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# **AFTER DECADES OF SILENCE**

## **Voices from Mizoram**

*A Brief Review of Mizo Literature*

**Margaret Ch. Zama and C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau**





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**Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research**  
**with support from the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, New Delhi**





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# About the Heinrich Böll Stiftung

The Heinrich Böll Stiftung / Foundation (HBF) is the Green Political Foundation from Germany. Headquartered in Berlin and with about 28 international offices, HBF conducts and supports civic educational activities and projects world-wide.

HBF understands itself as a green think-tank and international policy network, working with governmental and non-governmental actors and focusing on gender equity, sustainable development, and democracy and human rights.

HBF is present in India since 2002, with the HBF India office in New Delhi coordinating the interaction with local project partners. HBF India's programme activities are focused on three areas: Climate and Resources; Gender & Socio-Economic Policies; and Democracy & Dialogue.

## About C-NES

The Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research (C-NES) was established in 2000. It works on a range of issues and areas at both field and policy levels relating to governance, participative planning and rights, water resources, environment, rural livelihoods, peace building and building better understanding among communities.

C-NES is committed to building bridges between the North-east, among the lesser known and misunderstood parts of India, and other regions. The region is finally and slowly creating its own space and finding its own pulse after over six decades. C-NES develops innovative ideas for implementation to reach the poor and marginalized group in areas of health, education on and environment conducts workshops and training programs, reviews government policies and projects and designs ideas for development.

C-NES has been providing basic health care services to communities who do not have access to health facilities in the river islands of the Brahmaputra through its Boat Clinic initiatives in a Public Private Partnership (PPP) with the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Government of Assam. Its main goal is to take sustained health care to lakhs of persons on the islands, for the first time since independence, with a special focus on women and children, who are the most vulnerable in difficult conditions.



## Project Director

**Preeti Gill** is an independent editor and literary agent who worked for many years with Zubaan, an independent, feminist press, where she was Senior Commissioning Editor and Rights Director. She is co-editor with Sanjoy Hazarika of *Bearing Witness, A Report on the Impact of Conflict on Women in Nagaland and Assam* (2011), editor of *The Peripheral Centre: Voices from India's North East* (2010) and co-editor along with Uma Chakravarty of *Shadow Lives: Widowhood in India* (2003). She has contributed numerous articles on literature from the North-east to prestigious journals, curated literary festivals on the North-east and developed a unique list of women writers which includes some of the best known fiction writers, poets and scholars from the region. She is a member of the Board of Trustees at the Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research and has helped to research and script several documentary films.

## Joint Project Director

**Sanjoy Hazarika**, Managing Trustee and Founder is the Director of the Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research in Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi and in addition holds the Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew Chair. He was Chairman of the Task Force to promote educational opportunities and welfare of students from North East Region belonging to SCs, STs and PwDs, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Gol. A former member of the Justice Jeevan Reddy Committee to Review the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). He is the Visitor's nominee of the Executive Council of the Nagaland University and a member of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Shimla. Acknowledged as a specialist on migration and issues in the North-east his books include, *Writing on the Wall; Rites of Passage: border crossings, imagined homelands – India's East and Bangladesh, Reflections on the North-East; Strangers of the Mist; Tales of War and Peace from India's North East; Bhopal, the lesson of a tragedy*. He has co-authored *The State Strikes Back: India and the Naga Insurgency* (with Charles Chasie) (2009) published by the East West Centre in Washington DC. and contributed chapters to several books.

## About the Project

After Decades of Silence is a project initiated by the Centre for Northeast Studies and Policy Research, New Delhi, which works in the Northeast Region (NER); the project is supported by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, New Delhi. Its aim is to look at the years of conflict--'insurgency' in the eyes of the State-- in the Mizo Hills District of Assam and during its existence as a Union Territory in the 1960s, '70s and '80s, and review the events and both medium and long term effects of the struggle on the people of Mizoram.



The effort is to build up a corpus of documentation through oral narratives and photographs as well as a review of the writing and published literature over the last fifty odd years in order to focus attention on a period in the nation's history that has rarely figured in contemporary discourse or even scholarly debates. By talking about what happened in the 'rambuai' years--the trouble years--the project will study the effects of violence on the Mizo people, the Mizo approach to peace and peace-making and why the violence of the 1960s remains unaddressed, almost silenced.

The project has been built around two distinct and yet deeply interconnected segments: the first is the Review of published literature in Mizo and English to understand what writers across genres have focussed on in their writing especially of the 'insurgency' years. Have they grappled with the issues that have confronted them? In order to map the history of a nation and of a people it is crucial to document the issues and ideas its creative minds are engaged with. There is little information or indeed knowledge about Mizo culture, writing, people and their traditions and history in the Indian 'mainland' and this needs to change if there is to be better understanding and connection between the centre and its borderlands. This work informs the second half of the project which is a documentary film dwelling on the issues that have shaped Mizo society.







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# Introduction

The North-east of India is a complex and challenging region, which has seen a range of conflicts and also a cluster of agreements between different ethnic and political groups and the Government of India. But many of these agreements have not endured and in fact have unravelled fairly rapidly. Thus, time and again, soon after an agreement is signed, one group turns on the accord maker as a betrayer, targets its leaders and cadres while claiming to hold the true torch of liberty and rightful representative of people. Often, they collude with one set of political groups or individuals especially at the state level. Time and again this has happened, giving us the feeling that the growing economic and public interest in ensuring settlements is not as great as the economic dividends in making sure that unsettled if not unresolved conditions prevail.

Demographics are also critical here. It's important therefore to look at Mizoram, where conflict resolution efforts have not just worked but also been sustained through a mechanism that draws upon both public support and official commitment to the process.

Mizoram, indeed, makes the difference. This is a state where, one could argue, the Mizos, especially the civilian population, suffered more than any other part of the country in a situation of conflict with the State. In the late 1960s, full scale fighting erupted between the insurgents of the Mizo National Front (MNF) which tried to overthrow district administrations in the area, then the Mizo District (formerly the Lushai Hills district) of Assam. Indian Air Force attacks and army counter-assaults against insurgents followed (the rebels left as soon as they began), torching of homes and villages, displacement of 220,000 out of a district population of 280,000 and marching many villagers to new sites for settlement without considering the long-term consequences or indeed how such regrouped villages would survive in the future. That many of them have done so is no tribute to the Indian State or the security operations of the time; it is due to the hard work and determination of the Mizos. One doubts whether the word 'compensation' or the mechanics of covering the costs of 'collateral damage' was used at the time.

The conflict grew out of Mizo anger at Assam for failing to assist them with famine conditions of 1959, and that anger was used by the MNF. However, early on in the insurgency, even after the success of the early months, it has now emerged that Laldenga, the MNF chief, wanted to settle with New Delhi right from the initial stages of the underground movement. He was unsure of the capacity of the movement to win freedom from India, despite support from the Peoples Republic of China and Pakistan. He was forced to back down by his senior colleagues both in the army and political wings of the MNF and was based in East Pakistan. However, when Pakistan fell apart during the Bangladesh Liberation war of 1971, Laldenga managed to evade the crack security team sent to capture him.



The Mizo leader recognized the importance of negotiating independently rather than as a captured rebel. Through a remarkable series of twists and turns, Laldenga eventually landed up in Delhi where he stayed for years at a bungalow on Mahadev Road, near All India Radio, despite a brief spell of detention. Sporadic violence continued in Mizoram especially against *vais*, outsiders, who were served Quit Mizoram notices. He was to meet Indira Gandhi on the day that she was assassinated to formalize a package – that had to wait until Rajiv Gandhi, her son, came into his own as Prime Minister and signed what is known as the Mizo Peace Accord in 1986.

That unique Accord is now over 28 years old, signed by an insurgent who became chief minister of a state within the Indian Union, which he had resisted for most of his life. He contested and won elections but due to a quirk of fate or rather the sturdiness of Indian politics and politicians, found himself ousted within two years, as his party split. He was eventually defeated by the Congress and died in Opposition. The MNF never questioned the agreement and their acceptance of the Indian Constitution, despite being in and out of power in the past decades. Today, the man whom Laldenga replaced as chief minister, Lalthanhawla, of the Congress Party, has returned to power for the third time brushing aside the MNF.

The politics of this process is not often reflected upon in the broader Indian context. What is not examined is why it hasn't worked in other peace efforts in the region. The reasons, in my view, require stressing:

- The MNF had one unchallenged and undisputed leader, Laldenga. He had control of the political wing and the armed wing; once when challenged, in the Arakan, he placed his challengers in custody.
- He and the MNF accepted the constitution and the territorial integrity of India and Mizoram became a state of the Union, not a second rank Union Territory.
- There was a secret agreement preceding the formal accord between Congress and the MNF signed by Arjun Singh, the Vice President of the Congress Party and Minister for Human Resource Development
- The political flexibility of the State and Mizo leadership: Laldenga had a political opponent in Chief Minister Lalthanhawla who was prepared to accommodate the rebel leader by vacating his position even before the elections and make Laldenga an interim chief minister, a post that does not exist in law – this showed immense political tact, initiative and flexibility and the ability of accommodation was crucial to making the agreement work, especially by the bigger partner (Congress + Government of India).
- There were no border disputes or claims with other states of the NER despite the movement for a Zomiland, unlike Nagaland.



- Laldenga and the Mizos were practical: they traded weapons and the idea of freedom for limited political power, but the power to influence the lives of their own people and rule their destiny. Political power is basically self-serving, whatever gloss one puts on it, party, individual, national, regional etc.
- The demography of Mizoram played a key role: the Mizos were and remain an overwhelming majority in the state. There were other tribal groups but they were all aligned with the Indian State: Lais, Mara and Chakmas. So the MNF was seen as representative of all Mizos: the others were much smaller entities and were given autonomous district councils under the sixth schedule to protect their rights. The Reangs continue to be marginalized despite a sporadic and brief, low level armed movement by a faction; many continue to shelter in relief camps in Tripura (over 20 years there).
- The enormous role of the Church cannot be under-estimated: in no uncertain words, from the very start, men like Rev. Zairema and Lalngurauva Ralte went to the MNF and to the Indian Government, counseling dialogue and peace through negotiations. Within days of the outbreak of hostilities, the Church's emissaries told Laldenga that the path he had chosen was not right, that it would lead to extensive bloodshed and suffering especially for the Mizos. And in the final years, it reinforced a line that it had consistently made; that the Indian army and the Indian State was much too powerful for a small determined group to succeed. That it was time for the boys to come home, to rebuild their land and their people and basically cut the best deal possible otherwise such opportunities would not come again. In other words: be practical.
- One wished the message of practical-ness reached other groups in other states but they do not seem interested in listening.
- Despite the peace process in Mizoram, the benefits of development are not remarkable barring the area of education (it has the third highest literacy rate after Kerala and Lakshwadeep but this figure does not reflect a fully educated population and there is also a high drop out rate.) In addition, youth leaders say that the influx of Chins from Myanmar is causing a demographic imbalance. This also triggers occasional confrontations.
- The Mizos turned their back on 20 years of conflict but they did not apportion blame to India or its people. Visits to villages carved out of older settlements, conversations with people who said they did forced labour, built camps and were marched from their original homes, underlined a sense of loss. But the bitterness that is visible in other states such as Nagaland and Manipur was not visible. Is this the Forgotten Factor in forging settlements: how is hatred and bitterness to be healed, how can suspicions be buried and a sense of discrimination driven away? How do you move forward? Ultimately, it comes down to this as much as any political and physical intervention. And



no political analyst or spin doctor can best suggest how this can happen except through a more inclusive approach that learns from the past, includes groups in conversation and dialogue if not in negotiations so that problems are fixed not by manufacturing consent at one level between two groups and leaving out the people but by ensuring that all have a voice. Because all have a stake in a safe future.

If we look at Mizoram in the overall picture, then it is part of a region that shares borders with four countries—China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Bhutan—and are ethnically and historically different from the rest of India, although there are strong connections, established over centuries, between the state of Assam and the “mainland” as well as Tripura. The physical connection is slim, a narrow land corridor euphemistically called “the chicken-neck.” Barely four percent of the region is contiguous to the rest of India; 96 percent of the Northeast borders other countries.

The very complexity of this region is striking and stark: with over 220 ethnic groups, located in eight states. Although most of these groups continue to live in the general location where they have for hundreds of years, with some out-migration within the region, they have largely been on their own, barring the Brahmaputra Valley.

The entry of colonial rule in the 19<sup>th</sup> century placed physical and, to a great degree sharply defined, political borders on groups – restricting movements and traditional concepts of time and space, forging new identities, telling them, ‘This is where you live and belong.’ The collision of colonial ideas of what people are and should be was resisted, perhaps sporadically, and it is in that genesis of resistance that we can locate the post-independence revolts or struggle against the Indian State. Those in opposition and who took up arms in the early stages were making a very simple statement— ‘This is who we are, these are our beliefs’. We cannot discount the huge impact that large societies and states have on small communities, which have strongly held notions of separateness or difference, although these may not be well articulated.

The scholar Udayon Misra says that the centralized power of the Indian State is repeatedly questioned in the Northeast. Also questioned is its management of the problems of dissent and political identity and especially the question of “one nation,” with an emphasis on homogeneity. The first real armed challenge to the Indian state came from the Northeast, especially its hills. Historically, these areas had been kept at a distance from the “mainland” by the British, through special administrative arrangements with the hill tribes, and they were largely uninvolved in the welter of the independence movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. “During the post-Independence period, the rise of nationalistic aspirations among different communities has nowhere been as prominent as in undivided Assam.”

Of course, these conditions, for the main do not hold. Armed/political movements, though some leaders may still believe in these ideas, have morphed into intimidatory, extortionist



and brutal groups which harm the very people they claim to represent. That does not excuse the brutal strategies and methods used by the State and its security forces – mostly in the past but which occasionally come to our notice even these days – to ‘soften’ up or target the movement by violent conduct that impacts civilian populations. All of us are aware surely of past events that would not be countenanced today, because of a higher code of conduct, better training and heightened awareness, whether it is the burning of villages and homes, large-scale beatings and detentions and killings with impunity because of the protection of certain laws.

The terrain and physical location are also significant factors in considering approaches/strategies to issues, whether of conflict or infrastructure. The NER’s borders with four other countries take up 96 percent of its land frontiers. Many have cross-border cultural, linguistic and ethnic connections such as the Kukis, Chakmas and various Naga tribes like the Konyaks.

A second is that while an earlier generation – be it in Nagaland or Manipur and Mizoram and even Tripura and Assam -- may have fought vigorously for independence or greater autonomy, their children have accepted the idea of India, if not embraced it: the *lakhs* of young people from the region who migrate across India in search of jobs, education and livelihoods are an example of people voting with their feet.

Part of this has come out of the fact that today there is a greater public and political investment or interest in keeping and maintaining peace in areas which were known as trouble spots. Again, large numbers of those who fought against the State have fallen or have withdrawn from combat, or are engaged at the negotiating table, in peace camps or jail.

A significant factor is that many of the younger cadres are not regarded with the respect accorded to earlier generations of what were called ‘national workers’: they are seen as extortionist, intimidatory gangs and violators of rights and dignity. Ordinary people in those states hit by extremism speak quietly of their fear of them, perhaps more than of the military and state forces.

Indeed, public movements are growing against extortion in states like Nagaland. This is a phenomenon which has not been appreciated widely enough, either in the Northeast itself and certainly not in other parts of India.

I have gone into great detail into the past and the rationale behind the conflict in Mizoram and the manner of its closure because without that many issues that are discussed in the Project would not make sense. There is a flow to the narrative that draws on historical and cultural traditions, including religious ones. In my view, the last point I have made on the ‘Forgotten Factor’ is at the heart of this project on a Review of Mizoram’s *Rambuai* literature: the voices of a people, once stilled, are again awakened. Perhaps they have never



been stilled but only temporarily quietened. They reflect the personal angst, hopes, joys and grief of individuals and groups, communities and people. They speak from the heart, of difficult and good times. But it has taken a lot of hard work, rigorous research and knowledge and sensitivity to put this together.

In the original Concept note, we had said among other things, “It is perhaps time now to reveal some of the hidden stories of the Mizo conflict in order to see where the might of the Indian State has failed to bring justice and where it has abdicated its responsibility towards its citizens.”

The project sought to address several concerns including how have the people coped with this situation despite the lack of resolution, restitution and compensation. What is this ‘culture of silence’ around this entire period of insurgency and its aftermath? The project, the note said, would look at some of these issues “through a review of the literature both in Mizo and English to see what generations of writers (James Dokhuma, B.Lalthangliana, Khawlkungi, Lalsangzuali Sailo, Margaret Zama, Cherrie Chhangte, Mona Zote, and others) have said about the events, its history, people and literature in the so called ‘mainland’” . There needs to be a better understanding and connection between the periphery and the Centre.

Preeti Gill, my co-Project Director of ‘After Decades of Silence’ used her editorial and professional skills in organizing and developing the literature, with efficiency and sensitivity, in this final format, the first ever such sweeping survey of the *Rambuai* literature. It is a unique collaborative effort with Prof. Margaret Zama of Mizoram University and her associate, Dr. Lalawnpuia Vanchiau. Prof. Zama’s vast understanding and experience of academic issues as well as times past and writers of then and now, has helped enormously, drawing on her personal knowledge and professional judgment of issues.

We offer this publication as a tribute to the many individuals who have not been recognized or appreciated for the courage of their work over the decades and who find voice, late but perhaps fittingly, in these pages.

## **Sanjoy Hazarika**

Managing Trustee, C-NES

Joint Project Director

New Delhi

15th July, 2016







## Part I

# Background

Prior to delving into a brief review of Mizo Literature, a somewhat comprehensive introduction that looks into some key historical, social and cultural contexts is first necessary in order to help the reader to better situate and understand who the Mizo was, and is today, and why Mizo writers write as they do. What will be highlighted in this Background will be the brief early history of the Mizo followed by the colonial encounter, Christianization and the attendant post-colonial encounter and modernization process through education. This will be followed by inputs on the political awakening that heralded the end of traditional Mizo Chieftainship in 1953, and the MNF armed rebellion against the central government in early 1966 which changed the course of Mizo history and society in more ways than one. How the 'rambuai lai' or 'troubled times' that spanned 20 years produced a new genre in its literature will be dealt with in the body of the review, but more importantly, this introduction will show how Christianization and political alienation have contributed largely towards distancing Mizo literature per se from the influence of mainstream Indian literary traditions and lineages, hence leading to its marked absence. In other words, this background note attempts to provide a wide ranging context to the literature review itself.

It must first be established here that the word Mizo is used as a generic term to refer to the several clans / sub-clans who claim common ancestry. To name some of them inhabiting



regions outside Mizoram, we have the Hmar, Kuki, Paihte, and Gangte of Manipur, the Biahte and Vaiphei of North Cachar and pockets of Meghalaya, the Hrangkhawl, Darlong and Langrawng of Tripura and Cachar. Within Mizoram, many more clans and sub-clans live alongside each other such as the Ralte, Fanai, Pachuau, Chawngthu, Khawhring, Renthlei, Khiangte, Ngente, Tlau, Vangchhia, Chawhte, Sailo, Rokhum, Zadeng, Chuaungo, and several others, while the Lai (Pawih) and Mara (Lakher) mostly inhabit southern Mizoram.

## Early History of the Mizo

Known as a nomadic tribe of Mongolian descent from Central Asia, the long migratory route of the ancestors of the Mizo or Zo appears to have taken them from their very early settlements in the Kansu province of northwest China to the Chindwin region in Burma around A.D. 600-700 and into the Kabaw Valley or Kawlphai around A.D. 800-850 (B. Lalhangliana. *Mizo Chanchin*. 51-52, 60). It was around the 12th century that the Mizo ancestors were ousted from Kabaw Valley by the more powerful Shans coming from the north (*ibid.* 72-73) and compelled to proceed towards the Chin Hills in the southwest of Burma astride the river known as Run Lui, and thence further west toward the Lentlang Range by the late 15th century (Verghese & Thanzawna. Vol. 1. 81).

It is believed that from around this period, the Mizo forefathers who had earlier migrated in a somewhat homogenous group through the centuries sharing a similar if not common language and culture, broke up into different clan groups due to various compulsions, and moved on separately towards the west following their own routes at different periods of time, towards their present permanent settlements in Mizoram, parts of Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Assam and of course, neighboring Myanmar and the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. In the absence of verifiable data and written documents, much of the early history of the Mizo has been constructed from their rich oral traditions of songs, tales / stories, myths, legends and sayings. The shared myth of Chhinlung / Sinlung about a covered hole or cave out of which the ancestors of the Mizo emerged is a traditional belief long held by many Zo tribes / clans. Again, it is also a commonly held belief that while at Khampat in the Kabaw Valley, the ancestors before vacating, planted the sapling of a banyan tree in the centre court of the Khampat fort, vowing to return once its branches touched the ground. Khampat, with an earthen rampart built around it, is traditionally believed to be the oldest Mizo village established by the ancestors (*ibid.* 89). It is a fact that a group of people from Mizoram returned to settle at Khampat in 1916, the same year in which the branches of the banyan tree were believed to have reached the ground. Again, another group settled briefly in the area in 1952 before shifting a short distance away the next year (B. Lalhangliana. *Mizo Chanchin*. 58-59).

However, it is reasonable to keep in mind that such views of the early history of the Mizo is open to contestation and other interpretations due to the limitations caused by lack of



conventional historical data. The matter is further compounded by the fact that the Mizo after a time in the course of their migration, no longer remained a homogenous group that shared a common culture as already pointed out. Having established that the word 'Mizo' is not the name of a particular tribe or clan, but a generic term to cover the several clans sharing a common history of descent, it still appears to be necessary to briefly examine its usage, as it is contested and resisted by some Zo ethnic groups of Manipur, Tripura and Myanmar, and who today by choice, prefer to be identified by their clan / sub-clan titles, rather than be called 'Mizo' and merge their identity into what they consider as the marker of a more dominant group. Though an ethnic homogeneity is accepted by all these groups who are aware of their common history of shared descent, there are some who would rather use the name 'Zo', 'Zomi' or 'Chin', for a common identity marker, because they feel that the word 'Mizo' is meant for those inhabiting Mizoram only. This confers a rather narrow and illogical geographical limitation to the term 'Mizo', as Mizoram to these very same groups, is deemed to be home, and by some, even as their 'Mecca' and 'New Jerusalem'.

According to historian Prof. Sangkima, "Unlike the Nagas in Nagaland and the Khasis in Meghalaya, the Mizos in Mizoram were known in early times to the British and others by various names such as "Kuki", "Chin" and "Lushai". This suggests that the term "Mizo" is a recent phenomenon" (16). We may add here what Mangkhosat Kipgen also observed:

"Soon the British military officers and the civil administrators, many of whom were at least amateur anthropologists, came to realize that this people whom they called by various names were more or less the same people, and that they should be dealt with as a single group. Thus they began to refer to them by various hyphenated names, e.g., Chin-Lushai (A.S.Reid), Lusei-Kuki (John Shakespear) and Kuki-Chin (G.A.Grierson)" (22).

Without going into a detailed etymological study of these terms, it is also claimed that the word 'Mizo' was already in use by the forefathers while still in Burma (Sangkima. 16). From the above, we can see that it was not only in the context of Mizoram that these terms / names are being used by historians and scholars of early Mizo history.

The well-known linguist G.A.Grierson in his work of 1904, Linguistic Survey of India Vol III (rpt Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1967) had categorized the language spoken by the Mizo as belonging to the Tibeto-Burman group of languages. Though some of the clans and sub-clans in nursing the desire to maintain a distinctive identity continue to retain their own dialects, it is a fact that for all practical reasons, widespread acceptance of the Mizo language today as the official lingua franca, continues to gain ground. The Mizo language referred to here was originally Duhlian tawng, a Lusei dialect which gained widespread usage particularly under the Sailo chiefs and then continued during the British rule in the erstwhile Lushai Hills post-1890. The historian B. Lalthangliana succinctly summarises the



history of the Mizo language thus (Mizo Chanchin153) – that the language initially was part of the larger Sino-Tibetan group then eventually became part of the Tibeto-Burman group. It was probably round A.D. 600 that the Mizo ancestors started to branch off on their own from a much larger group when they started to settle in the Chindwin plains and Kabaw Valley in Burma for many centuries. It is also very likely that they used a common language during this prolonged period. The Shan invasion from the north as earlier mentioned, ushered in a change in the geo-politics of the Mizo ancestors who now had to seek habitation in different places even as they moved towards the Chin Hills in the west. A gradual break-up and separation took place among themselves along clan lines which gradually resulted in the loss of interaction between the different clan groups over a period of time. This in turn, impacted their language usage. In spite of this, it is believed that their language still continues to have close affinities with one another which studies show to be around 60% to 70% . With the British colonial occupation of the different areas inhabited by the Mizo by 1890, the renewal of their links took place and this initiated a coming together once again of their language as well, and which is seen in the continued growth and formation of the Mizo language today.

## Colonial Encounters

The initial colonial encounters of the Mizo with the white man and the outside world were, interestingly enough, not for trade and commerce like some of the other regions of Northeast India. Rather, these encounters were of stubborn resistance and intense conflict brought on by the compulsions of survival and protection of their hunting grounds from the growing encroachment of 'the other' who were engaged in expanding their profitable tea gardens. There exists several recorded documents written and maintained by English Political Officers, Administrators and Officers of the British Army, of such encounters between them and raiding parties led by Mizo / Lushai chiefs, which were then followed by punitive expeditions undertaken by the English forces that finally succeeded in subduing and overcoming them. We can say that these early encounters right upto the establishment of British occupation of the Lushai Hills covered a period of approximately 40 years, that is, from 1850 to 1890, though according to R. Reid, the formal annexation of the Lushai Hills to British India did not take place until 1895 (17).

Prior to the actual colonial encounters with the English, the early Mizo settlers who first reached and settled in the region used to raid other hill people settled to the north of Chittagong such as the Chakma, Bawm, Mughs and Bengalis, until they no longer dared to cultivate the lands close to the foothills of the Lushai Hills in the north. These encounters took place round 1700. (Lalhruaitluanga Ralte. 15). From around 1740 because of the growing demand and need for elephants there were a number of such encroachments into Mizo territory. The British East India Company required these elephants to aid in their



battles with the Indian princes. Many such elephants used to be captured from the deep forests of the Lushai Hills, and by 1840, the demand for elephants increased even more as by then, they were utilized for commercial purposes as well (ibid 15). Such encroachments did not go down well with the Mizo chiefs. According to Kipgen,

“The first recorded encounter between the Zos and British subjects occurred only in 1824 when enterprising traders from the plains penetrated the hills along the Dhalleswari river to collect bamboo and timber. They were ambushed and killed by Zos for refusing to pay them the tribute due those who passed through to the plains” (129).

Several other raids totaling 19 in number, took place during the period 1824 to 1854 by the hill tribes “in which 107 plains people had been killed, 15 wounded and 186 persons captured for slavery” (Verghese & Thanzawna.166). The hill tribes referred to here are the Kukis, Lushais, Shendus (Lakhers) and Chins occupying the hill ranges east and north of Hill Tipperah (ibid 166).

To very briefly and specifically sum up the colonial encounters within Lushai Hills as mentioned earlier which provoked the British forces to take counter retaliatory action, were the Lushai raids of 1862-1867 wherein the “Adampore Massacre” of 1862 took place, the Lushai raids of 1868-1869, and the Lushai raids of 1870-1871 wherein the famous raid on Alexandrapore tea gardens took place in January 1871 in which Mary Winchester, then aged 5 years, was kidnapped, and her father Mr. Winchester killed. All these raids were carried out by the consolidated forces of several Lushai chiefs, allied in separate groups at different points of time. The British retaliated with the 1st Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872 not only for the subjugation of the tribal chiefs but also the recovery of Mary Winchester. The British recommendation was “to send an overwhelming force to overawe the tribes in Lushai Hills” (ibid 206). The main task of the 2nd Lushai Expedition of 1888-1889 was to punish the villages of Hausata and Zahuata for the murder of Lt. Stewart and his party. The Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890 was reported thus by the Adjutant General:

“The expedition must be regarded as eminently satisfactory; for not only has communication between Bengal and Burma been established, and the tribes which had previously given annoyance fittingly dealt with, but all the principal tribes inhabiting the country have been brought under subjugation, a large number of captives who had been in the hands of these tribes restored to their own homes, and military posts at certain places for the preservation of order, and as evidence of British supremacy, established” (R. Reid, 17-18).

This last expedition marked the establishment of the Aijal Garrison on February 15th, 1890, on the site selected by Mr Daly and described by him as “a good place for a permanent post” (Verghese & Thanzawna, Vol. 1. 286). This was also the year that officially marked



British occupation of the Lushai Hills for the next half of the new century until 1947, the year of Indian Independence from British rule.

## The Mizo encounter with Christianity and its impact

The entry of the new religion Christianity into the then Lushai Hills is widely credited to two missionaries - J. Herbert Lorrain (1861-1935) and Fred W. Savidge (1869-1944), who were sponsored by the Arthington Aborigines Mission from England and who arrived at Aijal Fort on 14th January, 1894. Historically though, it was Rev. William Williams, a Presbyterian missionary working in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills who first brought the gospel to Lushai Hills, arriving at Aijal Fort on March 20, 1891 and staying on for a month before returning to the Khasi Hills. He was the first person who highlighted and brought the needs of the Lushais into prominence among the churches of Wales back in England.

When the two missionaries Savidge and Lorrain first arrived they did not get much help or encouragement from the British authorities owing to the unsettled state of Lushai Hills at the time. They were finally allowed to travel to villages while being warned that they were on their own. It was during these travels to far flung areas that the two realized there was very little difference in the spoken language of the people across the Lushai Hills, which was the Duhlian dialect. Lorrain, an accomplished linguist, along with Savidge, worked out a script for the language which till then did not have one. They used the Roman Script based largely on the phonetic Hunterian System of orthography. Within four years of their arrival, they were able to produce ***A Grammar and Dictionary of the Lushai Language (Duhlian)*** in 1898. Perhaps their own summation of their accomplishment in the four years of their mission work in the Lushai Hills speaks for itself:

During that time we had reduced for the natives the hitherto unwritten language to writing, and had taught numbers of Lushais to read and write, besides translating into Lushai the Gospels of Luke, John, and the Acts of the Apostles, which were afterwards printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society. We had also printed a Catechism upon the substance of the Bible, which we used in our Sunday School, and preached the Gospel in many villages in the northern half of the Lushai Hills. (Kipgen, 195-196).

Thus the process of gradual Christianization and education begun by the pioneer missionaries, ushered in the subsequent modernization process of the Mizo. While this is a recognized key cornerstone in Mizo history today, it is equally crucial to acknowledge the existence of the rich oral tradition of the Mizo ancestors that predate the print culture and conversion to the new faith, and which continues to strongly impact Mizo literature, as well as the formation of Mizo identity till today.

This brings us to what is today referred to as Mizo Christianity which reveal the impact and role that traditional culture can bring about as a catalyst of social and religious change



in a society. In the case of Christianity in Mizoram, the interaction between the Christian missionaries from England, and the traditional culture of the indigenous people involved change on both sides that resulted in an indigenization process in which a foreign religion eventually morphed into a homegrown religion – in other words, what took place was, in a manner of speaking, a subversive process. Mangkhosat Kipgen makes an in depth study of this aspect in his work *Christianity and Mizo Culture*, (1996), and sees the four religious Revivals of 1906, 1913-14, 1919-23, 1930-1937 as the main instruments of indigenization besides the *Puma Zai* (Puma's Song) movement which began in 1908, and the adaptation into Christianity of the Mizo concept of *tlawmngaihna*, which in essence is about service for the good of others without expectation of any return.

An example of indigenization which can be cited was the introduction and installation of the traditional Mizo drum into the Christian churches to the accompaniment of singing and dancing during the 3rd revival, which till then had been considered an instrument of Satan by the missionaries and early converts. Another was the birth of the 'Mizo Kristian hla thar' or new songs of the Mizo Christian in early 1920s during the 3rd revival and which still continue to remain popular today as they are composed along the lines of the old traditional Mizo songs that have a compelling emotive appeal ingrained in the Mizo psyche, and which certainly is not the product of any external factor.

It is ironic but true that today, from the viewpoint of a larger section of Mizo Christians, that their history of prolonged resistance and conflict with the British in the 19th century, and the subsequent colonial occupation of the Lushai Hills is considered, nay preached, as a boon brought on by divine intervention, making it a means to bring in the gospel to a pagan people. It is said that what first inspired the young Herbert Lorrain with missionary zeal to come to Lushai Hills to preach the gospel, was the sight of a photograph of the young Mary Winchester and newspaper reports that he read while at London, about the killing of her father, her capture and eventual rescue from the 'heathen' Mizo headhunters.

It is more than apparent from such stories that the only meaningful interaction made, and the ideological influence effected on the Mizo psyche that has lasted so far, was from an external factor - the English. The other was of course internal, received from their own traditional practices and beliefs inherited from their forefathers. As we trace the Mizo history of the pre-Christian era, evidence of any other inroads made by others, other than the English, is absent. Though Mizoram is indeed a part of India, this historical and ideological backdrop helps to explain why there is an absence of Indian literary traditions or lineages in the literary discourse of the Mizo - so far.

It is interesting to note though, that there is evidence found in Mizo folk literature of the Ramayana tradition believed to be derived from South-East Asian Buddhist source of non-Indian version, presumably picked up by the Mizo ancestors in the course of their migration.



The continued presence or absorption of this tradition is not found in any other aspect of Mizo culture or belief which would suggest that it did not establish firm roots in the first place and was therefore easily dislodged if at all it had established some tenuous foothold, with the eventual onset of Christianity. A study has been done on this very interesting aspect of Mizo folk literature by Dr. Lalruanga in his work *Ramayana leh Zofate (Ramayana and Mizos)* (1997) and also by Mizo historian, Sangkima. One of the key primary sources utilized by both these scholars is *Mizo leh vai thon thu (Mizo and non-Mizo tales)* edited by J. Shakespear, Superintendent of Lushai Hills who published it in 1897 at Shillong. According to Sangkima, this book contains 31 pages of 10 tales one of which is titled "Khena leh Rama-te Unau Thu" (the story of the brothers Laksman and Rama) which is the longest tale that covers 11 pages, and the only non-Mizo tale in the collection. He goes on to state that "The Mizo Ramayana is very short but depicts the main episodes of the Ramayana" (236-37). Besides this once tenuous linkage with Ramayana epic, there are also fleeting references to 'vai lal' (non-Mizo king or raja, an outsider) in other folk tales such as that of "Mauruangi" and "Tualvungi and Zawlpala" which suggests that some of the tales from Mizo folk tradition are of more recent origin and that this bears evidence to the fact that the Mizo by the time these stories were created, had already had some contact with outsiders, no matter how fleeting.

## **Brief highlights of the transition and change undergone by the Mizo up to present times**

Any discussion on transition and change undergone by the Mizo in all aspects of their life inevitably focuses on two major influences – British occupation (1890-1947) and Christianity (since 1894). Some of the main highlights are given below:

- Christianity replaced Mizo indigenous faith, considered by some as animism but this view is often challenged as it is opined that the Mizo did not worship but only propitiated with sacrifices, the spirits believed to inhabit the world around them who caused both good and ill fortune. Their faith reposed in an almighty being whom they called *Pathian* and a benevolent being whom they called *Khuanu*.
- The onset of the new faith effected a sea change in their traditional way of life. Some of the changes were – the strict observance of Sunday as a day of worship only, compulsory attendance of Sunday School by all converts, total abstinence from rice beer or *zu* which was the traditional drink that so far had been a part of all Mizo rituals and festivities, adherence to a moralistic life, and the practice of cleanliness and hygiene in daily life.
- The phasing out of traditional festivals and cultural practices, frowned upon as primitive and heathen practices by the missionaries. The remaining few festivals permitted to continue were modified and sanitized to suit the new religion.





- The chieftainship now subjugated and under British occupation, was shorn of its former glory and the absolute power they used to enjoy became a thing of the past. Chieftainship was now made hereditary “subject to good behavior, and mental and physical normalcy” of the eldest son (Verghese & Thanzawna 347). The region and native subjects were ruled through the village chief so that they, the British, could “enjoy all the assets and benefits and to avoid all responsibility and blame” (ibid 347).
- The ‘*bawi*’ practice of the Mizo chiefs, similar to slavery, was abolished in 1911 by the British.
- The phasing out of the traditional institution of the *zawlbuk*, or men’s dormitory which to explain briefly, used to serve as centre for informal education and disciplining of the male youth in particular, and society in general. Aware of its importance and the crucial role that it played in the Mizo way of life, Superintendent N.E. Parry issued a notification in 1926 to all the village chiefs to revive the *zawlbuk*, but a strong move against the institution had already been initiated for some time, ironically enough from a section of the local society, and this gained momentum, their stand being that it impeded progress of the Mizo society in its march towards modernization. (Without going into details here, this view in retrospect, is seen as a highly debatable one by people today). Twelve years later, Superintendent A.G. McCall in 1938 withdrew the notification of N.E. Parry after calling a public meeting wherein the overwhelming decision was in favour of ending the practice altogether. Interestingly enough, three years prior to this withdrawal, a committee had already sat to establish the Young Lushai Association (YLA) in 1935, considered a replacement or alternative of the *zawlbuk* institution. The YLA was rechristianed Young Mizo Association (YMA) in 1948 and has since grown to be the most influential and powerful Mizo NGO body till date.
- What also contributed to the change in outlook, mindset and worldview of the Mizo during the 1st half of the 20th century was certainly their participative role and exposure gained by them through active service during both the World Wars I & II. During WW I, 500 volunteers responded for active service and were recruited by the Lushai Military Police Battalion in early 1915, later to be renamed 1st Assam Rifles Battalion in 1917. Young Mizo men numbering 2100 were also inducted into the 27th Labour Corp and sent to France under Lt. Col. Playfair in 1917. They earned themselves a good name for commendable services rendered, and returned after a year to a hero’s welcome at Aijal in June 1918 shortly after which the 2029 who returned were disbanded. This was not all, for during WW II, the Lushai Brigade was raised by the British in March 1944, so too the Lushai Scouts. Many more joined the Auxiliary forces and Local Levies known as the “V” Force, while others were recruited to the Assam Regiments, Indian Hospital Corps (IAMC), and the Assam Rifles (Verghese & Thanzawna. 351-352). We



can safely assume that this kind of active and widespread participation among the upcoming generation of the time facilitated the Mizo into moving out of his insular existence into a world of other cultures and way of life, which in turn, went a long way into developing a competitive mind and spirit and the urge to be at par with people of other nations. The rich and varied experiences gained during this period provided the grist for a number of songs, narratives, stories and tales which were generated during and after the period, and this is briefly covered in **Part II** of this review of literature under the sections entitled **World War Songs / Writings**, and **World War Fiction**.

- A growing political consciousness and subsequent progress and change of political status of the region is witnessed first, with the founding of the first regional political party by the educated youth of Lushai Hills called the Mizo Union on 9th April 1946 followed by the United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO) on 5th July 1947, the Mizo National Front (MNF) on 21st October 1961 followed later by others. The birth of the Mizo District Council on 25th April 1952 was followed by the abolition of chieftainship in 1953. The Union Territory of Mizoram was born on 21st January 1972 and granted full statehood on 20th February 1987 to become the 23rd State of the Indian Union.
- Two other notable NGOs instituted solely for the uplift of women and to improve their status, was the Mizo Hmeichhe Tangruah Pawl in 1946, and later, the Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) in 1974, both of which continue to make their presence felt in Mizo society.
- Mizoram was declared a disturbed area due to the armed rebellion of the underground Mizo National Front (MNF) movement for independence led by Laldenga against the Indian Union on 1st March 1966. Beyond the destruction, prolonged terror and suffering that this conflict brought on the Mizo people, it also deeply impacted their traditional culture and way of life, ushering in transition and change in their socio-economic and moral life. This movement was brought to a closure 20 years later, with the signing of the Peace Accord on 30th June, 1986.
- The most interesting and noteworthy changes that took place as a result of the 1966 armed conflict was brought on by the Mizo encounter with mainstream India. Above and beyond the armed military conflict which took a drastic and lasting toll on the Mizo psyche, what is meant here is the encounter with Indian culture. It is this encounter which through the years, subsequently facilitated the toning down of Mizo insularity and alienation towards the 'other'. This no doubt is not only ironical but paradoxical as well. It helped the Mizo to achieve the gradual yet reluctant acceptance of the status of being Indian citizens, while at the same time, compounding the issues of alienation and differences.



- This armed conflict encounter brought about a distinct change in the language register of the Mizo which generated a vocabulary growth like never before to help address new concepts and ideas hitherto unknown. This aspect is touched upon in this review under **Part III** in the chapter on **Rambuai Literature**. The encounter also involved a cultural invasion of sorts done so mainly through the cinema medium provided by the Indian armed forces in the Village Grouping Centres during the period 1967 to 1972. It was not only a novel thing for the people but was the only form of entertainment available for an uprooted population whose lives were otherwise burdened with poverty and fear. Aizawl town which had a lone cinema hall called Krishna Talkies at the time, now had an additional three, the Sulu theatre at Bawngkawn Brigade, Pushpak Cinema Hall at Zemabawk, and the centrally located Assam Rifles Cinema Hall. The social history of the Mizo saw for the first time, the entry of social ills of a different nature and dimension hitherto alien to the culture – encouraging friendship of army officers with wives, daughters and sisters for food and alcohol besides other needs and favours.
- Today, there is much to bemoan and regret. Corruption and social evils have made inroads on several fronts in this otherwise peaceful state. On the other hand, and parallel to this, the state and its people are often held up as role models by governing agencies in the sphere of development (rural and urban), education, sports, and general good governance among other things. And above all, the success of the 1986 Peace Accord continues to be held up as a model for lasting peace to other conflict zones in the country. Christianity continues to be an important influencing factor, literature being just one of the areas where it is firmly entrenched, as will be witnessed in the review that follows. But the dynamics of public perception particularly towards the hegemonic power structure of the church is gradually undergoing a change in the light of growing social evils, crime and corruption. The question being asked is: Why is this so in a Christian world? Where do we fix the blame? And who is the most accountable? The future however is not too bleak for Mizoram is blessed with an alert and well-informed civil society which is highly participative and perceptive on issues and concerns of the state and its people.
- What holds interest for scholars and researchers today is a study of the aftermath of the 1966 uprising and the attendant suffering and trauma undergone by all sections of Mizo society – what have been the coping strategies evolved that made people get on with their lives at the time? What have been the post-war and post-accord reflections and debates if any? In looking into the literature generated by the period of '*rambuai lai*', some of the factors one also looks for are the problematics of truth telling and the politics of writing and interpretation, whether one witnesses attempts to sanitize and / or romanticize history in the writings. A number of the above issues are addressed



both directly and indirectly in the review while others will involve a separate study of a more in depth nature. It is appropriate to mention here that those who have returned to 'mainstream' life from the underground are basically of two categories – those from the leadership hierarchy, and those belonging to the lower rung or foot soldiers. The process of how they have coped with their return has on the whole, not been a complex one. The age old communitarian tradition of Mizo society which is inclusive by nature, coupled with the entrenched concepts of Christian brotherhood and forgiveness, has been the key factors for its success. Mr. C. Lalkhawliana, former Underground Finance Minister (1966-1971) and founder editor of *Highlander* English daily since 1972, gave a telling statement at the Aizawl Workshop of the project on *After Decades of Silence – A half century in Mizoram*, which was held on 22 July 2014, when he admitted that the 3rd factor, that is, the Mizo civil society, has been the core reason for the lasting success of the Peace Accord of 1986. If politics of interpretation is present (as it surely is), and a degree of valorization detected (again, as it surely is), particularly in the MNF narratives of **Part III** of the review which have emanated directly from their pens, there are also those engaged in a more raw truth-telling process. With the advantage of retrospective study offered by the span of over four decades now, writers of today engaged with the various texts and sub-texts of 'rambuai literature' genre, are shedding the inhibitions of the past and therefore are certain to offer interesting fare to the world of literature in the coming future.

This brief review of Mizo Literature is structured according to the development of different genres found, rather than the chronological method in order to avoid the mere enlisting of names of writers and their works. Although the review will be accompanied by brief critical comments where considered necessary, **Part IV** will contain an overall critique in order to give a holistic overview of how far Mizo Literature has come, and the challenges that lie ahead. The review will also dwell at length, in **Part III**, on an upcoming genre termed here as 'Rambuai Literature' which translated literally is 'Literature of a troubled land', which will be a review (for the first time) of both fiction and non-fiction writings as well as songs, generated by the Mizo National Front (MNF) uprising of 1966. This dark phase of Mizo history finally saw its closure after two decades with the signing of the historic Peace Accord on 30th June 1986.

To do justice to this review of the published works of Mizo literature, which incidentally is a first attempt of its kind in English, one has to begin from the 1930s since it was during this decade that the first noteworthy secular writings began.

Any study of the development of mainstream Mizo Literature begins with three key forerunners – Kaphleia (1910-1940), Lalzuithanga (1916-1950) and L. Biakliana (1918-1941). All three whom we will refer to as 1st generation writers, appear to have tried



their hand in different literary genres - the essay, novel, short story, drama, poem/songs in which we witness both the colonial influence as well as the beginnings of literary trends and traditions of their own making. Their contribution to Mizo literature cannot be ignored and we find that till today their works live on and continue to find a niche in college and post-graduate studies.

It was not as though there were no earlier writers before them. Thanga (1883-1957) credited to be the first educated Mizo, Pastor R. Dala (1884-1922) of the Thahdo-Kuki Pioneer Mission, Pastor Vanchhunga (1875-1956) who was one of the first preachers, Chuaftera (1889-1960) the first Mizo Baptist Pastor, Pastor Challiana (1890-1969), and several others have been noteworthy contributors to the birth and development of Mizo Christian literature and gospel translations of the Bible and hymns. However, except for fleeting references where deemed necessary, the focus of this review will remain largely in the realm of the secular wherein the extent of the growth and infusion of traditional and modern / current trends in literary outputs will be traced up to present times.

Kaphleia, Lalzuithanga and Biakliana whom we have referred to as the 1st generation writers, were among the first educated Mizo youth to expand their horizons and venture out both in mindset and location, to include other cultures in their literary oeuvre along with their own experiences. We can thus credit them with ushering Mizo literature into the modern era. Sadly enough, what these three young writers also shared in common was their early demise, but their remarkable literary contribution continues to have influence and be highly regarded. Their other writer contemporaries whose output we will trace in sequence are World War novelist Capt. C. Khuma (1914-1990), Nuchhungi Renthlei (1914-2006) considered the first contributor to Children's literature, and Rev. Zairema (1917-2008).





## Part II

# Brief Review of Mizo Literature

### Essay / Prose

The essay is considered to be one of the non-fiction genres that have most enriched Mizo literature. It is also true that this genre's presence in Mizo literature has a strong western influence in terms of genesis, form, and style of language used, in short, it is not indigenous to the Mizo oral tradition. Yet in content it is replete with a sense of rootedness and belonging. This is immediately seen in the select list of original Mizo essays which began the trend, beginning with the one written in 1939 by Kaphleia titled "Thlirtu" (The Onlooker). It was written during his struggle with the then dreaded tuberculosis disease while studying at Scottish Church College under Calcutta University, a disease that was soon to take his life. What gives added value to the essay is that it is a deep philosophical reflection of life based on his personal experience. Kaphleia's contemporary Rev. Zairema, though a pastor, was one who used a much wider canvas for his essays that included, (besides spiritual and religious topics), themes on politics, corruption, issues of language, translation, identity, nationalism, alcohol, Mizo social life, Mizo culture and many more. A collection of 83 of his essays have been published in a volume in 2009 entitled *Thukhawchang Min Pekte Hi* (subjects / topics you have given me). One of his essays



"Hmeichhia nge Minu?" 1997 (Woman or female?) stirred a debate in the daily local papers at the time of its publication, which was in retrospect an important contributing factor that helped generate public consciousness on issues of gender, feminism and male hegemony in Mizo society, for the first time in an open forum.

As we continue to trace the essay genre in the following years 1949-1950, we can detect other trends that enrich and widen its scope. The names of C.Thuamluaia (1922-1959) and KC Lalvunga, otherwise known as Zikpui Pa (1929-1994), and J.Malsawma also known as Thanpui Pa (b.1930) are important names to mention here. While students at Gauhati University, they used to contribute several essays of remarkable quality to a student magazine called *Mizo Zirlai Pawl Chanchinbu*. Mention may be made here of three essays in particular which are "Zoram Nipui" (Mizoram Summer) by C.Thuamluaia, "Thal Favang" (Autumn) by Zikpui Pa, and "Fur Khawhnawm" (Rainy Season) by J.Malsawma, which drew attention to the beauty and qualities of nature as part of God's creation, and resultant reflections on human life. C.Thuamluaia's essay quotes P.B.Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind", an indication of his poetic leanings, and a festschrift *Zo Hnam Arsi* dedicated to him was published in 2009, while 51 essays by Zikpui Pa have been compiled in *Zikpui Pa Hnuhma* (2000).

Amongst the three, Padma Shri (2013) recipient J. Malsawma's rich output include two well known essays "Harsatna" (Tribulations), "Kan Mizia" (Our Nature/ Character), and two books by him, *Vanglai* (Prime of Life) (1995) and *Zo-Zia* (Zo Nature) (2000). As a critic he is among the first to have given indepth study to Mizo songs and poems as a result of which his essay "Hla Nge Nge!" (songs will be songs) drew critical acclaim. In one essay from *Zo-Zia*, "Mizo Hmeichhia: Hman leh Tun" (Mizo Women: Then and Now) he gives a telling comment on Mizo women of today whom he believes are now too liberated with men in danger of coming under their authority. This comment of his is no doubt burdened with the sub text of male hegemony inborn in Mizo society.

The 1960s and thereafter witnessed the growth and increase of the print media - of both the daily papers and weekly/monthly magazines published in the Mizo language which played a crucial role in honing the writing skills and talent of upcoming writers. *Thu leh Hla*, a literary journal first published in 1965 by the Mizo Academy of Letters (MAL) has continued to make rich contributions to Mizo literature by providing a platform for various writers and critics, and from which literary discourse continues to emanate till today. Some well-known literary figures who continue to be read widely in the essay genre are R.Vanlawma (1915-2006) author of *Ka Ram leh Kei* (1965) (My Land and I), well-known translator J.F. Laldailova (1925-1979) author of *Bible Thlirna* (2003), Siamkima Khawhhring (1938-1992) author of *Zalenna Ram* (1986) (land of the free), novelist and recipient of Padma Shri (1985) and Bhasa Samman (1997) James



Dokhuma (1932-2007), well known Mizo historian and Bhasa Samman recipient (2014) B.Lalthangliana (b. 1945), noted critic L.Keivom (b. 1939), and several more whose names have not been enumerated here, have from the late 1970s, provided rich and varied readings for the literate Mizo public.

Though a developed print and publishing culture continues to facilitate more new essay / prose writers, they appear to have a long way to go in order to achieve the kind of literary value credited to the older generation. Post 1990s has ushered in new names like the popular writer Vanneihluanga and well known translator P.L.Liandinga, while from Lunglei, South Mizoram, names such as Thuamtea Khawlhiring and TC Jonunsanga (Sena Tlau) are well-known. Most of the prose writings found today are topical and deal with contemporary social and cultural issues, while the language of satire, wit and humour predominates in them. We may well say that Mizo popular literature within the ambit of popular culture is well and truly entrenched today because of the contribution of this new school of writers.

In the area of critical essay writing, two names come to mind and who by their own admission have more or less taken the credit for introducing the trend of literary criticism into Mizo writings. One of them is Zikpui Pa who in 1954 wrote "Lushai Literature" wherein he claimed that this essay of his was the first critical input made of Mizo literature. One predominant feature about his criticism is a clear privileging of English canonical literary traditions while sidelining the oral traditions of Mizo forefathers. Since his critical approach foregrounds a biased view it appears to have few takers as far as following this kind of a colonial trend is concerned.

The second name is Siamkima Khawlhiring who with his rich background as a college teacher of English Literature appears to carry more weight for some. His claim that his review essay of R.Vanlawma's book *Ka Ram leh Kei* as being the first sample of literary criticism in Mizo writing has perhaps prompted several others in the following years to claim their book reviews, or any book review for that matter, as literary criticisms. However, Siamkima's contribution of critical essays in *Zalenna Ram* (2nd edition 1992) contains some gems, one of them being "Mi Hrang Chhura" (The Brave / Daring Chhura) wherein he gives new and challenging interpretations to a folk figure who otherwise is regarded as no more than a bumbling fool and a figure of fun.

Among others though small in number, that have succeeded in delving deeper into literary critical ethos, is the review essay written by Peter Lianhleia (1945-1997) in the literary journal *Thu leh Hla* issue of March 1978, on James Dokhuma's novel *Thla Hleinga Zan* (1978) which among other things, has impacted a rethink on the very role of novelists. C.Lalsiamthanga besides his many critical articles on Mizo literature, recently published a book *Zawlawng* (2013) which is a collection of his critical essays of both English and





Mizo literature. His insightful views and practice of juxtaposing his reading of Mizo writing with those of other literatures has contributed meaningfully to bringing in other critical perceptions and interpretations as well. Others who have contributed meaningfully to the field of Mizo literary studies and criticism with their publications are B. Lalthangliana, Darchuailova, R.L. Thanmawia, and Laltluangliana Khiangte.

In the area of critical discourse the writings of L. Keivom (b. 1939) is worth study particularly for his views on the Mizo language. Recipient of the MAL 1991 Book of the Year award for *Zoram Khawvel I*, he is multi-lingual and writes in Hmar, Mizo and English with several poems, critical essays, and translations to his credit besides two novels and over a dozen short stories. His contest of the Duhlian Lusei dialect as the lingua franca for the Mizo is well known and has caused ripples in the literary world with what has been coined as 'keivomesque' (*Impressions on Keivom*, 187). This term refers to an English word which is put in Mizo spelling according to pronunciation. Some examples from *Zoram Khawvel I to IV* are given below:

Factory - faktawri	culture – kalchar	gender – zendar
Identity – aidentiti	qualification – kualifikeson	history – histawri
Modern – mawdan	democracy – dimokrasi	control – control
Function – fangson	duty – diuti	ethnic – etnik

As can be seen, there appears to be an attempt to indigenize or appropriate the English language. Keivom is however criticized for being inconsistent and arbitrary in his own usage, and for not having worked out any methodology for this practice. It is yet too early to gauge the extent of influence and impact that this new trend will have on Mizo writers but it certainly begs further debate in literary critical discourse. Besides some of his other views, he is of the opinion that anointing the Lusei dialect as Mizo language came much too soon and has adversely affected the unity of all those sharing common Zo descent. (ibid 187).

Amongst the current crop of new generation writers, there is a marked progress in critical discourse facilitated by the influence of new theories and serious research labour that has given an impetus to multi-interpretations of texts. H.Lalrinfela, aka Mafaa Hauhna with two slim volumes of his writings namely, *Chawlhna Tuikam: A Juvenilia* (2002) and *Thlaler Aurawl: A Miscellany* (2008) has succeeded in carving out a niche for himself and his style of writing and approach has influenced a number of other new generation writers. C.Lalawmpuia Vanchiau's book *Tapchhak Theory: Essays & Criticism* (2011) is a good example of new thinking and new trends that is slowly but surely gaining ground in the Mizo literary scene.



## Novel / Short Story

Both the novel and short story are categorized together and dealt with alongside each other in this review. The influence of the 1st generation writers like Kaphleia, Lalzuithanga and Biakliana continues to have a strong hold on later writers in terms of style, language, technique, presentation and choice of themes. It may be noted that the fictions of the 1st generation writers in the following review includes the year in which it is claimed that the works have been written, and the year of actual publication.

The first Mizo novel *Hawilopari* (1936 / pub 1983) by Biakliana is a historical novel having as its backdrop the 1st Lushai Expedition undertaken by the British (1871-72) into the then Lushai Hills, following the raid of Alexandrapur tea garden and the consequent kidnapping of Mary Winchester by Chief Bengkhuai and his warriors in January 1871. The novel incorporates several strands which provide an interesting glimpse of the old Mizo life and culture such as the practice of taking prisoners as slaves after a raid or battle. The first Mizo short story "*Lali*" (1937 / pub 1963) by the same author is also claimed to be the first Christian love story. It is interesting to note that Biakliana has not only used female protagonists as his focus but entitles both his works with their names. "*Lali*" can in fact be read as a strong indictment of the marginalized status of women in Mizo society.

Kaphleia wrote his short story "*Chhingpuii*" sometime between 1938-39 and published in 1963, based on a historical figure of the pre-colonial period. It is a compact narrative that contains several very crucial strands with regard to the old Mizo way of life – such as big game hunting, the status of 'pasaltha' (hunter-warrior), courting practices, superstition and taboo, inter village rivalry and 'war of songs' and many more. Kaphleia, like Biakliana, possessed a strong progressive streak that is reflected in their daring to break accepted norms of traditional thinking for new thinking and views in their writings which will be dilated upon in Part IV of this review.

Among the novels of 1st generation writers, *Thlahrang* (pub 1977) by Lalzuithanga is often referred to as the first Mizo detective novel, wherein a mystery is to be solved by both reader and characters within the novel. The building up of suspense, the underlying note of disapproval of colonial influence and presence seen as the evil 'other' while the old Mizo way of life is propagated as the more superior – all of this appears to reflect not only the wide reading of the writer but his strong sense of Mizo identity. This novel is probably one of the rare works found in Mizo literature which has no inbuilt love story, and one without a hero or heroine per se. *Phira leh Ngurthanpari* (1976) by the same author on the other hand has an overwhelmingly capable hero who may be the first of his kind in a Mizo novel. Set in pre-colonial times, it is an interesting read which depicts the tragic plight of the heroine who loses her sanity due to thwarted love, and the beloved who at the end, becomes a legend of sorts due to his valour and other qualities that he possessed



as a 'pasaltha' (brave warrior) in keeping with old Mizo values. Lalzuthanga also has three World War II short stories to his credit as claimed by C. Vanlallawma in *Zopui: Studies in Mizo Identity and Literature* (2011) which are "Min Hriatreng Nan" ( In Memory of Me), "Khawfing Chat" (Break of Dawn) and "Tu Mahin an Hriat Ve Loh Tur" (that which no one must know).

Another writer to use the World War II as setting for his novel is Capt. C. Khuma who is categorized amongst the first generation writers. His personal experiences as a Captain in the Burmese Army, and in the Allied war effort against the Japanese has served him in good stead as seen in his two novels *Maymyo Sanapui* (grand clock of Maymyo) (1946) and *Chhingkhual Lungdi* (love for a stranger) (1952). In the former work, we see for the first time the depiction of a Mizo male who falls in love with someone outside of his community, a Burmese girl named Ma Kla Kyi.

C. Thuamluaia wrote three short stories "Engtin Awm Ta Zel Ang Maw?" (what continues to befall him/her?) (1945), "Leitlang Dingdi" and "Sialton Official", the last of which earned him wide critical acclaim. In it Thuamluaia depicts an intense love story between a Mizo college student and a Khasi young girl who works at a tea-shop, whose break-up is inevitable due to their different community background. Since this is a story which uses Shillong (the present capital of Meghalaya) as a backdrop with which the author was all too familiar, readers can relate to a great extent with some of the locations mentioned in it such as Polo Grounds, Police Bazar and so on. The narrative technique of skillfully weaving two time-frames of past and present places the writer in a class of his own. The end of the story is somewhat contrived as though to incorporate the Christian element at all cost, and which appears to adversely affect an otherwise thoroughly good story.

C. Thuamluaia's contemporary Zikpui Pa has three novels and three short stories to his credit (this includes the last but incomplete short story "Lalramliana" (1994)). His novels include *CC Coy No. 27* (1986), *Cross Bulah Chuan* (by the cross) (1986) and *Nunna Kawngthuam Puiah* (at life's crossroads) (1989) while the titles of his other two short stories are "Silvarthangi" (1991) and "Hostel Awmtu" (the hostel guardian) (1991). "Hostel Awmtu" is a ghost story with a difference, one where the ghost is more a figure of pathos to be pitied than one who elicits fear of the unknown. "Silvarthangi" is a story that projects the plight of Mizo women in a dominant patriarchal society but one where women themselves are far from blameless when it comes to domestic abuse. *Nunna Kawngthuam Puiah* considered by the author as his masterpiece, is a big work set during the troubled years of the MNF uprising and can therefore be classed as 'rambua'i fiction' though the focus is more on the love story element rather than the 'rambua'i' which appears to be incidental. Prescribed for Undergraduate studies, it is projected more prominently as a love story but is in reality, rich for more complex interpretations. Interestingly enough, due to



pressure from some quarters, the author finally caved in and rewrote the novel's conclusion to satisfy a so-called 'public demand' to see the villain suitably receive his just dues.

The MNF movement and its aftermath post 1966 put a spanner to a great extent, on what could have been the continued development of the Mizo novel which had been making a slow but steady progress since post-independent India. Post 1970s saw the reappearance of the novel genre and new names. Darhlira, perhaps in an effort to bring in a change of scene from the general public mood of gloom and fear due to the troubled times, wrote a novel called *Khawkil Bung Huai* (spirit of the banyan tree at Khawkil) (1975) and we witness the first example of 'Rambuai' fiction in 1975 in Vanlalngena's work, *Ka Di Ve kha* (my beloved).

During this period, James Dokhuma who held the rank of Dy. Speaker in the MNF underground government was wounded during an ambush and eventually captured. While imprisoned at Tezpur Special Jail and Gauhati District Jail between 1968-1971, he wrote three novels *Rinawmin* (faithfully), *Khawhar In* (home of the deceased) and his classic novel *Thla Hleinga Zan* (full-moon night) which by popular demand has a sequel *Thla Hleinga Zan 2* (1999).

The year 1977 for the first time introduced what we may categorize as 'pulp fiction' to the Mizo reading public from Joe Ngurdawla in works like *Dirty Broadway*, *High Time in Paris*, *Home in Texas*, and *Meet Me in Texas Moonlight*. The titles themselves are a strong pointer of the changing times such as the growing influence of Western popular culture, and so occupies a significance place in the evolution and growth of Mizo fiction under different trends and influences.

It can be said that from 1989 onwards, the annual selection for the prestigious award of Book of the Year spearheaded by the Mizo Academy of Letters facilitated and encouraged the birth of several new writers and new books as well as the renewed input of established writers, particularly in the novel and non-fiction genre. Other fiction writers whose contributions have enriched Mizo Literature are Khawlkungi, Padma Shri Awardee (1987), H. Lalngurliani, R.L. Rina, V.L.Zaikima, C. Hermana, C. Remtluanga, Thankima, Capt. L.Z. Sailo, C. Laizawna, Lalhmingliana Saiawi, Lalhriata, and H. Lallungmuana. Their choice of themes as well as narrative approach, and the continued display of the influence of Christian morals remained similar to writers of the first generation. New literary contributions in the use of innovative narrative techniques, and new experimentations with language and style were still to come. It will be seen that attempts to engage with such trends and experimentation with forms, technique and language only began to be used by writers post 2000.

The literary contribution of Lalhmingliana Saiawi (b.1937) warrants some further observations here. His output is prolific both in the fiction and non-fiction genre. He wrote



18 books - 9 non-fiction and 9 fiction works. What is remarkable is the consistency of the theme of family ties and rootedness found in his writings. His fiction in particular are sagas of three separate families with the same backdrop and time frame that skillfully paves the way for future linkages. Two of the fictionalised families cross borders between books as it were, to tie up through marriage. The three families are: Laiawrha and Sakawli family in three books, Nukawki and her line in two books, and Unionliana family in two books. The family line of Laiawrha and Nukawki finally link through marriage ties in two later books and at some point we also witness the presence of the daughter of Unionliana (the third family) which perhaps predicts a future linking of all three generations from the three families. The chief literary contribution to Mizo fiction of these works is the introduction of the tradition of family saga writing, and that too which takes the innovative step of networking that spill over into the other without being sequels. The authorial presence is never far and the involvement with characters quite undisguised. The writer claims in interactions had with him, that the novels he writes are indeed intended to be lifelike and real and that he writes for his readers with the intention of making it worth their while. He also sees himself as a humourist. Perhaps due to the influence of the church, the Mizo reading public remains inhibited about scenes and language with sexual overtones in mainstream literature. In this sense Lalmingliana Saiawi continues to be controversial for we witness a consistent stand in his works, on the depiction of the realities of life in all its facets.

In the fiction output of the new contemporary writers we begin to witness a leaning towards new literary trends and innovations. Writers like C. Lalnunchanga, Lalrammawia Ngente, Samson Thanruma, Darrokima, Zonunsanga Kiangte and Romuanpuui Zadeng have made some valuable contributions in the field of Mizo fiction. One of the upcoming trends post 2010 is the momentum gained by short stories. Mafaa Hauhna's collection *Vaihna Vartian* (2010) and several other mixed collections of short stories, articles / essays and poems enlisted here already foretell the thrust of future works of the new generation writers.

*Nang leh Kei* (2010) by Zara

*Hmangaihna Zun Zam* (2010) by F.Vanlalrochana

*Kum Leng* (2010) by Vanhmunmawia Hnamte

*Vutduk Kara Meisi* (2011) by C. Lalnunchanga

*Hringnun Piah Lo Kir Lehna* (2011) by Lalropuia

*Nun Khawhar Hnemtu* (2011) by CVL Fakhlamawia

*A Hawlphum* (2011) by Thara Tlau

*Priya leh Kei* (2011) by Samson Thanruma



*Hlim Lai Ni* (2011) by Vanlalmuanawma  
*Maphasy* (2012) by F. Lalzuithanga  
*Enteh Lungrun* (2013) by Lalhmachhuana Zofa  
*Chhum Dum Kara Chhemdam Thli* (2013) by TS Khupchong  
*Lamlan Lehlam* (2013) by Lalhruaitluanga Chawngte  
*Ramada 19* (2013) by Zirsangkima  
*Ngawpui Khawhar* (2013) by Joseph K. Lalthanmawia  
*Lengdawn* (2013) by C. Lalhruaitluanga  
*Dithlifarfem* (2013) by Zirtei Mangpa  
*I Tan Ka Ti* (2013) by C. Lalrochhara  
*Rap* (2014) by Laltleipuia Hmar  
*Pindan Khawhar* (2014) by T.S.Khupchong

## **Drama / Plays**

Judging from available records, the Mizo was introduced to this category only after Christianization. The basic understanding of drama at the time was to do with pure enactment and performance as a result of which we do not have proper records, not to speak of publications, of the early initial short plays and skits. Similar to the medieval Miracle and Mystery plays found in English Literature, the white missionaries used play enactment particularly during Christmas festivities to attract crowds, wherein brief Biblical teachings would be incorporated into the variety shows. The first annual Christmas celebration was recorded to be in 1912 and “was a pot-pouri of various items and skits” (Tillotoma Misra. 210). This gradually took on a more secular nature as it grew in popularity and which in a sense, was eventually appropriated from the missionaries by the laity. But interestingly enough, Chawngzika (1913-2000) in his autobiography credits the coming of drama and its popularity in the early days from a different perspective – in his view it was the shows organized during Durga Puja by the Assam Rifles that first provoked interest in the genre of drama acting amongst the local population.

In 1940, Zosap Rev. Samuel Davies who was a diploma holder from the London School of Drama, instituted the Zosiami Cup in his daughter’s name and in the first drama competition of the same year, Lalzuithanga of the 1st generation writers participated with his play *The Black Corner of Aijal in 1999* (1999 a Aizawl Khawpui) which from its title, reflects a futuristic vision. It was enacted successfully by the Kulikawn YLA. Lalzuithanga it appears, was the only one from his generation of writers to have written a play. In



this first drama competition, the prize was awarded to Mission Veng YLA who enacted *Princess Pocahontas* scripted by Chawngzika. With the encouragement of Rev. Samuel Davies, interest in drama grew. Ch Pasena (1893-1961) by 1926 had already adapted Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* in a play called *Sailoka*. In 1929 he wrote a play called *Ransa Khawmpui* (Conference of Animals) to draw attention to the need for social reform regarding the evils of drinking. This fact alone is an interesting contribution to the study of Mizo society of the time – the level of awareness on the part of writers for the need of social reform is another. Lalkailuaia (1901-1954) scripted two very well loved Mizo folktales *Tualvungi and Zawlpala*, and *Liandova te Unau* (Liandova and brother) which was enacted in 1935.

The futuristic theme of Lalzuithanga's play of 1940 about the fate of Aizawl in the year 1999 reveals a depth and talent which, if reports are to be believed, the white missionaries found hard to believe. Lalzuithanga also wrote two other plays in 1941 namely, *Horrible* and *Westerners*, as well as a musical drama called *Lushai Fantasy*. Considering the fact that the print culture and education of the Mizo was barely into its 48th year, and the limited exposure and resources available at the time, the range of reading and confidence of the writer is nothing short of amazing.

The Mizo was thus no stranger to the genre of drama / play since the early days of Christianization and the focus was basically on enactment and performance. Chawngzika in his autobiography points out that post World War II saw the gradual decline of the active participation of the YLA (Young Lushai Association, later to be renamed Young Mizo Association in 1948) who used to be the prominent organizers and enactors in the popular drama competitions for the Zosiami Cup.

Lalthangfala Sailo was the first dramatist to write and publish a full-fledged Mizo drama *Sangi Inleng* (Sangi's visitor) (1963) which continues to be a popular inclusion for Undergraduate studies in the State. This work was followed by *Liandova te Unau* (1965) along the lines of the Mizo folktale that depicts not only the sad plight of two orphan brothers, but highlights the hand of destiny which eventually turns around the fate and fortune of the exploited – true to the saying 'every dog has his day.'

A contemporary of Lalzuithanga, Lalhmuaka (1915-2002) published a volume of six plays in 1965 called *Lemchan Bu* (Book of Plays), and another volume called *Drama Pasarih* (seven dramas) in 1987. Two plays included in the first work are by others, namely RK Dingliana and Lalzamlia. For the most part, Lalhmuaka's plays are based on biblical narratives and can be categorized as Christian plays.

While the influence of Christianity is a continuing process here just as we have seen with the previous genres, we also witness that juxtaposing this is the traditional Mizoness which



appears in various ways in the works of writers through the years. Christian conversion, education and print culture may have broadened the worldview of the Mizo, yet it did not colour him so completely so as to cause him to lose his indigenous rootedness. The Mizo sense of humour and ready wit is depicted by K. Saibela (1935-2010) in a play called *Chhura and Naa*, drawn from oral folklore, which got the 1st prize in 1962 in a drama writing competition organized by the Shillong Mizo Cultural Club. His other popular comedy was a work called *Thu A Tawp E Lumam* (that's all there is, fool) (1980) which was considered one of the top entries for another competition organized this time, by Tribal Research Institute. It is said that this play used to be a sell-out wherever staged, both at Aijal Club and other venues during the 1980s. Today, comedy has firmly entrenched itself as a popular and lucrative medium with the onset of local channels in the electronic media, and several drama clubs have sprouted, the better known and established ones being the well-loved Thangkura Drama Party, Zephyr Drama Club and Leikhi Miss (Tuarpuui Team). Comedy of course is used as a powerful tool for social criticism here, so both parody and farce predominate and no one is spared, least of all church leaders and politicians. All of this can be said to contribute effectively to the social mapping of Mizo society.

Khawlkungi has contributed richly to the sub-genre of Christian plays. She first achieved fame with the drama *Zawlpala Thlan Tlang* (by Zawlpala's grave) (1981), which she later converted into a novel in 1983. She scripted several plays for the stage, with all of them bearing the strong stamp of Christian moral teachings. They are *Hmuh Theih Ka Va Duh Em* (I wish I could see it) (1972), *Rammawi Kalkawng* (road to a beautiful land) (1978), *Monu Sual* (the wicked daughter in-law) (1982), and *Kristian Drama*, (1984), are among the more well-known pieces. She also has a book entitled *Lemchan Thawnthu Thlan Chhuah* (1999) which is a collection of plays.

Mizo drama has been given impetus and its progress further established due to the rich contributions made by Lalngluangliana Khiangte not only in terms of the 30 plays written by him, but also because of his success in taking the Mizo drama beyond regional borders. Under his direction *Sakei Lu Lam* was staged at New Delhi in 2011 at the IGNC for Arts. Another two plays written by him are *Lalnu Ropuiliiani* (chieftainess Ropuiliiani) (1991) and *Pasaltha Khuangchera* (brave warrior Khuangchera) (1997), both of them based on the life of Mizo historical and legendary characters who resisted and countered British occupation of the Lushai Hills. A Hindi translation of the latter play was published in 2014.

Several plays continue to be written and published post 2000. But the question is - how many of these are being staged, or, for that matter, have been written for the stage or the reading public? A point can be raised, in the context of Mizo literature, about having a growing corpus of written plays / drama in the absence of a theatre culture in which to stage / perform them. The fact that drama per se did not find space in the old Mizo culture





and oral traditions while story telling, myths, legends and songs definitely did, is one reason why theatre culture has still not found a strong footing till today. As for the performing arts, though rich in several kinds of dances to accompany various festivals and rituals, the actual enactment of any other kind of art was rudimentary and did not evolve into a formal art form in traditional Mizo culture. An example we can cite here is the rudimentary rituals and chants performed by priests – *bawlpu* and *sadawt* – for specific sacrifices which did involve some degree of enactment. It can also be argued that song traditions which the Mizo has in abundance from the old days are performative since performance can indeed spill beyond the formal theatre / stage ambit. With the coming of Christianity and the many revivals that have been referred to in the introduction, the singing and dancing of praise and worship which often get emotional and trancelike to the accompaniment of traditional drums, can also be deemed as performance in so far as it has a message to convey, either to God or the assembled congregation.

But the future is not too bleak for drama. The Science Promotion Wing of the SCERT has taken up the promotion of staging of plays in a big way at the High School level in the state. It organizes an annual competition for theatre as well as giving prizes for Best Director and Best Script. There are other forums involved in promoting the performing arts now, some in collaboration with the National School of Drama, New Delhi. The Department of Art and Culture, Government of Mizoram has consistently played a facilitative role. The role of the YMA as well as the church comes into play as well with its youth wing the Kristian Thalai Pawl (KTP) and Thalai Kristian Pawl (TKP) organizing drama competitions during the Christmas festive season as well as at their Conferences.

## Hla / Poems

This category of *hla* / poems requires a few lines of clarification first. '*Hla*' in Mizo simply means song - 'sung to a tune', so we may say we only had the tradition of 'song-poems' in our old oral traditions and even long after the post-literate culture was introduced. But having said this, we now also learn that first generation writer Biakliana, and well-known song composers like RL Kamlala (1901-1965) and Rokunga (1914-1969) later did pen a few poems, not songs only. The conscious effort to establish a tradition of the written poem which has been christened '*hlahril*' ('*hril*' denoting to narrate) is a recent one, since the year 2000 approximately, while the term '*hlachham*' or '*chhamhla*' – ('*chham*' denoting to recite or chant) since 2005-06 is also used by some scholars. Time will tell through usage which term will eventually be accepted to mean written poetry. In this review therefore, the term song (*hla*) will be used until we come to the contemporary scene where poetry writing (as in poem) enters the scene, when we shall use the term poetry / poem in both literal and literary sense.



It has been said that the song – ‘*hla*’ – tradition is ingrained in the Mizo psyche since time immemorial and some have even called the Mizo ‘the singing tribe’. The most useful resource for mapping and structuring of Mizo history and culture continues to remain its oral traditions, particularly the songs and tales.

It was mentioned in the early part of this review that the first generation writers Kaphleia, Lalzuthanga and Biakliana had tried their hand in different literary genres – the essay, novel, short stories, drama, poem/songs wherein we witness both the colonial influence as well as the beginnings of literary trends and traditions of their own making. Kaphleia, according to records from his diary, composed 17 songs out of which only 9 have been found. A song composed in 1939 at his village Tachhip “Zoram! Ka Ram!” (Zoram, my land) is expressive of his love for his land and people. It has thus been classed as a patriotic song. The last line of the 4th verse which when translated, reads “let it be for God and our land” in all likelihood was later to be the inspiration for the war cry of the MNF independent movement “Pathian leh Kan Ram Tan” (For God and Country). Lalzuthanga too composed several songs out of which 14 are available. He too has composed some ‘patriotic songs’ such as “Zo hnam hla” (song of Zo nation) and “Ka pianna ram” (Zoram, the land of my birth).

Biakliana, the youngest of the three, has over 30 songs to his credit, a few of them in translation from English as well. They are in most part Christian songs in praise of God. An instance of how a translator can further transform a phrase to flawlessly incorporate an indigenous strain from an otherwise totally English coloured song is the following from a Boys Scout and Girl Guide marching song entitled “Down from the mountain a gay little stream” . The chorus of this song – begins with the line “Murmuring stream, murmuring stream” which he characterizes with a Mizo touch by calling the stream “Zotui thiang te” – transforming it into a streamlet flowing down from the Zo hills of his land, thus appropriating the quality of the English countryside and localizing it to express his own feelings as a Mizo longing for the clear mountain springs.

The talent of these writers was truly versatile. It can be seen that the nationalistic nostalgia and patriotism felt for the land of their birth was not provoked by the MNF ideology or any party politics either, but rather the other way round wherein with the changing political scene, inspiration was drawn from such songs that were composed much ahead of the underground movement.

The following is a brief summary that highlights some of the different trends that Mizo song / *hla* underwent after the advent of Christianity and print culture.

## **Kaihlek hla / songs**

Since the word ‘*kaihlek*’ means to parody, to burlesque or to poke fun at, it was songs that sought to counter or undermine Christian / church hymns by appropriating the same



tune for the expression of non-religious sentiments. Such songs were popular during the decade spanning 1920-1930, and a number of them were not necessarily targeted at the church but composed to simply express sentiments of romantic love and relationships. The Christian conversion that was gradually sweeping the land was not without its teething problems and found resistance from those who balked at the rigidity of the new teachings, and the fact that old traditional songs and dances, in other words, the old Mizo way of life, was rejected and preached as evil and sinful. Any church member found singing such songs was disciplined by the Church. Such an approach offended the sentiments of many who believed their traditional identity was threatened. So '*kaihlek*' songs can be considered a subversive reaction to early Christianity in the land. However it is interesting to note that the church by the year 1947, when such songs continued to be composed by political parties for their own ends, was silent and appeared to not take offence.

### ***Lengzem hla / songs***

This category is love songs. Many of the songs composed borrowed the tune of well-known English / western songs of the time and were popular. Vankhama (1906-1970) and Lalzova (1920-1945) contributed largely to this category of songs and were in fact regarded as representative composers of '*lengzem*' song composers.

### ***Khuarel hla / Khawwtlang lunglen hla / hla lenglawng***

Such songs are 'nature songs' in praise of God's creation which also includes other parameters of the environment and human relationships, including all things appointed by God's will. Such songs carry the influence of Christian teaching and it is often hard to differentiate the object of praise and admiration – the creator or the object of creation. These songs also carry a strong strain of nostalgia and longing for the old life and values practiced by the forefathers, romanticizing the qualities of sacrifice, giving and sharing of the community, bravery, nobility of character, now being lost due to demands of new ways of life. The more prominent composers in this category are Liandala (1900-1980), Damhauva (1909-1972), Romani (1910-1972) and Rokunga (1914-1969). For many admirers, these songs are seen as the equivalence to English Romantic poetry / Romanticism.

### ***Ram / Hnam Ngaih hla***

There are some who prefer to categorize these songs as '*hnam hla*' or national songs, though such a nomenclature can be debatable as 'national' in literature, and 'national' in politics can have different connotations and interpretations. Many of the songs under this category are in a way identified with regional political parties and by extension, regional politics as well. We already commented on the song by Kaphleia "Zoram! Ka Ram!" but



other such songs which were composed by Rokunga and Laltanpuia (of Sialsuk, 1915-1997) were again, most profited from by the MNF movement. Capt. LZ Sailo (1924-2008) gained fame from his popular song “Insuihkhawm leh zai I rel ang u” composed in 1979. This song gives a clarion call to all Zo descendents far and near to come together as one nation – an ideology of the ZORO movement (Zo Reunification Organization) strongly advocated by the composer.

## **Poetry / chhamhla / hlahril**

The trend of poetry writing, (not song) as already pointed out, is of recent practice (though not necessarily of origin) in Mizo literature. There are many, particularly among the younger generation, who are now trying their hand at it. We will leave it to time to sieve through them. Meanwhile, the trend for, and the first to coin the word ‘*hlahril*’ is credited to James Dokhuma who in 1980 published a collection of his poems which he called *Ka Hlahril* after which he published another collection of 34 poems called *Ka Thinlung Luangliam* (1996). Others who have published their own collections have been Lalsangzuali Sailo (*Kulva*, 1993), Capt LZ Sailo (*Awmkhawhar Suihlunglen* 1998), C. Chhuanvawra (*Zo Kung* 2005), RL Thanmawia (*Senmei*, 1997), Lalzuahliana (*Lungmawl Selin*, 1992), Mafaa Hauhna (*Chawlhna Tuikam* 1997) and a few others.

Since the trend has been set, we can expect the corpus of this particular genre to be enriched in the years to come. Many of the educated younger generation are also contributing their original poems in English, in other words, in the genre of Mizo Writing in English (MWE). There was a poetry periodical started in 1993 called *Leisure* (A Magazine of Poems in English and Mizo) which unfortunately proved to be short lived. Monthly magazines of popular culture like *Sabereka Khuangkaih* since 1996 and *ZOlife* since 2004 have a poetry section for Mizo as well as English original poems. A literary *Journal of MIELS* started in 2014, also has a poetry corner for local poets.

Under this category of MWE there are some publications which, though few, deserve mention as collections by single poets. They are *Spectrum: A Plethora of Rhapsody* (2002) by Laldinkima Sailo with 50 poems, JB-a *Damlai Sulhnu: Selected Songs & Sketches* (2000) which contains 17 of his poems in English, *Tinkim Dawn: Mizo and English Poems* (2003) by Malsawmi Jacob which includes 50 of her poems in English, *Tapchhak Theory: Essays & Criticism* (2011) by C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau which includes 13 of his poems in English.

There are also poets in MWE whose output though small so far, have had their poems published in collections along with other poets from the Northeast of India. They are Mona Zote who has now gained wide recognition in academia, Cherrie L. Chhangte, Ramdinthari and Lalrinmawii Khiangte. With the exception of Lalrinmawii Khiangte, three of these young poets have had their work published in the *Anthology of Contemporary Poetry from*



*the Northeast* (2003). Their poems have been included in the *Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India* (Poetry and Essays) (2011). Dawngi Chawngthu is an established poet in MWE who has contributed richly with 16 of her poems to a collection published in Ontario, Canada titled *A Stream of Poetry: The Storytellers Anthology Vol I*, (2013). A collection of her own poems was recently published by Writers Workshop, Kolkata – *of butterflies and lullabies & Unfinished conversations* (2015).

## Mizo Women Writers

The growing number of Mizo women writers has warranted a separate category in this review. As a case in point, out of the 160 books published in Mizo in 2013, 14 of them were authored by Mizo women. This is no mean achievement when we consider the fact that Mizo women have entered the arena rather late. Enlisted below are some of the books of 2013, both fiction and non-fiction:

<i>Leibatna Sal Ata Zalenna</i>	Vanramchhuangi
<i>Mitthi Privatise</i>	Vanramchhuangi
<i>Rualbanlote Dikna leh Chanvo</i>	Vanramchhuangi
<i>Thawnthu 40</i>	Khawlkungi
<i>Tuarna leh Malsawmna</i>	Lalzawmliani
<i>Bible-a Hmeichhiate</i>	PC Laltlani
<i>Betty</i>	C. January
<i>Bai Bel</i>	Zarzokimi
<i>Dithlifarfem</i>	Zirtei Mangpa
<i>Hmeithai Fa Te Te Si</i>	C. Lalmangaihtluangi
<i>Zonunmawia</i> (drama)	Florence LR Ralte

Only three women writers have so far been recipients of the prestigious Book of the Year, awarded by the Mizo Academy of Letters since 1989. They are Lalsangzuali Sailo, writer / composer (1999), H. Lalngurliani, novelist (2004) and Romuanpuii Zadeng, novelist (2012) – just three women writers within the span of twenty-five years!

In order to trace the beginnings of how women made their voices known and heard, it is only fair that we go back in time to the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, to our oral traditions wherein women song composers like Pi Hmuaki, Lianchhiari, Laltheri, Darmani, Darpawngi and Saikuti not only composed songs with their own signature tunes, but even had songs named after them long after their demise, such was their fame throughout the land. They



are in fact among the early individual song composers who can be traced in the study of Mizo cultural history.

From the women writers / song composers who contributed richly to Mizo literature, there are some prominent names whose achievements are considered unmatched so far. In the category of *Khuarel hla / Khawtlang Lunglen hla* termed 'nature songs' which we already dwelt on earlier, we class amongst the first generation writers women like Romani (1910-1972), Nuchhungi Renthlei (1914-2006) and Lalruali (1924-2001). Lalsangzuali Sailo (1949-2007) considered by some an icon for her many achievements who along with Nuchhungi, playwright Khawlkungi and prominent songwriter Buangi Sailo are so far, the four Mizo women recipients of the Padma Shri award.

Romani as the elder sibling of her two famous brothers, song composer Laltanpuia (of Sialsuk) and novelist James Dokhuma, achieved as much fame as they did. She is said to have composed 50 songs amongst which two in particular brought her great fame – "Thal Awiin Lelte Pa'n Lenbuang A Nghak" and "Tah Lai Ni Kawlkung Zamual A Liam Thei Lo" supposed to have both been composed in 1938.

Nuchhungi's chief contribution lies in her books for children. A book published on her in 2010, *Nuchhungi Renthlei Thu leh Hla*, informs us that her literary oeuvre included stories, short plays, stories and songs for children, and several articles on different topics. Her stories have been prescribed for school children and published as *Serkawn Graded Readers'* under 4 sections, Primer, Book I, II and III. Her book *Mizo Naupang Infiamna* published in 1965 and reprinted in 1994 with a slight modification in the book title – *Mizo Naupang Infiamna leh A Hlate* (games and accompanying songs for Mizo children) - is a valuable contribution to Mizo cultural history as well. *Mizo Naupang Hla* (1986) is a work that contains 72 original children's songs composed by her with added value given by the inclusion of accompanying solfa and staff notations.

Lalruali who spent the better part of her later life at Durtlang Hospital due to a bone disease that plagued her, was both a composer and writer. She composed over 30 Christian devotional songs and wrote several articles / sermons published by *Kristian Tlangau* between 1954 to 1969. She wrote three novels *Sumchan* (1988), *Ringa leh Chhani* (1988) and *Ka Hmangaih Tlat Che* (1991) out of which the last has the World War II as its setting.

Lalsangzuali's output of songs and writings is remarkable to say the least. She has 28 published books (non-fiction) to her credit, and 369 songs. The theme of her songs cover topics and events that span from children's songs, love songs, nature songs, Christian devotional songs, Christmas songs, songs for conservation of the environment, songs on social problems of drug addiction, birthdays, jubilees, lamentations as well as songs of 'rambua' or the troubled years of Mizo history.



One of her works which won Book of the Year in 1999 – *Tlawm Ve Lo Lalnu Ropuiliani* (the undefeated Ropuiliani) for which she had done considerable research work from several resource centres in Kolkata, is about the Sailo Chieftainess Ropuiliani, (daughter of Sailo Chief Lalsavunga and widow of Sailo Chief Vandula) who was defeated and captured by the British in 1893, deported and imprisoned at Chittagong jail where she eventually died in 1895 after one and a half years of imprisonment there. Some controversy was raised by the book title which claims that Ropuiliani was one who never surrendered. The writer was of course referring to the non-surrender of the mind and heart. In any case, it is a historical fact that she along with her son Lalthuama eventually became the only two remaining chiefs who took a stand against the British after the other chiefs particularly those from north Lushai Hills accepted British rule by 1890. She refused to surrender arms, pay the mandatory tribute, nor would she allow her subjects to be part of the obligatory impressed labour force demanded by the British. In other words, she continued to challenge their authority till the end.

Khawlkungi has already been seen in an earlier section as playwright, but she is also novelist and translator as well. Her chief claim to fame in fact lies in her novel (earlier a drama) *Zawlpala Thlan Tlang* but there are several other novels written by her such as *Sangi Rinawmna* (the faithfulness of Sangi) (1978), *A Tlai Lutuk Ta* (It is too late now) (1979), *Fahrah Nun* (life of an orphan) (1979), *Pasal Duh Thlan* (selecting a husband) (1982), *Hmanlai Hian Maw* (once upon a time) (1987) and others, besides children stories, and several translations that she undertook from English into Mizo which she sourced mainly from popular British romantic writer Barbara Cartland and the Mills & Boon book series. One of the features of her novels that has drawn flak from critics is the depiction of her female protagonists as consistently ideal role models while the female foil is exaggeratedly evil – a depiction not considered realistic nor possible. H. Lalngurliani too, has contributed richly to the novel genre with works like *Zorinpari*, (2004), *Lungawina Kim* (complete contentment) (1998), *Inneih Thilpek* (wedding gift) (1999), *Rinawmna Rah* (reward of faithfulness) (1999), *Zirtirtu Tha* (the good teacher) (1999), and *Silai Aiah Hmangaihna* (love instead of guns) (2003).

Mizo women writers have made rich contributions too in the category of translations from English into Mizo. The most resourceful along with Khawlkungi, is L. Thanmawii (1921-2012) ex-MLA, who in 1974 translated the English classic novel Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. Some of her other translated works include *Doctor's Return* (1964), *Samari Hmeichhia* (samari woman) (1975), *Hmelhem* (disfigured) (1986) and *Khawngaihna Mak* (amazing grace) (1992). Not all her translations are novels though, there are non-fiction works pertaining to social reform as well.

Zaithanchhungi (b.1941) is a writer of travelogues, by virtue of two books that she wrote under this sub-genre - the first of them being *Chenna Ngai Loh Ram Fan Bu* (1981) about



her travels in Canada, but it was her book of travels in *Israel, Hei Le Israel* (1987) which brought her fame. This book reflected strongly the Mizo preoccupation with, and admiration for Israel at the time. This was followed by another book called *Israel-Mizo Identity* (1992), an issue that is close to her heart and for which she has done considerable travel and research. It also goes to her credit that her personal works and efforts gave impetus to the propagation of the movement of the Mizo as descendants of one of the lost tribes of Israel.

Besides what we have already written about Mizo women writers and their contribution to Mizo literature, it should be added that there are several other writers whose contributions come under what we term Christian literature which we have not included in this review, but mention and include as one of the upcoming trends in Mizo writing. Such writings include sermons, life of missionaries, mission field activities and about Christian life in general, particularly the role of women. The writings generated by these mission field activities in far-flung and often remote regions outside the state have in fact contributed to knowledge sharing of other people and their culture as well, thus further opening up the worldview of the Mizo reader in several ways.

## New Generation Writers

When writing about this category of writers, it should be kept in mind that as with all transitional periods, here too is seen an overlapping and continuum of the previous while the new forms and trends gradually consolidate. For the convenience of study and review we take the year 2000 as a loose demarcation although there are writers of the previous decades who continue to make their mark with their publications. Mafaa Hahnar followed shortly by Darrokima and C. Lalnunchanga (Taitea) are the first names noted amongst this new generation of writers. What has given impetus and provided an accessible forum to the current growth of Mizo literature are the monthly journals and magazines such as *Thu leh Hla* published by MAL, *Meichher* published by the Adult Education Wing, *YMA Chanchinbu* published by the Central YMA, and the more recent (post 2000) popular publications like *Saberaka Khuangkaih*, *Zolentu*, *Lengzem*, *Lunglen*, *Diktawn* and *ZOlife*. The popular monthly *ZOlife* has regular features like Review Page, Book Corner, Wings of Poesy, and *Sabereka Khuangkaih* has a Book Chat, Poetry section, and literary essay page. These features have proven to be stepping stones for most of the current new generation writers.

Mafaa Hahnar was former editor of *Sabereka Khuangkaih*, and also one who as a budding writer interacted closely with writers / composers of the old school like James Dokhuma, PS Chawngthu, Capt. LZ Sailo and others. His published works so far are all collections of a potpourri of nonfiction essays, creative works (short stories and poetry), musings and the like. They are *Chawlhna Tuikam: A Juvenilia* (1997), *Thlaler Aurawl: A Miscellany* (2008),





Vaihna Vartian ((2010), the last being a collection of his short stories. He has one for light reading titled *Hlim Ni leh Nuihlai Ni: A galore of wit, humor & anecdotes* (2011), and other edited volumes. Thuamtea Khawlhing, another noteworthy contributor to new writings from Lunglei, has a collection of essays and poetry - *Zothlifim* (2001) *Devan* (2010) and *Awmhar Hnemt* (2014).

The author of what is considered by many to be the best children's story so far in Mizo Literature, in fact compared by some to Mark Twain's classic *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, is Darrokima's work *Thihsak Pawh Ka Ngam* (I dare to die) (2007). In 2009 he wrote a sequel *Thihsak Pawh Ka Ngam II*, and *Gemini 13* in 2011 based on World War II and Nazi Germany. Somewhat similar to Darrokima's penchant for an amalgam of humour and the serious, C. Lalmingmawia of Kolasib too wrote *Keimah Sanghalhriamapa!* (2007) which alone has been reprinted thrice. He is also well-known for his essay "Ka Nuamsa Ber Lo Deuh".

C. Lalnunchara (Taitea) is recognized as one of the top story tellers in Mizo literature, a fame not confined to the new generation writers only. His fame as a writer and novelist did not happen overnight, it came with his 3rd book *Pasalthate Ni Hnuhnung* (last days of the warriors) (2006) which was awarded Book of the Year the same year. This, along with his fourth novel *Ruam Rai Thuruk* (2007) have raised the bar for Mizo creative writing. Taitea's work *Pasalthate Ni Hnuhnung* can also be read as one of the first postcolonial text for it projects as far superior, the noble bravery and spirited resistance of Mizo forefathers against the white man's incursions. He saw heroism even in defeat. He makes no bones about rejecting the set notion and idea of the white man's superiority to the tribal counterpart in war. This is a trend and an approach that is refreshing. A fifth book, a fantasy fiction by this writer won him his second Book of the Year Award, this time for 2015 – *Kawkil Piah Lamtluang* (2015).

Lalrammawia Ngente, another former editor of *Sabereka Khuangkaih* had already had 14 published works to his credit before he achieved fame with the 2009 Book of the Year *Rinteei Zunleng*. One of the trademark features of his novels is the constant see-saw of the fortunes of the protagonist which is rarely practiced by other writers. Lalrammawia is also a master short story teller, his technique here often being the providing of 'space' for his readers' imagination and speculation at the story's end.

The philosophical strain is also present in the writings of the new generation writers, samples of which are found in the essay and short story collections of writer Lalzarmawia, *Zing Daifim* (morning dew) (2008), *Nang leh Kei* (you and I) (2010) and *Nangma Khawvel* (your world) (2013). The trend of detective / espionage / mystery writing is quite prominent in the works of creative writer Samson Thanruma such as in *The Adventure of the White*



*Wasp: Hmaithinghawng Phena Inlarna* (2006) and *The Adventure of the White Wasp No.2: Sulhnu Hliam* (2008). He too received Book of the Year award in 2010 for his voluminous family narrative called *Beiseina Mittui* (tears of hope) (2010) based on 'rambua' so we can also class him among the contributors to 'rambua literature'.

The mystery / espionage writing begun earlier by first generation writer Lalzuithanga in *Thlahrang* has proven to be a popular sub-genre in Mizo literature. J.F. Laldailova largely initiated and contributed to this trend from the mid 1970s with his translations of R.L. Stevenson and the detective books of Peter Cheney, and so did P.L. Liandinga with his translations of the Sherlock Holmes series from the mid 1980s. Meanwhile C.Laizawna in the mid 1980s created his original detective works called the '*Chemte Thla Series*' all of which were reprinted in 2011 bearing witness to its continued popularity. Somewhat similar to the creation of '*Detective Denga*' by Thuamtea Khawhling, TN Vanlaltana too created a series of adventures for his detective hero named '*Sailo Khawma*' who since 1999 successfully solved the following cases after the style of Sherlock Holmes in works with English titles – The Barking Deer, The Lone Man, The Missing Child, The Two Bachelors, The Romantic Affairs and more. Lianhnuna Renthlei (Sena) too created his own series with the adventures of Dindin, the first being *Inbumna Hlawhtling Ber* (2003).

It is interesting to note that some Mizo writers, particularly those writing in the popular literature genre, use English titles, (if not partially), while the body of the text continues to be in the Mizo language. This tendency is sometimes seen in the older generation writers as well. This preoccupation can be interpreted in several ways – it reflects the continued influence of western culture which had taken roots at the turn of the 20th century with the conversion to Christianity and of course, the accompanying birth of print culture. It is also reflective of the general Mizo mindset that continues to assume the superiority of the white man's language and which, it is hoped will catch the attention of the reading public.

There is also seen the gradual popularity of the supernatural and psychological thriller which Lalzuithanga had already dabbled with in his short stories such as *Aukhawk Lasi*, *Char Huai I Hlaw Lawm Ni* and *Khawmu Chawi*. We also saw this in Taitea's novel *Ruam Rai Thuruk*. Two young writers Lalpekkima and Zonunsiam Ralte have begun to make their mark under this trend covering the gamut of themes such as devil / evil spirit worship, black magic, human blood sacrifice and the like. Lalpekkima received the Book of the Year award for 2013 for his novel *Thinglubul*. Both these writers wrote their debut novels while in class 12, *Lungpuk Huai* (the ghost of Lungpuk) (2009) by Lalpekkima, and *The Lost Cemetery: Inrukbona Rapthlak* (2010) by Zonunsiam Ralte. Both continue to write novels, taking on the problematic lives of the urban youth as their main oeuvre.

Zirsangkima is one writer from the new generation who consciously strives to be a writer of the contemporary school, and refuses to be confined by the notion that in order to be



Mizo, one has to write about or draw on the old / traditional Mizo life. In an attempt to not be branded as such, he declares that he would welcome being called a writer of 'pop literature'. His collection of short stories and two novelettes *Ramada 19* (2013) clearly reflects this attitude.

Some of the key features and contribution made by new generation writers to the growth and development of Mizo literature can be seen in the following:

- The notion that literature is restricted by given rules and norms is gradually being eroded and giving way to new innovations and experimentation.
- The notion that poetry in particular, has a writing formula is being done away with.
- Novelists now are learning to let go of the notion of authority over the reader and the content of their works, once published.
- Writers have begun to develop a broader mindset and not take negative reviews to heart, and the idea of accepting criticism from readers if one has published in the public domain, is taking root.

In this category of new generation writers, it should be understood that it is not the age factor we refer to, but rather the new approaches employed by the writers concerned, be it to do with choice of subject, style, technique, language – in other words, writers who have introduced and followed new trends, who have innovated and moved into new fields of literary style and approach that have found popular readership. In this group are some noteworthy writers who are not only more mature in years than the previous ones already mentioned, but who have contributed richly to Mizo writing in both fiction and non-fiction genre. They are Thuamtea Khawlhiring, creator of Detective Denga who was referred to earlier, writer Vanneihluanga, writer/translator PL Liandinga, poet Lalzuahliana and TC Jonunsanga (Sena Tlau).

PL Liandinga introduced the Mizo reading public to Sherlock Holmes when he began translating the detective series from the year 1977, though he began writing his own works post 2000. His works *Ka Tha ber Lo Deuh* (I am really not the best) (2003), *Ka Chhe Ber Lo Deuh* (I am really not the worst) (2003), and *Fiamthu Ngeiawm* (mean jokes) (2009) are mixed collections of humorous writings and essays while *Richard-a Te Tualah* (2012) is a travelogue. His contemporary Vanneihluanga, owner/editor of the popular monthly magazine / digest *Lengzem*, has likewise published collections of short stories and articles post 2000 – *Keimah leh Keimah* (2002), *Neihfaka Rilbawm* (2002), and *Rawhtuina Mei* (2004). Their literary contribution to a writing style which is an amalgam of wit, humour and satire is quite unmatched in Mizo writing.

Lalzuahliana may very well be called one of the first poets in Mizo literature to experiment with postmodernism. He has five collections to his name, the first being *Lungmawl Selin*



(1992) followed by *Saruak Hlimthla* (1997), *Thukna Pawnlang* (2002), *A Ni Khatna Chu: Kawhterenga* (2005), and *Putar leh Khuai: Mihring A Nui* (2013). These works are again, various collections of his writings that include poetry, short stories, plays, articles, and even what we can term as creative 'abstract art'. PL Liandinga in his Foreword to the first book of 1992, had made a telling statement with the comment (translated) - "This book is like a young man who is the first to have a haircut in an age when it is still in vogue to have the hair put up in a knot". One of the key features of his writing is the use of terms in an uncommon and sometimes provocative manner, as well as new language combinations, thus introducing an element of subversion, surprise and food for thought.

TC Jonunsanga, apart from his mixed collections published in *Ka Nu Tan* (2006) and a play entitled *Mizo Tlangval* (2013), has a play published in 2012, *Lungsakawl*, which is an experiment with some postmodernist trends which again, is a rare attempt made by very few Mizo writers. There is a deconstruction of some common trends found in Mizo drama wherein the protagonist occupies centre stage – characters in *Lungsakawl* do not override each other nor is there a main character per se. There is a marked decentralizing of the romance element so common in Mizo literature and a side lining of the usual plot, sub-plot, and dramatic device factors. There are also undertones of feminism and lesbianism in the play which in itself is still rare in Mizo writings.

## Translation

Christian literature, the Bible and Christian devotional songs / hymns were among the first translations that Mizo literature witnessed. Translation was facilitated by the print culture and literacy brought in by the first missionaries which proved to be a powerful tool for conversion and the spread of the Gospel. Apart from the Bible, we witness that among the first works to be translated was John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* by Pastor Chuaftera (1889-1960) in 1910 which he entitled *Kristiana Vanram Kawng Zawh*.

Beyond the translations generated by Christian literature, we have translations of famous and great works that cover the gamut of canonical writers of English and American literature such as Christopher Marlowe, Shakespeare, Charlotte Bronte, Charles Dickens, Walter Scott, RL Stevenson, Alexander Dumas, HB Stowe, Mark Twain, Sir Arthur Canon Doyle, Pearl S. Buck, Ernest Hemingway and several more. Some translators even translate the original title while some prefer to retain the original title in English.

A brief overview of some of the more prominent translators who have translated from English into the Mizo language is dealt with here. We already made mention of the rich contributions of Khawlkungi and L.Thanmawii as translators in the section for women writers so we need not repeat them here. JF Laldailova (1925-1979) was a versatile translator who translated across a range of different writers such as Shakespeare (*Hamlet*



and *Romeo and Juliet*), Charles Dickens (*Christmas Carol*), RL Stevenson (*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*), Alexander Dumas (*Camille*), Marie Corelli (*The Sorrow of Satan* and *Thelma*). JF was critical of many language errors and gaps that he detected in the current Mizo Bible translation of his day and which he used to highlight in a slim booklet that he called *Thu Ngaihnaawm Bu* that contained a section for his views which he called 'Bible Thlirna Section'. From existing records, he appears to have sporadically printed this informative booklet during the year 1978. He gained notoriety as a result of his critical views for it was considered by some as a challenge to the hegemony enjoyed by the church. His critical writings and objectivity of viewpoint which generated debate and controversy, have belatedly been recognized resulting in a collection of these very works called *Bible Thlirna* published by Gilzom Press in 2003.

Dengchhuana / Sangzuala Pa (1929-2005) has translated works not considered 'mainstream' by the Mizo reading public, but which actually have proven to be the most appropriate platform for the showcasing of his mastery of poetic language. They are Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*, and *The Rubbayat of Omar Khayyam* (source: translated English version of Edward Fitzgerald) which Sangzuala Pa entitled *Hringchan Piallei* containing 75 stanzas. The latter translation in itself is considered an excellent piece of work, often mistaken for an original text by those who are not aware of the existence of an original.

R.Lalrawna who had the distinction of being editor of *Meichher* magazine for 25 years (1975-2000), is a well-known translator who started quite early. As a High School student he had already translated *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* as well as *Sinbad the Sailor*. Among his published translations are Shakespeare's plays *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*, Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress 2*, Lloyd Douglas's *The Robe*, Marie Corelli's *Vendetta* and *Barabbas*, and Pearl S. Buck's work *Satan Never Sleeps*.

K. Lalchungnunga is a prolific translator with over 30 translations to his name. He is best known though for his translation of Henry Charrier's novel *Papillon* (said to have been reprinted 5 times, 1979, 1981, 1992, 1998, 2006), and *Banco*, as well as Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*.

PL Liandinga is not only a well-known writer, but one of the most, if not most prolific translators among Mizo writers. He not only introduced Sherlock Holmes and Tom Sawyer to the Mizo reading public, but has succeeded in translating all 60 books of the Sherlock Holmes series in 8 years, that is, from 1986 to 1993. Other works translated and published by him are Shakespeare's plays *As You Like It*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*, James Hilton's *Lost Horizon*, and *Arabian Nights*. He is one translator who retains the original English titles.



From the 1970s upto the 1990s, popular novels under the category of popular culture, like Western cowboy novels or novels of the Wild West and adventure stories in particular, enjoyed immense popularity among both translators and the Mizo reading public. Western novels were already around prior to the outbreak of 'rambuai' but the surge in translation output began from the 1970s. The more popular writers who found the most takers for translation were Zane Grey (1875-1936) and Louis L'Amour (1908-1988). Legendary heroes drawn from real life characters of the Wild West but enlarged to mythical proportions with what amounted to almost cult following, were characters such as Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill Hickok, Sitting Bull, Black Elk, Kit Carson, Wyatt Earp, Billy the Kid and Jesse James. Then there was Sudden, a character created by Oliver Strange, whose name explains the lightning speed with which he drew his gun, and others like Dusty Fox, Ysabel Kid, all well-loved western cowboy heroes of the time whose lines, way of dressing and projected values were emulated by Mizoyoung men of the time. These translations also proved to be a goldmine of information for the Mizo reading public who could hold forth on the American civil war, frontier railway, gold rush, slave trade, annihilation of the Native American and their dispossession, the Mexican war, Pinkerton detective agency, and Abraham Lincoln, with extraordinary accuracy and confidence. This was also the time when Hollywood movies under the sub-genre of the so-called 'spagetti westerns' were being churned out.

There are several more translators who have made their valued contribution to the enrichment of Mizo literature and provided the opening for wider reading and study of the culture of other nations which would otherwise remain inaccessible for those with no knowledge of English. Some more titles of famous works that have been translated are Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* by C. Lalitankima, Lew Wallace's *Ben Hur* by HK Thanglura, Alexander Dumas's *Count of Monte Cristo* by Lalsangzuala, Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* by R. Zuala, Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and HB Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by B. Lalhangliana, Charles Dickens's *The Story of Oliver Twist* by C. Biakmawia, and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* by R. Thangyunga.

There have been translators who have sporadically engaged in translating from Mizo into English for a wider readership but most of such attempts still remain unpublished and therefore unrecorded. Though there is yet to be published a full-fledged translation of a Mizo novel into English till date, there are translations of several short stories and folktales already in circulation, many of which have been prescribed for both under-graduate and post-graduate studies. The translation projects of fiction from the various states of India's Northeast by KATHA (New Delhi) initiated by Geeta Dhamarajan in 2000, bore noteworthy results for Mizoram in particular, in the two volumes published in 2004 and 2005 entitled, *The Heart of the Matter*, and *Fresh Fictions: Folk Tales, Plays, Novellas* respectively. These books contain short fictions, plays, novellas and folktales covering most states of the



Northeast region. *The Heart of the Matter* contains five translated Mizo short stories (*Lali* by Biakliana, *The Hostel Sentinel (Hostel Awmtu)* by KC Lalvunga, *Chhingpuii* by Kaphleia, *Sialton Official* by C. Thuamluaia, and *Thunderbird* by Vanneihluanga) while *Fresh Fictions* contains a novella *Silaimu Ngaihawm* by James Dokhuma translated as *The Beloved Bullet*, and one folk tale *Kelchawngi*. Folktales have received more attention from translators as seen in publications like *Hmar Folk Tales* (1995) from Laldena that contains 26 tales, *Folktales of Mizoram* (1997) from Laltluangliana Khiangte that contains 68 tales, *Hand-Picked Tales from Mizoram* (2008) from Margaret L. Pachuau that contains 14 tales from the folktale section, and *Folklore from Mizoram* (2013) again from Margaret L. Pachuau that contains a total of 12 folk tales .

## World War Songs / Writings

Wars and conflicts have always been a rich source of material for both song composers and creative writers. It has been no different for the Mizo, particularly for those events experienced firsthand.

'*German Run Zai*' became popular around 1918 with the return of over two thousand Mizo young men recruited by the British for the Labour Corp, from the war front in Europe. It was composed of 3-lined songs / *zai* that narrated the invasion and defeat of the Germans, and was responded to in a similar manner from those who remained behind in the homeland. During World War I, there were also many young Mizo recruits for the Army Bearer Corps. Some of the more informed and enterprising got their experiences published on their return, in a monthly paper called *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, a paper which lasted from 1902 to 1941. Information sourced from C. Lalnunchanga's book *Zoram Mi Hrangte An Vanglai* reveals that '*German Run Zai*' actually numbered 87.

'*Japan Run Zai*' and '*V-Force Hla*' (songs of the V-Force) were on the other hand, products of World War II, and similar to marching songs. They were group songs unlike the response songs of '*German Run Zai*'. Mainstream popular songs were also born out of World War II, such as those composed by PS Chawngthu during his stint with the Royal Indian Air Force. A few other songs and composers are enlisted below:

'*Raltlan Hla*' by Lalzova (1920-1945)

'*Lushai Scout*', '*Indopui H Hnehna Lawmna*', and others by Saihnuna (1896-1949)

'*Zawl Khawpui Venna*' by Rokunga (1914-1969)

'*Thinlai Mu Hnu Lunglen A Tho leh Ta*' by Suakliana (1901-1979)

'*Doral a Zual ta maw?*' by Siamliana (1894-1962)

'*Mi Hrang Val Rual*' by Rev. Hranghnuna (1900-1991)



'Indo Ropui a Lo Thleng, Hnam Tin Naufa', 'Ka Hawi Vel A, Lenkaw! Hnim Zo Lovin' and others by V. Hawla (1903-1995)

'Kan Zoram Chhan Ka Lungdi Valrual' by Vanthuama

## World War Fiction

A work based on World War I *Hmangaihna Tluantling* by H. Tlangkunga was published in 1982. We have also already touched on the stories based on World War II by Lalzuithanga, and Capt. C. Khuma, but there are also other writers who have contributed to this category such as the following:

Rev. Zokima's *Pathian Samsuih* (1970)

James Dokhuma's 4 novels *Thla Hleinga Zan* (1978), *Irrawady Lui Kamah* (1982), *Goodbye Lushai Brigade* (1983), *Kimoto Syanora* (1984)

Khawlkungi's novel *Zawlpala Thlan Tlang* (1983)

Lalruali's novel *Ka Hmangaih Tlat Che* (1991)

Zikpuii Pa's novelette *CC Coy, No. 27* (1994)

Capt LZ Sailo's three novels *Awi Ka Rei Lucknow* (1997), *Awi Ka Rei Lucknow 2* (2003), and *Relthang Ka Dawn Zo Lo* (2004)

L. Zokhuma's novel *Chhuhatlantlang* (1998)

H. Lallungmuana's novel *Hara Kima: Son of a Forgotten Soldier* (2007)

Darrokima's novel *Gemini 13* (2011)

There are also a number of books, translated or otherwise, which come under the category of non-fiction writing generated in some way or other by both the World Wars.

## Children's Literature

The Mizo oral traditions that include lullabies, game songs, and others, occupy an important place in this category. Nuchhungi's work published in 1994 *Mizo Naupang Infiamna leh A Hlate* is a work that has combined two books of 1964 and 1986, *Mizo Naupang Infiamna* (Games for Mizo Children) and *Mizo Naupangte Hla* (Songs for Mizo Children) respectively. Her hard work in the documentation of old oral traditions, along with some of her own compositions have now proved invaluable for Mizo literature.

Besides the above songs / *hla*, the rich trove of tales and fables from the oral traditions, now put in written form and published for wider readership by several scholars and





folklorists, have again proved invaluable. Needless to say, many of these tales have also been translated / transcreated into the English language by several writers / translators. Rev. JF Shandy is perhaps the first to publish in English, a slim book titled *Legends of Old Lushai* in 1919. PS Dahrawka may well be the first Mizo to have published a substantial collection of Mizo stories and legends in a volume titled *Mizo Thawnthu*, in 1964.

During the 1920s Rev. JF Sandy introduced the Mizo, perhaps for the first time, to children's literature from other cultures through his work *Esopa Thawnthu Fing* (Aesop's Fables). The Bible Society of India also contributed to this category of children's literature through Bible stories told through the medium of Bible Comics printed in the Mizo language that has proven immensely popular with children since 1930.

Apart from Nuchhungi and Dahrawka whom we have already mentioned, there are several other names who have made their contribution to this category. They are:

Khawlkungi – *Thawnthu Min Hrilh Rawh* (tell me stories) (1979)

K. Saibela – *Kan Headmaster Thawnthu Min Hrilh Chu* (stories our headmaster told) (1980)

Tribal Research Institute – *Mizo Thawnthu* (Mizo tales) (1992)

PL Liandinga (translated) – *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer* (1987)

C. Vanlallawma – *Hmanlai Hian Mawm* (once upon a time) (1991)

K. Biakveli – *Naupang Tan Vol I* (for children) (1991)

Vanneihtluanga – *Naupang Thawnthu* (children's stories) (1993)

Thankima – *Thawnthu Pu Chhuma Sawi* (stories told by Pu Chhuma) (1993)

KC Thanga – *A Pu Thawnthu Min Hrilh Rawh* (grandpa, tell me a story) (1994)

Lalrintluanga – *Naupang Tlahlang Chico-a* (chico, the vagabond child) (1997)

Aileen Vanlalzawni – *Ih Maw* (1998)

Lalrammawia Ngente – *Thil Bul Thawnthu* (origin tales) (2010)

Laltanpuia Chhangte – *Kutungpuia leh Naupang Thawnthu Dangte* (the thumb and other children stories) (2010)

Lalremmawia (translated) – *Estonian Thawnthu* (2011)

Nununa Renthlei (translated) – *The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland* (2011)

C. Zonunmawia – *African Thawnthu Ngaihnaawmte* (interesting tales from Africa) (2012)

C. Lalnunchanga – *Ka Pi Thawnthu Min Hrilh Chu* (stories told by my grandma) (2012)



R.L.Thanmawia – *Naupang Thawnthu* (children’s stories) (2006) and *Mizo Hnahthlak Thawnthu* (Vols I, II,III) (tales from Mizo sub-tribes) published in 2008, 2009, and 2012

VL Malsawmzeli – (collection of 22 short stories) *Naupangte Thian* (children’s friend) (2012)

It may be added here that though categorized under Children’s Literature, several of these works have served larger purposes, proving to be rich sources of information and primary materials for research in folktales / folklore and cultural studies, and for studies on Mizo oral tradition in general.

Lalmachhuana Zofa, owner of Diktawn Press and *Diktawn* monthly magazine is currently one of the most prolific contributors to this category. He began his *Mizo Thawnthu* series in 2006 which has been followed by several volumes. From 2008 he began the *Zo Comic* series that has already covered several of the well loved Mizo folktales such as *Chemtatrawta*, *Lianchhiari*, *Mauruangi*, *Chawngtinleri*, *Tualvungi leh Zawlpala*, *Ngaiteii*, and many more.

What deserves special mention here is a book titled *Naupangte Kutchhuak* (2010) initiated and compiled by C. Lalchhuanliani, - the reason being that all 43 stories in the book are authored by children between the ages of 6 to 15. Also, VL Malsawmzeli whose work *Naupangte Thian* which we have already enumerated in the given list above, was a 12 year old when this collection of 22 short stories was published in 2012.





### Part III

# Rambuai Literature / Literature of the 'troubled land'

'Rambuai' Literature literally translated means literature of the 'troubled land', and this nomenclature is seen as the most suitable for the purpose of this review as the intention is to be as inclusive as possible. This is to mean that fiction, non-fiction, songs and poems that have been generated by the troubled history of the Mizo National Front movement, be they MNF or non-MNF narratives, are included in the composition of this genre that is growing and likely to continue to do so in the years to come. The labeling of such works as 'insurgency' writing has been avoided as it is found to be limiting and in several ways politically incorrect, for it can be seen as denoting an underlying implication of condemnation of an ideology that others have sacrificed their lives for, or died in the countering of it.

As with other conflicts throughout world history, the Mizo '*rambuai*' conflict too had its supporters and detractors, the hardliners and those who tried to tread the middle path. There are also crucial questions to which there are several answers - questions such as why, where, who were the real victims, who were those responsible, and the like. And as with other conflicts, there is always a suppressed voice which none dare to foreground. The



sufferings caused by army atrocities were many, but so were those undergone in the hands of the underground and yet, most narratives remain untold. But with the passing of time, there comes a strong desire to set certain records straight, to retell histories, do justice to those no more, and to provide an unbiased history for the future generation. The Mizoram Upa Pawl (MUP), an association of senior citizens of Mizoram, have begun the process of this recovery of untold stories through 2 volumes entitled *Rambuai Lai leh Kei* (the troubled years and me) published in 2010 and 2014 respectively. More are expected in the future from this generation who have been the ones to have undergone the entire experience of the troubled times, and who have survived to tell their stories.

Before moving into a review of the songs / poems and fiction generated by 'rambuai', a review of the non-fiction output will be given first. There are layers of work and great potential for further research and study, and this review while attempting to be as inclusive as possible, will at the same time focus on key features only.

While focusing on a given period of Mizo history beginning 1st March 1966, it is crucial to recall the political propaganda that came into the public domain through booklets / pamphlets, and of course songs composed which we will cover later in the review. A few of such booklets / pamphlets that we can consider forerunners to 'rambuai literature' were *Zalenna Thuchah No.1.* (1962) and *Zalenna Thuchah No.2.* (1963) (message of freedom), the authorship of which is credited to MNF President Laldenga. To counter their ideology the Mizo Union Party issued pamphlets like *Politics kal Sual lakah Fimkhur a Ngai* and *Independent Thua Mizo Union Thupuan* (1963) which cautioned the public against the deviant politics of the MNF vision of secession from the Indian Union.

But first, a brief note about some of the first mechanisms put into place to facilitate secular publications in a streamlined manner.

In February 1964, on the advice of the then Assam Education Minister Dev Kanta Barua who had come to open the Mizo District Zoram Olympic Games, the Mizo Academy of Letters (MAL) was started. With the assistance of the Assam Publication Board, MAL was able to give publication grant for seven Mizo writers namely Nuchhungi for *Mizo Naupang Infiamna*, Zatluanga for *Mizo Chanchin*, (this particular book actually got to be printed much later in 1992 due to certain circumstances), R. Lalrawna for *Macbeth*, Thanga for *Hman Lai Mizo Awm Dan*, Lalhmuaka for *Lemchan Bu*, Selthuama for *Zoram Thar*, and Rokhuma for *Pangpar Bawm*. The books were published during 1965 and 1966 with 1000 copies each. The literary journal *Thu leh Hla* was published once by MAL prior to the outbreak of the trouble (1965) with JF Laldailova as editor only to be discontinued and then revived in 1974.

The two existing established printing presses prior to the trouble were the Synod Press (Presbyterian) and St. Joseph's Press (Catholic) whose output was mainly that of Christian



literature. Other than this, some books did get to be printed by smaller printing presses in the first half of the 1960s, most of which have already been mentioned in Part II of this review. By 1969, there were already stray protesting voices being raised particularly from the church, put into print form. Rev. Saiaithanga in 1969 wrote a book *Mizo Kohhran Chanchin* (history of Mizo church) wherein he briefly included 8 pages (175-182) on the MNF underground 'sawrkar' and wrote what at the time was considered to be the unmentionable – that the underground arrested those who did not bow to their authority and even killed some of them. He of course, did not spare the Mizo Union Party either. The Presbyterian Standing Committee also issued a notification and an appeal as early as March 13th, 1966 which no doubt displeased the underground leadership.

One of the books considered by many to be a book of MNF ideology is erstwhile MNF Foreign Minister / Secretary Lalhmingthanga's book *Exodus Politics* (1965). Others are former Defence Minister R.Zamawia's book *Zofate Zinkawngah Zalenna Mei a Mit Tur ani Lo* (2007), former Information Minister Ngurkunga's work *Political Diary of Ngurkunga* which was not printed but cyclostyled (date unknown), PB Rosanga's book *Insurgency in Mizoram* (1980), Biakchhunga's book *Hnam Kalsiam* (1996), Chawngzuala's *Ka Hringnun Zinkawng* (1998), Zoramthanga's book *Zoram Zalenna Lungphum* (1980) and *Mizo Hnam Hlabu* (patriotic Mizo songbook) published by the self-styled Ministry of Publicity of the underground Govt. of Mizoram in 1981. Incidentally, *Exodus Politics* was a book that was seized by the Indian Army during the time, according to the foreword of the revised edition.

It may be noted that several dailies (newspapers) were already in circulation prior to and shortly after this period. Some papers used as political organs were *Zoram Thupuan* by the Zalen party, and *Hmar Arsi* by the Mizo Union Party. *Mizo Aw* which began in 1964 was short lived but revived since 1972. *Tawrh Bawm* started in November 1968 was in many ways, a paper that succeeded in its attempt to lighten the mood of a public depressed by the troubled times. The Information and Publicity department of the underground Mizo Government began the publication of its weekly *Zalenna Tlangau* (voice of freedom) from June 1966, and shortly after started publishing their monthly called *Thlarau Ngunhnam* (sword of the spirit). The Mizo District Congress Committee too got into the act with their daily paper *Remna Palai* (ambassador of peace) in 1968 which was also about the time *Zoram Tlangau* started being published as well.

In *The Dagger Brigade* by Nirmal Nibedon, we are told that "On 28th January (1967) the Assam Government announced amnesty and littered the jungles with leaflets" (112), the leaflets being *Mizo Entu* scattered from a helicopter. By 1967 and 1968, leaders of the Mizo Union party (*Mizo Mi Ropui HK Bawichuaka*, 371 and *Ch. Chhunga Chanchin*, 115) were already talking about the need for forgiveness and reconciliation with the MNF brothers and sisters. There were of course several incidents and words spoken / printed at



the time and in the following years, to bear witness to the fact that the voicing of such good intentions did not make an impact on everyone. Even Laldenga himself when asked at a public meeting at Bawngkawn much later, on 20th September 1986 (post Peace Accord 30th June 1986), if he would seek pardon for the killing of over 200 members of the Mizo Union Party by the MNF, responded by saying that he did not find the need to do so! (*Sakeibaknei Weekly*, October 1-8, 1986).

In 1974, Brig. T. Sailo started the Human Rights Movement and wrote several articles to educate and spread awareness among the Mizo regarding their rights and relationships vis-à-vis the military, both in Mizo and English. These also include a Memorandum submitted to PM Indira Gandhi on October 16th, 1974 regarding Village Grouping and other related matters. All these writings were later compiled and published as a book entitled *Human Rights Report of Mizoram 1974* (2013).

Nunthara's article "MNF hold Key to Political Stability" published in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 9.50, Dec 14, 1974 could perhaps be claimed as the first academic attempt at 'rambuai' studies. Vol. 16.30, July 25, 1981 of EPW again published an article by him on "Grouping of Villages in Mizoram: Its Social and Economic Impact". In 1989 Nunthara published a book that continues to serve as an important reference book in academia – *Impact of Grouping of Villages in Mizoram*.

The year 1986 was important in Mizo history marking the event of the signing of the Peace Accord on June 30th between the MNF leadership and the Government of India. It was also crucial and interesting for related reasons due to the events leading up to, and after the signing of the Accord, generated so much public interest, debate and participation that the written outcome may be said to have contributed to the development of 'rambuai' writings in important ways. Some titles of journalistic writings in the local dailies and weeklies appeared to vie with each other in the use of sensational and provocative language that reflected the extremity of emotions of the times now let loose post Peace Accord, while there were also daily doses of very informative and interesting articles that fed the reading public.

The MNF returnees alone have given birth to several writers from whom over 30 books have been printed, not to speak of articles, memoirs and others published in dailies, weeklies, souvenirs and the like. These are the 'MNF narratives' referred to earlier in the review of this section. From the higher hierarchy of their structure, the written output usually touches on the origins and history of the movement including hiccups experienced, up to the Accord. The output from the ranks usually dwell on the action component, in particular of those between the years 1966-1971 considered to be the most violent period of the movement. The approach and writing style as well as the content of these works often reflect the level of, or lack of formal education on the part of many of the writers.



Many of the writings romanticize and valorize the movement while remaining silent on the resultant sufferings of the people, and at times, attempting to gloss over or justify several incidents that have not reflected well on them nor the movement.

It was K. Hawla Sailo, former underground, who expressed a strong opinion on the fact that history is biased and incomplete when it is written from one aspect only. In his book *Mi An Ve Nan* (to be like others) 2007, he admits that admitting the many wrongs committed by him and his compatriots is a difficult and shameful thing to do, but if the wrongs are not admitted by those who actually underwent and experienced it, others will later misinterpret history, and this will not be a good thing (139).

'MNF narratives' no doubt offer some very interesting fare, but '*rambuai*' literature does not end here. There are still many unwritten records of silent voices that refuse to speak out till date from both sides of the fence, for reasons best known to them. It also includes the flip side of many a story, the 'non-MNF narrative' emanating from pastors, church elders, pensioners, ex-servicemen, politicians, former bureaucrats, school teachers and all those who have something to tell, to narrate. In a sense this category of 'non-MNF narrative' can be viewed as the counter voice of the 'other'. Though the corpus / output is still limited in number, the narratives come in the form of articles, books, memoirs, biographies and so on. Information provided by these writings depends largely upon how outspoken (or reticent) the writer chooses to be. The first-hand accounts of sufferings undergone by the writers themselves prove deeply evocative and provide an effective counter-balance to the undiluted 'MNF narratives'. This is to be appreciated as a healthy trend that provides space for debate and growth besides its contribution to the enrichment of a discourse that incorporated a balanced history and its records.

Several submissions found in *Rambuai Lai leh Kei* (2010) published by the MUP referred to earlier was at first the outcome of the efforts of F. Malsawma, erstwhile Education Minister under the T. Sailo Ministry who invited school teachers of different villages across Mizoram, to write of their experiences during the troubled years. The submissions were kept in a file which much later got to see the light of day in this book. Thanseia, government official pensioner and noted social worker, wrote in his Foreword what has proven to be revealing about the written output of this particular genre of '*rambuai*' literature. He reflects on the dilemma that, (my translation) one is afraid to reveal the truth, yet one is also afraid to be untruthful. He expresses the hope that the book will truthfully reveal the sufferings caused by both the army and the underground without bias, that the future generations to come will know the truth for whatever it is worth, that we will be able to trace if acts committed by the underground were acts in consonance with Mizo behaviour; that if acts committed by the army were acts in consonance with the behavior of an army long known for its good reputation, and that if acts committed against its own citizens deserved merit in any way ( xii, xiii).



Such writings have critical value particularly for those who wish to learn and know more about the plight of the common man during the troubled times – who is the writer, where was he at that point in time? What was he doing? What was his involvement? Questions that will provoke some more of the ‘silent voices’ to speak up in times to come.

There is not much input to speak of from women writers. There were a number of woman volunteers who joined the underground while some remained over ground to perform specific jobs given to them. Many who married members of the underground also became actively involved. Lalzawmliani is one who wrote on the sad lot of wives whose husbands left for the underground in books like *Pathian Hruaina Kawng* (1992) (the god-led path) and *Tuarna leh Malsawmna* (2013) (travails and blessings) – the titles themselves are definitely reflective of Christian influence and spiritual solace that is sought. B. Sangkhumi wrote a book *I Pa Tak Tak Ka Ni* (2011) (I am your real father) wherein she wrote about her father MNF MP Biaksanga. A woman MNF volunteer Zaihruii wrote of her own experiences in *Thingsat Souvenir* (2005). An article published in the weekly *Hriatna*, 29th July-4th August 1986 entitled “Ka Bialpa Ruhro a Tel Ve Lo” (my lover’s remains is not included) was written by Sakhawmawii – probably a reference to the remains / bones brought home for burial by the MNF returnees, of their fallen comrades from the jungles after the signing of the Peace Accord in 1986. Incidentally, these remains were provided a resting place at Luangmual now christened Martarte Thlanmual (graveyard of the martyrs) wherein the collected bones of 1563 individuals lie, all individually engraved in granite. Room for another 2500 is also in place. This was a project undertaken by the MNF Party over a period of time post the Peace Accord.

Buangi Sailo’s book *Lunglen Zun A Zam* (2008) is a work that contains her observations of the aftermath of ‘rambuai’. In *Rambuai Lai leh Kei Book II* (2014) we find one lone woman contributor Maj. Lalchhingi from the Salvation Army. Mafeli so far, is the only woman writer who has contributed to the area of ‘rambuai fiction’ with her novel *Nghilh Har kan Tuar* (2010). However, in the ‘rambuai song / hla’ section we witness that contribution from women composers are much more. Some of them are Dr. Laltanpuui, Lalruali, Thansiami, RTC Lalduhawmi, Lalsangzuali Sailo, and Lalthanrengi. There is a collection of songs in a compilation made by the Peoples’ Conference (PC) *Ram Kalsiam Hla Bu* (2013) which contains several songs composed by women. Journalist Lalhruiitluanga Chawngte in *Zozam Weekly*, June 29, 2009, published an informative article “Zalenna sualin Mizonulate”, the title itself being self explanatory – ‘young women who fought for freedom’. A recent book *Ram leh Hnam tana Tuarna* (2016) (suffering for one’s nation and people) is a work by one Rebeki, wife of late S. Lianzuala, Home Minister of the underground after Sainghaka. The writer joined the underground wherein she met and later married her husband in East Pakistan. This book focuses on the role and contributions made by women of the MNF underground.





What is significant about the contribution of '*rambuai*' writings of the non-fiction genre, is the enriching of (particularly) spoken Mizo vocabulary with new words / word combinations, from other languages particularly Hindi and English. The usage of such words was most notable with the rural population whose daily lives were part and parcel of living in a conflict zone between the hammer and the anvil. The influence was mainly borrowed from conflict and military related language register which is interesting and goes to further prove how the expansion of language is facilitated due to a context bound environment. Some few examples (in Mizo spelling) are:

idepede (independent), bawikot (boycott), iunian (union), kansil (council), kawmander (commander), rasput (rajput) umbush (ambush), valantia (volunteer), kawnvawi (convoy), sergion (sergeant), diuti (duty), karfieu (curfew), kawmpensate (compensate), parmit (permit), ripawt (report), brigade (brigade), cornel (colonel), kem (camp) and many more.

Born also were several ironic / satiric expressions and idioms in spoken Mizo which can be seen to be embedded with conflict related subtexts. Just a few examples again – “dah-that” translated means to store away, but actually meant to exterminate, to kill the enemy, the traitor; “kum thar sial talh tur” translated means mithan for slaughter for the new year community feasts, but actually meant the underground suspects rounded up in villages by the Indian army for torture, and perhaps death for some. “Zion convoy” and “Kalvari ambush” are particularly interesting in the combination of biblical nuance with words inherited from the conflict language register. One obvious interpretation is the appropriation of words associated with deep emotional memories in the psyche of the common man, by some Christian groups and cults who use them to express, and provoke sentiments that the common man can relate to, and apply it to a totally different context of Christian redemption narratives.

## **'Rambuai' Songs / Poems**

In order to emphasize the power and influence of politically motivated songs, particularly in the role played by them in '*rambuai* literature', the review of this section will make a start from two important song writers / composers - Laltanpuia (of Sialsuk) and Rolkunga who, in post-independent India, succeeded through their songs in arousing the Mizo patriotic sensibility with an intense longing for Mizo nationhood. RL Thanmawia in *History of Mizo Literature*, (2013), acknowledges the contribution of Rokunga's songs in facilitating the MNF movement by emphasizing that such was the widespread popularity of Rokunga's songs post 1960 that it was difficult to gauge whether it was his songs that gave birth to the MNF or the other way round. In any case, that the patriotic songs composed by him stirred the public imagination and accelerated the growth of the MNF ideology is an accepted fact, for it is said that in no time his songs immersed the whole of Mizoram.



Ch. Saprawnga too in his memoir *Ka Zin Kawng* (1990) gives particular reference to one of Rokunga's song "Harh La! Harh La!" (1962) saying that it was this song with a marching beat that roused the Mizo youth with its clarion call (to rise, to wake up) (p 196). In *Rambuai Lai leh Kei* (2010) it is mentioned that the songs of Rokunga and Laltanpuia used to be sung by young boys and girls with tears in their eyes and that it seemed as if the whole of the land was convinced of the importance of independence (p 60-61). Laltanpuia had already composed in 1964, two years prior to the outbreak of the 1966 MNF-armed uprising, a song called "Independent kan Zoram tan" (independence for Zoram), "wherein he blatantly bore witness to the MNF nationalistic mindset and its policy of secession from India" (*Emerging Literatures of Northeast India*, p 67).

While writing of the influence and contribution of patriotic songs to the enrichment of 'rambua literature', there were other equally important contributions to this genre. Even as some songs were composed to rouse the sentiments of people towards hope for a new nation and a new future, there were song composers and even prophetic voices like Thanghleia who foretold of the untold sufferings and death that would be the outcome of such an uprising. There were obviously very few takers to share such a view at the time, for there was no room in those times of high pitched emotions, to reflect on the possibility of harsh reality. J.Malsawma too ironically comments in one of his essays in *Zo-Zia* 2001 (2nd ed), that songs such as those composed by Rokunga and others fell silent once the might of the Indian Army took over the land.

As the dark period of 'rambua' unfolded, composer Laltanpuia was compelled to compose his touching song on the burning of his beloved village Sialsuk by the Assam Rifles on 15th June 1966. The song "Sialsuk Khaw Kang Hla" was composed in the month of August of the same year. Because the incident caused such deep sorrow in the hearts of the people who witnessed the pride of their lives reduced to ashes – a village of over 300 homes with a hospital, a post office, a Primary, Middle and High School and a PWD Inspection Bungalow, and the churches – that the composer came up with a second song of the same title in the month of December of the same year!

The burning of villages along with village groupings became the order of the day and in no time the prophetic words of Thanghleia came to pass. It was the turn of Suakliana of Lianpui village who was grouped in Vanzau grouping centre to compose his famous song "Khaw Sawikhawm Hla" in 1968, sung by Siampuii Sailo in the AIR, that made listeners openly weep and came to be known as 'hla lungchhia' (the grieving song) (VLC Vanlalriatrenga. *Pathian Thlaraua Mi Ril Suakliana leh A Hlate*. Gilzom Offset, 2010). Below is the first verse and its summary for a sampling of the content of the song:

Kan huntawng zingah khawkhawm a paw ber mai,

Zoram hmun tin khawtlang puan ang a chul zo ta;



Tlang tina mi khalhkhawm nunau mipuite,  
Chhunrawl a vang, riakmaw iangin kan vai e.

(The most tragic of times ever encountered in our history is the village grouping, wherein the entire community is lifeless like a faded cloth, and people, mothers and children, herded from across the hills, are hungry and homeless like the 'riakmaw' bird in search of shelter).

Two-lined couplets and three-lined song compositions are not a new thing, particularly in the Mizo traditional songs. What is interesting is that there is a reversion to this type of composition though not widespread, during the troubled years. They, like the rest of the songs of the period, again provide an excellent landscape of the social and political history and mood of the times. For a sampling, in the month of September 1967, the Indian Army had rounded up over 600 men from the villages of Samthang, Zawlsei, Khuangthing and Khawbung, and imprisoned them in a confined space in Khawbung Middle School for 9 days and 10 nights. It took a mentally challenged man Lenchhuma to compose the lines below that reflects their miserable condition under heat and rain:

Khawbung e, Samthang e, Zawlsei e,  
Khuangthing e, Khawbungah pho ve;

A sat leh seng loh, a sur leh seng loh (*Zoram in Zalenna A Sual*. Vols 6 & 7: 49, 50)

(the men of Khawbung, Samthang, Zawlsei, Khuangthing, were put out in the open without shelter from the hot sun, nor the pouring rain).

Again, the villagers of Ngopa worked out a strategy to avoid the harsh physical blows that the Indian Army freely meted out, by saying "ram ram sap" each time they passed them by. So out of this was born the following couplet which villagers on their way to work in the jhums in groups, would loudly chant:

Vai sipai kutthlak a na lua,

Ram ram sap ka ti e zang dam nan (*Zoram A Tap*: 169-170)

which means, "I say *ram ram sap* in order to spare my back from the heavy blows of the heavy handed Indian army." Beyond the obvious pathos of the context, there is an underling note of subversive humour and the Mizo ingenuity to adapt which perhaps can be seen as an element of the coping strategies they developed for the dark period. There were of course, numerous songs generated by the period and composed by the MNF cadres themselves which have been compiled in *Mizo Hnam Hlabu*.

R. Thangvunga in commenting on 'raltieng ram' (ideal land beyond) romanticized by Rokunga in his songs, poses the question "is the breaking of dawn foreseen by songwriters



not happening?...O songwriter, could it be that you misread the bravery of our ancestors in your people?" (my translation) (*Zoram I Tan Chauh*: pp 53, 54). Rochamliana Ralte in an essay "Rokunga 'Sualna' " (pp 290-298) from *Mizo Nih Tinuamtu Rokunga*, enumerates the reasons for Rokunga's deep regret and the burden of responsibility that he carried in his last days, for the tragic aftermath of the troubled times and the sufferings of the Mizo people. He composed a song that reflected this depressive mood of his in 1969, the year of his demise, "Ka Pianna Zawlkhawpui" (Aizawl, the place of my birth) wherein he expressed his sadness over the changes he witnessed in Mizo society and Aizawl town – the crime and corruption that used to be alien to the old Mizo way of life.

In contrast to Rokunga, the regret and heartburn that Laltanpuia (Sialsuk) underwent was quite different according to his daughter Chuhthangi who in speaking about his song "Kan Ram Hi Kan Ram Ani" (1964) (*Zoram is our land*), said, that in the midst of all the revelry and rejoicing as a result of the Peace Accord in 1986, he was enraged and said that no one now had the moral right to sing his song as it was composed for the cause of independence and not mere statehood (*Laltanpuia Thu leh Hla Zirhona*: pp 28,29).

Amidst these conflicting emotions undergone by song composers who through their songs had laid themselves bare for the cause, we have V. Thangzama who in 1971 composed a song that continues to be popular and touch hearts till today "Tho La, Ding Ta Che", translated as "Arise and Awake" by the composer. It is a call to the people of the land to get on with the business of rebuilding their lives and society, and not to indulge in thoughts of revenge and anger. In other words, a song to regenerate and not look back, but to look ahead as there is a bright future before us all. (*Deh Loh Sakei Huai*: 118-119).

The songs and poems generated by the 'rambui' period have their own individual stories to tell, each worthy and deserving of individual study. Just as the times and context undergone by the songwriters / poets are not the same, so also the choice of themes and personal leanings. It is this very variety that makes this genre a rich source of information and research for not only the socio-economic and political mapping of the times, but of the workings of the Mizo psyche as well. However, while it is the prerogative of researchers and academia to unravel subtexts and put forth interpretations, it needs to be a responsible and accountable study gleaned from careful research on the history and politics of the times and also the context of the individual narratives themselves.

A brief overview is provided here of more of the songs other than the ones already given, to showcase other aspects of this dark history:

"Chawngtlai Khaw Hal Hla" composed in 1966 by TBC Zoramthara of Chawngtlai village. (Col. Lalrawnliana. *Zoram in Zalenna A Sual. Vol. II*. Zorin Compugraphics, 1996). This song is a lamentation for the burning of Chawngtlai village in which 180 houses were destroyed and an old woman Nawlchini burnt to death. This incident was followed by famine wherein



the young and old were the most severely affected. This incident was army retaliation of the ambush carried out by MNF volunteers between Khawzawl and Champhai village.

“Chul Hnu Vangkhoa” composed in 1966 by Roliana Ralte (L) of Lunglei (*Leng-Hnem*, Lunglei: Mizo Zaimi Inzawmkhawm, 2003). This is a song which relates the trauma and sense of loss experienced by him and his family as they fled their home to live for a period of time at Hauruang village in an old dilapidated barn belonging to a relative. He desires most by the grace of God, to return to his hometown which though destroyed, remains in the same place, the same hills. This nostalgic song narrates an experience that many families share, who had to flee their homes to seek shelter elsewhere with families and friends in other villages. For those who could, some fled to far off Shillong, Halflong, Nagaland, Manipur, and other places.

“Chang Khawpui A Chul Zo Ta” composed in 1968 by PL Lalnuai (L) of Hnahchang village. (Lalbiakliana. “Hla Phuathiam PL Lalnuai leh A Hlate.” *Thu leh Hla*, Oct 1999).

This song reflects the twin trauma of having their village burnt just prior to their forced grouping at Pangzawl in 1968. (This was the method enforced for village groupings at the time). The song laments the very prospect of having the name of his village Hnahchang fade with time. The additional 5th stanza was promptly composed when, in 1972, permission was granted to grouping centres to return to their old village sites and rebuild. The stanza declares that they will now rebuild their old village never more to fade or be destroyed – “Chul lo tur Chang khawpui I din thar leh ang u”.

Songs composed on the theme of village burning and village grouping were plentiful and they more or less convey similar sentiments that reveal the trauma of having their strong link with the place of their roots so brutally cut off. Their repatriation elsewhere even though it be with their own kind, cannot replace the nostalgia and longing that is reserved for their original homes.

Other selected songs with themes that depict various other parameters of the impact of the ‘rambui’ period are:

“Curfew Kara Suihlunglen” composed in 1967 by K. Rammawia (L), Lunglei. (Thuamtea Khawlhring. *Zothlifim*. Aizawl: Mizoram Publication Board, 2001). This song is interesting for the various dimensions it projects. It is a well known fact that curfew was imposed with rigidity during the ‘rambui’ period and any trespassers were dealt with harshly by the armed forces. However, it is said that K. Rammawia used to strum his guitar and sing his way through the hated curfew hours with full knowledge of the authorities. Surely a subversive way to defy authority! The chorus of the song goes:

“Aw lunglen Curfew karah hian / Tuar I har hrilh ka thiam zo love; / Hmanah Zoram nun leh Chim loh thadangi zun, / Ngaih hian chin lem a nei thei dawn lo” which can be



summarized as follows – one cannot explain the experience of the lonely curfew hours which only serve to enhance the endless nostalgia felt for the bygone life of Mizoram, and the ceaseless longing for one’s beloved.

“Jail Run Thim” composed in 1967 by C. Durthanga of Durtlang/Zawlnuam. (C. Zama. *Mizo Hnam Hla*. Aizawl: Mizoram Govt Press, 2005). This song was composed by C. Durthanga when he was captured and imprisoned in 1967. The song voices his loneliness and despair and questions if this is to be his lot decreed by destiny. He declares that he is not ready to accept such a life and wonders if happy days will ever return for him – “Engtikah her chhuak ang maw hlim ni tur, / Hei hi chantawk khuanu ruat em lo ni? / Ka zuam lo kumtluanga Jail run thim nghah reng chu”

“Prisoner Boy” composed in English probably in 1969, by Vanlalngaia of Aizawl. (C. Zama. *Jail Run Thim*. Aizawl: JP Offset Printer, 2013). Vanlalngaia was one of the top leaders of the MIS (Mizo Intelligence Service) when he got arrested and imprisoned in Silchar Jail. The thoughts that preoccupied him during his experience in the prison cell can be gauged from the lines “Someday I’m gonna write, / The story of a prisoner wall / For the sake of freedom call, / ‘Cause I’m a prisoner boy”.

“Aw I Hming A Dai Lovang” composed in 1967 by Chhawntluanga, Biahthe. (Lalthangmawia. *Thangrawiha Lungdawh*. Aizawl: Bethesda Offset Press, 2012). This song is not only tragic, but contains an ironic twist to it, for the composer Chhawntluanga who composed this song in memory of his beloved comrade-in-arms who died at the hands of the army, two years later became a victim himself to a most gruesome death. Arrested by the army, his health deteriorated compounded by physical torture. While transferring him to the army camp at Seling from Khawruhlian, his escorts clubbed him to death on the way by the banks of the Tuirini river because he was too weak to move on. His song for his dead friend ironically came to be a song that told of his own sad fate. “Aw I hming a dai lovang, / Thang leh thar chhuan tam ral mahse; / Zoram chhana I tuarna hian a man tawk e, / Chham ang I zalna piallei hmun leh / Zan mu chhing lo doral karah; / Kan tuanna mual tuai ang tharin / Nghilni I awm dawn lo” can be summarized thus – though many generations may pass your name shall not die, earned most deservedly by your sacrifice for Zoram. The memories of the many sleepless nights we spent while at war, and our sojourns among the hills is renewed even as I recall the thought of you lying beneath the earth as one dead – indeed, you will never be forgotten.

“Rock Edict Number Thirteen” composed in English in 1972, by Jeremy Zobiakvela (L). (Ngurthankhumi. *JB-a Damlai Sulhnu*. Aizawl: Milan Press, 2000). One of the verses of this song expresses quite succinctly the dilemma experienced by the composer as well as many others who, as followers of Christ’s teachings about universal love, cannot reconcile with the continued bloodshed and hatred of the prolonged ‘rambua’ years:



“Why don’t we follow his footsteps of Peace if not his religion  
And live in Peace and Harmony into the future  
And then we’d smile again and say that this is what I longed for  
We’d never ever have to live our lives in fear of the next war  
I do declare I’m not gonna make no more war”

In another song titled “Bad Dream” that is undated, he writes:

“Make peace, make love, put down your gun...

What do they do when people die?

Who or what makes them lose their minds?”

“Biplobi Mizo Bhoni (Mizo Farnu Hel) composed in Assamese in 1980 by Ramesh Deka of Melpara, Assam, and translated into Mizo by KL Pachuau. (*Hriatna*, August 12-18, 1986). Ramesh Deka was a member of the All Assam Student’ Union (ASSU) at the time of composing this song in praise of a ‘rebel sister’ B. Vanlalzari who was arrested on 18th January 1975 for her involvement as a collaborator in the assassination of 3 top police officers at Aizawl on 13th January 1975. Her incarceration at Tezpur Jail ended in December 1980 and brought to Gauhati Jail from where she was released on 16th December 1980. The sufferings and sacrifice undergone by Zari inspired many inmates imprisoned at the time in Tezpur due to the AASU movement. The song is a salutation to Zari for her bravery and loyalty, and hails her as their role model.

Lalsangzuali composed / or gave tunes to a number of songs of lamentation over the political killings of persons by the underground above and beyond her other songs on the atrocities of the army during the ‘rambuai’ years.

“A Na Ka Ti – A Pawi Em Mai” composed in 1982 by Lalsangzuali Sailo (L), Aizawl. (Laldinliana, *Lalsangzuali Sailo Hla Te*. Aizawl: Hnamte Press, 2007). This song of lamentation was composed for Lalthlamuani, the widow of ex-MNA (Mizo National Army) R. Zadinga who was brutally murdered by the underground on 15th June 1982, and who at the time was an MLA of the People’s Conference Party touring his constituency Phuldungsei. The lamentation of a wife for her slain husband, with her only confrontation with his killers being the words “you have misunderstood, my husband is not a bad person” drew tears from many.

“Pu Lalthawmvunga Sunna Hla” composed in 1984 by F. Vanlalthuama and given the tune by Lalsangzuali Sailo (L), Aizawl. (Laldinliana, *Lalsangzuali Sailo Hla Te*. Aizawl: Hnamte Press, 2007). Lalthawmvunga was an MLA candidate of the People’s Conference Party for N. Vanlaihphai constituency. He was brutally murdered during his campaign, on 11th April



1984 by “unknown persons” though the lyrics of the song clearly insinuate who the killers were.

## ‘Rambuai’ Fiction

History writing as we already indicated, is often biased as it is influenced by the context and hegemony wielded at the time. In creative writing however, the scope is more flexible and the hidden subtexts often come to light under this genre which we will call ‘rambui’ fiction.

Prior to a review of ‘rambui’ fiction, a brief overview of the different trends found in a Mizo novel / work of fiction, is usually under three broad categories:

- The historical novel wherein the events of the time occupy centre stage and influence the character and life of the main protagonists.
- The character-centered novel which is more in tune to the understanding of a created work of a purely imaginative world wherein all events, time and place are built round the requirements of the main character. An example is C. Thuamluaia’s short story “*Sialton Official*”.
- A combination of the above two where both character and setting / time enjoy the same status.

What however appears to be a common trait or practice in the genre of Mizo fiction is the compulsory love story line and the presence of a hero and heroine who are often endowed with extraordinary good and heroic / virtuous qualities. There often is a marked absence of the truly ordinary man as hero. The ‘rambui’ fiction is found to be no different.

In *Mizo Novel* (Golden Jubilee 1937-1987) Souvenir published in 1987, the historian B. Lalthangliana acknowledges categorically the rich contribution that the history of ‘rambui’ as resource, made to the growth of a new chapter in the history of Mizo literature particularly in terms of the novel genre. He mentions *Hring Nun* (1984) (human life) by PC Lalbiakthanga, *Thuruk* (1984) (secrets) by C. Laizawna, *Rinawmna Rah* (1985) by Vanlalchhuanga, *Zalen Hma Chuan* (1986) (until freedom), and *In Hrang* (1987) (haunted house) by C. Laizawna, as examples of such novels. R. Lallianzuala too in a seminar organized by the Mizo Lecturers Academy in 1989, again made mention of the novels enumerated above, with the addition of *Rinawmin* (1976) (faithfully) (2nd ed. 1992) by James Dokuma, in his observation that the number of novels written post 1966 upto 1989 appears to be covered by this short list.

What B. Lalthangliana and R. Lallianzuala referred to over two decades back as a new chapter in Mizo literature was ‘rambui’ fiction. These two scholar writers have been





the forerunners in opening the path for further studies in this area. There are however some more fiction titles not found in the above list. They are: *Ka Di Ve Kha* (1975) by Vanlalngena, and *Chhani* (1986) by C. Laizawna. Zikpui Pa too in 1989 had published *Nunna Kawngthuam Puih*. This was also the period when a cyclostyled fiction work titled *Hnam Sipai Huaisen Zoramchhana* (the brave patriot soldier Zoramchhana) was enjoying widespread popularity. In 1982, Pramod Bhatnagar had already published his novel in English titled *Zoramthangi: Daughter of the Hills*.

'Rambuai' fiction is no doubt creative writing, but behind the creativity lie several sub-texts that the writer embeds, and attempts to voice. The trauma and terror experienced during the troubled history, the trials and tribulations brought on by events often left untold by many, make their appearance in such writings under different guises. Though such writings can also serve as support to historical documents to a great extent, the extra-textual layering found in them which is often the product of the writer's deep involvement with the text, affects the work of interpreting the 'truth' or 'reality' and can be biased or unreliable at times.

A few selected fiction works are given below, to once again depict the rich variety of themes generated by the 'rambui' years.

Pramod Bhatnagar. *Zoramthangi: Daughter of the Hills*. Delhi: Vikrant Press, 1982. (written in English). Set against the backdrop of the 'rambui' years, this is the story of Zoramthangi and Ajay Kapoor, a police officer from Punjab who dies at the end of the book. Although Zoramthangi's maternal uncle is an underground hero with a head bounty of Rs. 10,000/-, their house in Lungdai village is burnt by the MNF, and her father Sangzuala is killed by them.

James Dokhuma. *Silaimu Ngaihawm*. Aizawl: Zosys (1992) 1999. (translated into English as *The Beloved Bullet*, published by Katha in 2005 in *Fresh Fictions*). This is a novella that tells the tragic story of Lalramliani and her lover Lt. Sanglura of the Mizo Army. Sanglura dies in an ambush with the Indian Army while his death brings on the slow demise of Lalramliani who dies pining in secret for her dead lover. Embedded in the story are details of the trauma, particularly one of loneliness and despair suffered as a result of the enforced Village Grouping by the Indian Army.

K. Hawlla Sailo. *Mizo Ngaihdan Dek Che Tham*. Kolkata: Display Printers. 2001. This autobiographical fiction comes from one who served for over five years in the underground government as a senior administrator high in the hierarchy. The book makes no bones about the cruelty of both the underground army and the Indian army. It has historical value particularly about the events of 1968 when the underground army moved through Sajek range into East Pakistan, and their involvement in the Liberation War and the shameful



behavior of some of his compatriots best left unsaid. The book depicts in turn the narrator/writer, and the male and female protagonists Zoramhmgaiha and Chhiari.

Mafeli. 1966 Mizoram: *Nghilh Har Kan Tuar*. Aizawl.: Samaritan Printers, 2010. This novel is located at East Lungdar village during the darkest period of the 'rambui' years and voices the lot of the women who are the worst victims of atrocities committed. In her defense of the people of Lungdar, she shows no qualms about lashing out at both the Indian and underground army who perpetrate sufferings on the people. Embedded in the book, which is a product of one of the younger generation of writers, are several uneasy questions that seek clarifications on some sensitive issues in connection with the troubled times.

C. Chhuanvawra. *Rinpui leh Seizika*. Aizawl: JP Offset, 2011. Written by an ex-underground member, this story takes place in and around an imaginary place called Chhinlung during the years 1965 to 1971. The actual time and events of the period are interwoven with several fictional elements that involve a famous traitor or 'kawktu', the burning of a school named Champhai Gandhi Memorial High School, and the relationships of fictional characters like Capt. Sapana, AO Richard Lalnema, and Rinpui.

Malsawmi Jacob. *Zorami: A redemption song*. Morph Books, 2015. This book is claimed to be the first published Mizo novel written in English by one who is also a widely published poet. The story weaves a sensitive tale about Zorami through several time frames, but the underlying thrust of the work is based on the troubled times and its tragic impact on several lives, showcased in particular, through the life of the protagonist. Zorami carries the trauma of being a rape victim as a young girl, a hated secret that she struggles with in her nightmares.





## Part IV

# Conclusion

From this review, we can highlight some notable features already seen from the early stages of written Mizo literature. The first writings in the new script worked out for the Mizo were, as already mentioned, selected translations from the Bible initiated by the 2 missionaries Savidge and Lorrain: the gospels of St Luke and St John as well as the Acts of the Apostles from 1894 onwards. This was followed by translations of Christian literature and Christian devotional hymns and songs. All of this served to entrench the Christian influence on the Mizo psyche which got to be manifested in several ways. One of the major ways seen is in the literary output of Mizo writers both in fiction and non-fiction as well as in songs and poems. This continues to be a powerful subtext making its presence felt till today.

It was pointed out that *"Lali"* (1937 / published in 1963) is claimed to not only be the first Mizo short story but the first Christian love story set against the backdrop of the new believers and their detractors. The heroine Lali epitomizes a good Christian girl who is also a Sunday School teacher and who eventually marries an equally good Christian boy. More importantly, there is detected the progressive mindset of the writer who at that point in time was already voicing the burden and sad lot of Mizo women. There are in fact lines in the story which can be read as a strong indictment of the marginalized status of women



in Mizo society. It is a voice that bitterly comments on women being sold like cattle for a price, in reference to the practice of giving bride price to the boy's family.

Kaphleia, a contemporary of Biakliana, possessed a strong progressive streak as well, but his is seen in his daring to break accepted norms of traditional as well as Christian thinking and values in his handling of the conclusion of his short story "*Chhingpuii*". The admired hunter warrior (pasaltha) Kaptluanga reduced to a mere shadow of his former self due to his illness, cannot live with the knowledge of the cruel end of his beloved Chhingpuii, and for which he holds himself responsible as he was not there to protect her from the enemies. It proves too much for this brave hunter who never once flinched before wild beasts, so he takes his own life with his hunting musket. But there are readers till today who decry and find unacceptable the hero's suicide on moral grounds.

The narrative technique of skillfully using two time-frames of past and present places a writer like C. Thuamluaia in a class of his own, for he was the first to experiment with this purely creative writing form. The end of the story however is seen as contrived by some critics. It is not a new thing to see in Mizo writing till today, a thoroughly good story in the telling deflate and flounder at some point due to a forced effort on the part of the writer to incorporate the Christian element at all costs. Though the reasons can be many, one of the reasons is of course the compulsion that the more conservative writers feel in having to please a readership supposedly steeped in Christian values. This comes at a price in literature, for it restricts the free play of imagination in creative works, and this continues to be the bane of many a talented Mizo writer. But this need not be so. There is limitless space in creative writing and literature, provided writers themselves discard their judgemental and self-righteous stance often taken to prove a point.

This brings us to the interesting feature of readers' involvement in a text, and the extent of their influence which compels a writer to rewrite or revise some portion of his work, in other words, the nature of author-reader relationship. In the case of Mizo fiction, the example of Zikpuii Pa's novel *Nunna Kawngthuam Puiah* immediately comes to mind. Due to pressure from some quarters who were unhappy with the ending that saw the villain go unpunished, the writer added a new last chapter that saw the villain receive his just desserts. Capt Ranade of the Indian Army who deceived a Mizo girl during the 'rambua' years in Mizoram and sold her into prostitution, is in the additional last chapter, seen serving drinks as a lowly bearer at a party – in other words, reduced to nothing by his superiors as punishment. Whether this has been accepted as poetic justice by readers is another matter!

James Dokhuma for a different reason, wrote Part II of *Thla Hleinga Zan* in 1999 after a gap of 30 years of writing a novel with the same title in 1969. According to him it was to indulge a section of his readers who enjoyed the story and requested him to prolong



it. It would not be out of context to also include here, another case of a different nature wherein liberties are sometimes taken with scant respect shown to a writer's creativity. The title of "Thunderbird", a short story by Vanneihluanga, when first prescribed for the Mizo syllabus at the undergraduate level well over a decade back, was given a new Mizo title by some well-meaning members of the board responsible for the selection. The reason was that a story prescribed for Mizo studies ought to have a Mizo title and not an English one. The unfortunate part was the loss of literary content – the symbolic title which encapsulated the entire meaning of the story was revealed by the new title "Beidawna Piah Ram" (beyond the world of despair), thus robbing the story of its poetry and imaginative creativity and reducing it to a mere moral fable.

We earlier referred to the year 1977 as one which effectively introduced the Mizo reading public to popular literature and pulp fiction. Joe Ngurdawla initiated this trend and made contributions with works like *Dirty Broadway*, *High Time in Paris*, *Home in Texas*, and *Meet Me in Texas Moonlight*. We have already mentioned how the titles themselves are a strong indicator of the changing times such as the growing influence of Western popular culture, and so occupy a significant place in the evolution and growth of Mizo fiction under different trends and influences. This influence was also witnessed in dress codes, body language and manner of speech of many young Mizo men of the time. Many of the publications during this period were done through cyclostyle printing and not all of the works have been preserved. It was also the time when writing serials was in vogue and popular heroes created. Wayne Cole the James Bond-like character created by Joe Ngurdawla, had a strong fan following witnessed in the fact that young men of the time emulated and nicknamed themselves or each other as Wayne Cole.

One of the most enduring popular culture hero / anti-hero however, is the comic strip character created by Sangzuala by the name of 'Sudden Muanga' after the famous cowboy hero 'Sudden' – creation of Oliver Stone in his Sudden western series. The series in comic form of Sudden Muanga in cyclostyled print was born in 1977 and continued for well over two decades. There is much to be said about this character and the series which epitomizes and covers most of the transitions that the Mizo society has undergone. But under the deceptive guise of comic sarcasm and irony lies a deeper subtext that provides a revealing study particularly of the socio-political study of Mizoram since 1977, through the 1980s and 1990s. What predominates however is the hilarious comic relief provided to readers in the gamut of roles or avatars that he takes on, in an exaggerated and often grotesque manner. He has been aptly dubbed "Zofate Superman" (zo superman) by L. Keivom in *Zoram Khawvel 2* (1997) because there appears to be nothing that he cannot do whenever necessitated by a situation. Some examples of other popular heroes created later during the 1980s, 1990s and post 2000 are 'Detective Denga' by Thumtea Khawlhing, 'Sailo Khawma' by TN Vanlaltlana, and 'Dindin' by Lianhnuna Renthlei (Sena) respectively.



The popular demand by the reading public for this kind of fare at a time when Mizoram was still in the throes as it were, of the troubled period, can be considered as one of the coping strategies provided by writers, in dealing with the times.

As a postscript for 'Rambuai' literature in particular, there are some questions that one can pose with regard to its future growth. As of now, unless the current writers of the 'rambuai' fiction genre in particular, experiment and explore new trajectories through the incorporation of wider themes, different mindsets and attitudes, it is likely to experience stagnation in terms of subject matter and approach. The MNF narratives (fiction) invariably contain the exhausted set pattern of the depiction of the Indian Army as villains, the 'kawktu' (pointer) and those unsympathetic to their cause as traitors and the underground cadre as patriotic heroes. The field itself however, is rich and contains vast potential. With the passage of time and the entry of a new generation of creative writers born post-'rambuai' period, it is hoped that some new and interesting developments in terms of new thinking and objective approach will take place in the near future.

Meanwhile, the postscript of the MNF movement has begun to impact the younger generation who did not experience its immediate aftermath, but who certainly have their own views and perspectives which are different and new to say the least. A politically conscious and indeed very alert younger generation now seeks to study and debate some key issues which have no doubt been stirred by debates in local papers and electronic media, particularly since 2010. The local papers which have initiated and continue to contribute to some truly stimulating debates are *The Aizawl Post*, *The Zoram Times*, *Vanglaini*, and *The Evening Post*, while the electronic media is very much in the loop with their talk shows and group discussions. From the political platform the two key issues (apart from a host of others) are first, did the MNF fight for independence or not? And two, was the Mizo Peace Accord of 1986 a surrender by the MNF or not? The point here being that the MNF did not bring home independence to the people.

Besides the above, two other issues debated in the public domain without a conclusion or resolution in sight are: was Aizawl town really bombed by Indian Airforce jetfighters or not, or was it shraffed from the air as claimed at the time by the Indian Government? And two, the Mizo student body the MZP since 2010, commemorate this 'bombing' each March 5th as 'Zoram Ni' or Zoram Day with the agenda of getting the Central Government to render a long pending apology for this one of a kind atrocity against its own citizens. Will this be taken up by the Indian Government, and if not, is there a likelihood of the issue ushering in more alienation towards an 'unsympathetic' government?

Today, Mizo writing and literature in general continues to grow with both the older and newer generations pooling in with their writings. A clear demarcation however, lies in the new literary trends that the new school of writers seek to aspire to in their use of innovative



narrative techniques, new experimentations with language, style and form while the more conservative writers prefer to continue with their traditional forms and themes. Meanwhile the publication system is now firmly in place and made more accessible thanks to media technology and the increased growth of the modern printing press, growing readership, incentive factor in terms of different literary awards, increased interest in academia for writings from the region – all this and more are clearly indicators today, for the continued further growth of Mizo literature.

Part of the future trend for Mizo literature as well as Mizo Writing in English (MWE), lies in the electronic media, for though print media will continue to occupy centre stage for writers, the role played by social network and internet blogs will also grow in relevance and visibility. A popular blog called Mizo Writing in English from blogger Zualteii Poonte since 2007, is one forum that continues to offer and provide space for MWE – folktales, original poetry and stories in English, articles, critiques, translated works – and it has grown to become a popular source for researchers as well. A brief mention is also warranted here with what we may term as Facebook literature as this is a growing trend among FB users. It will also be of future interest to gauge its level of contribution and influence / or impact on Mizo literature in the years to come. Currently, there are some groups who have brought out in print, what had been first exchanged in the realm of internet medium – *Kan Chawhchawrawi* (2013) from the Chawhchawrawi huang@facebook group, and *Zoram Tan: Mi Ngaihsanawmte Chanchin* (2013) from Zoram Tan facebook group. In order to reach a wider readership and provide a start-up for young talent and first timers to try their hand at writing, such groups offer an excellent alternative to hone writing skills and imagination with like-minded peers.





## Part V

# Other Literary Activities

### • **Mizo Academy of Letters**

The Mizo Academy of Letters which started in the month of April 1964 is one of the most consistent literary bodies that has contributed towards the growth and development of Mizo Literature. Its literary activities include the publication of a monthly literary journal called *Thu leh Hla*, and 'Book of the Year' award instituted since 1989. It also organizes seminars and symposium across the region.

#### **A list of those awarded Book of the Year:**

1. 1989 - *Ka Lungkham*, by B. Lalthangliana (literary studies)
2. 1990 - *Hmangaihzuali*, by C. Laizawna (fiction)
3. 1991 - *Zoram Khawvel - I*, by L. Keivom (travel writing)
4. 1992 - *Thangthar Taitesena*, by Romawia (fiction)
5. 1993 - *Mizo Literature*, by B. Lalthangliana (literary studies)
6. 1994 - *Kum 100 Kristian Zofate Hmabak*, pub. by Bangalore Mizo Kristian Fellowship
7. 1995 - *Ram leh I Tan Chauh*, by H. Lalungmuana (fiction)





8. 1996 - *Bible leh Science - II*, by PC Biaksiama (Biblical scholarship)
9. 1997 - *Pasaltha Khuangchera*, by Laltluangliana Khiangte (drama)
10. 1998 - *Anita*, by C. Laizawna (fiction)
11. 1999 - *Tlawm Ve Lo Lalnu Ropulliani*, by Lalsangzuali Sailo (historical studies)
12. 2000 - *Chawngmawii leh Hrangchhuana*, by R. Rozika (fiction)
13. 2001 - *Ka Khualzin Kawng*, by Evan. Robuanga (memoirs)
14. 2002 - *Runlum Nuthai*, by Capt. LZ Sailo (fiction)
15. 2003 - *Kan Bible Hi*, by Rev. Dr. Zairema (Biblical scholarship)
16. 2004 - *Zorinpari*, by H. Lalngurliani (fiction)
17. 2005 - *Damlai Thlipui*, by Lalhriata (fiction)
18. 2006 - *Pasalthate Ni Hnunning*, by C. Lalnunchanga (fiction)
19. 2007 - *Zofate Zinkawngah Zalenna Mei a Mit Tur A Nilo*, by R.Zamawia (MNF narrative)
20. 2008 - *Chun Chawiloh*, by Lalhriata (fiction)
21. 2009 - *Rintei Zunleng*, by Lalrammawia Ngente (fiction)
22. 2010 - *Beiseina Mittui*, by Samson Thanruma (fiction)
23. 2011 - *Zodinpuui*, by Lalchhantluanga (posthumous) (fiction)
24. 2012 - *Sihlipui*, by Romuanpuui Zadeng (fiction)
25. 2013 - *Thinglubul*, by Lalpekkima (fiction)
26. 2014 – *Ka Zalenna Ram* by B. Lalhriattira (essay collection)
26. 2015 – *Kawkil Piahlam tluang* by C. Lalnunchanga (fiction)

Besides the above award, MAL has also instituted the Academy Award since 1978, considered to be the apex award for writers. Eleven writers have so far been given this honour, the last being in 2013.

### **A list of those who received the MAL Academy Award:**

- |      |                 |
|------|-----------------|
| 1979 | Rev. Liangkhaia |
| 1983 | James Dokhuma   |
| 1989 | P.S. Chawngthu  |
| 1992 | A. Sawihlira    |



1995	K.C. Lalvunga (Zikpuii Pa)
1998	Khawlkungi
2001	J. Malsawma (Thanpuii Pa)
2004	Darchhawna
2007	B. Lalthangliana
2010	Rev. Dr Zairema
2013	V. Thangzama

## • **Mizo Writers' Association**

Mizo Writers' Association was started on 23rd July 1977. It organizes the 'Thu leh Hla Kutpui' (Literary Festival) every three to four years in which writers of renown are felicitated.

Other MWA literary activities include giving an annual award for the best translated work from English into the Mizo language known as 'Translation of the Year' award.

### **A list of those who received Translation of the Year Award are as follows:**

1. 2001 - K. Zachhunga
2. 2002 - Dr. Rualkhuma Colney
3. 2003 - PL Liandinga
4. 2004 - PS Laltlanthanga, Kawlkulh
5. 2005 - Thankhumi
6. 2006 - Malsawmdawngliana
7. 2007 - Chhanmawia Royte, Kolasib
8. 2008 - C. Nunthara
9. 2009 - Melvin Vanlalhlimpuia & Vanneihluanga
10. 2010 - CH Thangkhuma
11. 2011 - Thankima
12. 2012 - VL Hmangaihsanga & Chhuana Renghang
13. 2013 - VLC Vanlalhriatrena
14. 2014 – Zothanmawia Khiangte
15. 2015 – Lalzarzova Khiangte



## • Mizo Hlungpui Mual (Mizo Poets' Square)

**Location:** Khawbung, Champhai District, near Myanmar border.

The Mizo Poets' Square has so far installed commemorative stones for 33 renowned poets / writers whose extraordinary contributions have enriched Mizo Literature. 'Mizo Poets' Square Archive and Library' is currently being set-up within its compound which will house the writers' original hand-written works and other memorabilia besides works by them, and works on them. It is hoped that this archive and library will prove to be an invaluable source of information and research centre for scholars and lovers of literature from all over, in the years to come.

**Commemorative Stones have been installed for the following Poets / Writers:**

### **First installation, 1986:**

1. Patea Khawbung (1894-1950)
2. Damhauhva (1909-1972).

Patea and Damhauhva are sons of Khawbung and as such are the only two persons whose mortal remains lie buried in the Poets' Square.

### **Second installation, 1996:**

1. Kaphleia (1910-1940)
2. Siamkima Khawlhring (1938-1992)
3. L. Biakliana (1918-1941)
4. K. Zawla (1903-1994)
5. Lalzuthanga (1916-1950)
6. Laithangpuia (1885-1937)
7. C. |huamluaia (1922-1959)
8. Lalzova (1924-1945)
9. Rev. Liangkhaia (1885-1979)
10. Saihnuna (1896-1949)
11. JF Laldailova (1925-1979)
12. Lalawithangpa (1885-1949)
13. Capt. C. Khuma (1914-1994)
14. RL Kamlala (1902-1965)
15. KC Lalvunga/Zikpuii Pa (1929-1994)
16. Rokunga (1914-1969)
17. Vankhama (1906-1970)
18. Liandala (1901-1980)
19. Suakliana (1901-1979)
20. CZ Huala (1903-1994)

### **Third installation, 2006:**

1. Zasiama (1900-1953)
2. Vanmawia (1922-1980)
3. Ralngama (1907-1981)
4. Siamliana (1894-1962)
5. Laltanpuia (1915-1997)
6. Rev. Saiaithanga (1897-1980)
7. A. Sawihlira (1931-2000)



### **Fourth installation, 2011:**

1. PS Chawngthu (1922-2005)
2. Rev. Thangngura (1891-1943)
3. Nuchhungi (1914-2006)
4. Zirsangzela Hnamte (1952-2002)

### **Fifth installation, 2016:**

1. Padma Shri Lalsangzuali Sailo (1949-2006)
2. Padma Shri R. Vanlawma (1915-2006)
3. Padma Shri James Dokhuma (1932-2007)

## **• Mizo Padma Bhushan & Padma Shri Awardees (including Bhasa Samman)**

### **Padma Bhushan in Literature & Education**

2007 Captain LZ Sailo

### **Padma Shri in Literature & Education**

- |                         |                                    |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1985 James Dokhuma      | 1986 Nuchhungi Renthlei            |
| 1987 Khawlkungi         | 1991 RK Lalhluna                   |
| 1998 Lalsangzuali Sailo | 2000 Pahlira Sena Chawngthu        |
| 2005 Prof. Darchhawna   | 2006 Prof. Laltluangliana Khiangte |
| 2009 Lalthangfala Sailo | 2010 Lalzuia Colney                |
| 2011 Buangi Sailo       | 2012 Prof. RL. Thanmawia           |
| 2013 J. Malsawma        | 2014 C. Chhuanvawra                |

### **Bhasa Samman**

- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1997 James Dokhuma | 2014 B.Lalthangliana |
|--------------------|----------------------|

### **Bharatya Bhasa Samman**

2003-2004 C. Kamlova, for Nepali book *Anubhavko Dui Phant*

*Rashtrya Samman*

2005-2006 C. Kamlova for *Hindi-Mizo Dictionary*



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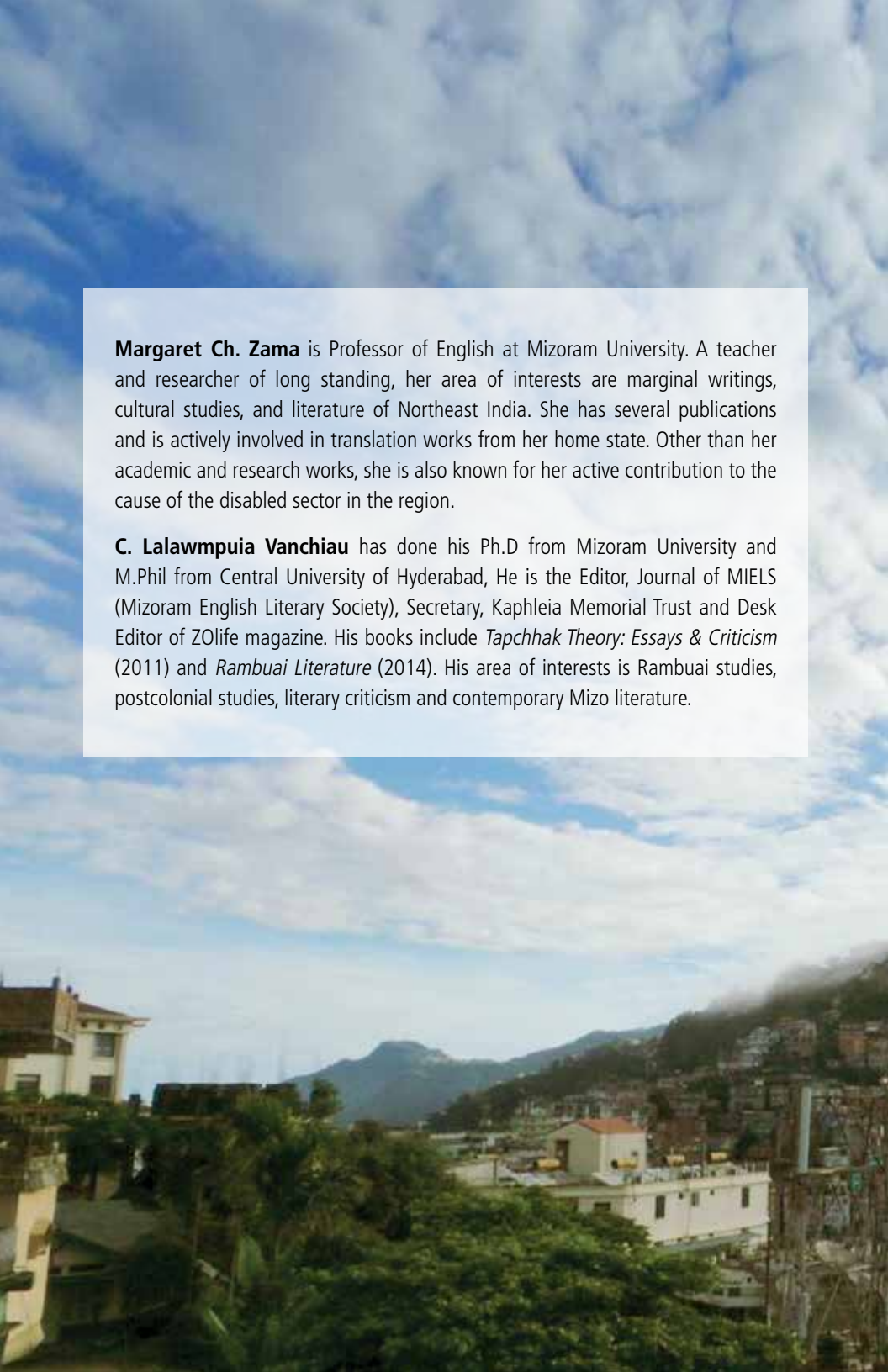


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