian who went to live in Chawnchhim a village on the Burma border. The villager expected a newcomer to build his house at once. Instead of that he first built a Chapel (*Biak In*) as there was none in the village. For him the house of God had first claim.

the poor (unable to afford doctors), and free medical camps, and establishing informal education for the poor.

7.4.1.4. **Hnatlang: Community Well-being**

Community has different meanings in theological, sociological, biological, psychological, archeological, and anthropological terms. But rather than study these in detail, we have followed the Oxford English Dictionary definition of community as “a group of people living together in one place”.⁷⁷⁹ Mizo community was built and strengthened through *Hnatlang*. They shared a common culture, patterns of living, and values. Nengzakhup describes Mizo cohesiveness:

There is neither caste nor stratified class system in the Mizo society. Therefore, there is no essential gap between the rich and the poor, the wise and the fool. The belief and practice in society brings the people close to one another.⁷⁸⁰

It is quite common in every local community or society for people to be distinct. Some are respected and considered important; others are ordinary, insignificant, or lowly. Among many Indian tribes, individual prestige and position is created according to their own caste system. Local communities have their own criteria for how people should be treated. Thus, it is relatively easy to observe individuals and their standing in the Indian community where a caste system exists.

Hnatlang, on the other hand, has no regard for individual prestige and position. There is neither caste nor class; everyone shares the responsibility and derives equal benefit, thereof. No one is exempt and there is an emphasis on community well-being over individual rights for position.

⁷⁷⁹ Soanes, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 214.

⁷⁸⁰ Nengzakhup, *Amazing Mizo Missions*, 64.

By doing *Hnatlang*, they (Mizos) not only shared a pattern of living and ideas in common, but built a solid foundation of community. The sharing, commitment and requirements of *Hnatlang* for the survival of the community as well as individual is deeply rooted in the heart of the people. The common interests of the people were what one could contribute for the growth and development of the community, instead of seeking assistance from the community.

Thus, *Hnatlang* generates a tangible community: playgrounds, roads, wells and halls (*Zawlbuk*) without heed to discrimination or distinction. The relationship of the Mizo-s to each other was simple and informal even with their chief. As mentioned above, there is a total absence of class distinction that is hard to imagine in Britain or most of India.⁷⁸¹ No individual went homeless or hungry.

Lalhmuaka reports a story in which a certain householder's paddy was stolen by his neighbour; in response to this incident the householder said to his family, "How stupid am I! I didn't even realize that my neighbour was dying of hunger". He took a paddy from the *Zem* (paddy bin) and gave it to the neighbour who stole his paddy."⁷⁸²

In fact, Mizos have a saying that "those who eat by themselves will die, those who share with others will live." Life for them is living for others; selfishness is death. In sharing joys and sorrows, they find true community life.⁷⁸³ The traditional titles of highest distinction in Mizo society are *Thangchhuah* and *Pasaltha*⁷⁸⁴. These could be obtained only by hosting a number of community feasts and dedicating oneself to the community.

⁷⁸¹ Lloyds, *History*, 215.

⁷⁸² Lalhmuaka, *Zoram*, 239.

⁷⁸³ Thanzauva, *Theology*, 162.

⁷⁸⁴ Pasatha is a person who is brave and manly; a brave, a hero; a famous or notable warrior or hunter (Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 352).

In addition, Mizo people traditionally practiced *Hnatlang* during times of tragedy or loss e.g. family bereavements. This relieved the burden on the bereaved as funerals, burials or cremations were organized by the community. This remains true in other Indian tribes and even in the wider global community.⁷⁸⁵

As soon the death became public, the *Hnatlang* was initiated. Everyone in the village would leave work that day. A dead body was usually laid on a bed, surrounded by the family members, relatives, friends and supportive villagers (adults). *Val upa* would send *zualko* to inform relatives and friends living elsewhere. Male youths went to the graveyard to dig the grave whilst the girls either served drinks or collected firewood and rice for the bereaved family. Between five and ten men manufactured a coffin. Following a service in the family home, the funeral procession began with the final service and burial being conducted in the graveyard. The following day *thlan nghah ni*⁷⁸⁶, a representative from every household would attend *mitthi ral*⁷⁸⁷ at the bereaved family home, contributing money, rice, sugar, and tea.

The previous chapter mentioned how Mizo-s traditionally practiced different *Hnatlang* - *Kang thelh*, *Hridai theu*, *Tuikhur hiah*, *Lal in sak*, *Zawlbuk sak*, *Feh kawng sial etc*⁷⁸⁸ for the welfare and safety of the community. We discussed how some of these continued in contemporary society and the new faith community “*Kohhran*”. Christianity was embraced by the Mizos for both individual and community interests.

⁷⁸⁵ Burial or cremation of the deceased is quite expensive and it could be a big burden for many families here in Great Britain and even in most of the African countries.

⁷⁸⁶ *‘thlan nghah ni*, n. the day after a burial or funeral (when the mourners and their friends still stay in the house to keep the departed on company-the grave being only just outside the front door). (Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 477).

⁷⁸⁷ Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 319. *mitthi ral*, v. to hold a wake for the dead; to attend a wake for the dead; to contribute refreshments towards entertaining those who gather at a wake or who come together afterwards in order to comfort and cheer the relatives of the departed; n. the people who attend a wake.

⁷⁸⁸ See Chapter II for detail information of these *Hnatlang*.

“*Kohhran*” focused on community. When missionaries brought education, they also had a concern for community:

The interest in education was usually twofold. It was not merely a desire to learn, but also a spontaneous desire to share with others what had been acquired. ‘Each One Teach One’ was common practice long before it became a slogan in the struggle against worldwide illiteracy. As a rule, a person who had mastered even the simple, recently invented alphabet felt obliged to teach it to others and had a little difficulty in finding a willing pupil.⁷⁸⁹

The specific challenge to every Christian community is to “demystify” the New Testament model and translate it into a concrete socio-cultural situation, real life here and now.⁷⁹⁰ Considering scripture and Mizo Christian community Thanzauva writes:

Therefore we must delight in each other, make others’ conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labour and suffer together, always having before our eyes our community as members of the same body. Likewise the church is a community of believers. Any ecclesiology which does not keep *koinonia* as its central theme cannot be an authentic ecclesiology.⁷⁹¹

We do not claim that a Mizo or any other Christian community is perfect. But in this study we have concluded that the Mizo community, whether traditional or Christian, provided easy bridges to the New Testament Biblical community mentioned in Acts 2:42-47. Even though perfect community is impossible to attain, Luzbetak asserts that a genuinely Christian community should approach life in this manner: being profoundly unique in concept, oneness and solidarity, source of life and strength, and purpose.⁷⁹² Amaladoss projects that Christian communities should be characterized by the following basic attitudes: “respect for the dignity and individuality, irrespective of caste, creed or ethnicity; altruism and a dialogue and collaboration that is the mark of a real democratic society.”⁷⁹³ Again Nengzakhup discovered some of these ideal amongst the Mizo community:

⁷⁸⁹ Lloyds, *History*, 63.

⁷⁹⁰ Luzbetak, *Church and Culture*, 380.

⁷⁹¹ Thanzauva, *Theology*, 145.

⁷⁹² Luzbetak, Lous J. *The Church and Cultures: New Perspective in Missiological Anthropology*. (New York: Orbis Books, Tenth Edition, 2002, 377). Here after cited as Luzbetak, *Church and Culture*,

⁷⁹³ Amaladoss, *Making*, 4.

One outstanding feature of pre-Christian culture is to generously share with others whatever one has. This is found in the principle *sem sem dam dam, ei bil thi thi*. This is made clear by C. L. Thansanga, an elder and an enthusiastic mission- concerned layman. He explains that “The chiefs used to visit houses and asked those who have abundant food in store house to share with those who do not have.” This has a deep influence in their attitude and action even after they become Christians. They have a strong desire to share the life changing good news with others.⁷⁹⁴

From this study, we analyzed how Mizo Christian life significantly challenged communities in the foreign mission fields. The Mizo Church is deeply committed to its members, as Luzbetak suggests, “The communal model views the Church as the Body of Christ, as God’s people, as a fellowship in Christ deeply committed to the well-being of its members.”⁷⁹⁵ Thus, Christian relationships must co-exist between various ethnic groups in order for each to succeed, rather than fall into a deep spiral of nonentity. In other words, members of a Christian community must interact with each other. “There is indeed no place in the church for the isolated self or for the selfish. When any individual experiences ‘justification by faith’, he or she is moved into the community of believers”, says Bosch.⁷⁹⁶

7.4.1.5. Great Commission and Hnatlang

The term “Great Commission” describing the command of Christ is found in Matthew 28:18-20 (cf. Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24: 46-49; Acts 1:8).⁷⁹⁷ Jesus Christ instructs His disciples to preach the gospel to all nations. It has become a popular way of describing mission work, or a popular way to emphasize or encourage the same. It is generally viewed as a command which Christ’s followers are to obey.⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹⁴ Nengzakhup, *Amazing Mizo*, 65. See also Dokhuma, *Hmanlai*. 166.

⁷⁹⁵ Luzbetak, *Church and Culture*, 376.

⁷⁹⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Missions*, 166.

⁷⁹⁷ Harry R. Boer, ‘Great Commission’ in Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission, edited by Stephen Neill, Gerald H. Anderson and John Goodwin (London: United Society for Christian Literature, Lutterworth Press, 1970, 235). Here after cited as Boer, *Great Commission*.

⁷⁹⁸ Boer, *Great Commission*, 235.

Thus, the Great Commission is one of the most referenced pieces of Scripture in order to challenge believers to witness the Gospel. It is also one of the most debated by theologians and missiologists in writing on the subject of missions. It was, however, not until the 1940s that biblical scholarship, pioneered by Michel (1941 and 1950/51) and Lohmeyer (1951) began to pay serious attention to Matthew 28:18-20.⁷⁹⁹

Some Mizo theologians believe that the Mizo concept of mission equates to evangelism and the primary task of the Church, which is to make converts and plant churches.⁸⁰⁰ Thanzauva believes that Mizo mission theology is based on three principles: doxological (thanksgiving) mission, election mission, and preparation for Jesus Christ's second coming.⁸⁰¹ "From the findings (interviews) that I get one may still get the impression that the Mizo Christians identifies mission with evangelism" says Lalfakzuala.⁸⁰²

There is no single or authoritative concept of Mizo mission; however, because of the distinctiveness of the cultural systems, the fundamental goal in the people's concept of mission has historically been the fulfillment of *Hnatlang*. This is for the development of the individual and social life by sharing and living in harmony with one another. In other words, Mizo-s mission is historically formed out of their life experiences (*Hnatlang*). Within the early society and culture, the achievement of *Hnatlang* was the ultimate individual and collective goal. *Hnatlang* was (and is) a state where every

⁷⁹⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 56.

⁸⁰⁰ Lalfakzuala, "Mizo Concept of Mission- A Theological Appraisal" in Annual Magazine 2005-2006: Spirituality in the 21st Century (Aizawl: Aizawl Theological College, 2006, 124). Here after cited as Lalfakzuala, *Mizo Concept of Mission*.

⁸⁰¹ See Dr.K. Thanzauva, "Mizo Kristiante Leh Mission: Mizoram Kohhran tan Mission Theology" in *Kum 100 Kristian Zofate Hmabak* (Bangalore: Bangalore Mizo Christian Fellowship, 1994, 76-78). Here after cited as Thanzauva, *Mizo Kristian*.

⁸⁰² Lalfakzuala, *Theological*, 64.

individual seeks to obey the *lal* (village chief) and *upas* (village elders), and takes responsibility for others and their own wellbeing.

Mention is made in previous chapters that, even before Christianity, Mizo-s already had a *Hnatlang* spirit in which everyone is ready or willing to do good for others. There was a commission in their hearts that compelled action by everyone for the sake of the community or one another, which is to some extent comparable with the Christian “Great Commission”. In short, previous chapters have shown that *Hnatlang* spirit identifies closely with the Great Commission. Everyone is taught to be *tlawmngai* (spirit of *Hnatlang*) in which they must willing or ready to do any *Hnatlang* at any time or in any circumstances. Village people followed the commission given by the *lal* (village chief) or *upa* (elder) through *tlangau* (herald). Being ignorant to the *Hnatlang* commission or refusing to contribute to it was considered immoral. Thus, the early converts to Christianity among the Mizo-s had no difficulty accepting the authority of Jesus and following His commands.

It was obligatory to obey *lal* and *upa* and follow their commands. Jesus has said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mat. 28:18) indicating that His authority is the foundation for the commands. No area, people, or culture now lies outside the domain of His power and authority.⁸⁰³ The Greek word *exousia* translated *authority* “denotes active power; the full ability to do as one wills.”⁸⁰⁴ This means that Christ’s desires will be fulfilled through His commands. Thus typical Mizos, being used to obeying their village *lals* or *upas*, were that much more willing for Jesus Christ, who

⁸⁰³ Verkuyl, Johannes. *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1978, 106). Here after cited as Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*.

⁸⁰⁴ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 196, 1171).

is not only their earthly chief (*lal*) but also has the authority of heaven (*pialral/mitthikhua*).

The Great Commission and *Hnatlang* are very compatible. What does Jesus command his disciples to do? First of all, “Go therefore.” The authors choose the Greek word *poreuthentes*, which means “to depart, to leave, to cross boundaries”-- sociological boundaries, racial boundaries, cultural boundaries, and geographical boundaries.”⁸⁰⁵ In comparison, every *Hnatlang* requires one to leave one’s own comfort zone, home and village. There were no longer any social, racial or cultural boundaries. Taken literally, the Great Commission is not optional but compulsory. Jesus says, “Make disciple of all nations.” The gospel must go to everyone and everywhere.⁸⁰⁶ As the Great Commission includes not only preaching but also making disciples⁸⁰⁷, *Hnatlang* includes bringing people into a true community. Therefore, there is no doubt that the concepts of the Great Commission and *Hnatlang* are very similar, if not to some extent identical.

The crucial transaction is the one that goes beyond the Mizo tribe. Mizo missions are not only preaching the gospel but also an expansion of *Hnatlang* to the rest of the world, making the world into one single tribe in which there will be no more caste or class. *Hnatlang*, therefore, challenges the worldwide social, racial and cultural boundaries that often create misunderstanding, division, abuse of power, and oppression among peoples.

This study also demonstrates that the Mizo missions concept is not confined to evangelism or soul saving, but *Hnatlang* aims to see the individual as God sees them.

⁸⁰⁵ Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, 106.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid, 107.

⁸⁰⁷ See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 73.

Hnatlang mission extends to every dimension of need, seeking wholeness at all levels in society. By crossing sociological, racial, cultural and geographical boundaries, Mizoram Presbyterian Church has opened several schools in her foreign mission fields, empowering pupils to improve and develop their skills, to serve the community and impact the world for Christ. Several medical centers were opened in which nurses were available around the clock to provide care to patients, families, and staff. The vision was to improve health in underdeveloped communities whilst sharing the love of Christ. Craft and tailoring centers were also opened to train people, along with fisheries, and farms to develop the economy.

So, we have learned from this study that Mizo missionary endeavors are based on fulfilling the Great Commission through *Hnatlang*. The spirit of *Hnatlang* along with the Holy Spirit compels believers to witness the gospel. Everyone was involved in the Great Commission from the start. They preached the gospel to their families, friends, clans, communities, neighbouring villages, states, other parts of India and even the world wherever possible. They felt obliged to help the poor and needy. Thus, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church continually extends her mission work by opening new fields and stations, sending Mizo to the missionary fields, and recruiting new native missionaries annually.

7.2. Critical Aspects of Hnatlang

Hnatlang is crucial to understanding all the activities of Mizo culture, including its missionary activities. However, it would be wrong to give full credit to *Hnatlang* for all efforts without careful criticism. *Hnatlang* may create anthropological problems by domination in which individual dignity, improvement, growth and even freedom may be

overlooked. It may also hinder economical growth and development if not handled properly. Some traditional *Hnatlang* may no longer be applicable or may need to be further modified to contemporary society. While it is a central part of Mizo culture, it may be a problem or obstacle to other cultures. It may hinder mission or church indigenization in the mission fields, failing to generate a sense of ownership in the indigenous people if not conducted appropriately. Thus careful assessment of *Hnatlang* is important.

7.2.1. Counter Culture

To analyze *Hnatlang* it is appropriate to discuss missionary attitudes towards foreign cultures. It is common for missionaries to consider their own culture better or superior to that of the people whom they evangelize. “For the most part, we all learn our own culture quite unconsciously and uncritically.”⁸⁰⁸ Did Mizo missionaries bring a Gospel in a culturally sensitive manner in the foreign fields? Were they able to promote indigenous life whilst using *Hnatlang* practices? And was *Hnatlang* favoured or detested in other cultures?

We are here cautious about attempts to make *Hnatlang* an obligation in other cultures particularly in the Mizoram Presbyterian Church foreign mission fields where Mizo-s preached the Gospel. This study clearly showed that *Hnatlang* was obviously the Mizo cultural foundation in which Mizo socio-cultural, economical, political and religious survival was depended upon. In other words, Mizo society or cultural life would be vague without *Hnatlang*. However, we must not fall into the trap of trying to vindicate the use of *Hnatlang* in foreign cultures just because it was so successful at home.

⁸⁰⁸ David J. Hesselgrave, “The Role of Culture in Communication,” in *Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategic, and Cultural Dimensions of God’s Plan for the Nations*, edited by Meg Crossman (Seattle: Youth with a Mission Publishing, 2003, 322). Here after cited as Hesselgrave, *Role of Culture*.

This study has explicitly shown that the Mizoram Presbyterian Church operated its mission amongst very complex cultures. Some are quite similar to Mizo culture or ethnicity, whereas others have very little in common. Foreign missions were more successful amongst tribes who were similar to the Mizo. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church operated fourteen foreign mission fields. Out of these, five mission fields of Manipur, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Jarkhand and Karbi Anglong (Assam) shared a culture or ethnicity that was similar to that of the Mizo-s.⁸⁰⁹ Whereas other mission fields of Borak, Calcutta, Delhi, Patna, Assam and Siliguri are not only radically different but also shared a comparatively high commonality with those cultures that are mostly influenced by the “caste system”⁸¹⁰.

As discussed earlier some scholars believed that Western missionaries were sympathetic to the Mizo culture. When the missionaries came, they did not aim to destroy the indigenous culture and customs, but rather preserve what they considered good and helpful.⁸¹¹ The success of the Mizo church was no doubt due to the Gospel being integrated with local culture (*Hnatlang*). This phenomenon is analyzed by Jack T. Thompson in explaining the reason for the success of Christianity in Malawi, particularly among the Ngoni:

Fraser’s attitudes were sufficiently open to encourage the Ngoni to work out their own response to Christianity in the light of Ngoni culture, and to find an answer which gave to that culture a place of some importance in the new way of life. That the Ngoni were able to preserve a distinctive and valid culture, while turning in large numbers to Christianity, was due mainly to their own inherent strength and cohesion, but partly also to the sympathetic approach of Fraser. The cultural adjustment of the Ngoni to Christianity was, however, merely one of the factors necessary for the creation of a genuinely Ngoni church; another was the

⁸⁰⁹ Thanzaupa, *Theology*, 23. The hill tribes are various groups of the Mizo-Kuki-Chin family living in Mizoram, Manipur and Tripura; the Nagas in Nagaland and Manipur; the Arunachalis in Arunachal Pradesh, the Khasi in Meghalaya and the Garo in Meghalaya and Assam.

⁸¹⁰ Caste system is a social stratification and social restrictions in the Indian subcontinent, in which social classes are defined by thousands of endogamous hereditary groups, often termed as *jatis* or castes. Caste means each of the hereditary classes of Hindu society distinguished by relative degrees of spiritual purity or pollution and of social status. (See Soanes, *Oxford Compact English Dictionary*, 162).

⁸¹¹ Hrangkhuma, *Mizoram Transformational*, 115-116.

creation of structures in which the Ngoni themselves would be the real and effective decision makers.⁸¹²

In contrast, several scholars believe that problems arise when missionaries fail to take into account their impact on people groups. When entering another culture, there are obstacles to meet and overcome. In any new culture we may experience feelings of alienation or dislocation. Change imposed (on a culture) in the wrong way can lead to cultural disequilibrium and demoralization.⁸¹³ We may remove certain things, just as doctors remove things during an operation if a patient is to live. But surely as we grow in experience and God-given wisdom, we should not and will not destroy cultures themselves.⁸¹⁴

The previous chapter mentioned how *Hnatlang* was fundamental in foreign missions to complex cultures, divided into two categories: tribal⁸¹⁵ (particularly Northeast India mission fields) and non-tribal culture⁸¹⁶ (particularly North India mission fields). Presumably *Hnatlang* practice would have been far more familiar to the tribal people (sharing a similar culture to the Mizos) than the non-tribal people. What were the influences of *Hnatlang* and the attitude of Mizo missionaries on other cultures?

⁸¹² Jack T. Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi: Donald Fraser's Methods and Ngoni Culture* (Leiden: New York; Koln: E.J. Brill, 1995, 153). Here after cited as Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi*.

⁸¹³ Charles H. Kraft, "Culture, Worldview, and Contextualization" in *Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategies, and Cultural Dimensions of God's Plan for the Nations*, edited by Meg Crossman (Seattle: Youth with a Mission Publishing, 2003, 295).

⁸¹⁴ Don Richardson, "Do Missionaries Destroy Cultures" in *Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategic, and Cultural Dimensions of God's Plan for the Nations*, edited by Meg Crossman (Seattle: Youth with a Mission Publishing, 2003, 365). Here after cited as Richardson, *Missionaries*.

⁸¹⁵ Here we are not going to discuss either the detail meaning of the term or used of the term "tribal" but simply used the term to identify people who lived a relatively isolated life in north east India, spoke common language, ate common food, observed common social activities and shared common culture.

⁸¹⁶ Non-tribal are the people who lived in India and belonged to the two major religious communities of Hindu and Muslim. These people are comparatively influenced by the caste system.

They followed the Indian caste system in which everyone has his own castes or jatis.⁸¹⁷ But as discussed, *Hnatlang* stands in contrast to the caste system, studied in detail by a number of scholars from different perspectives. The first and second edition of a book called *Caste in India: It's Natures, Functions, and Origins* is the outcome of the work of several scholars, whereas the third edition is solely authored by J.H Hutton. Hutton attempted to achieve a general but factual view of the "caste system" as a working whole, and the principal cohesive factor in the society of Hindusthan, and to examine various views put forward as to how it came into being⁸¹⁸ H.M. Elliot's work is a pioneer study of on the sociology and social anthropology of the races of the North India which is original, comprehensive, and informative especially for a student of sociology and social anthropology.⁸¹⁹ Several scholars observations on the caste system in a number of non- Hindu settings of Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Sikh and Jains is available from a book called *Caste Among Non-Hindus in India* edited by Harjinder Singh.⁸²⁰ James Massey writes in detail about the role of the Hindu religion with special reference to the Dalits.⁸²¹ Combining historical and anthropological approaches, Susan Bayly, analyzes the caste system within the context of India's dynamic economic and social order.⁸²² In his recent publication, Christophe Jaffrelot summarizes, synthesizes, and analyzes a vast amount of material to demonstrate the extent to which

⁸¹⁷ There are five different levels of the caste system: Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra, and Harijans. Within each of these categories are the actual "castes" or "jatis" within which people are born, work, marry, and die. They all have their own place among each other and accept that it is the way to keep society from disintegrating to chaos. However, none of these castes or jatis supposed to cross marries or shares the work. Every caste has their own categories of work for their living. Within most villages or towns, everyone knows the relative rankings of each locally represented caste, and people's behavior toward one another is constantly shaped by this knowledge. Between the extremes of the very high and very low castes, however, there is sometimes disagreement on the exact relative ranking of castes clustered in the middle.

⁸¹⁸ J.H. Hutton, *Caste in India: It's Natures, Functions and Origins* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1961, x). Here after cited as Hutton, *Caste*

⁸¹⁹ See H.M Elliot. *Encyclopedia of Caste, Custom, Rites, Superstitions of Races of Northern India* (Delhi: Sumit Publications, 1970). Here after cited as Elliot, *Encyclopedia of Caste*.

⁸²⁰ See Harjinder Singh, *Caste Among non-Hindus in India* (New Delhi, India: National Publishing House, 1977). Here after cited as Singh, *Caste*.

⁸²¹ See James Massey, *Dalits in India: Religion as a Source of Bondage or Liberation with Special Reference to Christianity* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995). Here after cited as Massey, *Dalits*

⁸²² Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Here after cited as Bayly, *Caste*.

the transformation of caste politics have led to fundamental and systematic changes in the Indian political system.⁸²³ However, for Mizo-s, the caste system is a foreign concept and hard to understand and practice.

As discussed in the previous Chapter, numerous *Hnatlang* were organized in the foreign missions sponsored by Mizoram Presbyterian Church members. While the motivation of *Hnatlang* in itself has important meaning, the practical work of building a functioning church and mission remains. However, this communitarian voluntary work was foreign to some of the cultures, particularly to the non-tribal cultures. It was normal for a typical Mizo young male and female to work together, walk and talk to one another publicly. On the other hand, the non-tribal young male and female life is comparatively isolated and distinctive. Thus, noticeably the Mizo *Hnatlang* crossed their cultural norms. In short, whilst the motivation for *Hnatlang* was good, it was rejected by the non-tribal mission. Whereas Mizo-s work together, non-tribal life tends to be isolated.

The writer witnessed numerous problems with *Hnatlang* practice while working in the foreign mission fields (1986-2005). Most of the Bengali workers living in the Silchar mission refused to attend *Hnatlang* to sweep the compound because they did not consider themselves part of a sweeper caste. The Nandi family also in Silchar, refused to join fellow Bengali believers for the church Christmas feast on grounds of their higher caste. Frequent graveyard cleaning *Hnatlang* organized by the *Kristyo Jubo Sangho* (Christian Youth Fellowship) in Silchar were boycotted by most of the Bengalis. *Hnatlang* to them seemed like a humiliation rather than an obedient or charitable service.

⁸²³ Christophe Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Lower Castes in North India* (London: Hurst & Company, 2003). Here after cited as Jaffrelot, *Silent Revolution*.

As mentioned previously in this study, most of the churches in the foreign mission fields were built by *Hnatlang*. The question is why the native people could not build their own? There could be many reasons for this but the overwhelming spirit for *Hnatlang* would be one of the more likely causes. Another factor would be the way most of the Hindu temples and Muslim mosques were traditionally built. Normally, temples are owned by the individual, family or clan, built by their own initiation and not by the community as a whole. In most cases, a house builder will be employed to build them. In general, mosques are owned but not built by the Muslim community either. Thus, *Biak in sak Hnatlang* (church building construction) was counter to these cultural norms.

7.2.2. Lack of Efficiency

It is evident from this study that Mizo society is considerably dependent on *Hnatlang*. It is hard to see the faults of the same. Only by extensive study does it become evident that the development of the application of *Hnatlang* encounters a complex of social conditions which a typical Mizo-s seldom consider, but are inclined to take for granted as in the norms of Mizo culture. This study showed that the *Hnatlang* do not stand alone as a typical or distinctive feature of modern Mizo society. There are also a complex of social, economical, political and religious conditions which require modification, change, and a complete discontinuation of Mizo traditional *Hnatlang*.

Two major forces, the British Government and Christianity, brought changes to Mizo society which eventually affected *Hnatlang*. New administration systems introduced by the British government including forced labour to make inter-village roads, and a new postal and monetary market disrupted the stability of the *Hnatlang*. Christianity

changed, transformed, and abolished some of the *Hnatlang*. Also, the ongoing development of modern Mizo life including changes to transportation, communication and technology impacted the same. As a result, some of the traditional *Hnatlang* such as *lal in sak*, *zawlbuk sak*, *hridai theu*, *miruang zawn*, *chanchintha dak*, *fangrual*, and *nghal rual zim*, disappeared whilst some of these were adapted.

Thlan laih (digging grave) usually attended by the entire youth community was seen as expensive, a time wasting exercise, and obsolete within modern Mizo society. Youths no longer engage in a particular work (e.g. *jhum* cultivation), but rather in studies and employment limiting their ability to *Hnatlang*. Community mass practices have also been facing a loss of interest and participation, particularly in urban areas. Understanding this, several communities changed the system and moved the time of the *Hnatlang* from day to morning so that more people could attend.

Large groups usually normally did attend Mizo *Hnatlang* and, as a result, it was difficult to apply careful attention to the work and apply a systematic process to the work. *Hnatlang* work is sometimes done in a hurry, and the completed task would likely not reach the expectation of quality.⁸²⁴ People of different backgrounds, talents and skills attended *Hnatlang* when a particular Mizo *Hnatlang* was organized in the foreign mission fields (constructing church buildings, staff quarters, schools, erecting roads, clearing farms and making furniture etc). Since there is no caste system among Mizo-s, a typical person is expected to be able or willing to do any type of work

⁸²⁴ Missionary staff quarter construction *Hnatlang* was organized at Hailakandi when I was working as Missionary in Barak Mission Field under the guidance of Rev. S. Lalkhuma. About ten members of the Chhinga Veng Presbyterian Church with some Mizo missionary were attended this *Hnatlang*. Wood flooring was done with rush under the rain due to lack of time. The work must be done on that day because people who attended that *Hnatlang* had no more time to do the work. The finishing was very poor that a big holes (half to one inches) lies between the woods. When I visited later, my colleague Robert Lairotluanga and his family showed me the holes and shared me the problem they faced.

whether he or she has training, or is talented or skilled for that particular work.⁸²⁵ Thus, *Hnatlang* often creates unprofessional mass labour and ends up with serious deficiencies.

7.2.3. Lack of Indigenization

Without a doubt the *Hnatlang* mission approach was successful developing an indigenous church in Mizoram”. *Hnatlang* was itself indigenous to Mizo life and church growth was inevitable. But the question is to what extent *Hnatlang* produced indigenous churches in the foreign mission fields.

This study indicated that no “three self” principle churches have been established so far, although progress has been made in the mission fields. A questionnaire was distributed amongst all mission workers in north India (Delhi, Calcutta, Patna, Siliguri and Lucknow). Mizo-s resident there, as well as a number of Mizoram Presbyterian church lay leaders in Mizoram. It asked whether they believed a self-supporting church could be established.⁸²⁶ One hundred sixty-one responded out of which 81 believed it would be, whereas 80 responded that they didn’t believe a self-supporting church could be established. They were also asked to point out their reasons. Common answers were: it is impossible because the believers are generally poor and coming from the backward classes, they are solely depended on the Synod Mission Board and not well equipped or trained, and most of the new converts have no commitment or zeal for preaching, giving or being involved in the church or mission. In contrast, people believed a three self church could be established if (1) natives are given rights to authority in mission (2) Mizo mission had a proper plan (3) Mizo stopped spoon feeding mission activities (4)

⁸²⁵ When I was working as missionary at Kabuganj, our family quarter wooden works was mostly done by *Hnatlang*. The finishing was very poor due to lack of time as well as skills by the people who attended *Hnatlang*.

⁸²⁶ See Appendix, Questionnaire No.5.

Mizo trusted the new believers (5) with proper guidance and training but that it would still take a long time.

Questionnaires were distributed to Mizo and non-Mizo mission workers, Mizo lay leaders, and residents in the foreign fields. They were asked if they believed the Church foreign mission had been successful so far. One hundred sixty-one responses were received out of which 74 believed it was successful, 23 people believed it was not successful, and 64 believed it was average.⁸²⁷

The questionnaire results show that *Hnatlang* was extensively applied in the foreign fields. More than 99% of the church buildings were built in this way. Forty-seven schools were built and established and funded by the Synod Mission Board (22 Primary schools, 16 Middle schools and 9 High schools)⁸²⁸ except for one school which was established by the indigenous believers of *Burburia* under the Tripura Mission Field.⁸²⁹ However, a typical Mizo could not resist the *Hnatlang* spirit to intervene, even with those who were trying to stand on their own feet. The Mizo Presbyterian Church's Foreign Mission also funded Rs. 100,000 for three years and employed two teachers for them.⁸³⁰

The Mizoram Presbyterian Church believed that securing a site and erecting a church building was the way to establish a church and mission--secure from being driven away by the non-Christians. Well-built mission stations or church buildings seemed to imply a well founded, stable Christian community was present. But it appears they did not realize the mistake made by many Western missionaries who used a similar approach

⁸²⁷ See Appendix, *Questionnaire* No.2.

⁸²⁸ See Mizoram Presbyterian Church, *Commission Report*, 5.

⁸²⁹ Rev. Zosangliana Colney, Personal Interview on 8/5/2009, Aizawl, Mizoram.

⁸³⁰ Rev. Zoramawia, Field Secretary of Tripura Mission Fields, Personal Interview on 8/5/2009.

long before the Mizo mission has been established in these mission fields.⁸³¹ They did not realize that their own survival was not dependent upon missionaries, but solely depended on their own *Hnatlang* initiation.

It is significant to note that about 87 years ago Roland Allen challenged the paternalistic Western missionary practices in many organizations:

The very permanence of the buildings suggests the permanence of the foreign element. The land is secured, and the buildings are raised, in the first instance by the powerful influence of foreigners. That naturally raised a question in the native mind why these people should be so eager to secure a permanent holding in their midst. They naturally suspect some evil ulterior motive. They supposed that the foreigner is eager to extend his influence and to establish himself amongst them at their expense.⁸³²

Whilst those on the receiving end highly appreciated these efforts, they harboured feelings of insecurity. *Hnatlang* hindered their sense of ownership which they required in order to feel at ease. They could not consider the church building built by the Mizo people as their “own church”. New believers thought missionaries to be “givers” or “redeemers”. They were given what they could not afford and offered assistance when the missionary thought they needed help.

It is the people who must evaluate the new ideas brought to them. Existing needs and expressions must be interpreted in the light of their new relationship to God and fellow believers.⁸³³ Delhi Mission Field native workers and believers do not assume to preside

⁸³¹ We find many abandoned mission stations and church buildings in many parts of India, north India in particular that are built by the western missionaries. Some of them were occupied by the Indian government, Hindus, Muslims and also some of it was inherited by the remnant Christians. Some people told me that, “long time ago, Calcutta city, was called “city of church”. But now, no one would dare to call it “city of church”, rather they would call it “city of temple”. I could see myself while working as missionary in Calcutta during 2002-2005 that without a doubt, numerous church buildings and mission stations erected by the missionaries and British government were still standing without a church (people of God). I could see even that the oldest library building established by William Carey was standing totally abandoned at A.J.C. Bose Road near Mother Teresa’s Home. At the same time, considerable numbers of church building were occupied by a few remnant Christians.

⁸³² Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 55.

⁸³³ Dale W. Kiedzman and William A. Smalley, “*The Missionary’s Role in Cultures Change*” in *Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategic, and Cultural Dimensions of God’s Plan for the*

over the church and mission; in other words, they were not given a sense of ownership. The Mohanpur Bengali believers were perplexed by the struggled to understand the “ownership of the church building” built for them by Mizoram Presbyterian Church.⁸³⁴ In fact, most of the indigenous people lacked ownership or were overlooked when the buildings were erected. It seemed that the Church’s actions reinforced the indigenous view of Western missions, as Roland Allen describes:

The natives always speak of ‘the Mission’ as something which is not their own. The mission represents a foreign power, and natives who work under it are servants of a foreign government...It is a model, and the natives learn simply to imitate. It is a wealthy body, and the natives tend to live upon it, and expect it to supply all their needs. Finally, it becomes a rival, and envy its power; it becomes an incubus, and they groan under the weight of its domination.⁸³⁵

After conducting 41 years (1967-2008) of foreign mission, the Synod Meeting of 2008 resolved for the first time to attempt to establish an independent Synod in the Manipur Mission Field, thus handing over responsibility to the native people in 10 years time (i.e., 2018).⁸³⁶ According to the Synod financial budget of 2005-2006, the total budget for Manipur Mission Field was Rs. 11, 704,400/- out of which the total Synod grant was Rs.10, 298,400/-. This means that the Mizoram Presbyterian Church still contributed 70% of the total budget after more than 35 years. Ten year financial contributions from both the Mizoram Presbyterian Church and the indigenous believers show a clear picture of the Manipur Mission Field’s growth, within the Meitei Presbytery in particular.⁸³⁷

Nations, edited by Meg Crossman (Seattle: Youth with a Mission Publishing, 2003, 348). Here after cited as Kiedzman and Smalley, *Missionary’s Role*.

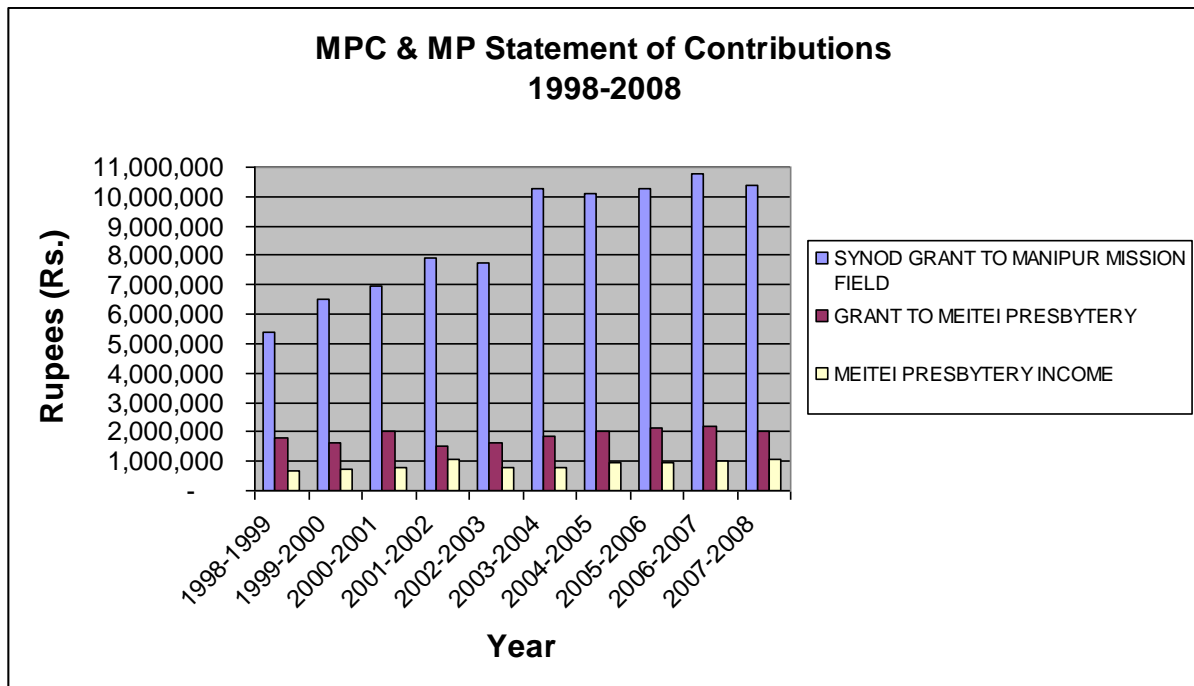
⁸³⁴ The Mohanpur Church building was built by Zarkawt and Luangmual Presbyterian churches when I was working as missionary in this village during 1986-1988. I knew that they (believers) had no ownership of this church building because when I asked them to repair the church wall and fencing which was simply fenced by the bamboos, they advised me to go to the mission office to ask whether the mission could do it or funding money instead. In the meantime, bamboos were available in the nearby forest which they could easily collect it and repair the church fencing within a day or so.

⁸³⁵ Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 83.

⁸³⁶ MPC, Synod, 2008, General,

⁸³⁷ See Appendix Six for the detail statement.

Table D



We observe from the above statement that Manipur Mission Field and Meitei Presbytery are financially still very dependent on the Mizoram Presbyterian Church. It appears growth towards indigenization during these ten years has been rather slow, hindered by the spirit of *Hnatlang*. Mizoram Presbyterian Church contributions continue to rise, whereas those of the indigenous church remain static every year. Allen's observation of Western missionary attitudes towards the indigenous church seems to throw light on the Mizoram Presbyterian Church's attitude towards Manipur mission and Meitei Presbytery in particular:

Approaching them in that spirit, we have desired to help them. We have been anxious to do something for them. And we have done much. We have done everything for them. We have taught them, baptized them, shepherded them. We have managed their funds, ordered their services, built their churches, and provided their teachers. We have nursed them, fed them, and doctored them. We have trained them, and even ordained some of them. We have done everything for them except acknowledge any equality. We have done everything for them, but very little with them. We have done everything for them except give place to them. We have treated them as 'dear children', but not as 'brethren'.⁸³⁸

⁸³⁸ Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 143.

This study illustrates how the Mizoram Presbyterian Church failed to recognize that the creation and success of an indigenous church only in Mizoram largely depended upon the Mizo people's initiation of *Hnatlang*. The Church would not be what it is today if the Western missionaries had done everything. After further analysis, Mizo theologians have commented "the deficiency of Welsh Calvinist Church mission was a Mizo fortune".⁸³⁹

7.3. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the substantial constructive aspects that are of benefit to the mission of the foreign fields as well as churches and missions worldwide. Out of many possible constructive annotations that could have been chosen, this chapter has focused on those benefiting the pre-Christian Mizo socio-cultural, political, and religious development. We also examined the constructive annotations of *Hnatlang* for the development and growth of Christianity and missions of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church. More importantly, we examined the theological and missiological validity of *Hnatlang*.

We first analyzed how *Hnatlang* helped bring about a three self church principle in Mizoram. There is considerable evidence of Mizo traditional society being by nature self supporting and self governing. When Christianity arrived, this turned out to be the major factor in establishing an indigenous church and mission in Mizoram. Assertions were made that it would have been harder not to establish a three self church whilst continuing to perform *Hnatlang*.

⁸³⁹ Zairema, Personal Interview on 08/11/2006, Zarkawt, Aizawl, Mizoram.

Lalsawma, Personal Interview on 05/1/2006 Mission Vengthlang, Aizawl, Mizoram.

Examining the theological validity of *Hnatlang*, we then discussed how *Hnatlang* was somewhat comparable to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, focusing on community and the unity of the three Persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. No attempt was made to minimize the divinity of God but rather to note the similarities of the *Hnatlang* spirit and action with the attributes of God. We also noted how the Trinity and *Hnatlang* share common ground in terms of the principles of unity and sharing, and how Christianity was received as economic and ontological Trinity, where believers shared everything in common just as the traditional communitarian society had lived.

The Greek word *diakonia* is used for a comparative study of *Hnatlang*. *Hnatlang* required nothing beyond sharing money or personnel, and can be compared to the New Testament concept of *diakonia*. We then examined whether the Presbyterian Church foreign mission *diakonal* services successfully respond to the call to spread the evangelical message of salvation (holistic) to a wider community. We pointed out how *Hnatlang diakonal* services covered the holistic mission in Mizoram and the foreign mission fields.

We examined how *Hnatlang* contributed more to community well-being than that of single individuals in traditional Mizo society. *Hnatlang* is the foundation of Mizo community and strength. Mizo-s lived together with a common culture across a wide geographical area. We saw how the Mizo traditional community and developing Christian community closely resembled the New Testament Biblical community of Acts 2:42-47.

With regard to the Mizo concept of mission we examined the Mizoram Presbyterian Church strategy. We argued how the Mizo concept followed the “Great Commission”,

implemented by *Hnatlang*. Mizo-s now gave their time and talents towards the spread of Christianity and discipleship of believers. Mizo missions could be termed, “*Hnatlang* missions”.

A critical analysis of *Hnatlang* demonstrated that it was in many circumstances counter cultural and unproductive in some foreign fields. In many instances it resulted in a lack of indigenization and efficiency. We found some convincing evidence of how *Hnatlang* created anthropological problems in the foreign mission fields by its domination. Individual dignity, improvement, and the development and freedom of individuals are overlooked when *Hnatlang* restricts non-indigenous individuals from participating and asserting “ownership.” Case studies illustrated how *Hnatlang* hindered the development of an indigenous church in other cultures. It even caused problems or obstacles for other cultures in contrast to its wide acceptance at home. We also examined how some traditional *Hnatlang* were made redundant or were transformed in contemporary Mizo society.

The final concluding chapter will summarize the entire thesis addressing the existing status of *Hnatlang* both in Mizo society and the Mizoram Presbyterian Church mission to the foreign mission fields. Recommendations will be made to the Mizo Churches, Mizo missionaries in particular of how *Hnatlang* missiology should note contemporary missiological implications.

CHAPTER- VIII

PROSPECT AND PROPOSAL

8. Introduction:

This research focused on the Mizo traditional cultural practice of *Hnatlang* which was identified as the major factor for the growth and expansion of Christianity in Mizoram. *Hnatlang*, consequently, has shaped and molded the expression of the mission endeavor since its inception.

In this study we investigated what has been termed “*Hnatlang* Missions”. The main factors have been examined for the phenomenal growth of Christianity in Mizoram, and those motivating factors for mission efforts. It was posited that the major factor for church growth and missions has been the Mizo traditional cultural practice, its application among the Mizos early mission efforts, and an evaluation of how cultural practices particularly *Hnatlang* played a major role. This study examined the Mizoram Presbyterian Church and its missions because it is the largest denomination in Mizoram.

Previous studies about the growth of Mizo Christianity and mission made little reference to the importance of pre-Christian cultures. These studies usually credit either the Western missionaries or the revival as the major factor for the growth of Christianity among the Mizo. However, the Mizo traditional culture, itself, has often been overlooked as a primary factor. Mizos were considered to be “head hunters” or “savages” in need only of civilization from the West, and Christianity was required to bring that. Mizo traditional cultural practices *Hnatlang*, *Tlawmngaihna* (spirit of *Hnatlang*) and *Tlangau* (herald of *Hnatlang*) were indispensable to the growth of Christianity. This study, therefore, critically analyzed the legacy of Mizo traditional culture, especially *Hnatlang*.

8.1. Mizo Traditional Cultural Practices and its Fond etc

Hnatlang was the foundation and the driving force of the socio-cultural, political, religious and economic stability and development of the Mizo society, and it was compulsory in Mizo society. We analyzed some major traditional *Hnatlang* which were essential for the development and stability of the Mizo society such as (1) Social development: *Zawlbuk sak, Tuikhur hiah, Hmeithai in sak, Mi ruang zawn, Kang thelh, Thlan laih, Zualkova tlan and Mibo zawn* (2) Economical development: *Pum sak, Sanghal rual zim, Feh kawng sah, Lawm rual and Ram theh*, (3) Political development: *Lal in sak and Kuli*, (4) Religious development: *Hri dai theu, Buh den and Sathing zar*.

This study evidently shows that those major traditional *Hnatlang* were no doubt essential for the development, stability, unity and more significantly for the survival of the Mizo society. *Hnatlang*, thus, was not an option for a Mizo but inevitable. The pre-Christian Mizo culture was not, therefore, merely a savage, pagan, barbarian, headhunting, heathen or so called “uncivilized” as considered by several writers. But more uniquely, there was love, unity, sharing, hospitality and liberty in Mizo traditional culture which was driven by *Hnatlang*. *Tlawmngaiha* which was/is considered by several writers as the social ethic and principle of Mizos was born out of this *Hnatlang* practices. In short, the Mizo pre-Christian culture, *Hnatlang* in particular was adaptable, accommodative or receptive to Christianity.

8.2. Cultural Contacts with Christianity

Western missionaries arrived in Mizoram at the end of 19th century, and brought Christianity to the Mizos years after the vast majority of Indians had already received

the Gospel. However, unlike other Indian states (Nagaland excepted), most Mizos in Mizoram embraced Christianity within six decades. There were significant factors that contributed toward this result in the church's and mission's rapid growth among the Mizos. Some attribute this growth to various factors such as isolation of the land, preparation for the gospel, the influence of the British administration, revival and missionary strategy etc. But no scholarly study has been conducted to focus upon the Mizo traditional culture, itself, as the major factor.

Hnatlang, in particular, played a significant role in the foundation of Mizo Christianity. Through the spirit and practice of *Hnatlang*, the first Mizo Christians, Khuma and Khara, were compelled to a voluntarily witness of the gospel to different villages. This particular instance occurred even prior to experiencing the first revival in Mizoram. No record exists where the missionaries directly instructed them to voluntarily share this news with others, but it was *Hnatlang* of Mizo traditional culture that influenced the actions of Khuma and Khara. This example and many others in this study, demonstrate that it was normal, expected, and required in pre-Christian culture for Mizos to always share important news without delay.

As Mizo Christians grew in number, they were united in evangelizing their friends, families, and neighbouring villages. Every new believer became a new missionary. By utilizing systems of traditional *Hnatlang* they built their own *Biak In* without the help of missionaries or funds from the Wales Presbyterian Church. Mizos initiated gospel preaching *Hnatlang* such as *Fangrual*, *Beihrual* and *Chanchintha Dak*. From the outset they supported their own evangelists and pastors from local church contributions, which was unique among churches in India. In addition, volunteers preached to every village

in Mizoram. The spirit of *Hnatlang*, thought to be enabled the people to witness the gospel, and raise the inevitable prospect of an indigenous church.

There were many other *Hnatlang* practices that enabled the spread of the gospel among the Mizos. *Beihruai* was demonstrated to be an important factor in the growth of Church membership, and the same *Beihruai* practice continues to this day. The *Chanchintha Dak Hnatlang* emerged out of a need in the Chin Hills of Burma, and it brought the gospel to the unchurched, served the poor, promoted literature, promoted unity among the Christians, and ultimately was responsible for the formation of a denomination in Burma. Finally, *Tlangau* was very important in the growth of the church and understanding of the gospel. The concept of *Tlangau* was a central idea used in the translation of the Bible and, thus, promoted a seamless understanding of the gospel, while establishing a unique Mizo cultural identity with the gospel. These practices of *Hnatlang* were the primary factors in influencing Mizo Christianity and its mission.

It is quite evident from this study that Mizo traditional cultural customs and practices thus found their way into Christianity. On the other hand, Christianity advanced an attitude of tolerance towards Mizo traditional cultural beliefs and practices where these are not always seen as having a direct relevance to the Christian faith.⁸⁴⁰ If traditional cultural practices then, are the contact points, then the question immediately arises as to why Mizo traditional culture is to be credited for the rapid growth of Christianity in Mizoram. Is it because of what Sanneh called “translatability” of Christianity as one of the factors as he writes, “Christianity is remarkable for the relative ease with which it

⁸⁴⁰ See Alister E. McGrath, *Christianity: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 317). Here after cited as McGrath, *Christianity*.

enters living cultures? In becoming it renders it-self compatible with all cultures?”⁸⁴¹

Or as mentioned earlier that is it because Mizo traditional culture was more conducive and receptive to Christianity than the other Indian culture? Mizo traditional cultures, as studied was remarkably favored to innovation, open to peaceful interfaith relations, coupled with the need to live in harmony with others, exposure to a host of neighbours and foreigners, and developed a mentality of hospitality and sharing.

8.3. Mizo Indigenous Church

The traditional communitarian society formed a unique identity. The administrative structure of the church was virtually identical to that of the *lal* (chieftainship) and the *zawlbuk*. The pastor led the church and administration assisted by deacons and elders in much the same way the *lal* oversaw the village and *zawlbuk* administration with the help of *khawnbawl*⁸⁴² and *val upas*⁸⁴³. The church building was built by *Hnatlang* and usually in the centre of the village. The *lal in* and *zawlbuk* were identical. Church deacons and elders voluntarily devoted their time and talents for the development of the church in the same way as *khawnbawl* and *val upa* volunteered for the community. The word of God was preached in the church as the *lal*, *khawnbawl* and *val upa* guided the people in ethical principles within the *lal in* and *zawlbuk*. As these examples were examined in this study, the pre-Christian traditional cultural institutions and their corollary indicate the reasons for the swiftness and almost effortless transition from pre- to Christianity.

A Mizo indigenous church was established and continued through the appropriation of *Hnatlang* practices into Christianity from its inception. Where a typical Mizo community would perform *Hnatlang* under the direction of a *Lal* (chief) and his *upa*'s

⁸⁴¹ See Sanneh, *Translating*, 50

⁸⁴² *Khawn-bawl*, n. an elder, a mantra; one who acts as adviser, minister or elder to a chief, etc, (Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 257)

⁸⁴³ *Val upa*, n. an oldish young man, a middle aged man (Lorrain, *Dictionary*, 542).

(elder's) for the development of society, the new Christian communities followed a pastor or church elder performing the same function for the development of the church and her mission. Similarly, a typical Mizo youth would follow *Val upas* on attending youth *Hnatlang*, but this also translated into Christian *Hnatlang* for youth groups like *Kristian Thalai Pawl*. Generally, the traditional village administration system became a church administration and led to the growth of an indigenous church and mission.

The Mizo churches, the Presbyterian Church in particular, depended greatly upon *Hnatlang* for its survival early on. The Presbyterian Church (*Presbyterian Kohhran*), Christian Youth Organization (*Kristian Thalai Pawl*), and Women's Fellowship (*Kohhran Hmeichhia*) performed many types of *Hnatlang* even today. Even without the Western missionary financial resources, nothing hindered the establishment, growth and development of the indigenous church. Enthusiastic indigenous leaders engaged people in the process of mission, devoting their own time, talent and money for a self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing church. The church was established by initiating different *Hnatlang* such as *Biakin sak*, *Christmas Hnatlang*, *Synod Hnatlang*, *Bible Chhiar Chhuah-Inkhawmpui*, *Hlo Thlawh*, *Kawng Laih*, *Mutpuan Suk*, *Thisen Pek*, *Di Sah*, *Thirchhe Zawn*, *Thil Zawrh*, *Pheikhawk Nawhfai*, *Thingphurh*, *Buhfai Tham*, *Nun pek*, *Buh Thlei*, *Chengkawl Khawrh*, and *Lawm-Bawm*. Mission success relied on the burning desire of Christians of all ages and every village for *Hnatlang* service, and for giving to one another generously.

If "indigenous church" is established from the very beginning of Christianity in Mizoram in which Mizo pioneer Christians and their traditional cultural practices played an important role, then, the question is to what extent western missionary legacy would be remaining? Did the missionary indigenize the local culture or local culture finds its own place in Christianity? Or, did, what Werner Ustorf called "the

unexpected” , happen among the Mizos , as he writes when analyzing missionary processes in West Africa, “Local People, who were supposed to be receptive believers, became responsible and innovative interpreters of the Gospel. They found answers which missionaries had not expected.”⁸⁴⁴ And he continues, “The dynamics of missions not controllable culturally, and as it seized control of its own agents it subjugated them to mission too.”⁸⁴⁵

8.4. Foreign Missions

Hnatlang within the Christian context manifested a desire for evangelizing those who had not yet heard the gospel. This took place, not only within the land of Mizoram, but beyond its borders. Mizo zeal for missions even extended to different parts of the world. Today, missionaries are working in Nepal, China, Taiwan, Wales, United States of America, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, *et al.*

Hnatlang influenced all spheres of life among the Mizos, and the carrying of this phenomenon beyond Mizo culture and locale was very likely, to be expected. The desire was to bring the gospel to all, worship and follow Christ, and have fellowship with other Christians in the community. Men and women engaged in evangelism, traveling and even migrating to the non-Mizo world. Local churches, women and youth organizations held *Hnatlang* to raise funds at home for foreign missions. All were willing to contribute time, talents, and money over and above what they could afford in order to bring the gospel beyond Mizoram.

⁸⁴⁴ Werner Ustorf, *Christianized Africa – De-Christianized Europe? : Missionary Inquiries into the Polycentric Epoch of Christian History* (Seoul, Korea: Tyrannus Press, 1992, 41). Here after cited as Ustorf, *Christianized Africa*.

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid, 55.

Missions to non-Mizo people, both within and outside Mizoram, were fully operative from the early 1960's. By then the mission work amongst Mizos in Mizoram had nearly been completed, and much of the attention turned to foreign missions at that time. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church alone extended her work into 15 different mission fields across India and more than 1,400 missionaries were employed.

Mizos understood missions as a voluntary task in which every individual would share responsibility, contributing time, talent and money. Groups of people frequently traveled to the foreign mission fields, organizing different types of *Hnatlang*, accomplishing much together for the development of foreign missions. All the manpower, finance, time and talent was provided by way of *Hnatlang*--they built churches, schools, and headquarters, dug wells, made roads, cleaned agricultural farms, and graveyards, built compound fencing, etc. The use of the *Hnatlang* approach in evangelism was also actively applied within the educational and medical ministry.

Now the Mizoram Presbyterian Church proclaimed Christianity by extending its foreign mission to North Eastern India (Barak, Karbi Anglong, Manipur, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam), carrying out evangelism, church planting, education, and ministry through education and medicine. Churches were planted as part of the directive of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod administered and financially supported all these missions.

By 1988, the Synod extended its mission towards North India, establishing headquarters at Delhi, Kolkata, Siliguri, Lucknow, Patna and Dumka. The methods of evangelism were somewhat different to those in the Northeastern fields. In the beginning, the Synod Mission Board preferred to cooperate with existing churches and organizations

focusing an ecumenical ministry. Partnership and networking ministry were initially the most dominant strategy, and there was no intention to plant new independent or separate churches. But as time passed, thousands of new believers were baptized and church planting became the practical outcome.

The prospect of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church foreign missions grew and improved. Every year mission fields and stations were added, resulting in more believers. Mission financial contributions abounded because a heart for evangelism continued to beat throughout the local churches. *Kristian Thalai Pawl* (Christian Youth Organization) and *Kohhran Hmeichhia* (Women's Fellowship) were heavily involved in *Hnatlang* missions, and a considerable number of youth were ever ready to be sent as missionaries. *Hnatlang* continued to be used in local churches and in the foreign mission fields. Most local Mizoram Presbyterian churches held Morning Prayer every day, earnestly praying for the missions in the spirit of *Hnatlang*. In addition, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church frequently organized mission trips to initiate *Hnatlang* in the mission fields. As a community, they established mission stations, built their churches, schools, medical centers and staff quarters; they dug soil, erected roads, and erected wells; they made furniture for the churches, schools, staff quarters and medical centres; they organized gospel camping, campaigns, crusades, seekers rally, booklet distributions, et al.

In view of the evident of Mizo indigenous missions, it would not be exaggerated to claim that a well-known missiologists such as Rufus Anderson, Henry Venn and Roland Allen's desires of planting a three self principle church, particularly a self propagating church were successful among the Mizos. However, this led to the consequent question how the Mizo foreign missions are operated?

This study proves that Mizo believers, Presbyterian churches in particular, are seen as very mission minded, wealthy, industrious and self sufficient, requiring little assistance in the foreign mission fields. Thus, the recipients of the mission efforts also believed that Mizo desire and able to build the mission stations, church buildings, schools and medical centre without their assistance or contribution. They also believed that missions will be retained by the Mizos, and thus concluded that not only Christianity but also missions belonged to the Mizos.

This study demonstrated that, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church could not plant a three-self principle church in her foreign mission fields so far despite considerable efforts had been made. Consequently, they could not yet hand over church and missions to the “indigenous” believers after commencing this ministry for more than forty years. The Mizo missionaries continued to organize different *Hnatlang* but little indigenization was achieved. More than 98% of the indigenous worker salaries are paid by the Mizoram Presbyterian Church. Also about 99% of the church buildings were built by the same and it continues to pay about 99% of the rent for house fellowships.

The Mizoram Presbyterian Church foreign mission fields are still physically (*Hnatlang*) and financially very much dependant on Mizoram Presbyterian Church. This proves that Mizo missionary are still the new European missionary in India. *Hnatlang* missions therefore, is facing a critical missiological implication question as to what extent will this be continued, stopped or transformed?

8.5. Theological Validity of Hnatlang

The Mizoram Presbyterian Church continually extends her mission work by opening new fields and stations, sending Mizo and recruiting native missionaries annually. All these efforts are conducted by using the spirit of *Hnatlang*. There are substantial constructive aspects of *Hnatlang* benefiting Mizo society, Christianity, and its mission. Mizo socio-cultural, political, economical and religious development was dependant upon *Hnatlang*. *Hnatlang* was the major factor of growth of Christianity and missions of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church. More importantly, *Hnatlang* was one of the foundations of Mizo missions.

Without minimizing the divinity of God, a comparison was made between the *Hnatlang* spirit and action with the attributes of God. *Hnatlang* was to some extent comparable to the Christian doctrine of Trinity, focusing on community and the unity of the three Persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity and *Hnatlang* shared common ground in terms of the principles of unity and sharing. Christianity was received as an economic Trinity and ontological Trinity in which believers shared everything in common, much like the traditional communitarian society lived. The new faith community '*Kohhran*' mirrored the first community found in the Bible (Acts 2: 42-47). The followers of Christ shared their wealth and crossed lines of discrimination.

The Greek word *diakonia* is used for a comparative study of *Hnatlang*. *Hnatlang* can be compared to the New Testament concept of *diakonia*. *Hnatlang* covered all services of socio-cultural, political, economic and religious development. Both traditional and contemporary *Hnatlang* reflected the Old Testament *abodah* that meant work or service for the benefit of the community. The Presbyterian Church foreign mission *diakonal* services successfully responded to the call to spread the evangelical message of salvation to the wider community.

Hnatlang was the foundation of Mizo community and strength. Mizos lived together within a common culture and there is neither caste nor class distinction--everyone shares the responsibilities and derives equal benefit thereof. Instead of regard for individual prestige and position, the spirit of *Hnatlang* contributed more to community interests. Mizo Christians constantly utilized *Hnatlang* for the community well-being in contemporary society and the new faith community “*Kohhran*”.

Mizo missions were a “*Hnatlang missions*”. The Mizo concept of mission followed the “Great Commission” implemented by *Hnatlang*. Mizo Christians felt an obligation for witnessing their new found faith, contributing their time and talents towards missions based on fulfilling the “Great Commission” through *Hnatlang*. They preached the gospel to their families, friends, clans, communities, neighbouring villages, states, other parts of India and even the world wherever possible. Many Mizos felt obliged to help the poor and needy as part of the *Hnatlang* mission.

There were, however, some aspects of *Hnatlang* that created problems for Mizo modern society and hindered the church growth and missions, especially in the foreign missions. First, in *Hnatlang* individual dignity, improvement and the development and freedom of individuals was overlooked. *Hnatlang* could humiliate or insult the dignity or self-respect of the individual. Individual’s suffered the indignity at some point while practicing *Hnatlang* because everyone rich or poor, skilled or unskilled, strong or weak, educated or uneducated and energetic or lazy etc worked together sharing the same task.

Second, *Hnatlang* was made redundant or transformed in contemporary Mizo society. Mizo socio-economic, political and religious development made redundant most of the

traditional *Hnatlang* such as *Zawlbuk sak*, *Lal in sak*, *Zualko tlan*, *Sanghal zim* and *Raldai theu* etc. Some traditional *Hnatlang* of *Thlan laih*, *Tuikhur hiah* and *Mi ruang zawn* are being transformed to appropriate Mizo contemporary society. *Zawlbuk sak* was replaced by *Biak in sak* (church building); *Lal in sak* was replaced by missionary or pastor quarter *sak* and *Raldai theu* was replaced by *Damdawiin sak* (hospital/medical centre). A community mass youth *Thlan laih* was reduced to a limited area as well as numbers of people. Most of the *Tuikhur hiah* was reduced to *Tuikhur tihfai* (cleaning/clearing a well). *Miruang zawn Hnatlang* was reduced as vehicle transport was available even in most of the rural areas.

Third, *Hnatlang* turned out to be counter-cultural in some foreign fields and resulted in a lack of indigenization and efficiency. This communitarian voluntary work was foreign to non Mizo and discarded by some of the cultures, particularly the non-tribal cultures. It was norm for a typical Mizo people to work together, walk and talk to one another. On the other hand, the life of non-tribal particularly in the urbanized centre is comparatively isolated and distinctive. Thus, evidently the Mizo *Hnatlang* crossed their cultural norms and, whilst the motivation for *Hnatlang* was good, it was rejected by non-tribal populations.

Fourth, *Hnatlang* hindered the growth of the indigenous church in the foreign missions. *Hnatlang* spirit understood as being molded by the Holy Spirit enforced and strengthened Mizo Christians zeal for missions to a fully enthusiast and generous to help. They built their churches, school buildings, medical centres and staff quarters; they dug wells, erected roads and cleaned agriculture farms; they employed indigenous workers and supported financially; they rented houses for their worship services; they

provided furniture for churches, staff quarters, medical centres and schools. In short, they have done almost everything for them that hindered their overall growth.

Finally, *Hnatlang* created anthropological problems in the foreign mission fields by its inherent tendency to be the dominating force behind all efforts in the field. Mizo missionaries felt that they are the owner of the gospel; they played administrative and leadership role; they managed finances and they controlled construction works. Thus indigenous missionaries and Christians not only lacked ownership of the property, finance and authority but also the gospel.

8. 6. Proposal

What changes need to happen to *Hnatlang* in modern Mizo society? What missiological lessons should we learn from traditional cultural factor that led to the expansion of Christianity in Mizoram and how that factor may be relevant to the expansion of the gospel today? In other words, in what ways should the cultural factor offer both strategic opportunity and demanding challenges for twenty first century missions? What changes need to happen to promote the growth and development of indigenous Christianity in foreign missions? How an indigenous Church like Mizoram Presbyterian Church could be established in foreign mission fields?

Hnatlang was and is the driving force of the Mizo socio- cultural, economical, political and religious development. However, it is important to be aware of the fact that in modern society some people refused to participate in some *Hnatlang* because they do not have time, perceived it to be outdated, or view it as a threat to their individual freedom and identity. Thus it is important to acknowledge that *Hnatlang* may need to be adapted or, in some cases, abolished in line with socio-cultural, economical, political and religious development realizing that:

Cultures are constantly changing because the individuals of the society-the architect of culture- are constantly modifying their “plan for successful living” constantly seeking to improve their underlying code of behavior in accord with the growth of their experience and ever changing physical, social, and ideational environment.⁸⁴⁶

This study evidently proves how traditional cultural factor led to the expansion of Christianity in Mizoram. In other words, we have learnt a significant missiological lessons how cultural factor was/is relevant to the expansion of the gospel. To draw a practical missiological lesson, it would be incorrect to assert that indigenization should be initiated by the missionaries only, or indigenization should be imitated in the foreign mission fields only after the sending Church or missionaries abandons the missions. If a traditional cultural practice worked out as the principle of mission in Mizoram, missionaries should guide or teach the indigenous people to initiate their own traditional cultural practice appropriately from the inception of the missions. The indigenous believers must make a decision whether they would initiate to preach the gospel and develop the church according to their own willingness, capacity and situation. “If genuine change is to take place, the decision, the selection, has to be made by the people themselves” says Smalley.⁸⁴⁷ Then only, will an indigenous church be established in her foreign mission fields.

Another area in need of improvement is the missionary attitude towards other cultures. The missionaries under the Mizoram Presbyterian Church indiscriminately applied their traditional culture *Hnatlang* to the foreign mission fields. Mizos were unaware that the mission approach was inherently culture specific and not applicable in all its aspects to the foreign mission field. They simply assumed that *Hnatlang* was a supracultural

⁸⁴⁶ Luzbetak, *Church and Culture*, 292.

⁸⁴⁷ William A. Smalley, “*Cultural Implications of an Indigenous Church*” in *Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategic, and Cultural Dimensions of God’s Plan for the Nations*, edited by Meg Crossman (Seattle: Youth with a Mission Publishing, 2003, 342) Here after cited as Smalley, *Cultural Implications*.

practice and universally valid, to be exported together with Christianity.⁸⁴⁸ About 97 years ago, Allen rightly lamented for the cause of failure of the western mission approach:

We have allowed racial and religious pride to direct our attitude towards those whom we have been won't to call 'poor heathen'. We have approached them as superior being, moved by charity to impart of our wealth to destitute perishing souls. We have used that argument at home to wring grudging and pitiful doles for the propagation of our faith, and abroad we have adopted that attitude as missionaries of a superior religion.⁸⁴⁹

From the very existence of Christianity up to the present day, the faith of the Mizo missionaries was inculturated in a great variety of their liturgies and contexts.⁸⁵⁰ Missionaries should seek more active cooperation with the existing people and culture by maintaining a creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures.⁸⁵¹ Just as Jesus took flesh in a particular place and time, so the good news needs to become embodied or incarnated in the different culture within which people live.⁸⁵² Pioneer Mizo Christians communicated and translated the gospel in to their culture, and it is the job of any missionaries while making an attempt to discover that some gospel elements are hidden in their (foreign missions) culture, and bring this hidden Gospel to light.⁸⁵³ The Christian faith never exists except as "translated" into a culture.⁸⁵⁴ In other words, "the gospel message must be contextualized, and the congregation planted appropriate to that culture."⁸⁵⁵ Thus, missionaries have to acculturate themselves to the local church in order to facilitate the

⁸⁴⁸ See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 448.

⁸⁴⁹ Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 142.

⁸⁵⁰ See Ibid, 453.

⁸⁵¹ See Shorter, Aylward, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, (New York: Maryknoll, 1988, 11) .Here after cited as Shorter, Towards.

⁸⁵² See Dorr, Donald. *Mission in today's world* (Blackrock, Co Dublin: the Columbia Press, 2000, 94). Here after cited as Dorr, *Mission*. See Robert J. Shreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (New York: Orbis Books, 1998, 6-7). Here after cited as Shreiter, *Ministry*.

⁸⁵³ See Peter Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation* (New York: 1990, 26-27). Here after cited as Schineller, Handbook.

⁸⁵⁴ Bosch, *Transforming*, 447.

⁸⁵⁵ Ralph D Winter, "The New Macedonia: A Revolutionary New Era in Mission Begins" " in *Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategic, and Cultural Dimensions of God's Plan for the Nations*, edited by Meg Crossman (Seattle: Youth with a Mission Publishing, 2003, 169). Here after cited as Winter, *New Macedonia*.

inculcation of the Gospel in to the local context.⁸⁵⁶ They should not regard local culture as degenerate and a barrier to Christianization.⁸⁵⁷ It is important to remember that some people reject the gospel not because they perceive it as false, but rather alien or a threat to their own culture.⁸⁵⁸

Missionaries should also realize that “cultural differences can create opportunities for advancing the kingdom rather than hindering it.”⁸⁵⁹ But at the same time, missionaries should avoid the two polar positions in responding to cultures which are either complete imitation, or isolation of culture, in order to preserve Christianity.⁸⁶⁰

Christian missions must not continue a ‘spoon feeding mission’⁸⁶¹ and repeat the failings of several Western missionaries in planting a three-self principle church. Missionaries must give the pioneer Christians a chance to survive and grow by their own strength. They should follow “Paul’s strategy of mission that it was better that his converts should win their way to security by many falls than that he should try to make a short cut for them.”⁸⁶²

The Mizoram Presbyterian Church seemed to have planned that “we must have the material establishment before we build the spiritual house”.⁸⁶³ But it was not fully realized that by securing land and buildings and providing material needs, they could

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid, 127.

⁸⁵⁷ See Beaver, *History of Missions*, 441.

⁸⁵⁸ John W.R. Stott, “*The Bible in World Evangelization*” in *Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategic, and Cultural Dimensions of God’s Plan for the Nations*, edited by Meg Crossman (Seattle: Youth with a Mission Publishing, 2003, 6). Here after cited as Stott, *World Evangelization*.

⁸⁵⁹ Meg Crossman, “*Pioneers of the Movement*” in *Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategic, and Cultural Dimensions of God’s Plan for the Nations*, edited by Meg Crossman (Seattle: Youth with a Mission Publishing, 2003, 143). Here after cited as Crossman, *Pioneers of the Movement*.

⁸⁶⁰ See Warren, *Purpose Driven*, 235-236.

⁸⁶¹ Spoon feeding mission here simply means doing mission without giving training or expecting the new believers to stand on their feet.

⁸⁶² See Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 119.

⁸⁶³ See Ibid, 53.

create problems and difficulties in the mission fields. The indigenous learned to rely on Mizo *Hnatlang* rather than their own efforts. Mizos were not cognizant that a successful church planting was not dependent upon the permanence of its building. The focus should be on the people and the church building erected by them when they feel it is necessary and feasible. Erecting church buildings should never take priority over reaching a community.⁸⁶⁴ In addition, missionaries should realize that everything established or planted by them has a foreignness of its own.

Christian missions should recruit spiritually mature and culturally sensitive who will follow Paul's example in training up indigenous leaders. "The more independent spirits amongst them can find no opportunity for exercising their faiths," says Allen.⁸⁶⁵ Unfortunately, the indigenous leaders were often not empowered to govern themselves. The attitude of domination and distrust should be abandoned. This study explicitly proves that Mizo Christianity was indigenous from its inception and this missiological lesson must be learned and applied in the foreign mission fields.

Missionaries should be taught missionary anthropology, in order to understand and function within other cultures. They should realize they are agents of cultural change as well as growth of a church and mission. Paternalistic missionary work that creates dependency should be abandoned. Dependence does not give rise to independence; slavery does not educate men for freedom.⁸⁶⁶ They should be seen, rather, as friends by the natives who are sympathetic, understanding, and a people who genuinely love them. At times, *Hnatlang* was misused as a means of domination which created dependence rather than transform the existing cultures. It would be better for *Hnatlang* to focus on

⁸⁶⁴ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995, 79). Here after cited as Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*.

⁸⁶⁵ See Ibid, 81.

⁸⁶⁶ See Ibid, 125.

serving and respecting the served. Frederick Schwartz, one of the Halle missionaries to South India in the beginning of the eighteen century showed the example as Beaver stated:

Although still a European to all appearances, Schwartz actually became in effect a guru or spiritual teacher, loved and trusted by all. Persons of all religions and castes could gather around him as his disciples regardless of the difference in their status. His ministry was essentially a remarkable kind of adaptation or accommodation to the culture.⁸⁶⁷

Another proposition for missions is that indigenous believers should be guided, taught or encouraged to be self-sufficient, just as the Mizo missionaries were able to stand on their own feet. This was accomplished in such a way that the Mizo church survival and growth was not dependant upon riches, but by the burning desire of *Hnatlang*. We have learnt that where there was a heart of *Hnatlang*, there was a way to stand self-sufficiently. If poor Mizo pioneer believers had little difficulty in supporting their evangelists and pastors, any group should be able to support their own evangelists and pastors. If Mizo pioneer Christians did not need much missionary support or assistance to find a place to worship or to build their own churches, the indigenous believer too should be able to find a suitable place to worship. If Mizos managed to establish a self governing church, they should be able to do the same.

Christian missions should consider the missiological implications of continually supplying financial and material support to the foreign fields. Unwise giving leads to dependency. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church always supplied more than the indigenous believers could afford or handle. But they did not realize that supplying what they cannot supply the Mizos checks them in the proper impulse to supply what

⁸⁶⁷ Beaver, *History of Mission*, 440.

they can supply.⁸⁶⁸ In other words, the growth of the indigenous church was hindered by supplying or providing almost all their needs.

Hnatlang should not be presented as a destroyer of culture, but rather a unifying, strengthening and guiding force for growth and development. In other words, missionaries should show sympathy to other cultures, allowing natives to initiate their own culture, and the church to grow in its own way. These efforts give the believers in any culture an opportunity to take more responsibility. Missionary domination should be avoided focusing what Hiebert writes, “Young churches wanted the power to make their own decisions arguing that they would never mature until they had self-rule. The Missionaries were reluctant to give up their power for fear that inexperience and local politics would ruin the church.”⁸⁶⁹ Agreeably Allen stated:

We can gather in converts, we often gather in large numbers; but we cannot train them to maintain their own spiritual life. We cannot establish a church on a self-supporting basis. Our converts often display great virtues, but remain too often for generations dependent upon us.⁸⁷⁰

Recruiting and training of native pastors and teachers was the New England mission strategy since the protestant participation in world mission began early in the seventeenth century. R. Pierce Beaver stated that, “Both the missionaries and their supporters realized that only native agents could effectively evangelize and give pastoral care to their people.”⁸⁷¹ Mizo converts were given large measures of freedom to translate or baptize their traditional culture into Christianity. Natural leaders emerged from the converts that ultimately led the church towards indigenization. In other words,

⁸⁶⁸ See Ibid, 56.

⁸⁶⁹ Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights from Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991.195). Here after cited as Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights*.

⁸⁷⁰ Allen, *Missionary Methods*.82. See also Neill, *History*, 408.

⁸⁷¹ R. Pierce Beaver, ‘*The History of Mission Strategy*’ in *Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategic, and Cultural Dimensions of God’s Plan for the Nations*, edited by Meg Crossman (Seattle: YWAM publishing, 2003, 439). Here after cited as Beaver, *History of Mission*.

Mizo church indigenization was initiated by the indigenous leaders within their indigenous culture.

Another important implication for missions is the Holy Spirit. All believers should be taught that they have the Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide them when needed. If indigenous believers had no initiative without Christ, with Christ they should not fail to have it.⁸⁷² Hiebert states, “The same Holy Spirit who helps us to understand the Scriptures is also interpreting it to believers in other cultures.”⁸⁷³ Thus, the Holy Spirit should be put at the top priority of Christian missions. “The purpose of Christian mission, whatever form it takes, is basically spiritual,”⁸⁷⁴ says Hrangkhuma. Revival was one of the important factors of church growth in Mizoram that produced indigenous expression of Christian faith.

Last but not least, a Church should examine the entire enterprise of its foreign missions to acknowledge how traditional culture historically played an important role in mission principle and problems involved in the cross-cultural communication of the gospel. In other words, a Church should carefully examine how the church and the gospel take root and flower in diverse cultures while applying inculturation or indigenization missiological approach. Missionaries must approach cultural variety with the realization that people build cultures in different ways, and they believe their cultures are better than the missionary culture.⁸⁷⁵ Missionaries should also apply appropriately what Richardson called “redemptive analogy”⁸⁷⁶ in which people are made aware of spiritual

⁸⁷² See Ibid, 146.

⁸⁷³ Hiebert, *Culture*, 285.

⁸⁷⁴ Hrangkhuma, *Transformational Change*, 359.

⁸⁷⁵ See Hiebert, *Culture*.

⁸⁷⁶ Don Richardson, ‘*Redemptive Analogy*’ in *Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategic, and Cultural Dimensions of God’s Plan for the Nations*, edited by Meg Crossman (Seattle: YWAM publishing, 2003,). ‘*Redemptive analogy identifies and confirms the cultural components that result from God’s revelation*’. Here after cited as Richardson, *Redemptive Analogy*

meaning dormant within their own culture, to communicate the gospel.⁸⁷⁷ On the other hand, missionaries should be aware of the fact that when entering another culture, there are obstacles within him/her to meet and overcome. It is important to recognize that cross cultural witness recognizes both the possibility of change and the power of habit.⁸⁷⁸ Thus, in order to handle properly these cultural problems, missionaries are to be trained to understand the contexts of the people prior they are sent to the foreign missions. This study should include the political, economical, social and religious setting in which the people live.

8.7. Suggestions for Further Research

This research focused on Mizo traditional cultural practices of *Hnatlang*, *Tlawmngaihna* and *Tlangau*. Of the material in this research, only brief mention was made of the contribution of the pre-Christian faith and practices, but a broader analysis is required. Second, this research provided a brief history and analysis of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church's foreign missions. In order to properly document the efforts of the entire mission enterprise, further detailed study of each and every mission field's history is required. Third, this research was very limited regarding the Mizo mission efforts abroad. Further research is required to analyze the Mizo contribution to the wider global community and answer further questions about the application of *Hnatlang* in these global efforts, including those of mission partnerships.

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⁸⁷⁷ Richardson, *Redemptive Analogy*, 286.

⁸⁷⁸ Charles H. Craft, 'Culture, Worldview, and Contextualization' in *Worldwide Perspectives: Biblical, Historical, Strategic, and Cultural Dimensions of God's Plan for the Nations*, edited by Meg Crossman (Seattle: YWAM publishing, 2003, 295). Here after cited as Craft, *Culture*.

Appendix One

Rowland's Memorial High School HSLC (Equivalent to GCSE) Result, Karimganj 1977-2006. [Absolute numbers, that is, persons]

Years	No. of Students	1 st Division	2 nd Division	3 rd Division	Distinction	Star Students	Letter subjects	Percent
1997	07	05	02	-	03	03	09	100%
1998	13	06	06	01	01	01	07	100%
1999	19	07	10	02	01	02	08	100%
2000	24	17	07	-	04	02	24	100%
2001	26	18	04	04	04	01	24	100%
2002	28	17	08	03	09	03	45	100%
2003	32	20	11	01	05	-	35	100%
2004	38	31	04	-	13	03	72	100%
2005	48	29	15	04	09	-	65	100%
2006	41	30	10	01	07	08	94	100%
Total	276	180	67	16	56	18	383	-

Appendix Two

Mizoram Presbyterian Local Churches/Organizations/ Individual's Additional Contribution for Foreign Mission 2006. [Amounts in Indian Rupees]

S/n	Name of churches/organizations	Purpose of contributions	Amounts
1	Kulikawn Kohhran Ramthar	Rohini church approach road	15,000.00
2	Guwahati Mizo Church	Guwahati mission a approach road	5,000.00
3	Pi Tawni Sailo family	Koilamati Sacrament tools	5,900.00
4	Sailam Veng, Chhiahtlang	Bairakunda Crusade expense	2,000.00
5	Baktawng Venglai Kohhran Ramthar Committee	Boleng church building	2,100.00
6	Chawlhmun Kohhran Ramthar Committee	Manipur filed church building	5,000.00
7	Kohhran Ramthar Committee	Karimganj Christmas celebration	1,000.00
8	Chawlhmun Kohhran Ramthar Committee	Salem Boarding Christmas expenses	1,000.00
9	Chawlhmun Kohhran Ramthar Committee	Vathuampui Christmas expenses	1,000.00
10	Dawrpui Kohhran Ramthar Committee	Kolkata Field-a N.F.E. Teacher	20,000.00
11	Dawrpui Kohhran Ramthar Committee	NMCF convention conveyances	4,800.00
12	Ramhlun Venglai Kohhran Hmeichhia	Sekmeijin church building	5,000.00
13	Chanmari Kohhran Ramthar Committee	Pasighat church building	100,000.00
14	Hlimen Damveng Branch KTP	Convention conveyances	2,400.00
15	Mission Veng Kohhran Hmeichhia Committee	Bhandarpur Fellowship Hall	5,000.00
16	Mission Veng Kohhran Hmeichhia Committee	Chutkivita Fellowship Hall	5,000.00
17	Mission Veng Kohhran Hmeichhia Committee	Chwdepawa church building roof	20,000.00
18	Mission Veng Kohhran Hmeichhia Committee	Molong church building roof	6,000.00
19	Mission Veng Kohhran Hmeichhia Committee	Nokoti church building roof	5,000.00
20	Mission Veng Kohhran Hmeichhia Committee	Kamcherra church building roof	6,000.00
21	Mission Veng Kohhran Hmeichhia Committee	Buknuam church building	20,000.00
22	Mission Vengthlang Kohhran Ramthar Committee	Gauhati missionary quarter	15,000.00
23	College Veng Church	Singzamei church building	5,000.00
24	Khawbung Women Pastorate	Lopchu church building	6,000.00

25	Tuivamit Church	Koilamati church building	1,000.00
26	Tlangnuam Church Ramthar Committee	Miscellaneous	24,000.00
27	Tlangnuam Church Ramthar Committee	Kawlsi evangelist quarter	7,500.00
28	Central Jail Veng Church	Koilamati church building	1,000.00
29	Ramhlun North Church	Bairakunda crusade	5,000.00
30	K.Lalthanzama, Bethlehem Veng	Sekmaijin church building	120.00
31	Zarkawt Church Ramthar Committee	Kok Borok Hymn book printing	40,000.00
32	Ruallung Church	Baiakunda crusade	1,000.00
33	Sihphir Venglai Church Ramthar Committee	Jengkha church building	5,000.00
34	Sihphir Venglai Church Ramthar Committee	Gauhati missionary quarter	5,000.00
35	Tuikual Church Ramthar Committee	Assamese Hymn book printing	5,000.00
36	Leitan South KTP	Relief- Orjon Chalraboty	1,000.00
37	Khatla Church	Tuirum church building	5,000.00
38	Mission Veng Church Ramthar Committee	Convention conveyances	5,000.00
39	Mission Veng Church Committee	Dawn Church building	20,000.00
40	Chaltlang Church	Tuirum church building	3,000.00
41	Tuikual Church	Thaidawr church building	5,000.00
42	College Veng Church	Tuirum church building	1,000.00
43	Kulikawn Church	Tuirum church building	4,000.00
44	Bawngkawn Church	Bolakhera church building	10,000.00
45	Vaivakawn church	Sekmaijin church building	5,000.00
46	Vaivakawn Church	Tuirum church building	5,000.00
47	Bawngkawn Church	Tuirum church building	1,500.00
48	Melriat Kohhran Ramthar Committee	Bairakunda crusade	1,000.00
49	Chaltlang Church Hmeichhia	Bairakunda crusade	10,000.00
50	Phullen Pastor Bial Kohhran Hmeichhia	Khumlang church building	2,000.00
51	Serchhip Vengchung Bial Kohhran Hmeichhia	Lucknow Field miscellaneous	5,000.00
52	Kolasib Diakkawn Kohhran Hmeichhia	Pu. Thangzalana's Bicycle	2,100.00
53	Aizawl Venglai Kohhran Ramthar Committee	Bairakunda crusade	10,000.00
54	Thingsulthliah Kohhran Ramthar Committee	Donke church building	4,000.00
55	Kawnpui Pastorate	Arunachal crusade	10,000.00
56	L.T.Mawia	Arunachal church building	2,000.00
57	Dosvunga & family	Along church building	2,000.00
58	Tlangnuam Church Ramthar Committee	Tuimuktupara missionary quarter	2,000.00
59	Pu B. Lalmuanpuia	Mongnang church building	2,500.00
60	Tv. Liankunga Ralte (sihphir)	Jengkha church building	1,000.00
61	Chhinga Veng Church Women's	Bairakunda church roof	2,000.00
62	Baktawng Pastorate Church women's	Boleng church building	3,000.00
63	Thingdawl Venglai Church	Nepal Field miscellaneous	1,167.00
64	Hualngohmun Kohhran Ramthar Committee	Rothaba church building roof	5,000.00
65	Republic Veng Church	Singjemei church building	20,000.00
66	Chanmari Pastor Bial Kohhran Hmeichhia	Relief for Dinesh Singh Negi	1,000.00
67	Aizawl Venglai Church	Sekmaijing persecuted church	15,000.00
68	Kulikawn Church Ramthar Committee	Lungwaih church building	5,000.00
69	Khatla Pastorate Ramthar Committee	Madhuripathar PA set	15,000.00
70	Reiek Pastor Bial Kohhran Hmeichhia	Nepal Field miscellaneous	2,000.00
71	Vaivakawn Kohhran Ramthar Committee	Rev. Lalsawta's conveyance	2,000.00
72	Vaivakawn Kohhran Ramthar Committee	Mohanlalganj missionary expense	3,000.00
73	Vaivakawn Kohhran Ramthar Committee	Bolakhera church building	5,000.00
74	Electric Pastor Bial Kohhran Hmeichhia	Dawn church building	20,000.00
75	Armed Veng Church	Langwaih church building	35,000.00
76	Kulikawn Pastorate women meeting	Langnimso Evangelist quarter	10,000.00
77	Chanmari Church Ramthar Committee	Khambar church building	20,000.00
78	Chanmari Church Ramthar Committee	Tuihiching church building	10,000.00
79	Chanmari Church Ramthar Committee	Kasko church building	10,000.00

80	Chanmari Church Ramthar Committee	Kakandighi church building	10,000.00
81	Khatla North Church Women's Meeting	School furniture	5,000.00
82	Kawlkulh Pastorate Women's Meeting	Miscellaneous	1,000.00
83	Durtlang Church Ramthar Committee	Bolakhera church building	20,000.00
84	Aizawl Venglai Women's Meeting	Langkarcha church building	10,000.00
85	Khawzawl Vengsang Church	Charaghat church building	3,000.00
86	Lily Veng Church Ramrhar Committee	Karbook's furniture & PA set	30,000.00
87	Zemabawk North Church	Rachung church building	15,000.00
88	Pu. Sangzuala (Tuikual)	Dibrugarh P/S miscellaneous	2,000.00
89	Sakawrtuichhun Church	Koilamati church building	2,000.00
90	New Serchhip Pastorate KTP	Thumsip church building roof	6,000.00
	Total		808,587.00

Appendix Three

Barak Mission Field Hnatlang (Work Camp) Lists 2004-2008

S/n	Name of churches/groups	Dates	Working places
		2004	
1	Kawnpui Hmar Veng Church	Jan. 2-4, 2004	Construction Church (Dholaicherra)
2	Seling Church	April 7-11	Cemetery cleaning –Jarultola
3	Mission Vengthlang Church	April 5-6	Lamargram
4	Bawngkawn Pastorate KTP	March	RMH School roof repairing –Karimganj
5	Champhai Kanan Church	June 8-10	Planting trees –Silchar
6	Vairengte Pastorate KTP	-	House construction –Mohanpur
7	Republic Pastorate KTP	-	Pastor quarter construction –Lala
8	Vaivakawn Church	July 1-2	Madhutilla ah ram an lei
9	College Veng Church	June 22-23	Pachmail ah biakin lungphum
10	Electric Veng Church	August 27	Exploring a land - Wokokpi
11	Kolasib Venglai KTP	August 6-7	Mission compound cleaning- Silchar
12	Seling Church	March 3-9	Quarter construction -Hailakandi
13	Thakthing Church	November 16-19	Work camp- Jiribam
14	Champhai Vengthlang Church	October 26-30	Work camp -Telkata
15	Durtlang Leitan South Church	November 16-19	Work camp -Kamranga
16	Chanmari West Church	November 17-21	Work camp- Lalchhora
17	Ramhlun Vengthlang Church	December 14-18	Pastor quarter construction- Lala
18	Republic East Church	November 30	Church fencing -Sibtilla
19	Vaivakawn Pastorate	December 23-26	Quarter construction -Madhutilla
20	Zuangtui Church	December 6	Quarter's repairing -Dhullupcherra
21	Thingsulthliah Church	November 29	Guest House Roofing –
22	College Veng Church	December 6	Church building construction –Panchmail
23	Vaivakawn Church	December 16	Quarter construction –Madhutilla
24	Ramhlun Vengthlang Church	December 13-16	Pastor Construction-
26	Vaivakawn Pastorate	December 14-17	Quarter construction -Madhutilla
27	Sihphir Venglai Church	December 16-19	Church building construction –Chandpur
		2005	

28	Luangmual Vengthlang Church	January 12, 2005	Verandah repairing- Karimganj
29	Vaivakawn Church	January 26-31	Quarter construction- Modhutilla
30	College Veng Kohhran	February 15-19	Church building construction- Panchmail
31	Seling Church	February 28	Quarter construction- Silchar
32	Tuikual Church KTP	Good Friday	Church building construction- Bhabahar
33	Vairengte Church	April 13-15	Quarter roofing –Bontarapur
34	Kulikawn Pastorate KTP	May 4-7	Mission compound fencing- Kamranga
35	Saitual Church	September 26-30	Karimganj WC
36	Maubawk West Church	October 10-15	Quarter repairing –Dhulupcherra
37	Ramthar Veng Church KTP	November 1-5	Well digging –Winchester
38	Electric Veng Pastorate KTP	November 24-28	Compound cleaning- Dholaicherra
39	Ramhlun Vengthlang Church	October 31	School repairing – Dholaicherra
40	Kelsih Church	October 24-28	Cleaning cemetery- Silchar
41	Bawngkawn Church	December 13-17	Compound fencing – Konakpur
42	Kawnpui Chhim Veng Church	December 15-19	Compound fencing – Silchar
43	Kolasib Venglai Pastorate KTP	November 1-4	Church building construction- Kaisanari
44	College Veng Church	November 14-21	Church building construction –Panchmail
45	Chanmari West Church	November 22-28	Church building construction- Lalchhora
46	Venghlui Pastorate KTP	November 14-17	Compound cleaning –Silchar
47	Chhinga Veng Church	December 16-18	Church building construction- Cheraghi
48	Phaisen Church	December 6-8	Compound fencing –Balighat
49	Elictric Pastorate KTP	Nov. 29-Dec. 3	Compound fencing –Dholaicherra
50	Tuikhuahtlang Church	December 23-26	Church building construction- Sibtilla
51	Hunthar Veng Church	December 12-17	Compound- Silchar
52	Khatla Pavalai Church	December 24-26	Church building construction- Borbil
53	Zarkawt Church Ramthar Com.	December 14-16	Chruch building construction- Bontarapur
54	Kolasib Venglai Church	December 20	Pandal construction- Silchar
		2006	
55	Zarkawt Church Ramthar Com.	Feb. 14-17/2006	Church building construction- Bontarapur
56	Thentlang Church	March 13-17	Church building construction- Pailapool
57	Zarkawt Church Ramthar Com.	April 21-22	Church building construction- Bontarapur
58	Durtlang Church	June 14-24	Silchar
59	Nursery Veng Church KTP	November 17-22	Kitchen construction- Dholaicherra
60	Aizawl Venglai Church KTP	October 24-28	Compound fencing –Dholaicherra
61	Bualpui Church	November 28-30	Church building construction-Pailapool
62	North Hlimen Church	November 17-19	Church building construction -Bontarapur
		2007	
63	Saitual North Church	Jan. 9-12/2007	Church building construction-Sibtilla
64	Armed Veng North Church	April 3-8	Church building construction –Kamranga
65	Vaivakawn Church	April 16-26	Quarter extension – Modhutilla
66	Chawnpui Church	March 5-10	Quarter construction -
67	Thingdawl Church KTP	March 12-17	Quarter construction –Lala Bazar
68	Chawnpui Church	May 1-5	Staff quarters repairing- Silchar
69	Ramhlun North Church	May 8-12	Making School Furniture- OHS Silchar
70	Bungkawn Pastorate KTP	May 9-12	Silchar
71	Dinthar Church KTP	May 9-12	Silchar
72	College Veng Church	May 29-June 1	Church building construction- Kamranga

73	Kolasib Electric Veng Church	August 2-4	Staff quarters repairing – Silchar
74	Khatla Church	August 23-25	Church building construction- Borbil
		2008	
75	Durtlang Leitan Church	March 20-24,2008	Church building construction- Zaithe
76	Maubaw School Veng Church	June	Compound fencing- Kabuganj
77	Electric Veng Pastorate KTP	October 27-31	Kamranga
78	Thingsulthliah Ramthar Com.	Oct. 28- Nov. 4	A/S Office renovation- Silchar
79	Khatla Pastorate KTP	November 12-15	Church building construction- Bagbahar
80	ITI Church	November 12-17	Digging church's site- Chhotosalganga
81	Bethlehem Vegnthlang Church	September 21-24	Church building repairing- Badarpur
82	Bawngkawn Church	December 9-12	Digging water well- Winchester
83	Durtlang North Church	December 10-13	Digging church site – Bagbahar
84	Ramhlun Venglai Church	December 24-26	Free Clinic – Bontarapur

Appendix Four

Questionnaire to the Native Workers/Mizo Missionaries/ Missionary Trainees/ Mizoram Presbyterian Church Leaders

1. Are you satisfied working under the Mizoram Presbyterian Church SMB?
2. Do you think that the SMB mission is/was successful so far?
3. What do you think is the best thing done by the SMB in comparison to other churches or missions and why?
4. What do you think is the most significant weakness of the SMB in comparison to other churches or missions and why?
5. Do you believe that it is possible to plant churches that are self-supporting, self-propagating and self-sufficient/governing in this field? Why and why not?
6. What do you think would be the best policy in terms of baptism of new believers and explain why?
7. What is the most probable reason that baptized new believers leave the church very often?
8. Who do you think is most probable responsible for the above question and explain why?
9. What do you think is responsible to build the Church building in the mission field? (a) local members (b) missions sending church (c) local members and missions (d) missionary/evangelist (e) other.
10. Who do you think is responsible to build the new church building in the mission field?
11. What do you think is/was the most effective approach of missions in this field?
12. Do you think that the new believers have a problem in giving?
13. Do you think that the Mizoram Synod Board Medical Ministry is/was successful?
14. Do you think that the Mizoram Synod Mission Board Non Formal Ministry is/was successful?
15. Do you think that the Mizoram Synod Mission Board Church Planting Ministry is/was successful?
16. Who do you think is the most responsible for the success and development of the mission field works?

17. What do you think is the single most important strategy that should be applied by the Mizoram Presbyterian Church Mission in this field and why?
18. Write down anything (comments, suggestions or questions etc.) that you think are important to record or notice for the study of this particular field.

Appendix Five

Mizoram Presbyterian Church Financial Contribution for Missions 1999-2009 [Amount in Indian Rupees]

Financial Year	Budget	Actual Received	Exceed Amount
1999-2000	61,000,000	78,810,538	17,810,538
2000-2001	73,000,000	100,122,290	26,122,290
2001-2002	104,100,000	112,519,652	8,419,652
2002-2003	122,392,000	124,060,523	1,668,523
2003-2004	120,234,000	135,536,236	15,302,236
2004-2005	134,000,000	143,310,751	9,310,751
2005-2006	137,000,000	155,035,823	18,035,823
2006-2007	144,000,000	165,860,803	21,860,803
2007-2008	158,500,000	183,496,638	24,996,638
2008-2009	165,550,000	216,820,521	51,270,521

Appendix Six

Statement of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church & Meitei Presbytery Financial Contributions (Amount in Indian Rupees)

Financial Year	Grant to Manipur Mission Field	Grant to Meitei Presbytery	Meitei Presbytery Income
1998-1999	5,367,000	1,768,000	667,007
1999-2000	6,508,100	1,600,000	723,362
2000-2001	6,985,600	2,000,000	793,099
2001-2002	7,939,600	1,500,000	1,042,368
2002-2003	7,744,200	1,642,800	768,202
2003-2004	10,260,200	1,828,000	812,762
2004-2005	10,075,450	1,995,500	933,578
2005-2006	10,298,400	2,137,300	948,165
2006-2007	10,752,000	2,190,200	1,029,786
2007-2008	10,362,300	2,000,000	1,085,706

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