

## Writings in Mizo Manuscripts

# Samīkṣikā - 18

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The Samīkṣikā Series is aimed at compiling the research papers presented by the distinguished scholars and specialists in the seminars organized by the National Mission for Manuscripts. The seminars provide an interactive forum for scholars to present to a large audience, ideas related to the knowledge contained in India's textual heritage.

# Writings in Mizo Manuscripts

*Editor*

Laltluangliana Khiangte



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## Foreword

THIS publication *WRITINGS in Mizo Manuscripts*, a culmination of seminar papers, is an in-depth study on the foundation and structure of Mizo language and its manuscripts.

Writing in the Mizo language has a history of less than one and half century. Before the advent of the British, there was nothing in Mizo scripts. The credit to the formal writing of the Mizo language, using Roman scripts based on the Hunterian system of orthography, is due to Thomas Herbert Lewin, the then Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Hill Tracts, in 1874. He published, since then, a few informative books in the Lushai dialect of the Mizo language. Subsequent to it was a scholarly effort – *Grammar of the Lushai Language* – by Brojo Nath Shaha, a Civil Medical Officer of Chittagong in 1884. This was followed by a compilation of Mizo grammar by a British officer, C.A. Soppit.

However, a significant breakthrough happened in the language development with the arrival of two Arthington missionaries, the Rev. F.W. Savidge and the Rev. J.H. Lorrain, on the scene. By 1894, these missionaries developed Mizo alphabet and many of the Bible books got translated into the Mizo language. By 1940, they could bring out a Mizo dictionary. Along with, and subsequent to the efforts of these two missionaries, there were many who contributed to the growth of the Mizo language in its different dialects like Lushai, Dzo or Kuki and Rangkhoh.

This volume talks about the uniqueness of Mizo language; select Mizo manuscripts; importance of manuscripts in a language; story of lost manuscript; Mizo alphabet and its properties; among a few more interesting topics.

I hope this effort will open a new vista for academicians and language

lovers alike and will unearth many a piece of information on the minor languages spoken and written across the Indian subcontinent.

**Prof. Pratapanand Jha**

Director

National Mission for Manuscripts

# Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	v
– <i>Pratapanand Jha</i>	
Keynote Address: National Mission for Manuscripts and Writing in Mizo Alphabets	1
– <i>Lalthuagliana Kiangte</i>	
1. The Uniqueness of Mizo Language	19
– <i>Rozama Chawngthu and Lalmawipuii Chawngthu</i>	
2. A Brief Discussion of Select Mizo Manuscripts	25
– <i>Vanlal T. Bapui and K.V. Subbarao</i>	
3. Importance of Manuscript in Language	41
– <i>C.E. Jeeni</i>	
4. The Story of Lost Manuscript in South Asia	45
– <i>Lalhruaitluanga Ralte</i>	
5. The Mizo Alphabet and Its Properties	57
– <i>Rema Chhakchhuak</i>	
6. Survival of the Mizos and Their Language	69
– <i>Lalthuagliana Kiangte</i>	
7. Manuscript: A Derivation of Information	83
– <i>Darchuailova Renthlei</i>	
8. The Introduction of Mizo Alphabet and Its Properties: An Overview	97
– <i>C. Vanlal Ruaia</i>	
9. Appendix: National Seminar on Mizo Manuscripts – A Report	107
<i>Contributors</i>	113
<i>Index</i>	115



## Keynote Address

# National Mission for Manuscripts and Writing in Mizo Alphabets

*Laltluangliana Khiangte*

IN THE absence of experts from the office of the National Mission for Manuscripts, it is my duty to address as a keynote speaker for this National Seminar on Writing in Mizo Manuscripts organized by the Department of Mizo in collaboration with the National Mission for Manuscripts, IGNCA, New Delhi.

### Topics for National Seminar on Writing in Mizo Manuscripts

1. Manuscripts and National Missions in India – An overview  
(Keynote Address to be presented from New Delhi office only)
2. How to examine and preserve manuscripts today
3. Origin and development of Mizo manuscripts and letters
4. Tribal art, indigenous mode of communication down the ages
5. Introduction of Mizo alphabet and its properties
6. Manuscripts, written words and literature today
7. Manuscripts to creative writings and the relevance of research work
8. The need of organizing basic level workshop on manuscriptology and palaeography in Mizoram
9. The importance of manuscripts for language studies

What is a manuscript? A manuscript (MS in short form) is any document written by hand or even typewritten one as opposed to being mechanically printed or reproduced in some indirect way. It is understood to be an author's written, typed copy of any sort of work, as distinguished from the print of the same. All documents and books were considered

as manuscripts before the arrival of the art of printing with any kind of machine. So, manuscripts may be mostly in book form, but those in scrolls or in codex format may also be considered as MSS.

In their legendary parchment, the forefathers of the Mizos claimed that they had recorded something in black and white, which however, was eaten up by a hungry stray dog since it was carelessly kept in the porch. So, there is no writing that can be read before the advent of the British in the last part of the nineteenth century.

The language has been codified by the two pioneer missionaries – Sapupa (the Rev. F.W. Savidge) and Pu Buanga (the Rev. J.H. Lorrain) – who had landed in a small hamlet near Sairang by the bank of the River Tlawng, in the chilly winter of 11 January 1894. Since they did not have any servant, they were considered as *sap vakvai* (wandering white men) and they were not considered as those authoritative British who came to the land before them. Since they had been familiar with Mizo language from the book prepared by Thomas Herbert Lewin (1839–1916), they began making full form of Mizo alphabet before preaching any of the good news.

But, it was twenty years before they arrived on the land, Lewin, the then Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Hill Tracts, whom the Mizos dearly called as Thangliana, had written so many Mizo words and published a few informative books. In one of his books titled *A Colloquial Exercise in the Lushai Dialect of the Dzo or Kuki Language with Vocabularies and Popular Tales* published in 1874, he had written a good number of Mizo words including three folk tales of the tribe. It seems that this book is the first ever written document on the Lushai (Mizo) language. It may be a little presumptuous to claim the existence of any Mizo literature prior to that year, i.e. 1874. Thangliana wrote several books that include *Progressive Exercises in Lushai Grammar* (London), *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and Dwellers Therein* (Calcutta 1869), *Wild Races of South Eastern India* (London 1870) and *A Fly on the Wheel* (London 1912). In 1884, Assistant Surgeon Brojo Nath Shaha, a Civil Medical Officer of Chittagong, published an important book called *Grammar of the Lushai Language*. However, this particular book could not be found (only the photocopy) now for reference.

Commenting on these pioneering written works, Lorrain wrote that he and his colleague Savidge found them extremely useful in their early efforts to learn words and phrases, but neither of them pretended to suggest a mode of literation which could be taught to the Lushais. Lorrain further pointed out in his introductory note:

It, therefore, fell to our lot to reduce the language to writing in such a way that our system could be readily adopted by the people themselves. For this purpose we chose the simple Roman script, with a phonetic form of spelling based on the well-known Hunterian system, and this, with slight emendations adopted since, is still used throughout the tribe with eminently satisfactory results.

Besides these two books, one British Officer C.A. Soppit compiled *Rangkhoh-Kuki-Lushai Grammar* (1885) and a few other materials of relevant subject had also been published. All these efforts paved the way for a more systematic exercise by the missionaries.

So, the Mizo alphabet was actually devised by European scholars (initiated by both political officers and missionaries) just before the turn of the twentieth century and it has gained wide acceptance as the missionaries began to teach in daily school and early learners approved to be very successful. One political officer T.H. Lewin started using Roman scripts for Mizo manuscripts before Lorrain and Savidge made use of the prevailing system of orthography that had been introduced in schools.

Therefore, the traditional evolution of Mizo literature was in three stages, such as Thomas Herbert Lewin, Brojo Nath Shaha, and the Arthington missionaries introducing the school education. By reducing the writing of Mizo language with a view for its preservation and also to facilitate the study of Mizo language when the missionaries came, later, had a great advantage to study which enabled them to serve at once with good relation among the natives in Mizoram.

The Hunterian system of orthography, used mostly for reducing languages of the Indian subcontinent into that which was decipherable for European rulers of the time, that is what we called the Roman script. The alphabet we are now using is not perfect to really represent whatever we would like to communicate. However, to make change in its format is rather difficult, one has to agree, as long as it serves the purpose as understood by the early learners.

The Mizo language, known in the British era literature as the Lushai language, was first described in 1874 by Lt. Col. Thomas Herbert Lewin, the British Administrator of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in his *Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai Dialect of the 'Dzo' or Kuki Language*. Lewin first made his forays into the Mizo Hills in 1872 as he helped the preparation for a military expedition to rescue Mary Winchester. He transcribed the language mostly in the interest of the non-Mizo-speaking British officers who had to deal with the Mizos. He came in contact with different sub-tribes of the Mizo, twelve of which are listed in his book. In terms of the speech of the tribes, he notes the following:

Nearly each separate clan has peculiarities of diction proper to itself; but the speech of the whole people is in truth but one language, the differences being those merely of local pronunciation, of special terms or provincialisms, affected by the different clans, in the same way that our English language is spoken differently by the country folk north and south in England. The dialect of the tongue of the great family from which all the chiefs are said to have sprung. The Lushai dialect is in fact the lingua franca of the country. — Lewin 1874: 3

Lewin attributes the difference in the dialects as due to the absence of any written form of the language as it has never been reduced to writing. He admits his ignorance as a non-linguist in constructing the grammar of the language. He includes ninety linguistic exercises in his book including three popular Mizo stories which resulted in the reduction of the Mizo language into writing for the first time. Lewin's attempt is noteworthy not only because of its pioneering work, but also for its scope and quality even as he targeted the non-Mizo speakers who might have interest to understand the tongue in order to communicate with an ethnic group with a sinister reputation of being headhunters.<sup>1</sup>

Brojo Nath Shaha was an Assistant Surgeon serving as the Civil Medical Officer at the Hospital in Tlabung (Demagiri).<sup>2</sup> He was not

<sup>1</sup> Lewin mistakenly interprets the literal meaning of the tribe name *lushai* as “the decapitators” from his misunderstanding of the word *shai* as *sat* meaning to cut. However, *shai* is the mishearing and mispronunciation and anglicized form of *sei* which means “long”.

<sup>2</sup> Tlabung was established as a town by S.P. Crouch and 150 soldiers following the orders of Lt. Col. Th. Lewin on 9 November 1872. Lewin moved the  
→



only known for his medical works, but also for his contributions to the study of Mizo language. He notes the influence of Lewin in taking up the study of the language:

Captain Lewin, in laying the foundation for enquiry into the Lushai language by his “Exercises in the Lushai Dialect” expressed a hope that other enquirers might add to the work at some future date. My knowledge of some of the European and Indian languages has emboldened me to follow in his steps and make further researches in the language by publishing this Grammar of the Lushai language. Close and frequent communication with the Zau people coupled with a patient enquiry as to the roots, orthography, derivation, and pronunciation of words, the comparative and differential construction of sentences, and lastly the analogy of the language and its construction with respect to certain other languages, led me eventually to shape the work as it stands.

– Shaha 1884: 4 of 104

Shaha expresses his appreciation of the beauty of a natural language in Lushai (Mizo), with its complex verb system in contrast to what he said was a “barbarous condition” of the “semi-savage tribe” who are speaking the language. He also mentions the main difference in his approach over that of Lewin by adopting Dr Wilson’s system of transliteration in preference to Sir William Jones’ system of transliteration. He also includes the Bengali equivalent of the sounds of the language which gives an added advantage for the language inquirer as one could cross-refer with the English symbol which was the primary point of reference for many would-be language learners (Shaha 1884: 4 of 104).

The Hunterian transliteration system is the “national system of romanization in India” and the one officially adopted by the Government of India. A similar project called Pinyin Romanization of Mandarin Chinese was taken up in China beginning in 1913 with the creation of the National Phonetic Alphabet based on Chinese characters which was initiated by Sir Thomas Francis Wade and Herbert Allen Giles. Their

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← capital of the Chittagong Hill Tracts from Rangamati to Tlabung in 1872 thus by the time Shaha served as Civil Medical Officer of Chittagong Hill Tracts he would be serving at a hospital in Tlabung. His contacts and informants of the Mizo (Lushai) language would be the Mizos he met at Tlabung.

system came to be known as Wade–Giles Romanization.<sup>3</sup> Hunterian transliteration was sometimes also called the Jonesian transliteration system because it derived closely from a previous transliteration method developed by William Jones (1786). However, the Hunterian system was not without its weaknesses and had faced criticism over the years for not producing phonetically-accurate results and was seen as a system geared towards English speakers. It was not necessarily intended for native speakers of the language nor universal or standard enough for researchers from other linguistic background.

### **Lorrain and Savidge’s Alphabet of 1894**

Lorrain and Savidge first came into contact with the Lushais (Mizos) at Kassalong in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1892 and later settled amongst them at Fort Aijal in January 1894. There was no written Mizo then. Lorrain and Savidge made good use of the only available books on the language, viz. Lewin’s *Progressive Colloquial* of 1874 and Shaha’s *Grammar of the Lushai Language* (1884), in their efforts to learn the language. However, these two pioneering works did not include orthography for the language. Lorrain and Savidge then were tasked with reduction of the Mizo language to writing for the native speakers for the first time and they chose the Roman script for the purpose, adopting the prevalent phonetic form of spelling of the day known as the Hunterian system of orthography after Sir Willian Hunter who devised the system for languages of the Indian subcontinent (Lorrain 1940: v).

Lorrain and Savidge initially employed separate symbols *aw* and *o* to represent the long and short form of open-mid unrounded back vowel /ɔ/ but it was realized that it was confusing the native speakers. This was the only change that was made to the original alphabet as Lorrain claims in his 1940 *Dictionary*. He actually did more than that by excluding *ô* as the long form of *O* and also excluding *j* which was described as being used only in English words in any case. Also, the alphabet did not include the velar nasal stop *ŋ* which never occurs word-initially in English but is very common in Mizo in all word positions. The Lorrain–Savidge alphabet with further modification by Lorrain in 1940 is claimed to “adequately

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<sup>3</sup> “Pinyin Romanization” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pinyin-romanization&grqid=1w5uBlfi&hl=en-IN> (accessed 30 October 2017).

express every sound in the Lushai language”, and Lorrain further claims that the alphabet is “still used throughout the tribe with eminently satisfactory results” (Lorrain 1940: v and viii). The alphabet as devised by Lorrain and Savidge consists of 28 letters and is as presented below:

*a, â, aw, âw, b, ch, d, e, ê, f, g, h, i, î, k, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, t̃, u, û, v, z.*

So, Mizo has thirty-two consonants and five vowels. Each vowel has tense and lax properties which are phonemic in nature. To represent these forty-two different phonemic sounds the alphabets adopted are the ones devised by Lorrain and Savidge albeit in its modified form. Presently there are twenty-five consonants representing the forty-two different sounds in the language. The Mizo orthography makes use of diacritics to differentiate the contrastive vowel sounds. The presently accepted Mizo alphabets consist of the following twenty-five Roman letters:

*a, aw, b, ch, d, e, f, g, ng, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, t̃, u, v, z.*

### **Written Language and Literature of the Mizos for Higher Education**

Looking back to the formation period, the two pioneering missionaries of London-based Arthington Mission, Lorrain and Savidge prepared valuable documents during their first four years of stay (1894-97) in Mizoram. The first known book in Mizo called *Mizo Zir Tirna Bu (A Lushai Primer)* was published on 22 October 1895. Then they revised as *Zirtanbu (Primer)* and then *Zawhna Leh Chhanna (Questions and Answers)* in 1896. They also prepared simplified textbooks for elementary schools from which the beginners made their effort to learn reading and writing.

Then they put an earnest effort to the translation of the Bible. They started with the Gospel of St. Luke on the 21 August 1895, followed by the Gospel of St. John and then the Acts. First was the translation of St. Luke Chapter 15, verses 11 to 32 into Lushai (Dulien dialect, as recorded by them) the parable of Jesus Christ about the Prodigal Son and the first copy was sent to their friend Parteous on 5 February 1896. The two gospels were published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1898. Again, the year 1898 saw the publication of Lorrain’s great work, *Grammar and Dictionary of the Lushai Language* by the Assam government.

Other important written works like *Mizo Leh Vai Thon Thu* of 1898, as collected and printed by Tarmita (J. Shakespear); the translation of the

Gospel of Luke from the Bible by Pu Buanga and Sapupa, which they started on the 1 August 1896; Gospel of John translated and published by British and Foreign Bible Society in 1898; Acts of the Apostles published in 1899 and the first Christian Hymn Book (*Hla bu*) printed in 1899 were among the first few books that Mizos had in hand before the turn of the twenty-first century.

The Welsh missionaries (namely Zosaphluia alias D.E. Jones and Zosapthara alias Edwin Rowlands) had taken up the difficult task of teaching, preaching, translating, writing, composing and compiling books after the pioneering missionaries Savidge and Lorrain left in 1897. They found that the publication of Christian literature helped to convey the message of Christianity to the Mizos. So, with the help of some early Khasi Christians who were working in the government offices and the first group of Mizo literates, the Missionaries could produce a number of literary works within a short period of time. Besides, those publications mentioned earlier, a school textbook called, *Zirtirbu Thar* (new Primer) was compiled in 1899. It contains moral and religious lessons and some articles on General Knowledge. With the help of early-educated Christians of the tribe, several textbooks and other relevant books have been written, translated and prepared in a published form by the Missionaries during 1900 to 1930.

### **Translations/Journals/History, etc.**

Following the publication of various textbooks for schools and the Bible in Mizo, a good number of translated Christian hymns were published which the new literates appreciated with all their hearts. Then came the Mizo version of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1910) translated by the Rev. Chuautea and *The Story of the Bible* (1909) translated by the Rev. Challiana, which remained two of the most readable books, apart from the Bible, in Mizo literature for a long time.

Having been exposed to the world of literature, the need for publication of things common and secular was soon felt. The first Mizo journal of a sort called *Mizo Chanchin Laishuih* (*The Highlander's News*) was published in 1898, most probably in the month of July. It was a hand-written cyclostyled tabloid. It featured local news of different villages, folk tales of the tribe and conveyed the orders of the government to

various chiefs. It was a miracle for most people that something could be read from the white sheet of paper.

A monthly journal *Mizo Leh Vai Chanchin Lehkhabu* (*Mizo and Non-Mizo News Book*) was published by the then Superintendent of Lushai Hills, J. Shakespear in November 1902. Interestingly, contributors to this journal were the first literate Mizos (three chiefs) who were held in high esteem by the people. Then came the *Kristian Tlangau* (*Christian's Crier*), edited by R. Dala, a monthly mouthpiece of the Presbyterian Church Mission from Aizawl, which has been published without any break since October 1911 till today.

Other magazines are *Sipai Tlangau* (*Army's Crier*) by Salvation Army from 1931; *Tlawmngaihna* (*Selflessness*) in 1934 by the "Rover Scout" group of Baptist Mission Serkawn; *Kohhran Beng* (*Church's Organ*) a monthly newspaper by Baptist Mission Lunglei started in 1947; *LSA Chanchinbu* (*LSA Journal*) by Lushai Student Association started in September 1938 (later renamed *MZP Chanchinbu, Journal*); *Tun Hapta Kar Chanchin* (*This Week's News*) started in September 1939 by Liankhuma; the first known daily newspaper of Mizoram – *Ni tin Chanchin* (*Daily News or Account*) by D.C. McCall in 1939; *Zoram Thupuan* (*Announcement of the Land*) started on 6 December 1947 by the United Mizo Freedom Organization; *Mizo Arsi* (*Star of Mizos*) started in 1948 by H.K. Bawihchhuaka to benefit Mizo Union Party. Apart from these, religious books, travelogues, prose, essays and stories were also published before 1950. Several dailies, bi-weeklies, fortnightlies and monthly magazines have been circulated within and outside Mizoram. In 2001-02, there were fifty-eight approved newspapers according to *Statistical Handbook 2002*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics.

Many other newspapers and journals have come up since then. Amongst those, the ones that have contributed most to the development of Mizo literature are those of the old *MZP Chanchinbu* (a journal of Mizo Students Union), *Meichher* (*The Torch* – a publication of Adult Education Wing), *Thu leh hla* (*Literature* – a mouthpiece of the Mizo Academy of Letters).

Apart from the contributions of the church and other organizations, the earliest important individual work is the *Mizo Chanchin* (*History of Mizos*) by Pastor Liangkhaia, which he completed in 1926. It was

a competition manuscript with which he won the first prize in the first ever writing competition held in the land. The book was published in two volumes. The first part of *Mizo Chanchin* was published and printed in 1938 and the second part in 1947. Apart from this book, Liangkhaia wrote and published almost fifty books and also contributed over hundred articles in different journals before his death in 1979. He had undoubtedly made great contribution in the field of sacred hymn, poetry and prose writing. In addition, he translated twelve books of English Bible into Mizo language within two years (1947-49) as he was rightly engaged as the first full-time literary worker by the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram.

### **Hymns/Songs/Poems, etc.**

With the coming of the gospel in the hills, the first two missionaries translated and recomposed /adapted a few Christian hymns/songs from 1894 onwards. With the help of the new converts, several hymns were translated by the missionaries one after another. Amongst them, the literary works of Zosaphara (Edwin Rowlands) were commendable for his tireless efforts for the preparations of school textbooks, Christian guidebook and in the production of sacred hymns. He had nearly a hundred songs/poems to his credit, of which seventy-five of them are still very much alive to be included in the official hymn book of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church and Baptist Church of Mizoram.

Many composition of Christian literature appeared right from the turn of the twentieth century from the hands of early Christians and that of missionaries. When we look at closely, Awithang-pa (1885–1965) and Elder Thanga (1883–1957) started composing poems and songs in the beginning of the twenty-first century, followed by the Rev. Liangkhaia (1884–1979), who had contributed a good number of hymns for the official hymn book. The three poets mentioned can be considered as the pillars of Mizo written language and literature, because they made extensive impact for other writers who followed them at their heels like L. Siamliana, R.L. Kamlala, Hrawva, and Damhauhva in the 1920s.

Three poets-cum-song writers namely L. Biakliana, Kaphleia and Laltuithanga appeared into the scene from 1930s. They all were novelist as well. Laltanpuia, V. Hawla, Romani and others started composing songs in the 1930s. In the southern part of Mizoram, song writers like

Lalmama, Liandala, Chhuana, Rokunga Khiangte, F. Rokima, Nuchhungi and others contributed a great deal. From 1940s, several poets, song writers, hymn writers like P.S. Chawngthu, Rokunga, L.Z. Sailo and others began their compositions. Literary compositions like poems that are not designed to be sung appeared rather late. K.C. Lalvunga, James Dokhuma, Lalthangfala Sailo, R.L. Thanmawia, Laltluangliana Khiangte, Laltzuahliana and many others contributed to the enrichment of Mizo secular poetry and devotional songs.

### **Novel/Short Story/Novellete, etc.**

A study of the contemporary Mizo literature reveals considerable maturity and depth from 1930s onwards as poets and writers have been producing works of lasting value on secular subjects. The first Mizo novel, *Hawilopari* written by L. Biakliana (1918-41) appeared in the year 1936. The same novelist wrote a short story called *Lali* in 1937. The third Mizo novel, *Chhingpuii*, a romantic tragedy was written by Kaphleia in 1939. The two pioneer novelists L. Biakliana and Kaphleia wrote and circulated weekly news – *Chhura Chanchin (All about the Man called Chhura)* – while staying at the hospital in Durtlang village as TB patients. Chronologically speaking, these three novels were the only novels written before 1940.

Then, the ghostly fictions, *Thlahrang* and *Phira leh Ngurthanpari* were written by Laltzuithanga, son of Chawngnhuaia. He was a romantic tragedian born on 16 April 1916 and died on the 28 September 1950. Laltzuithanga also wrote a number of short stories, *Aukhawk Lasi*, *Khawfing Chat*, *Eng Dan Nge Ni*, *Eng Nge Pawi?* These were printed in book forms.

C. Khuma (Challiankhuma), an Army Officer serving in Burma, wrote the tragic love story called *Maymyo Sanapui* in 1946. It was published by the Burma Lushai Association in 1950. This tragedy was perhaps the first Mizo fiction ever printed and published outside Mizoram. The author has also written other interesting short stories like *Hmangaih Thiamna*, *Fahrah Nun*, *Phu Loh Zunleng* and *Chhingkhual Lungdi*.

One of the most popular novels *Thla Hleinga Zan (Full Moon Night)* was written by James Dokhuma. He wrote a number of fictional works, viz. *Good Bye Lushai Brigade*, *Rinawmin*, *Irrawaday Luikamah*,

*Tumpangchal Nge Saithangpuii, Hmangaihna Thuchah, Kymoto Synora, Silaimu Ngaihawm* and other books. In 1977, Khawlkungi wrote the Christian love story titled *Zawlpala Thlan Tlang*, winning story-writing competition organized by Central Kristian Thalai Pawl. She also wrote a number of other stories like *A Tlai Lutuk Ta, Sangi Rinawmna, Fahrah Nun* and *Pasal Duhthlan*, and she happened to be a playwright as well.

An Indian Foreign Service officer and a former Indian Ambassador, K.C. Lalvunga, also known as Zikpuii-pa, wrote fictional works like *C.C. Coy No. 27, Silvarthangi, Hostel Awmtu, Kraws Bulah Chuan* and *Nunna Kawng Thuampuih*. Zikpuii-pa was also a well-known essayist and poet.

A number of fictional works appeared in the 1980s and 1990s. Lalengmawia Ralte wrote about seven fictions and C. Laizawna also wrote more than ten novels. Other novelists like Lalhriata (*Khualzin Nula*), H. Lallungmuana (*Ram leh I Tan Chauh* and *Hmangaih Zoramthangi*), and C. Remtluanga (*Fate Nu Atan*, etc.), Khawlkungi (*Zawlpala thlan tlang* and others), L.Z. Sailo (winner of Book of the Year Award, *Runlum Nuthai* and others), Lalhmingliana Saiawi (*Lungrang Laiawrha* and others), H. Lalngurliani (winner of Book of the Year Award) and many others made valuable contributions to Mizo literature. There are as many as 500 (approx.) novels and short stories that are preserved in printed form till today.

### **Drama/Short Play/Morality Plays, etc.**

The root of Mizo drama began with the celebration of the grandest Christian festival in the land which is Christmas. The missionaries and a few native speakers celebrated Christmas in 1903 by entertaining children and giving them a special feast. It soon turned out to be a yearly activity. In 1912, Christmas day was celebrated in most of the villages with grand feast. That Christmas day will be remembered in the history of Mizo drama, because in the evening of this very day, the first ever dramatic performance was held in the small thatched-roofed theatre of Thakthing Veng (one locality of the present capital of Mizoram). With the initiative of the missionaries, the most successful function of variety show was conducted for the first time.

The first Mizo dramatic performance had a strong moral content. The effect of the religious teaching was great. It closed the early Christmas



entertainments in the Church. The immediate result was the emergence of secular drama. About this time, Ch. Pasena (1893–1961), who had a Diploma in Education from London came back to Aizawl in 1925. In those days, the people were strongly attracted to the Puja Variety Show of Bengali Babus at Babutlang (Officer's Complex) and the *Nataak* (Live performance) of 1<sup>st</sup> Assam Rifles Regiment at Drill Shed in Aizawl. The time was ripe for theatrical revival, which had faded as a result of spiritual awakening. Pasena came forward to stir up the latent dramatic instinct of the people. His participation in the dramatic art suited the time, for he was a free mixer with all sorts of people. Pasena was trusted by the natives; also an advantage for foreigners who came to Mizoram. Between 1925 and 1933, Pasena prepared and directed six extempore dramatic performances, which were staged in Sikulpui Hall (Government Boys' School), the popular name for Boys' Middle English School at Mission Veng, Aizawl. All these dramas were enacted not only for entertainment but also for moral lessons. His first dramatic show, *Heroda Chawimawina* (*King Herod's Glory*), a tragedy was staged in 1925 at Sikulpui Hall by the actors of Mission Veng.

There were several other dramatists like Lalkailuia, Chawngzika, Lalzuthanga, Lalmama, L. Biakliana and Lalhmuaka who made good contribution to the development of Mizo drama. The flowering period arrived with the publication of *Sangi Inleng* by Lalthangfala Sailo (b.1933) in the early part of 1960s. Lalthangfala Sailo wrote and published almost ten plays, some of which have been prescribed as texts in the school and degree level courses. A recipient of Sangeet Natak Akademi Award 2007, Sailo made a good contribution to Mizo drama since 1959.

The writer of this paper (Laltluangliana Kiangte, an Awardee of Padma Shri in Literature in 2006) may be considered as one of the major playwrights who made contributions to the development of Mizo drama in a variety of ways. As a playwright, he has written more than thirty plays, of which twenty-four are published in different volumes. His first play, *Thupha Ka Rawn Chawi E* (*I Come To Apologise*, 1982) was written and staged in Shillong. Out of his seventeen plays published so far, *Pasaltha Khuangchera* (a collection of three plays where the all about of the greatest fighter's account being included) was awarded the *Book of the Year 1997*, i.e. the book was chosen as the best out of 115

books newly published in 1997. His other play, *Lalnu Ropuiliani* (all about one brave lady-chief) won the first prize in the state level drama writing competition in 1990, organized by the Art & Culture Department, Government of Mizoram. One of his plays, *Chanchintha Meichher* (*The Gospel Torch*, 1993) was used as an official script of drama that had been staged in every village of Mizoram as one item of celebration in the Gospel Centenary in 1994. Some of his plays have been translated and acted in Hindi and broadcasted in Delhi Doordarshan and other channels. He has also been awarded the Distinguished Playwright Award, Rastriya Lok Bhasha Samman and Bharat Adivasi Samman for his valuable contributions, especially in the field of drama.

There are several other playwrights who had contributed a great deal to the field. Playwrights like Lalhmuaka (1915–2001), H. Lalsiama (1909–83), Khawlkungi (b.1927), James Dokhuma (1932–2007), K. Saibela (b.1936), Liansailova (b.1949), Lalsangzuala (b.1951), H.K.R. Lalbiakliana, C. Laizawna and some younger dramatists made commendable contributions to the development of Mizo drama. According to my record, by the end of the twentieth century and the close of the second millennium, over 150 plays have been published in the Mizo language. So, there is a good scope of research in the field of drama, an opportunity to improve and enrich Mizo literature through the use of various dramatic performances.

### **Essays/Articles/Critical Writings/Research Works, etc.**

If we turn our attention to other prose writings like essays, critical and research works, the contribution of essayists like Kaphleia, C. Thuamluaia, Zikpuii-pa, J. Malsawma, Siamkima Khawlhling, James Dokhuma, Dengchhuana, Darchhawna and L. Khiantge may be considered for critical examination. Then, imaginative essays are closely followed by the critical writings in the form of book review and literary appreciation-cum-criticism. Research scholars of Mizo language and literature have now explored the wide ranges and prospects of research field for younger research scholars, students and outside investigators. Mizo scholars, writers and journalists are continuously publishing essays and articles in various journals and books. It will not be inappropriate to conclude that the Mizo prose work is increasing in a large scale through hundreds of newspapers, bulletins and magazines published fortnightly,

monthly, bi-annually and annually. And the Mizos may possibly be considered to be one of the richest in having a variety of newspapers, journals and magazines viewed in proportion to the population of the region.

### **Concluding Note**

No sufficient justice can be done to describe the spurt of literature, which came in the recent years without a full-length study. Suffice it to say that the literary award given to Liangkhaia, the multi-faceted prolific writer, by the Mizo Academy of Letters in 1979, and Padma Shri Award to James Dokhuma on literature (1985) by the President of India, confirm that, given the opportunity and necessary patronage, the door is open now for massive development of Mizo literature. At present, as many as sixteen writers [James Dokhuma (1985), Nuchhungi (1986), Khawlkungi (1987), R.K. Lalhluna (1989), R. Vanlawma (1998), Lalsangzuali Sailo (1998), P.S. Chawngthu (1999), Darchhawna (2005), Laltluangliana Khiangte (2006), L.Z. Sailo (2007), Lalthangfala Sailo (2009), Lalzuia Colney (2010), Buangi Sailo (2011), R.L. Thanmawia (2012), J. Malsawma (2013), C. Chhuanvawa (2014)] have bagged the Padma Award in literature, and eleven writers [Liangkhaia (1979), James Dokhuma (1985), P.S. Chawngthu (1992), K.C. Lalvunga (1995), Khawlkungi (1998), J. Malsawma (2001), Darchhawna (2004), B. Lalthangliana (2007), Zairema (2010), V. Thangzama (2013), R.L. Thanmawia (2016)] have been awarded the Mizo Academy Award in literature, and this may be considered as the highest state award in the field of language and literature.

The greatest impediments to the growth of Mizo literature is lack of fund for printing of books in a large scale. In the small community of the Mizos, the number of books that can be sold is very small. Publication of a literary work, unless it happens to be a textbook or supported by the government or church body, is a losing proposition which no individual writer can afford. There is, at the moment, a great interest in the development of literature which is evident from the number of manuscripts and cyclostyled copies lying with individual writers. If only there could be an agency on the government willing to assist in the publication of works of literary value; it would be a monumental contribution for the growth of Mizo literature and the society. The

Mizoram Publication Board Bill, 1993, has been quite effective ensuring the publication of more than 200 new books with 75 per cent assistance given by the Board.

In spite of all these problems, the Mizo Academy of Letters, knowing the increasing number of published works in various genres of literature; started selecting “Book of the Year” since 1989. The best book in Mizo language and literature was awarded Book of the Year Award; a small cash incentive and a citation of honour. It is clear from the record that the Mizo literature has greatly developed and a large number of books (100–200) are published every year. Today, the Mizos have a good number of poems, plays, essays, novels, articles, critical reviews and other prose works which are to be translated into different languages of the world and to be circulated outside the state of Mizoram. The Department of Mizo, Mizoram University, is doing all-out effort for the improvement of Mizo language and literature by organizing several academic programmes like Orientation, Consultation, Seminar, Workshop and Training. In the same way, publications of relevant books, refereed journals, and production of materials for higher education and all other related concerns have been taken care sincerely by members of the faculty of the Mizoram University.

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# The Uniqueness of Mizo Language

*Rozama Chawngthu*  
*Lalmawipuii Chawngthu*

**Abstract:** To speak and write correctly the Mizo language, one has to be very careful as it has a unique pattern. The uniqueness of Mizo language is so great that it cannot be stated all at once. After reading this paper, one may come to know some of the unique qualities of the Mizo language in terms of intonation, sentence constructions and various grammatical patterns as compared with the English language.

**Keywords:** Mizo language, uniqueness, tonal language.

TO SPEAK and to write Mizo language for a Mizo are not difficult. But to speak and to write correctly, one has to be very careful as the Mizo language is very unique. Among the many uniquenesses, let us summarize a few of them.

First of all, some affirmative and negative sentences have the same meaning, *a nih leh aw* (if it is so) and *a nih loh leh aw* (if it is not so) have the same meaning. In the second sentence there is *loh* which means “not”. Grammatically they are supposed to be contradictory. But the meaning is exactly the same; both are used for “OK, bye/see you”. *A lo kal hma chuan kan lo tan tur a ni lo* (we must not start before he comes) and *a lo kal hma loh chuan kan lo tan tur a ni lo* (we must not start not before he comes) Anyway, the second sentence means “We must not start until he comes”. English language also has something like this. “God be with you till we meet again” and “God be with you until we meet again”. Grammatically there is difference, but the meaning is more or less the same.

The use of an adverb in Mizo language is different. In English and other languages the same adverb can be used for two opposite words.

“All day and all night” in Mizo is *ni leng leh zan khua*. We cannot say *ni leng leh zan leng* or *ni khua leh zan khua*. Here “all” means *leng* to qualify “day” and *khua* to qualify “night”. In English we say “very big and very small”. The same adverb “very” qualifies the two opposite words. Even in Hindi the same adverb qualifies the two opposite words: “*bahuta barā* and *bahuta choṭā*”. But in Mizo we cannot use the same adverb to qualify big and small. While “very big” is *lian pui*, “very small” is *te reuh te*. *Pui* qualifies *lian* (big) but *reuh te* qualifies *te* (small). Above all, the adverb comes after an adjective or a verb in Mizo language while it comes before an adjective in other languages.

The name of one type of a thing can differ depending on the location, e.g. hair on the head is *sam* but hair on other parts of the body is *hmul*. We never say, *Ka zak sam*, *ka chawn sam*, *ka awm sam*, instead, *ka zak hmul*, *ka chawn hmul*, *ka awm hmul* is the correct way of speaking the language. The dorsal side of a knee (*khup*) is *kaiza* while the dorsal side of an elbow is *kiukawn*. If this is *kiukawn* why don’t we say *khupkawn*?

The Mizos often use *thukhuh* (minimization of facts/concealed words/exaggeration). “How are you?” To reply this question, it is said, “I am very well” which in Mizo is *ka dam ṭawk ṭawk e*. This literally means “I am hardly well”. When Mizos are ill, even if it is serious, they say, *ka ṭha e* (I am alright). If they say, “It is not dangerous”, it means there is danger. If they say, “I am not in pain”, usually there is pain. The Mizos are cultivators; when they want to say that their paddy field is very small, they exaggerate and say “Our paddy field is as small as a hen’s face”. They try to produce rice for the whole family from such a small field. However, there are times when families cannot look after their so-called small fields and have to abandon some portions of the field. When they want to say that the abandoned portion of the field is so wide, they say, “We left as wide as half the sky”. When they want to tell the paddy produced from the field is very little, “Our product is only a handful of a dog”. Nevertheless, though concealed words are used, it is regarded as polite manners.

The use of *angin* is very peculiar. *nang angin ka sang lo* literally means “I am not tall like you” in English. Here the sentence in two languages is quite different. *Nang angin ka sang lo* means “You are tall; but I am not tall” while the English sentence – “I am not tall like you”



means “You are not tall, I am also not tall, both of us are not tall”. Though we use *angin* (like), we mean “unlike” as it is followed by a negative word *lo*. “Like you” is to be said *ang bawkin*. “I am not tall like you” is *nang ang bawkin ka sang lo*. But if he is tall and I am not tall, we have to say, *nang angin ka sang lo* which means “I am not tall unlike you”. This is often misunderstood by many Mizo people and is often mistranslated as well. This uniqueness of the Mizo language should clearly be understood and be used correctly.

There are many words used only in negative (*lo* means “no or not”) such as *namai lo*, *namen lo*, *zei lo*, *hnaisai lo*, *mumal lo*, *dukdam lo*, *ṭawmkai lo*, *chiangkuang lo*, *tlaktlai lo le lo*, *nikhua lo*, *bengtla lo*, *ṭṭai lo*, *fumfe lo* and many others. *Chauh namaiin ka chau lo/chauh namenin ka chau lo* means “I am very tired” literally “I am not a little tired”. Even many Mizo people do not understand this. The old translation of the Bible is also criticized by some Mizos as they do not grasp the correct uses of such words. *Hlahh namenin an hlahh ta lo va* means “And they feared exceedingly”. Such words are directly followed by *lo* or *loh* (no or not), e.g. *zei lo*, *mumal lo*, *chiangkuang lo*, etc. which can easily be understood by all Mizo people. But when some words fall between the word and *lo*, it is a bit difficult to understand.

Mizo language is a tonal language. The tone plays an important part in the formation of meaning. The same spelling which can be of different tones can have different meanings. Let us give examples. **T-h-a-ng** can be tuned in six different tones having six different meanings. Short high sound – *a hming a thàng* means “His name is well known”. Long high sound – *a buang thàng mai* to denote a beautiful brown colour. Short low sound – *he thleng hi a thàng* means “This plate is greasy”. Short high to low sound – *a thàng rei ta hle mai* means “He has been away for so long”. Short low to high sound – *Thăng ka kam* means “I make a trap”. Long low to high sound – *so hle rim chu a thàng* denoting the odour produced by raw meat. The second example is *pang*. *Pang* can be tuned in eight different tones; having eight different meanings in different parts of speech. (The sentences in the examples are not translated into English as there are no exact equivalent words in English for some *pangs*.)

ᵃ (short high sound)	<i>an lo thlèng ta</i>	<i>pàng mai ᵃ!</i>
ᵃ̄ (long high sound)	<i>ka lùkhàm hi</i>	<i>pàng lᵃ a ni</i>
ᵃ̇ (short low sound)	<i>ka mᵃ a, ka</i>	<i>pàng a khām</i>
ᵃ̈ (long low sound)	<i>mī a hniāl vᵃ</i>	<i>pàng pàng a</i>
ᵃ̄̇ (short high to low sound)	<i>lala a ᵃ̄chei</i>	<i>pàng lutuk</i>
ᵃ̄̈ (long high to low sound)	<i>a ᵃ̄wng pàng</i>	<i>pàng mai ᵃ!</i>
ᵃ̇̄ (short low to high sound)	<i>an unauvah a</i>	<i>pàng ber a ni</i>
ᵃ̈̄ (long low to high sound)	<i>tui a hmuam</i>	<i>pàng mᵃ le</i>

*Sikul ka kᵃl* (I go to school). Here *kal* is a high tone. *Sikul kᵃl hi a ᵃha* (It is good to go to school). Here *kal* is a low tone. If a high tone is used instead of a low tone, it is incorrect. There are many words which are mispronounced even by the Mizos themselves.

The other uniqueness of the Mizo language is that both the noun and the pronoun are often used together. “*Thanga comes*” cannot be translated as *thanga lo kal*. *Thanga a lo kal* is demanded. *Thanga* is a noun and *a* is a pronoun (he). But in English “*Thanga he comes*” is incorrect. Some journalists dropped the pronoun “he” or “she” and used to write as – *pu hawla zin, pu rama delhi kal*. If we add a pronoun, a single letter *a* it is complete. Many journalists in Mizoram today believe that a full sentence is not needed for a headline or a sub-headline of a newspaper. However, incorrect construction of sentences is to be avoided. “Prime Minister-in *Nehru thlan tlawh*” (prime minister visited Nehru’s tomb). Here, the English is correct; but, the Mizo language construction is not. A pronoun *a* is to be added; “... *a tlawh*” is required. If we want a shorter headline, *nehru thlanah prime minister* (prime minister at Nehru’s tomb) is acceptable for a headline. In such a case, a complete sentence is not necessarily demanded for a headline. At the same time, an incorrect sentence for a headline must be avoided.

Mizo language is said to be a mono-syllabic language. Correct writing of the language is very difficult. It is often confusing to know when to write certain words in a word or two. In most cases, every syllable has meaning. It is very difficult to say as to which is a word or a phrase. There is a common practice which is to be learnt carefully. *Dawhkan* and *dawh kan* are not the same. While *dawhkan* is a noun (table), *dawh kan* is a verb and an adverb. *Dawhkanah lekhhabu a awm* (There is a book on the table). *He thingphek hi bangah hian dawh kan tur a ni* (This plank is to be placed up at the wall). The use and meaning

of *mahse* and *mah se* are also different. *Kima chu lal a ni; mahse, hna a thawk thin* (Kima is a king; but he works). *Kima chu lal ni mah se hna a thawk thin* (Though Kima is a king, he works or Kima works though he is a king.) There are a number of such words or phrases which are very difficult to write correctly.

The most uniqueness of Mizo language is that it is rich in adjectival adverbs. Examples will clarify it. *Lala a lo tlan **luang luang** mai*. Here *luang luang* is an adjectival adverb since it qualifies *lala* (noun) and *tlan* (verb). What we can know from *luang luang* are – (i) *lala* (the man) is big or fat. (ii) He does not run fastly though he is in a hurry. (iii) The way he runs is not steady but the word denotes that *lala* looks as if he is swinging. *Mawii a thu **hnur** mai*. Here *hnur* is an adjectival adverb. *Hnur* denotes that Mawii is a big woman and she sits improperly. *A lo kal den den a, a lo kal dan dan a, a lo kal dun dun a*. Here *den den*, *dan dan*, *dun dun* are adjectival adverbs. *Den den* denotes that the noun is small; *dan dan* denotes that the noun is a normal size; *dun dun* denotes that the noun is big. Such adjectival adverbs are commonly used in Mizo language which cannot directly be translated into other languages.

Since Mizo language is unique, many a time, literal translation is impossible. It further poses quite a number of difficulties, not only for non-native speakers learning the language but for the Mizos as well.



## A Brief Discussion of Select Mizo Manuscripts

*Vanlal T. Bapui*

*K.V. Subbarao*

**Abstract:** The aim of the paper is to demonstrate the relevance of the study of Mizo manuscripts. We show that an in-depth study of manuscripts will provide us insights with regard to language change over a period of time and language use at a specific period of time. We compare and contrast the changes that took place in the Mizo language with the structural aspects of the current Mizo language. Since these manuscripts are in a written form, it would be difficult for us to assess the nature of the pronunciation at that time. However, certain usages found in the manuscripts, such as the use of the letter /o/ for the present-day Mizo script /aw/ provide some possible clues with regard to pronunciation of the earlier times. We also show the difference between the grammatical rules that the language adhered to at that time and how they are different from the present-day Mizo.

**Keywords:** Mizo language, Mizo script, Mizo manuscripts, Mizo grammar, written language, style of writing, cultural wordings, parts of speech.

### Introduction to Manuscripts

ACCORDING to the *Oxford Dictionary*, the meanings of manuscript are given as (i) a copy of book, piece of music, etc. before it has been printed, and (ii) a very old book or document that was written by hand. We may say that any old or new handwritten document is a manuscript. The abbreviation MS stands for manuscript. In this sport paper, we will deal with old handwritten as well as printed materials in Mizo. The printed

materials have been chosen to be included to show the evolution of the Mizo language through the years.

We are aware of the fact that in recent times, a very significant discovery in Mizoram came to light at Vangchhia, where a large number of ancient stone pillars, monuments, carvings, tablets, etc. were unearthed. Prior to this find, we noted the presence of huge stone megaliths spread all over north-east India. In the district of North Cachar Hills of Assam, we have an arrangement of huge stone pots, the purposes of which is still a mystery, similar to those found in Laos–Cambodia areas of Southeast Asia. Though these may not come under the category of manuscripts, the fact remains that the significance of these ancient relics has to be deciphered and interpreted as history.

Manuscripts are the best way of knowing the type, style and use of linguistic characteristics as used and recorded by people of the past. Especially, in under-analysed and under-recorded languages like Mizo, which is still in the process of evolution and standardization, manuscripts play a significant role, as usages change in course of time. The older written works, though may be considered obsolete, provide crucial inputs and information with regard to the changes that took place in language. The study of language change is an important area of historical linguistics, as such a study tells how language change and what kind of factors – social, political, areal factors – are relevant for such study.

Every now and then, such handwritten accounts of the past of the people, ways of life, teachings and accounts are discovered all over the world. Some are written even in languages and scripts which are no longer in use in the world today. Accounts of what took place in the past came to be known through these manuscripts.

In this brief paper we intend to highlight the earliest manuscripts of the Mizo language which the authors could obtain.

### **Mizo Manuscripts**

The earliest manuscript that the authors could access is a portion of *Laisuih* dated 24 August 1898, issued from Aizawl. The MS deals with the killing of ferocious wild animals and the rewards offered by the authorities. The MS is reproduced verbatim below:

## MS 1 – PART 1

1. *tu-pawh sakei-te, savom-te a- kap she la, a- lu borsap hnen-a a-entir*  
 anyone-also tiger -pl bear -pl 3sg shoots let-be so its- head DC to- at  
 3sg- show

*she la a- man a- hmu- ang*

let be its- cost 3sg- get- will

“If any one shoots tigers or bears, if the head is shown to the District Administrator (DC), he will receive its cost.

The following points are worth considering:

- (i) Every transitive verb (that is, a verb that takes an object) in Mizo requires the presence of the ergative marker – *n/-in* to occur to the right of the subject for the sentence to be grammatical. In (1) above we notice that though the verb *kap* is transitive, the occurrence of the ergative marker is absent with the subject *tu-pawh* (who ever).
- (ii) In modern Mizo the conditional marker *chuan* is preferably used in place of the permissive marker *she la* that is used in the manuscript.
- (iii) Further, when *she la* (let be, if) is used the subject agreement marker */a-/* does not occur, just as in the case of conditionals in the present-day Mizo, where the subject agreement marker is not permitted in the subordinate clause.
- (iv) In the words *savom* and *borsap* above, the vowel */o/* is pronounced with an open mid-vowel */ɔ/* in modern Mizo. */ɔ/* is written as */aw/* in the present-day Mizo script.
- (v) Further, *she la* (let be, if) of the MS is pronounced as *se la* (let be, if). That is, there is loss of palatalization of the sibilant */sh/* to */s/*.

2. *sakei than.kin a-kap she la tangka shom hnih leh cheng nga*  
 tiger grow.stop 3sg-shot let be money ten two and rupees five  
 (end of growth)

*a-hmu-ang*

*Analysis*

- (i) The letter /*tʰ*/ in the expression *than.kin* (end of growth) in the current Mizo is written as /*tʰ*/. It is a compound with *than* and *kin*, where *than* means “grow” and it is a verb, *kin* means “end of an activity” and the compound *than.kin* imparts the interpretation of “end of growth”. Such compounds are abundantly prevalent not only in Mizo, but also in the other Kuki-Chin languages. In fact, compound formation is extremely productive and robust in the other Tibeto-Burman languages too.
- (ii) The expression *than.kin* is sparingly used in the present-day Mizo. The speaker of the present-day Mizo prefers to use the expression *putling* (mature). *Putling* (mature) carries the feature of [+human] and hence, its use in the current Mizo, we point out, is not appropriate. In fact, the use of *than.kin* (end of growth) is a preferred expression for [+animate] and [-human] entities such as lions, cows, fish, deer or any other animal.
- (iii) The use of the word *tangka* for “money” is not very common these days, and the preferred expression is *pawisa*. Note that both *tangka* and *pawisa* are borrowed from Indo-Aryan.
- (iv) The phrase *tangka shorn hnih leh cheng nga* “25 rupees” is no longer used. Instead, the phrase *cheng sawm.hnih panga* “25 rupees” is used.
- (v) The literal translation of *tangka shom hnih leh cheng nga* “25 rupees” is: “money 10 2 and rupees 5”.

The literal translation of the present-day expression *cheng sawm.hnih panga* is “rupees 10 2 5”.

3. *tin sakei. no a-kap shela tangka shorn leh cheng hnih leh duli*

then tiger.cub 3sg- shot let be money ten and rupees two and half-rupee  
a-hmu-ang.

3sg-get-will

“And the shooter of a tiger cub will receive Rupees 12 and half”.

*Analysis*

- (i) Here too, the phrase *tangka shom leh cheng hnih leh duli*



“12.50 rupees” is no longer used. Instead, the phrase *cheng sawm.pahnih leh pawisa sawm.nga* “12.50 rupees” is used.

- (ii) The use of *sh* for *s* may also be noted.
- (iii) Our observation is that during those times, the counting is done by assigning unit place and tenth places. The expression will literally mean “two tenth places and five” in the unit place of counting.

3. *tin savom than.kin a-kap she-la tangka shorn a- hmu-ang*

Then bear grow.stop 3sg- shoot let be money ten 3sg-get-will

“The shooter of a full-grown bear will get Rupees Ten.”

*Analysis*

The use of *thankin*, *she-la* and *tangka* may be noted as above.

4. *tin savom.no a-kap she la cheng nga a- hmu-ang.*

then bear.cub 3sg- shoot let be rupees five 3sg-get-will

“If someone shoots a bear cub, he will get Rupees Five.”

*Analysis*

The comments made above for *savom no* “bear cub” and *she la* (let be, if) apply in sentence 4 too.

5. *tin sa dang a-kap she la a- man a- hmu- lo- yang.*

then animal other 3sg- shoot let be its- cost 3sg- get-, neg- will

“The shooter of any other animal will not get any cost.”

*Analysis*

Here too, the comments made earlier for *a-kap* “3sg-shoot” and *she la* (let be, if) apply in sentence 5.

We provide below a full summary of MS 1.

*A brief summary:* If anyone has shot a tiger, he must produce the head of the animal to the District Administrator. He will then be paid a reward of money amounting to Rs. 25. A tiger cub or a younger one will entitle him to receive Rs. 12.50 (i.e. half of the reward for a full-grown tiger). The reward for a full-grown bear is Rs. 10 and that of a bear cub is Rs. 5. Other animal shot will not get any reward.

The above is a kind of MS that informs the people of the availability

of rewards from the authorities as and when ferocious wild animals like tigers and bears (perhaps considered man-eaters and hence better if they are eliminated) are killed. The condition is that the hunter must produce the bead of the animal slain to the DC or Magistrate. And the one who had shot a fully grown tiger will receive a reward of Rs. 25, a young tiger Rs. 12.50. A bear slayer can get Rs. 10, and that of a bear cub will get Rs. 5. Any other animal killed does not entitle the hunter a reward.

The significance of the above passage is that we could see some differences of the Mizo language used in those days in comparison to the modern-day Mizo language, spoken and written at present.

#### MS 1 – PART 2

*tin rokungi khuate pawh pa hnih an kap.*

then Rokungi villagers also unit two they shoot

“The villagers of Rokungi also killed two (bears)”

*tin thanruma savom a kap shial. in a ai.*

then Thanruma bear 3sg shoot bison.with 3sg perform *ai* ceremony

“And Thanruma shoot a bear, and did the *ai* ceremony by killing a bison.”

*tin khua vel thanga khuate pa hnih an kap.*

then “village around famous” villagers unit two they shoot

“and the villagers of Khawvelthanga killed two.”

*tin lung lei kiang.a lalchunga khua.te pakhat a kap.*

then Lunglei near adv Lalchunga villagers.pl one 3sg shoot

“the villagers of Lalchunga, near Lunglei, shoot one.”

#### *Account*

The villagers of Rokungi had also shot two animals (apparently tigers). Thanruma shot a bear and performed the *ai* ceremony as thanksgiving by killing a bison for the whole village to enjoy. The villagers of Khawvelthanga also shot two (possibly bears). And the villagers of Lalchunga who are near Lunglei also killed one.

What we can easily see from the above MS is that the style of speech, expression and writing the Mizo language has changed over the years.

Thus, this manuscript provides information about language change. We assume that the expressions used in the manuscript above were the expressions that were in vogue at that time.

1.2.1: The above portion contains a record of the number of tigers killed by the different villagers. Villages are often referred to as the village of the chief or the prominent person of that village. Note that in lieu of giving the name of the villages, they have been named as “Rokungi’s village” or “Lalchunga’s village”.

1.2.2: One hunter celebrated his success with the *ai* ceremony in which the hunter killed the treasured animal of the Mizo people, the *sial*, a black gayal or mithun. This ceremony is performed to appease the spirit of the slain animal so that the spirit will not haunt the hunter in his future hunting trips. The village priest will offer the sacrificed animal and the meat will be eaten by the entire villagers. This is also the time to honour the hunter with decorated cotton yarns and decorated plumes of birds of paradise. Such decorations often assign a place of honour to the person in the village situation.

1.2.3: One cannot but notice the way proper names are written. *Khua vel thanga* is now written as *Khawvelthanga*, and *Lung lei* written as *Lunglei*.

1.2.4: The grammatical rules followed then are also no longer followed now. The sentences and clauses may be very ungrammatical. However, the facts stated in the MS remains, and there lies the importance of the MS.

#### MS 1 – PART 3

*tin lianona khuate pakhat chu savom hnu a- zui- lai in*

*then Liannona villagers one def bear pugmark 3sg follow* while

“As one plan of Liannona’s village was following the trail of a bear.”

*savom chuan a sheh a,*

bear def 3sg- bite expletive

“the bear bites him,”

*a hrok a, a lu chhip a, a hmui a, a ko ki a, a hnung a,*

*his throat adv, his head top adv, this lips adv, his shoulder adv, his back adv*

“in the throat, top of head, mouth, shoulder, back”

*a ban ve ve a kut ve ve a sheh chiam a.*

his arm both his hand both his bite much is

*hmun shom hnih leh hmun nga a a sheh a.*

Place ten two and place give adv it bite is

“The bear bites him in 25 places.”

*a sheh ni chu doctor sap lianona khua a riak a,*

It bite day def doctor sahib Liannona village 3sg spend-night is

“The day he was bitten, a European doctor was in the village.”

it hmuam hma a sil fai a hmun thum a a thui a

3sg wound 3sg wash clean adv place three adv 3sg sew is

“He washed the wound clean and sewed in three places.”

*damdoi a hnoi vek a, a tuk.a chuan*

medicine 3sg apply all adv, 3sg morrow-adv def mkr

“He applied medicines on all the wound, and the next day.”

*aizawl a an zawng a, tuna a dam dawn ta.*

Aizawl adv they carry is, now 3sg well almost is

“they carried him to Aizawl and now he is recovering.”

### *Account*

One hunter of Liannawna’s villages was bitten by a bear while he followed the pug marks of the bear. The bear bites him in the throat, top of the head, mouth, shoulder, back, both arms, both hands very severely. He was wounded in twenty-five places. That night a European doctor spent the night in Liannawna’s village. He cleaned the wounds, applied medicines and stitched them in three places. The next day he was taken to hospital in Aizawl, and now he is recovering.

The third portion differs from modern language in several ways. A hunter of Lianhnuna’s village or Liannawna’s village, was following the pug marks of a bear when suddenly he was attacked by the bear. It must have been injured and was turning ferocious and aggressive. The bear attacked him and bit him on the *hrok* (neck), *lu chip* (upper portion of head), *hmui* (lips or mouth), *ko ki* (shoulder), *hnung* (back), *ban ve ve* (both biceps), *kut ve ve* (both hands), *ke ve ve* (both legs). The man was

bitten at twenty-five places. Fortunately for him, a European doctor was in the village. He cleansed the wounds, stitched it and applied medicines. The next day, the hunter was carried to Aizawl and it was reported that his condition got better.

A modern reader may wonder why such incidents were reported in the very first newspaper of the Mizo people. To appreciate this, one has to be transported to the time of occurrence and be conscious of the situations prevailing at that time. Mizoram was still a thickly forested area where lots of ferocious animals were hunting their prey. In the process, humans were also preyed upon frequently by ferocious animals like tigers and bears.

The hunter from Lianhnuna's village might have injured the bear and was following the injured animal when he was unexpectedly attacked and thoroughly mauled. The injures were said to have been suffered in no less than twenty-five places, some severe ones needing stitching. The MS contained interesting accounts as —

1.3.1: *lianona khuate pakhat* is a person of Lianhnuna's or Liannawna's village, and modern Mizo invariably must have *mi* before *pakhat* to indicate that it was a person. The plural form of village *khuate* (villages) conveys the meaning of one person from among the villagers and not the village itself.

1.3.2: *hnu a zui lui in* indicated that the hunter was stalking the bear. Hunters resort to following pug marks as they stalk their prey. Even after shooting the prey with a gun, if the animal had not fallen with the first shot, the pug marks and blood stains are followed carefully with the hope that the dead carcass will be found somewhere ahead. This account showed that the case was something unexpected.

1.3.3: *savom chuan a sheh a* "bear bites him" may convey the sense that the bear unexpectedly attacked the hunter and bit him in several places.

1.3.4: *hnum shom hnih leh hmun nga* is an old way of expression of numeral as already stated. Modern Mizo speakers will just say *hmun sawmhnih pangaah a seh*.

1.3.5: The use of *ve ve* (both or each) for each of the arm, hand and legs is typical of old usage of Mizo. Modern Mizo prefer the use of numeral *puhnih* in its place as *kut pahnih*, *ke pahnih*, *ban pahnih*, etc.

1.3.6: One wonders how the use of *aw* and *o* are freely interchanged for representation of the *o* sound. It may be a proof of how early the people have been able to write the Mizo language so close to the reduction of the language to a written one. There certainly are ample chances of interchanging these alphabets to represent the *o* sound. Definitely the influence of English on the *o* cannot be ruled out. And one must be aware of the fact that this was long before the Mizo written language has been standardized.

## MS 2

We reproduce below the second of the old MS which we could obtain. It is a page of the *Mizo Leh Vai Chanchin Lekhabu*. This may not be MS in the strict sense of the term, however it is shown here to highlight the primitive nature of the printed document.

### MS 2.1

*tin, anmani hnena nen, lal leh upa hnena nen ka hril a*

Then they to them and Chief and Council to them also I tell is

“I told them and told the Chief and his Council also”

*tuna va hruai thuai thuai rawh u in hruai thuai-lo va, ril tam a a*

Now go bring quickly quickl imp 2pl 2pl fetch, quick not is, hungry adv he  
*thih chuan in*

die def adv

“Now you must go quickly to bring him, if not brought, he dies of hunger”

*in khua in in tuar pha' ange" ka ti a, buhfai kengin a hruai tur chuan*

your village-adv you suffer reason will I say it, rice carrying to bring  
for def

“your village will suffer the consequence, I said, carrying rice with them”

*an kal ta.*

they go pt

“they went off”

*ka-hmuh lai.in kal thuai.thuai- rawh.u, chuti lo chuan sawrkarin lal*

My-seeing during go quickly.quickly imp 2 pl, like-that-neg-def govt

will Chief

“Go quickly while I am here, otherwise government will punish the Chief and Council”

*leh upa*

and Council

*a hrem ang” ka ti a, hruai twin ka kal tir ’a ni. a fapa hming pawh*

it punish will, I say, fetching for I go let is. His son name also

“So saying, I let them go. His son is named Denga of Minpui village”

*denga a ni minpui khua. lunglei 13.12.1905.*

Denga is Minpui village Lunglei 13.12.1905

*bawktea ralte, Rashi veng, lunglei.*

Bawktea Ralte Rahsi village, Lunglei

### *Account*

This is a report of the Circle Inspector of Lunglei named Bawktea Ralte, residing in Rahsi Veng, Lunglei. A person or a family of Minpui village, near Lunglei, was in a bad state. It is possible that the person was poor and had no food, or that he or the family was in dire strait due to poverty and lack of food, and might be starving. The CI was urging the people to go with something to eat so that the person(s) do not die of starvation. It was also possible that the village had suffered from natural disaster from which the people could not recover on their own.

The above appears to be a report submitted by Bawktea Ralte, a Circle Interpreter (Rahsi) as they were known then. There must have been a calamity at Minpui village near Lunglei, in which a person(s) needed an evacuation. The CI gave instructions to the villagers to go with food supply for fear of the victim’s death due to hunger, which is an unwanted thing to happen. The village was Minpui and the name of the son was given as Denga, which suggest that the victim(s) was a family. And the report mentioned that the government authorities would inflict punishment on the Chief and his Council if they failed to evacuate the person(s) before their death.

2.1.1: Any reader with an idea of the Mizo language will immediately

assign the “t-dot” “trii” inome of the words of the account, as in *tam* which may be read to mean “many or much”. The preceding syllable (which should have been joined with the word) is *ril* “stomach or intestine”. It cannot be assigned to mean “many or much” because of the clause that followed the word, *a a thih chuan* (if perished due to) which can only suggest that the cause of death is hunger *riltam* only.

2.1.2: The first thing that one notices is the way words are spelt and how words are joined and separated with the word belonging to other parts of speech. Words like *riltam* (hungry), *chuanin* (if so), *laiin* (while, as same time), etc. are written separately; whereas, some separate words like *ange* (will be) is written as a single word. Even the generic term Mizo is written separately in the name of the paper.

2.1.3: We notice how importance is given to the authority of the government. The CI’s report repeated the instructions that he had given to the villagers. The ultimate blame will be laid on the village authorities in the persons of the Chief and his Councillors.

### MS 3

The same paper of MS 2 above, dated January 1906 has an account titled *Zu Thu*, as reproduced below:

*zu hian zo ram min ti buai ber mai.*

Zu def Mizoram us cause-trouble most is prt

“Zu is what causes the most trouble to Mizoram”

*kan in shum thei deuh chuan, kan tan a tha in,*

we self-control able more def us for it good will be,

“If we can exercise more self-control it will be good for us.”

*a nuam zawk bawk ang.zu in tam luat tuk hian*

it pleasant more also will be.zu drink much excess much def

“It will be more pleasant. Too much drink in excess”

*lu-khawng a nei shi lo; kan harh*

reward 3sg have is negative; we sober

“have no reward whatsoever; when we are sober”

*huna in chhir na pawh a awm zawk.*



time adv regret nomlz also it occur more used to be.

“we often regret our loss of self-control”

*zu avang.a ren chham pawh kan tam.*

zu because of poor become also we many

“Many of us become poor due to zu”

*zu kan in hi at mu ei kan ni.*

zu we drink is fool seed eat we are

“Our drinking of zu is our foolishness”

*chhungte tan.a phal lo leh fate tan.a phal lo pawh,*

family members for adv allow neg and children for adv allow neg also

“What is prohibited for family and children also”

*zu kan nam chuan, ni lo ang takin kan ti ral thin.*

zu we smell when negative like adv we do finish used to

“when we are drunk, we become permissive, forgetting rules”

*chapo nan kan hmang hawk thin.*

arrogant for we use also used to

“we use to use it for arrogance”

*zu kawng.a hian ui leh vawk ang kan ni;*

zu way of def dog and pig like we are

“In the ways of zu, we become like dogs and pigs”

*zah kan nei lo, ten kan nei lo, thu dawn*

shame we have neg, loath we have neg, word consider

“we have no shame, no loath, no thought”

*kan nei lo. in-then lo tur-in in-then nan an hmang;*

we have neg. Divorce neg for by divorce reason they use

“we don’t have. Good couples divorces due to zu”

*thu buai nei lo turin thu buai*

word trouble have neg for word trouble

“good people have cases”

*an nei. mi thi shela, “zu” kan ti a;*  
 they have. People die let be, *zu* we say prt  
 ‘When people die, we ask for *zu*’  
*nau piang shela, “zu” kan ti a; zin ila, “zu”*  
 baby born let be so, *zu* we say prt; travel if *zu*  
 “when a child is born, we ask for *zu*, if we travel, *zu*”  
*kan ti a; sa kap ila, “zu” kan ti.*  
 we say prt; animal shoot if, *zu* we say  
 “we ask for, if we shoot wild animals, we ask for *zu*”  
*engkima zu hi thu pui ber leh,*  
 In all at/for *zu* is word big most and  
 “In everything, we give *zu* the foremost place”  
*dam chhan bera kan hmang thin ...*  
 life reason most adv we use used to ...  
 “we use *zu* as our chief reason of life”

### *Account*

This is an account of the evil of drinking *zu* by the Mizo people. The account is a condemnation of the practice of drinking *zu* for every occasion like death, birth, travel, celebration, success, and has been a scourge for the society. Once a person is intoxicated, it results in senseless works and activities done on the part of the person. It has also resulted in divorces proving that it can destroy good marital relationship. *Zu* reduces a person to a state of dumb animals like dogs and pigs and people should realize that by drinking *zu* for every occasion, they are only eating the seed of foolishness.

The third old document certainly appears to have improved in style of writing and the use of abbreviations like full stop, comma, inverted commas, etc. Though the spelling, joining of syllables of single words, etc. have not improved much, the print certainly improved and is easier to read than the previous two MSS. However, the usages and style of the language have remained the same suggesting that the MS shows the standard usages and style of the language then.

The MS gives a detailed account of the misuse of *zu*, a traditional alcoholic drink of the Mizo society during the period of the account. The maxim-like statement *zu in tam luat tuk hian lukhawng a nei si lo* (excessive use of alcohol has no reward) could be said to be still relevant for the modern world as well, as it pointed out the universal abuse of the intoxicant. The account suggests that for the Mizo people of the time, *zu* occupied a very prominent place in their life as *zu* is associated with death, birth, tiredness, travel, success in hunting, etc. People tend to give one reason or another to justify their love for *zu*. In fact, the end part of the account can amount almost to the suggestion that *zu* is paramount for the Mizo people.

3.1: There are some beautiful cultural words like *lu-khawng* (the reward for some actions), *ren chham* (a state of complete lack of food and drink, a state of bankruptcy), *at mu ei* (to be eating the seed of what causes madness, a derived and part of an old saying, *mi a in an atmu an lem* “a fool suffers the consequences of his foolishness”), etc. are deeply rooted in the culture of the Mizo people.

3.2: Alcohol reduces the ability to remain as a sane and rational human being, and can easily make a person to become a curse and not a blessing to the family. A right-thinking person is often made the cause of the downfall and ruin for the family.

3.3: Alcohol makes a person haughty and proud. At the same time the account compares an alcoholic to a dog and a pig. Under the influence of alcohol, a person becomes shameless, careless, thoughtless, and is reduced to a state of animals which cannot have reasoning.

3.4: The last few lines lament over the culture of the people who are dependent on alcohol for every occasion like death, birth, tiredness, travel, success in hunting and so on.

### Concluding Remarks

Manuscripts can rewrite history. Every now and then some ancient manuscripts are discovered in different parts of the world. These are mostly handwritten and meticulous works of dedicated persons. Some are even written in obsolete scripts like hieroglyphs and sign languages.

**Acknowledgements:** We are thankful to Pu Thankima for providing us the manuscripts discussed herein from the archives of Aizawl Theological

College, Aizawl. We appreciate the fact that Prof. Lahluangliana Kiangte took the initiative for the study and analysis of such manuscripts. This, to the best of our knowledge, is a unique attempt and the first of its kind. We do hope that more manuscripts are unearthed and their analysis is made to see the kind of changes that took place in the Mizo language over a period of 100-120 years. Such analysis in our view would provide a great input for language use and standardization, a valuable source for dictionary making and textbook preparation.

### **References**

*Mizo Chanchin Laishuih.*

*Mizo leh Val Chanchin Lekhabu.*

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## Importance of Manuscript in Language

*C.E. Jeeni*

**Abstract:** This paper deals with the features of language and the script. They are two different things. According to phonology, script is morphological, while language is glottical /pharyngeal. The concept of script is sustainable as it affords the systematic preservation of thoughts, ideas and developments. Though man-made, manuscripts are more dependable and trustworthy to know about our past, our literary advancements and cultural moorings.

**Keywords:** Language, script, manuscript, morphology, phonetics, grammar, handwritten word.

MANUSCRIPT is the most authentic, trustworthy and proven document written by any individual in any language at any point of the time and place. It is termed as the first original source in the studies of all histories pertaining to the development of civilization and culture and all incidents perpetrated by the human or all activities and incidents of the nature recorded by man from the day and time our forefathers had invented the science of palaeography and morphology/script. The word “manuscript” itself denotes that it is a man-made graphic, i.e. an invention totally done by man and not merely a discovery, discovered by our forefathers, which is supposed to be a creation and a gift of nature.

I mean, manuscript is not God-given or the Mother Nature’s benevolent gift to man. Manuscript is totally man-made, an invention only. God has given us the ability and power of expression through the omnipotent Mother Nature to use our glottis and larynx to utter a number of sounds in variants to communicate our feeling extrovertly. All our expression is basically phonetic and entirely based on sound system. In linguistic terms it is called phonology/phonetics. There are less than 100 sounds only in total in free-variations and complementary

distribution throughout the whole world/whole universe, we encounter in our dwellings and daily chorus. Ancient mythologies have given a vivid account of the creative force of sound system, that is venerated as the root-cause of the reflection of our world and universe. The Big Bang theory is one such scientifically accepted theory of the origin of the universe, which is totally based on sound therapy. In Hindu mythology there is a very interesting storyfication/description of the science of phonology. Indians believe that the science of script was given by Manu. The Jews give credentials of giving the knowledge of alphabets to Prophet Moses as per Old Testament. Christianity gives credit to God, who gave the words/alphabets to the Messenger of His “Benevolent”, i.e. “Lord Christ” and the Muslims give credit to their Great Prophet “Mohammad”. The historians give credit to old/ancient Sumerians/Assyrians and Babylonians who first invented the script/the hieroglyphics, the alphabets/tablets and standardized them to denote some meaning, some reference, some message, which ultimately associated with well-grafted sounds and morphology together with semantics and syllables in a grammatical system with well-defined and well-crafted propriety of expression and recording/scribing.

In fact, language and script are two things in the eyes of phonology. Script may be or may not be phonetic. Script is morphological. It is invariably optical, while language is not optical. Language is glottical/pharyngeal. It does not need the help or assistance of other organs of the body or other outside material, but script needs the invariable assistance of hands/fingers, eyes and other outside material like ink/colour, paper, brush, pen, cloth, base of any material. Language is oral, script is not oral, it is optical. In language the uttering sounds are in constant change and in variants like atoms, while in script the changes or variants are not so rapid and essential. Language travels in sheer present, while the script travels in all the three modes of time, i.e. the past, present and future. That is why the music is universal. Manuscript is orthographical.

The fact is that language is not problematic, actual problem lies with the manuscript. The man has been fighting on account of manuscript, i.e. the morphology or palaeography since the ages unknown in his existence on this earth, and not on account of mere phonology. That is why, the language of music is universal and the language of manuscript is parochial.

But this concept of script is very important and essentially sustainable because systematic preservation of thoughts/ideas and actions/incidents/happenings man has encountered since the ages unknown in his history is essentially required to hold. The animals, birds and other earthlings do not need to preserve their feelings, thoughts, actions, etc. So they do not need any script. But in the case of man the situation is warranted differently. The man has grafted the God-gifted sounds, the phonetics skilfully in morphemes, allomorphs, morph and putting them in a desirable grammatic pattern added/associated them with clear-cut semantics and syntaxology/sequentology. He has also adopted colourful different motifs to systematize his orthographs. Not only he has also developed a well covered out system to train himself and his generation to learn and to acquire skills in script. Thus, the manuscript has become a true and trustworthy portal of mankind. One can doubt the typed, printed, stenographed, mobilized/computerized or filmed and screened word, but one cannot doubt the truthfulness of the manuscript in original. The handwritten word is most authentic, because it is the root storehouse of all we think, talk, see, experience and record. One can deny the language in oral-syndrome, but one cannot deny the handwritten word. That is why the manuscript is more important than the mere language.

In language audible anarchy with relation to meaning may prevail up to a longer strength, but in script it is not allowed to occur. The morphological or morphophonemical symbols (morphophonemics) are well carved out, well grafted, well standardized and well preserved. Any change or variation in its shape or primary/dictionary meaning is not allowed. Script remains as primitive as its origin. Although some changes also occur in script but they occur not so frequently and they take too much time in accordance with the passage of human scientific innovations in their art – crafts and graft. That is why the (hand)written word is more judicial and true than the oral word.

When we autograph the sounds (i.e. phonemes) of a particular language in the script of another language and try to be accurate to the sound system of the language we are scripting in, then we are supposed to take the help of transliteration symbols and not the mere translation. For example, to orthograph the Sanskrit or Hindi (or to say of any other language) in English mere translation of English vowels won't be suffice

till we do not apply the transliteration marks/symbols while scripting/ scribing the diction on the paper. The actual Sanskrit word is Krishan (कृष्ण) or Ram (राम). In English if we put it as KRISHNA (= कृष्णा) or RAMA (रामा) it is wrong. But if we scribe it using transliteration marks as “Kṛṣṇa” or “Rāma”, we are more accurate.

I would like to inform you that the Chinese and Japanese scripts are converted in system and their symbols are standardized for their proper understanding and orthography. Even the Sanskrit texts of India are more accurately translated and quoted putting proper transliteration marks. Translation is alphabetical-based, while transliteration is morphophonemics-based. A good manuscript cares for this accuracy so to convey the proper meaning and to adhere to the desired inference of the written word. The actual sound is “Mizo” and not “Mijo” – we cannot write or use the letter (alphabet) / J / in place of English letter/ alphabet / Z /. In Hindi no equivalent alphabet is available but a Persian sound using a decimal mark (.) below the letter of/ ज / as / ज़ / and thus in Hindi we will write / मिज़ो / and not / मिजो /. / मिजो / is wrong but / मिज़ो / is right. Such a situation prevails throughout all the languages of the world at the moment of scripting them accurately. If this accuracy can be and should be achieved in manuscript, then the printing mechanism may also be put in order. The language of telegraphy and stenography could answer the vibrant importance of manuscript in a better way. Now, one thing is clear that manuscript is more dependable and trustworthy than the printed or typed or mechanically inscribed diction on any object.



# The Story of Lost Manuscript in South Asia

*Lalhruaitluanga Ralte*

**Abstract:** This paper discusses about the story/myth of a lost manuscript prevalent among ten tribes or social groups of people scattered across a wide geographical area including north-east India, Burma, China, Thailand and the Philippines. The Lahhu, the Wa, the Khasis, the Rengma, the Karens, the Kachin, the Kui, the Lisu, the Motado Manobo Indians and the Mizo were the peoples who believed in the story of a lost book/script by their ancestors and were waiting for their retrieval at the hands of a white man. This myth has helped the spreading of Christianity among these ethnic groups as they believed that the white missionary with the Bible was the one that they were waiting for long.

**Keywords:** Lost book, lost script, forefathers, white man, lost book tradition, missionaries, return of the lost book, Christianity.

THE story of lost book or lost script is being told in India's north-east, Burma, China, Thailand and the Philippines. It is handed down from mouth to mouth, from the grandparents to grandchildren inside the houses of these countries. The most fascinating thing is that this story is not lost through the ages, but kept alive, may be through four centuries. The story is that their forefathers lost an important book or script which will be recovered from a foreigner, especially from a white man.

## I

In the tri-border of Burma, Thailand and China live a quarter of a million people called the Lahu. Legends said that Gui'sha (creator of all things) had given their forefathers his law written on rice cakes! A famine came, and the forefathers ate the rice cakes for their physical survival. They rationalized this act by saying that Gui'sha law would be then inside

them! The Lahu believed that a sense of Gui'sha law was still within them because their forefathers ate the rice cakes. They could not, however, obey their creator perfectly until they regained the precise written form of his laws. They believe that:

There will come a time when Gui'sha will send to us a white brother with a white book containing the white laws of Gui'sha – the words lost by our forefathers so long ago. That white brother will bring the lost book to our very hearts.

– Richardson 1984: 85

In 1890s American missionaries commissioned one of their numbers, a certain William Marcus Young, to take the gospel to the Shan people in eastern extremity of Burma. Accompanied by a young Karen Christian, Young established a base in Kengtung city, the capital of Shan region. One day Young preach to the Shan people about ten commandments, holding his Bible, the laws of “the True God”. As he preached Young noticed strangely garbed men gravitating towards him out of the throng in the market. Obviously they are not Shan people; they are Lahu men who descend from distant mountains to trade their wares in the market of Kengtung. Soon they completely surrounded him, stared incredulously at his white face, the white interior of the book in his hand, and listened to his description – in Shan language – of the laws of God contained in that book.

Then, in an outburst of powerful emotion, the Lahu pleaded with William Marcus Young to follow them up into the mountains. In fact, they practically kidnapped him: “We as people have been waiting for you for centuries,” they explained. “We even have meeting houses built in some of our villages in readiness for your coming.”

Some of the Lahu men showed him bracelets of coarse rope hanging like menacles from their wrists. “We Lahu worn rope like this since time immemorial. They symbolize our bondage to evil spirit. You alone, as messenger of God Gwi'sha, may cut these menacles from our wrists – but only after you have brought the lost book of Gwi'sha to our very hearts.” Nearly speechless with awe, Young and Karen missionaries went with them. What followed sounds like nineteenth-century Acts of the Apostles. Tens of thousands of Lahu became Christians.

– 1984: 97-100

## II

Scattered through the mountains rising between the Kachin and Lahu domains lived another hundred thousand tribesman called the Wa. The Wa were headhunters – but not promiscuous one! They said that from time to time prophets from the true God, whom the Wa called Siyeh arose to condemn headhunting and spirit-appeasement. One such prophet appeared during 1880s, he was called Pu Chan by the Shan people. Pu Chan persuaded several thousand Wa tribesmen in Pong Lai village and surrounding areas to abandon headhunting and spirit-appeasement. Pu Chan said that the true God was about to send a long awaited “White brother with a copy of the lost book”. If he came close to Wa territory and heard about that the Wa were practising evil things, he might think them unworthy of the God’s book and turned away again! If that happened, Pu Chan warned, surely the Wa would never get another chance to have a look at the lost book restored to them! (Richardson 1984: 87-88).

It was during the initial stage of Lahu response to the gospel that Pu Chan, God’s advocate among the head-hunting Wa people, saddled the little pony and told his disciples to follow it in search of a “white brother bearing the script of Siyeh, the True God”. The pony led those amazed disciples over approximately 200 miles of mountainous trails and down into the city of Kengtung. Then it turned into the gate of a mission compound and headed straight for a well. The pony stopped beside the well. Pu Chan’s disciples looked in all directions, but could not see no trace of either a white brother or a book.

Then the Wa tribesmen heard sounds in the well. They looked inside it and saw no water, but only two clear blue eyes looking at them out of friendly, bearded white face. “Hello strangers,” The voice – speaking in Shan language – echoed out of the well. “May I help you?” William Marcus Young climbed out of the well. As he brushed the dust from his hands and faced them, the Wa messenger asked, “Have you brought a book of God?” Young nodded. The Wa men overcome with emotion, fell at his feet and blurted out the message from Pu Chan. Then they said, “This pony is saddled especially for you. Our people are all waiting. Fetch the book, we must be on our way!”

Young stared at them. “I can’t leave,” He replied. “Thousand of Lahu come here almost daily for teaching, what shall I do?” Then Young presented the situation to the Lahu Christians. Together they provided

an accommodation for the Wa men so that they could receive teaching in Kengtung and make trips back to their country to teach their own people. By this means Pu Chan and thousands of his people became Christians without a single visit from Marcus Young.

– Richardson 1984: 102-04

Granddaughter of William Marcus Young, Mrs Widlund asked Don Richardson in an interview, “Don, would you like to meet my father Vincent Young and see the ancient photo of my grandfather took of that little pony with the saddle on its back?”

So she took Don Richardson to Mentone in California where Vincent Young live. Young showed Richardson not only the photo of the little pony but albums after albums of the ancient photos – Karen men and women working with him, as well as hundreds of Lahu and Wa standing in the shadows waiting to be baptized.

### III

Khasi tradition had two versions of the lost book of God: One says that the Khasis had a script, but it was lost in the fire at Nongkseh and Madur Maskut (Bandyopadhyay 2003: 71). The other said that a Khasi and a Bengali went together to a God’s house where they received a book of wisdom. On returning they had to cross a river. The Khasi put the book in his mouth while the Bengali tied it on his head. While crossing the river, the Khasi lost the book by swallowing it, but the Bengali friend retained it (Ryngnga 1994: xv).

### IV

The Rengma tribe of Nagaland said that the Supreme Being gave his words to their forefathers by writing them on animal skins. But the forefathers did not take good care of the skins. The dogs ate them up! (Richardson 1984: 90).

The Nāgā people had prophets who arose among them from time to time. An author named Phuveyi Dozo, himself a Chakesang Nāgā, describes one prophet, a woman named Khamhimutulu, believed to have lived in the 1600s. The details of her prophesy reportedly reveal remarkable conformity to Biblical principles and also to events which began to take place among the Nāgā at the beginning of the twentieth-century (<http://agape3bibletranslationhistory.blogspot.in/>).

The tradition of lost book of God, combined with the ancient predictions such as those uttered by the seventeenth-century prophetess Khamhimutulul, played a major role in awakening the Nāgās to the meaning of Christian gospel (Richardson 1984: 106).

## V

Don Richardson narrated an Englishman an interesting story that took place more than 200 years ago. Near Rangoon, Burma, in the year 1795, an encounter took place in the following manner:

“If the inhabitants of the village are not Burmese,” asked a sun-helmeted English diplomat, “What do they called themselves?” “Karen,” replied the diplomat’s Burmese guide.

“Very well,” said the Britisher. “let’s see what Cariansers’ look like”.

The “Cariansers,” it turned out, were even more interested to discover what the Englishman looked like! This first encounter with a European’s white face electrified people in that village. Drawn like moths to a lamp, they converged upon the diplomat, who recoiled slightly as wiry brown hands reach out to touch his arms and cheeks.

The Burmese guide meanwhile, spoke disparagingly of the Karen: “Be careful! They’re just wild hill people given to stealing and fighting,” he scoffed.

It was not entirely true. The Karen were in fact the most progressive of Burma’s many tribal peoples. Burmese, however, had abused and exploited the Karen for centuries, making such descriptions self-fulfilling.

The Englishman was no longer listening to his guide, cheerful Karen voices now charmed his ears. Every man, woman, and child around him glowed with radiant welcome. How refreshingly different, he thought, from the usual Burmese crowd’s aloofness towards foreigners.

A Karen man who could speak Burmese explained something to the guide.

“This is most interesting,” the guide said. “These tribesmen think you may be a certain ‘white brother’ whom they as a people have been expecting from time immemorial!”

“How curious,” replied the diplomat. “Ask them what this ‘white

brother' is supposed to do when he arrives."

"He's supposed to bring them a book," the guide said. "A book just like one their forefathers lost long ago. They are asking – with bated breath – 'hasn't he brought it?'"

"Ho! ho!" the Englishman guffawed. "And who, pray tell, is the author whose book has power to charm illiterate folks like these?"

"They say the author is Y'wa – the Supreme God. They say also ..." at this point the Burman's face began to darken with unease, "... that the white brother having given them the lost book, will thereby set them free from all who oppress them."

The Burman began to fidget. The nerve of these Karens! This English diplomat was part of a team sent to arbitrate a dispute between Britain and Burma – a dispute which Burma feared might give Britain pretext to add Burma to its empire. And now these wily Karens were practically inviting the British to do just that! Who would have guessed, he fumed, that simple tribesmen would be capable of such subtlety?

Sensing the guide's displeasure, the Englishman also began to squirm. One word from the guide, the Burmese authorities might descend with swords and spears against these humble villagers.

"Tell them they are mistaken," he ordered, hoping to set the Burman at ease. "I have no acquaintance with this god called Y'wa. Nor do I have the slightest idea who their white brother could be."

Followed by the guide the diplomat strode out of the village. Hundreds of Karen palled with disappointment, watched him leave. They intended no political ploy. They had simply repeated with all sincerity a tradition which had haunted them as a people since antiquity.

Returning to the newly-established British embassy in Rangoon, the diplomat reported his strange experience in the Karen village to his superior, Lieutenant Colonel Michael Symes. Symes in turn mentioned it in a manuscript entitled *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava in the Year 1795*, published 32 years later in Edinburgh, Scotland.

For the next 175 years, occasional browsers in Symes report paid scant attention, if any, to this curious reference on Karen tradition. Its anecdotal nature effectively screened its historical significance. Nineteenth century Britishers, moreover, were not generally interested in approaching Asians as "white brother." White master was a role more

to their liking. Indeed, beginning in 1824, Britain launched a series of attacks against Burma and eventually became, for about a century, rulers of that exotic land. – 1984: 73-75

Even before the first British invasion, however, history recorded a second foreigner's encounter with the Karen people's lost book tradition.

In the year 1816 a Muslim traveller happened to enter a remote Karen village about 250 miles south of Rangoon. The Karens scrutinized him carefully as they had scrutinized all foreigners whoever came to their way – especially a light-skinned ones – looking for their “white brother.” Well, the Muslim was not very light-skinned, but he did have in his possession a book. And he said the book contained writings about true God.

Seeing their intense fascination with the book, the Muslim offered it as a gift to the elderly Karen sage. Later the people said he told them to worship it, but it seems unlikely that a Muslim would give that kind of advice. Perhaps he simply urged them to take good care of it until one day, hopefully a teacher would come who could interpret it for them.

The Muslim continued his journey, and never returned.

The sage who received the book wrapped it in a muslin and placed it in a special basket. Gradually the people developed rituals for venerating the sacred volume. The sage adorned himself with ornate garments befitting his role as keeper of the book. He carried a special cudgel as a symbol of his spiritual authority. And, most poignant of all, he and his people had kept constant vigil for the teacher who would one day come to their village and open the contents of the sacred book to their understanding.

But that is not all. In perhaps a thousand Karen villages of Burma, men called Bukhos, a special kind of teacher representing not demons but Y'wa, the true God – Yes, the Karen actually esteemed them as prophets of the true God – kept reminding the Karens that the ways of Y'wa and the ways of Nats (evil spirit) were not the same. One day, these Bukhos affirmed, the Karen people must return fully to the ways of Y'wa (Richardson 1984: 90).

In 1813 a devout American Baptist missionary named Adoniram Judson disembarked near Rangoon in Burma after a long sea journey from America. He had a Bible tucked under his arm, to be sure, but he possessed not the slightest inkling of the incredible significance that

book held for more than 3 million people living within 800 miles of the dock on which he stood.

Judson translated the Grammatical Notices of the Burman Language and the Gospel of Matthew, in 1817. He began public evangelism in 1818 sitting in a *zayat* by the roadside calling out, “Ho! Everyone that thirsteth for knowledge!” The first believer was baptized in 1819, after 6 long years of hard work, and there were 18 believers by 1822.

– [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adoniram\\_Judson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adoniram_Judson)

In the April 22, 1827 entry in his journal, Judson recorded, “Tha Byu, a poor man belonging to Maung Shwe Be”. Judson described Tha Byu as a Karen by race, imperfectly acquainted with the Burmese language, and possessed of very ordinary ability.

– <http://www.historymakers.info/inspirational-christians/tha-byu-ko.html>

He was introduced to the gospel, but the Karen man’s brain seemed too dense to grasp the message. Then after he started asking questions about the origin of the gospel and about these “white strangers” who had brought the message – and a book which contained it – from the west.

– Richardson 1984: 93

Suddenly everything fell into place for Ko Tha Byu. For it had already dawned upon Ko Tha Byu that he was the very first among his people to learn that the “lost book” had actually arrived in Burma! The long traditional prediction of the lost script and the white man bringing it back to them and explaining the meaning into their language was like a dry sponge absorbing water inside the bucket.

Tha Byu was an instrument :to convert thousands and thousands of Karen men and women into Christianity when he told them about the return of the lost book of God.

## VI

The Kachin tribe in the northern Burma numbered half a million people. They are fiercely independent people and their creator god is called Karai Kasang – a benign supernatural Being “Whose form or shape exceeds man’s ability to comprehend”. Sometimes the Kachin called him Hpan Wa Ningsang – the Glorious One Who Creates, or Che Wa Ningchang – the One Who Knows. The Kachin also believed that Karai Kasang one gave



their forefathers a book which they lost. Kachin beliefs did not specify how the lost book would be returned to them, but apparently they were open to the possibility that it would one day be restored (Richardson 1984: 85).

Like the Karen, Kachin had rejected Buddhist idolatry for centuries on the grounds that Karai Kasang would not approve, that the sacred writing lost by their forefathers would be lost forever if they accept idolatry. Also like Karen, the Kachin responded to Christianity as a fulfilment of their own beliefs about Karai Kasang. Within the next 90 years 250,000 Kachin people were converted into Christianity.

– Richardson 1984: 97

## VII

Kui people are found in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. They are also known as Kui, Suay and Kamen-boran (which means ancient Khmer). They have their own language, unwritten, until recently. One folk tale is that the village elders originally wrote their language on a pig skin but then dogs ate it so their writing was lost (<http://www.sawadee.com/thailand/hilltribes/other.html>).

Alexander MacLeish states that the Kui tribesmen living along the Thai-Burma border, actually built houses of worship dedicated to the true God in anticipation of the time when a messenger from God would enter such places of worship with the lost book in his hand to teach the people (Richardson 1984: 89).

## VIII

Across the border in Yunnan province of south-western China, several hundred thousand Lisu hill-dwellers waited patiently for a “white brother with a book of the true God” written in Lisu language! They believed that their book was lost by their forefathers, long long ago.

Don Richardson said:

This is of special interest when one realized that the Lisu language lacked even an alphabet, let alone printed materials! No Matter. The Lisu were convinced that one day He would come and give them a book of God written in their language. And when they receive that book, they said, the Lisu would have a king of their own to reign over them (they

had been subject to oppressive Chinese rule for many generations).

– Richardson 1984: 89

James Outram Fraser of the China Inland Mission had arrived in Yunnan in 1910, and spent nearly thirty years working among the Lisu. Fraser is best known for the alphabet he created for the Lisu, often referred to as the Fraser alphabet. It was designed for purpose of translating the New Testament into the Lisu language. He was stationed in the then remote province of Yunnan to work with the local Chinese, but Fraser was a keen climber and revelled in climbing through the mountains meeting and preaching to the Lisu people, particularly in the upper Salween River valley ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_0.\\_Fraser](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_0._Fraser)).

Encountering difficulties Frazer crossed the border into Burma to see what he could learn about the cross-culture communication from American Baptist Mission who, he heard were experiencing phenomenal success among the peoples similar to the Lisu. He reached Baptist outpost and found it occupied by Karen missionaries. He urged the Karen at that post to send one of their members with him for the spiritual benefit of the distant Lisu.

Frazer returned with a new Karen helper, translated Gospel of Mark into Lisu language. When the Bible arrived from Sanghai he travelled to village after village reading from the gospel. He was unaware that Lisu tradition has long predicted the coming of the white faced teacher who would restore the Lisu long-lost book of God in their language. Later, tens of thousands of Lisu men and women were added into the kingdom of God (Richardson 1984: 104-05).

## IX

In southern Philippines, tradition in the Motado Manobo Indians handed down their story that their creator gave them an important script. On hearing the news that their enemies were going to raid them, one of the leaders took the script and threw it into the sea. He hid the rest of the script in the forest which was later turned into doves and flew away. This tradition said that someday white men called *milikano* will bring God's script and explain it to them. In 1957 Tom and Elnore Wyman came to the Philippines, translated New Testament of the Bible. Believing that this book is their traditional prophecy came true, they believed and were converted into Christianity (Lalnghinglova 1999: 207).

## X

The Mizo did not have a script of their own till the last part of nineteenth century. Tradition says that the written script of the Mizos was written on a sun-dried animal skin, which was eaten by a hungry dog while unattended (Thanga 1914: 8). One writer had it that the script was written on leather scroll which was lost while living a nomadic life (Hluna 1992: 50-51). Others said that the leather scroll was used as a cover of a wooden mortar, used for pounding rice. Unfortunately, a dog hungry dog ate it while unattended (Lalremsiamia 1997: 8; Lalthangliana 2004: 83). So, the precious script was lost long ago.

Don Richardson mentioned that Herman G. Tegenfeldt quotes a writer named Hanson who claims that the Mizo people also possessed traditions of a sacred book. Pathian originally gave it to their forefathers, but they subsequently lost it (Richardson 1984: 91-92).

A Mizo man named Darphawka had a prophetic and highly influential dream sometime during the nineteenth century. Born in about 1840, Darphawka, his real name Darneihthanga, was visited by an Welsh missionary named the Rev. D.E. Jones in 1889-90, because of his dream and prophecy (Ralte 2008: 340-45).

Out of his many dreams and prophecies two are related to the “white men bringing their books”.

“White men will come from across the sea. Follow them and obey their teachings” (Ralte 2008: 345). Darphawka, living in the southern part of Mizoram, had this vivid dream in 1882. After nine years in 1891 a certain Welsh missionary named the Rev. William Williams with his three companions visited Aizawl, preaching the gospel for almost a month in March–April. He sowed and planted the seed of salvation of Jesus into the hearts of the Mizo people. Followed by two missionaries named J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge in 1894, who became the pioneers by giving the Mizo people – alphabets and a school, a dictionary and the Bible, a song book and a small worship house. The Mizo people followed these missionaries and obeyed their teachings just as Darphawka had prophesied!

“There will be light in the South and the North” (Ralte 2008: 345), true to Darphawka’s prophecy the southern light was a Baptist church, established by the Baptist Missionary Society and the light in the northern

Mizoram was the Welsh Presbyterian Church established by the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission. These two lights shining in the dark becomes brighter and brighter as the Mizo people send their missionaries to all over the world. Now, in 2017, there are more than 5,000 missionaries within Mizoram, India and outside of India – send by the churches, para-churches and other organizations of the Mizo people, the record of highest number of missionaries sent from one country.

### Discussions

1. Comment on the story of the lost book or script from these ten peoples?
2. Who could have given the script to the Mizo people, a scroll, written on animal skin?
3. Why should these peoples possessed a script they could not read?
4. Do these ten peoples originate from the same place in the distant long past?

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## The Mizo Alphabet and Its Properties

*Rema Chhakchhuak*

**Abstract:** This article explores the early history of Mizo writing that started with the transcription of Thomas Herbert Lewin and the works of F.W. Savidge and J.H. Lorrain, and navigates one through the development of Mizo language and its orthography. It also provides the phonological properties of the twenty-five Mizo alphabets. It further talks about the reform of Mizo spelling, the refinement of Mizo alphabets and development of the Mizo language at the hands of many a modern linguist and writers.

**Keywords:** History of Mizo writing, Mizo spelling, Mizo alphabets, reform of Mizo spelling, phonological properties, thirty-two consonants, five vowels, J.H. Lorrain, F.W. Savidge.

“WRITING is not language” insists the American linguist, Leonard Bloomfield (1887–1949), “but merely a way of recording language by means of visible marks” (Crystal 2010: 180). Graphology, in its linguistic sense, is the study of the systems of symbols that have been devised to communicate language in written form. The term *grapheme* had been coined analogous to phoneme. Graphemes are the smallest units in a writing system capable of causing a contrast in meaning. Orthography is the writing system in standard everyday use (ibid.: 196). Cahill and Rice describe orthography as:

An orthography is a system for representing a language in written form. The first thought that comes to most people’s minds is individual characters (graphemes), but an orthography is much more than that. It also includes word breaks, punctuation, diacritics, rules on how to split and hyphenate words at the end of lines, and capitalization, and

is sometimes thought to include spelling as well.

– Cahill and Rice 2017: KL 34

The earliest known alphabet was the North Semitic, which developed around 1700 BCE in Palestine and Syria. It consisted of twenty-two consonant letters. The Hebrew, Arabic and Phoenician alphabets were based on this model. Then, around 1000 BCE, the Phoenician alphabet was itself used as a model by the Greeks, who added letters for vowels. Greek in turn became the model for Etruscan (c.800 BCE), whence came the letters of the ancient Roman alphabet, and ultimately all Western alphabets. Most alphabets contain 20-30 symbols, but the relative complexity of the sound system leads to alphabets of varying size. The smallest alphabet seems to be Rotokas, used in the Solomon Islands, with eleven letters. The largest is Khmer with seventy-four letters (Crystal 2010: 204).

The Mizo language, known in the British era literature as the Lushai language, was first described in 1874 by Lt. Col. Thomas Herbert Lewin, the British Administrator of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in his *Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai Dialect of the 'Dzo' or Kuki Language*. Lewin first made his forays into the Mizo Hills in 1872 as he conducted a military expedition to rescue Mary Winchester. He transcribed the language mostly in the interest of the non-Mizo-speaking British officers who must deal with the Mizos. He came in contact with different sub-tribes of the Mizo, twelve of which are listed in his book. In terms of the speech of the tribes, he notes:

Nearly each separate clan has peculiarities of diction proper to itself; but the speech of the whole people is in truth but one language, the differences being those merely of local pronunciation, of special terms or provincialisms, affected by the different clans, in the same way that our English language is spoken differently by the country folk north and south in England. The dialect of the tongue of the great family from which all the chiefs are said to have sprung. The Lushai dialect is in fact the lingua franca of the country.

– Lewin 1874: 3

Lewin attributes the difference in the dialects as due to the absence of any written form of the language as it has never been reduced to writing. He admits his ignorance as a non-linguist in constructing the grammar of the language. He includes ninety linguistic exercises in his book including

three popular Mizo stories which resulted in the reduction of the Mizo language into writing for the first time. Lewin's attempt is noteworthy not only because of its pioneering work, but also for its scope and quality even as he targeted the non-Mizo speakers who might have interest to understand the tongue in order to communicate with an ethnic group with a sinister reputation of being headhunters.<sup>1</sup>

Brojo Nath Shaha was an Assistant Surgeon serving as the Civil Medical Officer at the Hospital in Tlabung (Demagiri).<sup>2</sup> He was not only known for his medical works, but also for his contributions to the study of Mizo language. He notes the influence of Lewin in taking up the study of the language:

Captain Lewin, in laying the foundation for enquiry into the Lushai language by his "Exercises in the Lushai Dialect" expressed a hope that other enquirers might add to the work at some future date. My knowledge of some of the European and Indian languages has emboldened me to follow in his steps and make further researches in the language by publishing this Grammar of the Lushai language. Close and frequent communication with the Zau people coupled with a patient enquiry as to the roots, orthography, derivation, and pronunciation of words, the comparative and differential construction of sentences, and lastly the analogy of the language and its construction with respect to certain other languages, led me eventually to shape the work as it stands.

– Shaha 1884: 4 of 104

Shaha expresses his appreciation of the beauty of a natural language in Lushai (Mizo), with its complex verb system in contrast to what he said was a "barbarous condition" of the "semi-savage tribe" who are speaking

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<sup>1</sup> Lewin mistakenly interprets the literal meaning of the tribe name Lushai as "the decapitators" from his misunderstanding of the word *shai* as *sat* meaning to cut. However, *shai* is the mishearing and mispronunciation and anglicized form of *sei* which means 'long'.

<sup>2</sup> Tlabung was established as a town by S.P. Crouch and 150 soldiers following the orders of Lt. Col. Th. Lewin on 9 November 1872. Lewin moved the capital of the Chittagong Hill Tracts from Rangamati to Tlabung in 1872 thus by the time Shaha served as Civil Medical Officer of Chittagong Hill Tracts he would be serving at a hospital in Tlabung. His contacts and informants of the Mizo (Lushai) language would be the Mizos he met at Tlabung.

the language. He also mentions the main difference in his approach over that of Lewin by adopting Dr Wilson's system of transliteration in preference to Sir William Jones's system of transliteration. He also includes the Bengali equivalence of the sounds of the language which gives an added advantage for the language inquirer as one could cross-reference with the English symbol which was the primary point of reference for many would-be language learners (Shaha 1884: 4 of 104).

The Hunterian transliteration system is the “national system of romanization in India” and the one officially adopted by the Government of India. A similar project called Pinyin Romanization of Mandarin Chinese was taken up in China beginning in 1913 with the creation of the National Phonetic Alphabet based on Chinese characters which was initiated by Sir Thomas Francis Wade and Herbert Allen Giles. Their system came to be known as Wade–Giles Romanization.<sup>3</sup> Hunterian transliteration was sometimes also called the Jonesian transliteration system because it derived closely from a previous transliteration method developed by William Jones (1786). However, the Hunterian system was not without its weaknesses and had faced criticism over the years for not producing phonetically-accurate results and was seen as a system geared towards English speakers. It was not necessarily intended for native speakers of the language nor universal or standard enough for researchers from other linguistic background.

### **Lorrain and Savidge's Alphabet of 1894**

Lorrain and Savidge first came into contact with the Lushais (Mizos) at Kassalong in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1892 and later settled amongst them at Fort Aijal in January 1894. There was no written Mizo then. Lorrain and Savidge made good use of the only available books on the language, viz. Lewin's *Progressive Colloquial* of 1874 and Brojo Nath Shaha's *Grammar of the Lushai Language* (1884), in their efforts to learn the language. However, these two pioneering works did not include orthography for the language. Lorrain and Savidge then were tasked with reduction of the Mizo language to writing for the native speakers for the first time and they chose the Roman script for the purpose, adopting the

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<sup>3</sup> “Pinyin Romanization” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pinyin-romanization&grqid=1w5uBlfi&hl=en-IN> (accessed 30 October 2017).



prevalent phonetic form of spelling of the day known as the Hunterian system of orthography after Sir Willian Hunter who devised the system for languages of the Indian subcontinent (Lorrain 1940: v).

Lorrain and Savidge initially employed separate symbols *aw* and *o* to represent the long and short form of open-mid unrounded back vowel /ɔ/ but it was realized that it was confusing the native speakers. This was the only change that was made to the original alphabet as Lorrain claims in his *Dictionary* (1940). He actually did more than that by excluding *ô* as the long form of *O* and also excluding *j* which was described as being used only in English words in any case. Also, the alphabet did not include the velar nasal stop “ŋ” which never occurs word-initially in English but is very common in Mizo in all word positions. The Lorrain–Savidge alphabet with further modification by Lorrain in 1940 is claimed to “adequately express every sound in the Lushai language”, and Lorrain further claims that the alphabet is “still used throughout the tribe with eminently satisfactory results” (Lorrain 1940: v & viii). The alphabet as devised by Lorrain and Savidge consists of twenty-eight letters and is as presented below:

*a, â, aw, âw, b, ch, d, e, ê, f, g, h, i, î, k, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, t̄, u, û, v, z.*

Mizo has thirty-two consonants and five vowels. Each vowel has tense and lax properties which are phonemic in nature (Chhange 1989: 18-19). To represent these forty-two different phonemic sounds the alphabets adopted are the ones devised by Lorrain and Savidge albeit in its modified form. Presently there are twenty-five consonants representing the forty-two different sounds in the language. The Mizo orthography makes use of diacritics to differentiate the contrastive vowel sounds. The presently accepted Mizo alphabets consist of the following twenty-five Roman letters:

*a, aw, b, ch, d, e, f, g, ng, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, t̄, u, v, z.*

The phonological properties of the alphabets are described below:

#### *Vowels:*

- |          |          |   |
|----------|----------|---|
| <i>A</i> | <i>a</i> | This letter represents two separate vowels. The first is the open-mid back unrounded vowel /â/ in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as in <i>dāp</i> (to frisk or to search). |
|----------|----------|---|

The second is the front unrounded open /a/ is tense and is represented in the alphabet as *â* as in *dâp* split and flattened bamboos used as building material.

- Aw*     *aw*     An open-mid unrounded back vowel /ɔ/ which sounds like *aw* in the English words *awl* and the Mizo *zawng* (to search).
- This has a longer form [ɔ:] marked with a diacritic as in *âw* which is also phonemic as in *zâwng* (monkey).
- I*       *i*       High front unrounded vowel as in *tin* (nail).
- The phonemic long /i:/ is transcribed as *î* and is also phonemic as in *îin* (to disperse).
- U*       *u*       Close, back rounded vowel as in *Tut* (River Tut) and *kut* (hand).
- The phonemic long form /u:/ is represented in the orthography as *û* as in *kûit* (festival).
- E*       *e*       Open-mid unrounded vowel /ɛ/ as in *petek* (to slip).
- The long form /ɛ:/ is also phonemic as in *kêk* (to pull the hair).
- O*       *o*       This is a single letter in the alphabet representing the diphthong *ou* as in *chho* (ascent) or “uphill” or *zo* (to finish). It is similar to the *o* in the English “go” and “no”.

### Consonants

- B*       *b*       The voiced bilabial stop as in *bal* (dirty).
- CH*     *ch*     The voiceless alveolar affricate /tʃ/ as in *chawl* (to rest). It occurs only word initially.
- The aspirated //tʃh/ is also phonemic as in *chhaw* (stupid).
- D*       *d*       Voiced dental stop as in *dân* (law). Never occurs in the word final position.
- F*       *f*       The voiceless labio-dental fricative. It occurs only in the word initial position as in *fai* (clean).
- G\**      *g\**      This is the voiced velar stop found only in foreign words as in the English word “go”, “good”. This sound does not belong to the Mizo phonological system, thus should not have been included in the Mizo alphabet.

<i>NG</i>	<i>ng</i>	<p>This is the velar nasal stop /ŋ/. It occurs in all word positions in Mizo as in <i>ngai</i>, <i>vanglai</i> and <i>veng</i> (missing someone, heyday and locality respectively).<sup>4</sup></p> <p>The aspirated form /ŋh/ is also phonemic as in <i>sangha</i> (fish).</p>
<i>H</i>	<i>h</i>	<p>This letter represents two separate phonemes in different word positions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In the word initial and medial positions this represents the voiceless glottal fricative as in <i>hetah</i> (here) and <i>theihai</i> (mango).</li> <li>2. In the word final position the letter <i>h</i> represents the glottal stop /ʔ/ as in <i>sawtah</i> (over there).</li> </ol>
<i>J*</i>	<i>j*</i>	<p>This is equivalent to the voiced palatal affricate /dʒ/, the voiced counterpart of /tʃ/ as in the English “judge”. However, the sound is not found in the phonological inventory of Mizo, thus should not have been included in the alphabet.<sup>5</sup></p>
<i>K</i>	<i>k</i>	<p>This is the voiceless velar stop and occurs in all word positions as in <i>kâwk</i> (to point at something).</p> <p>Aspirated form /kh/ is phonemic in Mizo as in (<i>khâwk</i>) (to echo).</p>
<i>L</i>	<i>l</i>	<p>This is a voiceless alveolar lateral as in <i>lawm</i> (glad).</p> <p>The aspirated form /lh/ is phonemic and is written in the orthography as <i>hl</i> as in <i>hla</i> (song).</p>

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<sup>4</sup> The pronunciation of this alphabet has a northern and southern variation in Mizoram. In the north it is pronounced as the velar nasal stop /ŋ/ whereas in the south the English letters representing the sounds are pronounced separately as in *n* and *g*. This highlights the seriousness of what would have started off as a trivial and innocent variation in pronunciation but increasingly this serves as a regional marker.

<sup>5</sup> This was initially included in the 1894 Lorrain–Savidge Mizo alphabet but was omitted by Lorrain in his 1940 alphabet. It has found its way back in the present Mizo alphabet courtesy of Edwin Rolands who added *j* and *Ng* in the alphabet as claimed by Ralte (2008: 212).

<i>M</i>	<i>m</i>	This is a bilabial nasal stop as in <i>mawi</i> (beautiful). The aspirated version / <i>mh</i> / is also phonemic and is transcribed as <i>hm</i> in the Mizo Orthography as in <i>hmai</i> (face).
<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	Alveolar nasal stop as in <i>nen</i> (with). It occurs in all word positions.  The aspirated form / <i>nh</i> / is also phonemic and is transcribed as <i>hn</i> in the orthography as in <i>hneh</i> (to defeat).
<i>P</i>	<i>p</i>	Voiceless bilabial stop and occurs in all word positions as in <i>pawp</i> (hole). Aspirated / <i>p</i> / is phonemic and is represented as <i>ph</i> in the orthography as in <i>phaw</i> (shield).
<i>R</i>	<i>r</i>	Alveolar central liquid as in <i>ro</i> (treasure) or <i>kawr</i> (shirt). Aspirated form / <i>rh</i> / is marked as <i>hr</i> and is phonemic as in <i>hria</i> (to know).
<i>S</i>	<i>s</i>	This is the voiceless alveolar fricative. The tongue is brought very close to the alveolar ridge but doesn't touch the alveolar and the air is released with friction. It occurs word initially as in <i>sal</i> (slave) or <i>sang</i> (tall) and medially as in <i>lasi</i> (fairy) but never in the word final position.
<i>T</i>	<i>t</i>	This is a voiceless dental stop. It occurs on all word positions as in <i>tît</i> (centipede) <i>titau</i> (to sulk). Aspiration of <i>t</i> is phonemic in Mizo and is marked with <i>h</i> as in <i>thin</i> (liver).
<i>Ṭ</i>	<i>ṭ</i>	The central alveolar flap as in <i>ṭi</i> (fearful). The aspirated variant is also phonemic as in <i>ṭhi</i> (necklace).
<i>V</i>	<i>v</i>	The voiced labio-dental fricative. It occurs in the word initial position as in <i>veng</i> (to guard) and word medial position as in.
<i>Z</i>	<i>z</i>	This is the voiced alveolar fricative. It occurs word initially as in <i>zo</i> (to finish) and medially as in <i>tlaizawng</i> (rhododendron) but never word finally.

### Refinement of the Mizo Alphabet

An important “Workshop for Mizo Lecturers” was organized by Pachhunga University College in 1989 in which Lalnunthangi Chhangte expressed her opinion that the present Mizo orthography is adequate to meet the written needs of Mizo as was deliberated and reported in *Thupui Zirbingte*. There has been a suggestion to change the spelling system, for instance, of the word *hma* into the phonologically accurate *mha* which indicates that it is the nasal consonant /m/ which is being aspirated. However, the consensus of the group at the time was there was no need of changing the spelling system (Khangte 1989: 7-9 and 24-25).

While reform of the Mizo spelling system was addressed at the seminar, the need to refine the Mizo alphabet was a surprising omission in the proceedings of the seminar even as Chhangte mentions, for instance, the use of one letter namely *h* to represent two different phonemes (ibid.: 25) which is in direct violation of Kenneth Pike’s phonemic principle in which he proposed that orthographies should exhibit an isomorphic relationship between sounds and symbols: “a practical orthography should be phonemic. There should be a one-to-one correspondence between each phoneme and the symbolization of that phoneme” (Pike 1947: 208).

The inclusion of the non-native Mizo sounds in the Mizo alphabet is met with a surprising silent acquiescence by the present generation of Mizo speakers and linguists even as it was not included in the final alphabet as devised by Lorrain in 1940. Whereas Cahill observes that “native speaker intuition is a two-edged sword in orthography development” the speakers’ *analysis* of the problem may or may not be on target, there is a case for both the value and limitations of native speaker intuition (Cahill and Rice 2017: KL 394), it is the contention, however, of many linguists that native speakers’ role in graphization is crucial in order for the orthography to be effective and accepted by the users (Jones and Mooney 2017: KL 169). Chhangte mentions the availability of reliable phonological analysis of Mizo in the following:

...the phonology of Lushai has been extensively studied. ...Studies by Henderson (1948), Burling (1957), Bright (1957), Weidert (1975) and Chhangte (1985, 1986) have dealt with some aspects of phonology. ...

– Chhangte 1989

Lalhruaitluanga Ralte claims that Lorrain and Savidge had already finalized their Mizo alphabet before they even set foot on the hills of Mizoram simply by reading and learning the language from the limited linguistic data and description they found in Lewin and Shaha's books. By the time they arrived in the Mizo hills, they were simply road-testing and refining their pre-designed alphabet which is no mean feat in itself (Ralte 2008: 212). As the Hunterian system of transliteration has been criticized for not reflecting a phonologically accurate information, the Lorrain–Savidge Mizo alphabet is also found to include sounds which are simply not present in the Mizo phonological inventory. These sounds are *j* and *g*, which are described by Lorrain himself as employed only for foreign words. Therefore, it stands to reason that these two letters representing foreign and non-native sounds are omitted from the Mizo alphabet altogether.

Smalley (1964) presents five maximums, or essential criteria, which are required for the development of a successful orthography, the second of which is that an orthography must possess “maximum representation of speech” and that it must represent “all and only the distinctive sounds of the language being written”. He also advocates that orthography must be easy to type or print in order to be successful. Whereas a wholesale change in the spelling system would make many a confused language readers and writers, but based on Smalley's last criterion, it would be a helpful refinement and improvement if the letter *c* is used to represent the voiceless alveolar affricate /*tʃ*/ or *ch* and the aspirated form with a single *h*; thus *c* = *ch* and *ch* = *chh*. This will save a lot of trouble in writing and in typing the language.

As we acknowledge and pay homage to the British officers and missionaries for their immeasurable contributions in describing the Mizo language and in the development of the Mizo orthography, the time is now ripe for refinement of the Mizo alphabet and orthography of language as great progress and development is being made on all other fronts.

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## Survival of the Mizos and Their Language

*Laltluangliana Khiangte*

**Abstract:** This paper deliberates on the varied tasks that have been undertaken so far and the tasks at hand to popularize Mizo language to ensure its survival and enhancement. Efforts from the academic, literary, political and governmental realms are called for to get Mizo language in the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Indian Constitution to scale up its growth and popularization further. Also recommended is the translation of epics and classics of other languages into Mizo and translation of Mizo works to English, Hindi and other leading languages paving the way for further researches on Mizo language and Mizo cultures of various tribes. In short, unification of the different tribes of Mizoram and the preservation of their cultures should be the core intent of all actions and suggestions discussed herein the paper.

**Keywords:** Mizo ethnic groups, dialects of Mizo tribes, Tibeto-Burman languages, Official Language Act, VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule, popularization of Mizo language.

IN THE 2019 Chapchar Kut, a spring festival which is most celebrated by the Mizo people, the theme “Zofate Inpumkhatna (Integration of the Mizo ethnic groups)” was explored which stressed on, and ignited awareness about, the importance of unity among all the tribes of Mizoram. The theme refers to the unification of all tribes that belong to or were once a part of Mizoram. In light of this event, it dawned on me that language could be one element that plays a detrimental role in achieving such a goal.

It is a known fact that inventing a new language and having different tribes using it is a nearly impossible task and even if it were possible it would entail a long and tedious process, which in contemplation is

something that is unlikely to happen. With that being said, there are currently more than twenty dialects in use by various tribes of Mizoram. These dialects are still very much in use and unless the speakers die out, it is unlikely that they would suddenly disappear or cease to exist. However, it is to be noted that there are also some dialects (like Ralte) that are bordering on becoming endangered. Since, it is my belief that language is central for the unity that we are seeking, we must utilize it in ways that contribute to our goal. This belief has also brought me to a realization that protecting and preventing all dialects (endangered and not endangered) from death is of utmost importance.

### **What Language Should We Use?**

On 19 February 2019, I had the honour of being invited to give a special lecture at the Government College, Churachandpur. I was deliberating whether I should be giving my lectures in English or Mizo, as I was aware that the students are from various tribes of Mizoram and that of Manipuri-speaking with varying dialect. I voiced my concern out loud as I wanted my lecture to be understood by the masses. The reply I received was something that not only astonished me but reinforced my belief that *language can unite*. This reply was that regardless of what language I chose to give my lecture with, I would be understood.

As Christians we dream of a paradise where people of all races interact using their own language and is understood by everyone. I was reminded of this paradise we long for when I was told that I would be understood regardless of what language I chose to speak in. I was happy that in Churachandpur, in the presence of intellectuals and academicians, I could make a pick of whatever language I was comfortable with to give my lecture. With this assurance, I gave my lectures in Mizo and was indeed understood. And then I spoke in English, it was also understood. Each person I spoke with used whichever language he or she preferred. This was nothing short of the paradise that I seek.

The experience left a lasting impact which led me to contemplate a world where various tribes of Mizo/Lusei, Hmar, Vaiphei, Zomi, Gangte, Kuki, Joute and Duhlian understood each other without having to debate which of the dialect should be popularized and used as a common dialect. What if we create this paradise where each tribe speaks their own dialect

but is understood by every other tribe?

### **Language Is an Intergral Part of One's Culture and Heritage**

The importance our native tongue is given has gone through tremendous changes over the years. Aware of the declination in status and the importance of Mizo/Lusei language to our culture and heritage, a three-day Mizo Literature Festival titled “Thu Hla hril kutpui” was conducted during 6-8 June 2018. It was a successful event and a step towards native language awareness as it opened a discussion on the importance of our own native tongue. Following the success of this event, a seminar was organized, in the same year, inviting not only locals but intellectuals and academicians from outside of Mizoram. The two-day seminar titled “International Festival Commemorating the Birth Centenary of the First Mizo Novelist” was conducted on 18 and 19 October at Saitual College. The seminar had its focus on novels, poetry, songs as well as dances of the Mizo people. Although it was an exciting event renewing our sense of Mizo language, culture and heritage, it should not end with a mere celebration of the literature and dances, rather it should create more awareness, leading to widespread discussion among the Mizo people.

Another notable event was a visit by our Honourable Vice-President Shri Venkaiah Naidu in May 2018. During his visit, he stressed on the importance of knowing one's own language and to be well versed with it before acquiring any other language. He emphasized the intricate connection between our language and culture and mentioned that instead of taking a step to study other languages like English (one of the widely spoken languages in the world and in India), he advised us to take steps to know our own mother tongue better. Although his advice invoked keen interest and found acceptability among the Mizo language researchers, it seemed to have fallen on deaf ears of the public. In recent years, the number of students admitted to Mizo-medium schools has drastically declined whereas there is a high demand for English-medium schools. Instead of instilling the knowledge of our own Mizo language, parents are eager for their kids to be fluent in English and admitting them to costly English-medium schools while struggling to make their ends meet. Instead of learning our own Mizo songs, they are eager for their children to sing “Jack and Jill & Baa Baa Black Sheep”. In place of our own folk

tales like “Chhura” and “Arpui sent te” they are eager for their wards to know of English fairy tales. Neglecting our own alphabet A-AW-B, the kids today have been taught at a very young age the English alphabet A-B-C-D. This is the mindset that contributed to the declination of our Mizo language, a mindset that is instilled in the youth at a very young age. It is a mindset that shows disrespect towards one’s own language and culture that was taught not in words but rather through action. For this reason, the pillars of our tribe, our culture and heritage have been shaken.

### **Mizo Is a Dying Language**

Since Mizoram became a state in 1987, the declination of our mother tongue has reached its nadir; it is nowadays common to find people commenting that “some things are clearer or better described in English”. Government and political officials include English terms and phrases in their everyday discourse as if implying that similar terms are not available in our Mizo tongue. Even the general public has unconsciously adapted this attitude and often replace Mizo terms with that of English. For example, instead of *choka* we tend to use “kitchen”, *thuk* is replaced with “gas stove”, *bel* with “pot”, *chhuar* is no longer in use, instead “shelves” is commonly used. Likewise, common household items like spoon, plate, chair, room, curtain, pillow, bedroom and living room are replacing their respective Mizo term *fian*, *thleng*, *thutthleng*, *pindan*, *parda*, *lukham*, *mutna pindan* and *thutkhawmna pindan*. In addition, English terms like fridge, cabinet, washing machine, tap, fork, tray, cup, mug, saucer, food warmer, cooler and bowl are used and adapted as they are.

This inclination towards English by the general public has elevated its status, endangering the status of our own mother tongue. With its speakers not many in number and their attitude towards Mizo language, one is left to wonder why Mizo has not yet been included in the list of endangered languages by UNESCO!

### **Mizo Language as an Official Language of the State**

Where and when the term “Mizo” originated from is debatable and many researchers have varying opinions. In 1946, when the Lushai Hills were still under Assam jurisdiction, a patriotic organization called the Mizo Union was formed with a purpose of popularizing “Mizo”. Further in 1947, United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO) was again formed

and in 1961 Mizo National Front (MNF) was formed, both for patriotic purposes. Rajya Sabha member R. Thanhliira raised his voice and took action to get “Mizo” recognition. Finally, in 1972 when Mizoram was declared a Union Territory, Mizo district became “Mizoram”, the term “Lushai”, often used academically, was replaced with “Mizo” to describe the people and their language. Following this, even in census readings the term “Mizo” was used solidifying its status as an official term for denotation.

Prior to this, the use of the term “Mizo” can be seen in various printed works. One of the earliest records of its use was *Mizo leh Vai*, published in November 1902. Other published works include, a handwritten work titled *Mizo Chanchin Laisuih* in mid-1898, *Mizo Zir-tir-bu* in 1896, *Mizo Chanchin* by Liangkhai in 1926, in 1903 Zosapthara and Thanga were recorded to have used the term and in 1935 an organization of students Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZIP) was formed. R.B. McCabe, a Mizoram Political Officer, in his book *Our Relation with Eastern Lushais* published on 1 March 1892 wrote “Lushais call themselves Mizo or Mizau”. Since the time of T.H. Lewin there have been records of using terms like *Dzo*, *Mizo*, *Mizau* and *Mizou* in reference to the natives and language of Mizoram. Since the term “MIZO”, phonemically transcribed to *mizou*, it may be more appropriate to correct the spelling of the term “Mizo” to “Mizou” to avoid unnecessary misperception.

The Mizoram Official Language Act, 1974 was passed, according to which “... Mizo language shall be used for all the official purposes of the Government of Mizoram at all levels...”. The Act was scheduled to be implemented from 15 August 1987 according to the *Mizoram Gazette*, Extraordinary, Aizawl, Friday 14.8.1987, Sravana 23, S.E. 1909 Issue No. 84 (B) published by authority. However, over thirty years since the Act has been passed, English has been used as an official language at all levels of government and educational institutions. Till today, no apparent action has been made to put this Act in motion and the government seems content with the official use of non-native languages like English and Hindi in all important institutions. This subsequently results in the native tongue being pushed into oblivion and consequently affecting the attitude of the public towards Mizo language. If, at an official level, Mizo language is discarded it could create a sentiment that Mizo is not

as relevant and as important as that of English and Hindi. However, I find the need to stress that we the people of Mizoram, our culture and our heritage are intertwined with our language and it is also one of the things that makes us Mizo. We must not disregard ourselves to seek inclusiveness by trying to master another language.

### **Mizo Subject in Central Universities**

The inclusion of Mizo subject in higher education is a huge step towards the preservation and protection of the language. On 12 August 1997, Mizo (Language and Literature) was included as a permanent subject for Masters Degree in NEHU, Mizoram Campus producing several postgraduates in Mizo subject by July 1999. When Mizoram University (MZU) was established on 2 July 2001, Mizo Subject was one of the first seven courses offered. Today, there are over 500 students who have graduated with master's degree in Mizo. In addition to MZU, other central universities like Gauhati University, NEHU and Manipur University also offer Mizo subject. Also, there are other universities like Tripura University and the University of Calcutta offering the subject as MIL subject in one of their courses.

As a result of steps that have been taken, in 2001 MZU introduced its first PhD programme in Mizo language thus creating opportunities for native researchers to investigate and analyse their own literature and language. An MPhil (Master of Philosophy) programme was also introduced in the same university in 2012. Today, there are countless students who have received their MPhil or PhD degrees, with thesis written in Mizo language. Further, in 2018 Pachhunga University College and ICFAI University Mizoram also introduced a postgraduate course in Mizo creating opportunities for more students to study Mizo language.

It is indeed a feat to have Mizo subject included in central and state universities. However, there is a huge demand of Research Centre for Mizo language as there is a need to have many burning questions answered. Mizo is a language that is unexplored by researchers unlike English or Hindi and it is an untrodden fertile land for native researchers.

### **Is There a Need to Create a New Script for Mizo?**

My answer to this would be a “No, there is no need for a new script”. Mizo uses a Roman script that was given by the British missionaries

in late nineteenth century after a proper study of the language and the phonemes the native speakers use. That Mizo language uses Roman script, which is one of the widely used and easy to read script, and holds many advantages.

A special guest of Mizoram University once remarked “So, Mizo does not have a unique script of its own” in a mocking undertone. My reply was “We are using one of the most widely used Roman scripts which makes our language easily accessible to non-native speakers. And we have no intention of landing in a similar situation with those of the people in Manipur.” As it so happens that recently in Manipur there was an eruption of outrage to use “Meitei Mayek” rather than the “Bengali Script” that has been practised for a long time. The government was pushed to a corner to restart a movement, to reawaken the use of their unique “Meitei Mayek” and to undo what has been in practice. However, since they were unable to comply, the enraged public burnt down their State Library on 19 April 2005 in their attempt to remove all traces of works written in Bengali Script. It was no doubt a huge loss. As an observer, it is apparent that suddenly changing a script, expecting the general public forget the old script and accept and use a new script is logically unrealistic. Although it is not impossible, changing one’s script requires time and consistency and is a long and tedious process. One cannot easily break one’s habit that has been formed, especially one that has been practised since childhood. To give a metaphorical example, for comparison, a heavy smoker cannot suddenly quit smoking; it takes a long and arduous practice to finally quit smoking.

Taking this situation into account, forcing a new script for Mizo language would be a meaningless task which may result in huge losses. I believe it is wise to be content with the script that we have with improvements. There is a need to clarify the use of “o” and “aw” and “J” and “G”. The late B. Chamhlira had, in the past, mentioned that since “o” is pronounced as “ou”, there is a need to correct “Mizo” to “Mizou” reinforcing my earlier observation. There is also ambiguity with regards to the use of “G” where arguments have been made to accept “G” to denote the sound “Ge” as in *gawl* (goal), *gei gui* and *gan gan a che*.

Recently, there have been rumours that it is almost impossible for a language to be listed under the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule if the said language

uses a script other than Devanāgarī. However, it is my opinion that in a diverse country as India, languages should not be limited and that embracing other scripts into our Schedule would only enrich our culture and heritage. As a Roman script user, we should strive to be included in the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule as there have been other script users like Bengali, Persian (Kashmiri) and Arabic (Sindhi) users who have also been listed under the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule.

### **The Need to Include Mizo in the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule**

There are twenty-two languages under the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule (Article 344(1) and 351) including Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Maithili, Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santhali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. The users of these languages have many advantages that the non-scheduled language users have. The most notable one being the protection of the scheduled language from eventual death, consequently protecting the culture and heritage of its speakers. This is a much-needed insurance that would benefit the people of Mizoram.

In India, efforts have been made to elevate the status of Hindi and various actions have been taken to ensure its official status. I came across a copy of Annual Programme 2006-07 for Implementation of Official Language Act, 1963 which was distributed by the central government in Mizoram University. It was mentioned that Hindi should be used in all official business of the government and “that Hindi only be used for original noting and drafting with the spirit of the Constitution of India”. In addition, the President of India decreed that Hindi should be used in ministries, departments and offices, computer–email–website and all scientific and technical literature should be written in Hindi. Further, typing boards supporting the Devanāgarī script should be used and even stenographers are expected to write in Hindi. Ministries and departments should also take ardent steps to organize seminars/workshops to promote Hindi. These steps taken by the government and the President have indeed improved the status of Hindi which, as a consequence, can have a detrimental effect on languages like Mizo. If the current situation continues, Mizo language may one day be pushed to a corner by English or Hindi, where the speakers are in existence but the language is no longer spoken. There is an immediate need to take measures to protect the Mizo



language from suffocation and its death. The inevitable first step should be to urgently and strongly push forward the proposal to include Mizo in the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule.

In 1997, one of the biggest NGOs of Mizoram, Young Mizo Association (YMA), in their meeting in East Lungdar, had suggested that the proposal for the inclusion of Mizo language in the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule should be pushed forward by the state government. They submitted a letter to the state government stating their concerns and followed up the matter with the state government. Central YMA and other NGO leaders on two occasions, spoke with prime ministers I.K. Gujral and A.B. Vajpayee in this regard during their visits to Mizoram.

The Mizo Academy of Letters (MAL), an organization of learned men, had often discussed the need for including Mizo in the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule in their annual meetings and seminars. On 23 April 1998, the organization on its Foundation Day carried the theme VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule and discussed the importance and steps to be taken to set this goal into motion. On 29 January 1999, an official letter was sent to the chief minister of Mizoram highlighting the importance of the issue and urging him to take necessary steps.

In the state election of 2003 Mizoram People's Conference and Zoram Nationalist Party included VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule in their manifestos. Prior to this, R. Romawia, a minister from an opposing party MNF, on 26 February 1991 brought forward this issue in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly requesting the ruling party to ask the central government to include Mizo language under the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule. Lalthanhawla, the leader of the then ruling party, Congress, did not argue nor rebut his request and readily accepted his proposal (Ref. R. Romawia: 26.2.91 – Admitted 22.3.91. Passed. Copy of passed Resolution forwarded to Chief Secretary, Govt of Mizoram, Aizawl vide Letter No. MAL 2/90-91/84 dt 2-4-1991). It was an act of a ruler that thought of his people before his own party.

Aside from the aforementioned, other organizations like MUP, MHIP, MILLTA and MWA and various other departments including the department of Mizo under MZU advocated the pushing forward of proposals to include Mizo in the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule.

According to a study by the New Delhi MZP, the number of Mizo speakers in Mizoram, Bangladesh and other places in the world totals to 2,638,518. In India, there are 1,681,188 people who speak Mizo, Myanmar boasts of 837,542 speakers and Bangladesh has 74,789 speakers. Out of these, 1,012,463 use it on a daily basis since birth. The Bible Society of India in 1989 has stated that there are 600,000 Mizo language speakers. According to the census of 2001, there were 891,508 of people residing in Mizoram which got increased to 1,097,206 in 2011. This shows that there is a gradual increase in the number of speakers each year. The study of the census readings has brought to attention that there are scheduled languages whose number of speakers are lesser than the number of speakers of Mizo language. The list of scheduled languages with lesser number of speakers, going by the 1991 census, has Dogri (89,681), Kashmiri (56,639) and Sanskrit (49,736). According to the census of 1991, there were 538,842 Mizo speakers. It is evident from this that Mizo speakers are not too few in number to shy away from their demand that Mizo be included in the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule.

It is the responsibility of all organizations and government and political officials to seriously consider this issue and work in unity for its success. Central YMA and other NGOs should work to pressure the state government to take up necessary steps. Students and academicians should be woken from their stupor and speak out. Student organizations should realize the importance of Mizo being included in the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule and step up the demand in whatever way they can. The most important step should come from the state government; with its might, it should push this cause so that the central government to include the Mizo language in the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule.

It is of utmost importance to be aware that its inclusion in the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule would allow the inclusion of Mizo as an optional paper in all competitive examinations conducted in India. As a result, the youth of Mizoram will have the comfort and advantage of taking competitive exams in their own native tongue. This will consequently allow the youth to progressively thrive which will subsequently result in a progressive state. Alternatively, if we continue as we are and Mizo is not included in the VIII<sup>th</sup> schedule, we could face the threat of being dominated by other languages like English and Hindi. Since, language is a core part of

one's culture and heritage, the loss of it could result in the loss of one's heritage and cultural past.

### **Enriching Mizo with Languages from the Same Family**

Mizo belongs to the Tibeto-Burman (TB) family of languages. In India, there are twenty-two languages belonging to the TB family including languages spoken in the north-east like Mizo, Manipuri, Adi, Anal, Kuki, Missing, Garo, Angami and Ao. If researchers from these languages were to work hand in hand and compile a dictionary/thesaurus, it would not only enrich the language but would prove as a useful handbook for non-native researchers as well. Organizing poets' meet, scholar's meet or conferences and seminars would be a step towards achieving such a goal.

Interacting with other TB family language speakers would indeed enrich our mother tongue but an important first step would be to learn from other dialects in Mizoram. In this age, there is an increase in number of loan words, borrowed from English, which in a way has enriched our language as we adapt these loan terms by nativizing them and thus absorbing them into our existing linguistic system. Also, we can further enrich our system by learning and interacting with speakers of our sister dialects such as Hmar, Kuki, Lai, Paite, Mara, Ralte, Thado, Vaiphei and Laizo. If borrowing words from English (belonging to a different family) could enrich our system, one can only imagine the linguistic wealth that would erupt through the interaction and concurrence of these dialects.

Books like *Samaw Mizo* by Lalchhanhima Zofa and *Mizo-Lai Dictionary* by M.C. Lalrinchhunga are the two important cross-dialectal books that have taken positive steps towards dialectal interaction and concurrence. Ardent steps should be taken to publish books like *Mizo Glossary and Dictionary-cum-Thesaurus* by language researchers and the state government should consider its importance and provide funds and resources for such a drive.

### **Popularizing Mizo Language**

As mentioned before, there are 1,012,463 speakers who use Mizo as their means of communication and consider it their native tongue. In order for the number of speakers to increase, interest should be created towards the language. For that, books, newspapers, comics and songs of Mizoram should be widely distributed. Further, with developments in technology,

nowadays it is easier to distribute visual and audio recorded documents and we must make use of such media to our advantage. These should be made easily accessible and reasonably priced bearing in mind that it is a tool for popularizing the Mizo language.

Another way to popularize a language is translation. Translation of great classics and other famous works into Mizo is of paramount importance. If these are made available in Mizo language for the Mizo locals, there would be no need to learn a different language to understand them. For reference, the Bible, the most translated book in the world, since it is made available in Mizo language it is accessible even for laymen. Similarly, it would be beneficial if other classics like the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and Quran, are also translated. Further, we should take steps to translate our own Mizo literature, songs and popular works into other languages like English, Hindi and Bengali. Translation of local works would create interest towards the language and its people, and thus, would subsequently be beneficial in the popularization of the language and the state.

### **Broadening of Perspective in Research**

It is no secret that there has always been an ongoing debate in relation to the grammar, the morphology, the phonetics and other areas to which no conclusion has been drawn as yet. There is a pressing need for linguists who can give logical and technical explanations to these unanswered questions.

Mizo grammar and other related linguistic researches have always been conducted using English language as a model. It is indeed alright to make a comparative study but it is not logical to conform and limit our findings with that of English language. Mizo is of a different branch in the language family, and so restricting our study and modelling it after English are a wrong approach and a total flaw. Mizo language should be studied and researched on as it is, meticulously analysing its own unique structure and functions. Rather than English, it would be more fitting to look into researches that has been conducted on other Tibeto-Burman languages. Furthermore, native researchers should take steps to investigate their own literature and language, introducing them to other non-native academicians in literary conferences, seminars, poets' meets, etc.

## Conclusion

It can be observed from the above discussion that the inclusion of Mizo language in the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule is paramount for the survival of the language and its people. The state government should take active steps for Mizo language to be included among the scheduled languages as well as the implementation of the Mizoram Official Language Act, 1974. Many tasks have been discussed aiming at popularization and survival of our mother tongue. Some of these can be easily achieved while there are some that require patience and hard work. Suggestions have been made to interact with speakers of other dialects of Mizoram and through this, steps need to be taken to enrich each dialect. Such active interaction could in turn result in the ability to comprehend each other and thus resulting in the unification of the different tribes of Zohnahthlak.

The speakers of Mizo language should value and cherish their mother tongue above every other language. If the native themselves do not cherish their own language, the chance for its survival is low. Consequently, since language is also an identity and intimately connected with culture and heritage, its death would result in the loss of our culture and identity. In order to protect and preserve our identity, native researchers, intellectuals and academicians should work hand in hand towards popularizing our language and literature. If there are more speakers or more people who speak and understand the language, we will not face the danger of extinction of our language and thereby we ensure the preservation of our culture and identity.

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# Manuscript: A Derivation of Information

*Darchuailova Renthlei*

**Abstract:** Manuscripts speak out the multifaceted life of a certain society. Manuscripts in the Mizo language are not an exception to this reality. The usage of some words and their pronunciation, for that matter their written form, can vary from one place to the other, along with their meaning. For creative purpose, poetic freedom of adding new words or making slight changes to an existing word is allowed. This paper has set its focus on the solution of debatable language, elaborating certain given manuscripts.

**Keywords:** Manuscript, Mizo language, poetical word, poetic licence, cultural behaviour.

## Introduction

THE word manuscript is derived from Latin *manu* and *scripture*. A manuscript (MS) is any document written by hand or typewritten, as opposed to being mechanically printed or reproduced in some indirect or automated way. More recently, it is understood to be an author's written, typed, or word-processed copy of a work, as distinguished from the print of the same. Before the arrival of printing, all documents and books were manuscripts. Manuscripts are not defined by their contents, which may combine writing with mathematical calculations, maps, explanatory figures or illustrations. Manuscripts may be in book form, scrolls or in codex format. Illuminated manuscripts are enriched with pictures, border decorations, elaborately embossed initial letters or full-page illustrations. In the context of library science, a manuscript is defined as any hand-written item in the collections of a library or an archive. For example, a library's collection of handwritten letters or diaries is considered a manuscript collection.

Historically, manuscripts were produced in the form of scrolls (volume in Latin) or books (codex). Manuscripts were produced on vellum and other parchment, on papyrus and on paper. In Russia birch-bark documents as old as from the eleventh century have survived. In India, the palm-leaf manuscript, with a distinctive long rectangular shape, was used from ancient times until the nineteenth century. Originally, all books were in manuscript form. Private or government documents remained hand-written until the invention of the typewriter in the late nineteenth century. In Southeast Asia, in the first millennium, documents of sufficiently great importance were inscribed on soft metallic sheets such as copper plate, softened by refiner's fire and inscribed with a metal stylus. In Burma, the *kammavaca*, Buddhist manuscripts, were inscribed on brass, copper or ivory sheets, and even on discarded monk robes folded and lacquered. In Italy some important etruscan texts were similarly inscribed on thin gold plates.

In other contexts, however, the use of the term "manuscript" no longer necessarily means something that is handwritten. By analogy a typescript has been produced on a typewriter. In book, magazine, and music publishing, a manuscript is an original copy of a work written by an author or a composer, which generally, follows standardized typographic and formatting rules. In film and theatre, a manuscript, or script for short, is an author's or dramatist's text, used by a theatre company or film crew during the production of the work's performance or filming. More specifically, a motion picture manuscript is called a screenplay; a television manuscript, a teleplay; a manuscript for the theatre, a stage play; and a manuscript for audio-only performance is often called a radio play, even when the recorded performance is disseminated via non-radio means. In insurance, a manuscript policy is one that is negotiated between the insurer and the policyholder, as opposed to an off-the-shelf form supplied by the insurer. The Bible was the most studied book of the Middle Ages; along with Bible scores of manuscripts made in the Middle Ages were revived in church.

The study of the writing, or "hand" in surviving manuscripts is termed palaeography; manuscripts using all upper case letters are called majuscule, those using all lower case are called minuscule.

This paper mainly focuses on the solution of debatable language by elaborating certain given manuscripts.



## A Solution of Debate

Manuscripts are expedient for solving debatable vocabularies by showing how the forefather brought into play the same. Once I was in a function, and the programme was going on, it came the time that a sweet and beautiful singer played her tune. I can't remember the name of her song or her name but I cannot forget one word, i.e. *chhimlei*. Pi Vanhlupuii, a famous singer was sitting by my side, and she gossiped "why so many composers use *chhimlei*, it should be *chhimhlei*". I did not react by word but gestured moving my head downward approving her opinion. Again after some months, I was in the function, a beautiful lady singer sang a sweet song that I can't remember but the same word *chhimhlei* etched in my mind because of the past experience. By then a man who sat nearby me (whom I couldn't identify) gossiped uttering his concept which is a reverse to Pi Vanhlupuii, "why *chhimhlei*, it is *chhimlei*". It reminded me the time we shoot the breeze with Pi Vanhlupuii and I smiled at him with respect instead of responding to him. Had you dare to mention, you might have had experienced the invariable situation for quite sometimes in your day-to-day life.

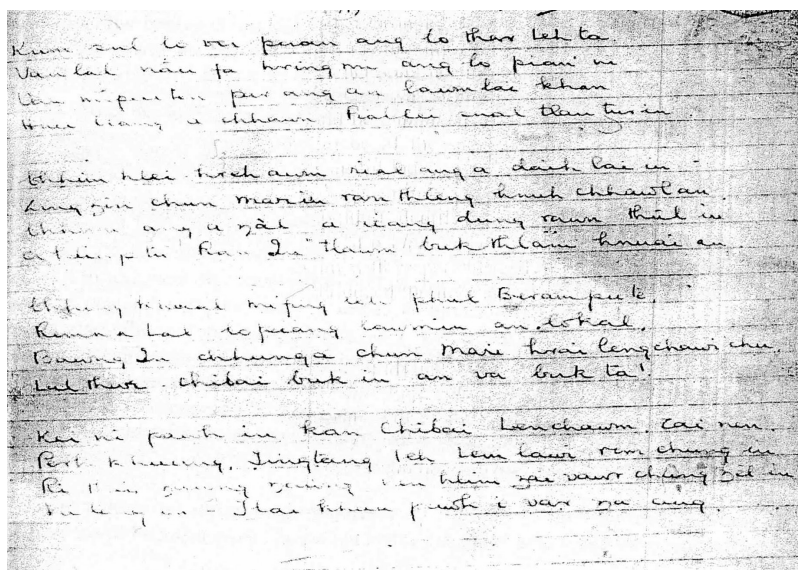


fig. 7.1: Vankhama: Kumsul lo vei Puan ang lo Thar leh ta

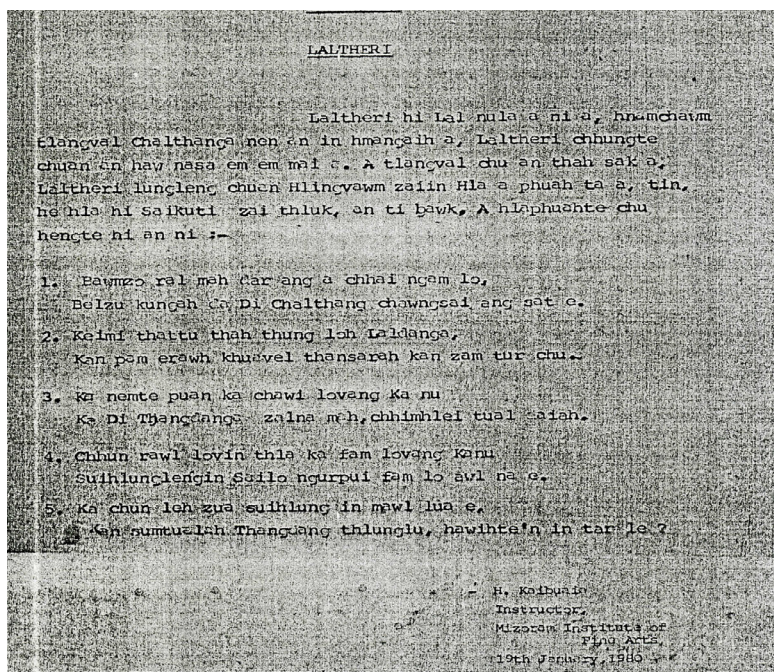


fig. 7.2: H. Kaibuaia: Laltheri Hla

Looking into the above referred to state of affairs, one can debate on which one is correct, either *chhimhlei* or *chhimlei*. Now let us examine the manuscript of Vankhama in which, I suppose, our curiosity will be quenched in one way or the other:

If we thoroughly examine the manuscript (fig. 7.1) *Vankhama: Kumsul lo vei Puan ang lo Thar leh ta*, the second stanza runs like this:

*chhimhlei hrehawm rial ang a daih lain,  
 zingzin chun marin ranthleng hnuhchhawlan;  
 chham ang a zal a riang dung rawn thulin,  
 a hliaptu ran in tlawm bukthlam hnuaian*

We will certainly find the first word *chhimhlei* in the first line which indicates Vankhama preferred *chhimhlei* to *chhimlei*.

The same word *chhim hlei* is found in under inserted manuscript.

These two manuscripts indicate that poets of the past in Mizoram used *chhim hlei* rather than *chhim lei* which in turn gives advice to the

present poet in the selection of language. To ascertain the steadfastness of the renowned poet's principle, let's have a look at what critics say about a poet.

P.B. Shelley says:

to be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful, in a word, the good which exists in the relation, subsisting, first between existence and perception, and second, between perception and expression. Every original language near to its source is in itself the chaos of a cyclic poem: the copiousness of lexicography and the distinctions of grammar are the works of a later age, and are merely the catalogue and the form of the creations of poetry.

But poets, or those who imagine and express this indestructible order, are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance, and architecture, and statuary, and painting; they are the institutors of laws, and the founder of civil society, and the inventors of the arts of life, and the teachers who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true, that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion.

— *A Defence of Poetry*

Why do I excerpt this definition of poet? It is to ascertain the reliability of a poet's manuscript in finding what is true or what is wrong or which way is the right path to be followed. If we are going to draw conclusion on the debate of *chhimhlei* vs *chhimlei* from the appraisal of the manuscript, *chhim hlei* is the correct one and *chhim lei* is not acceptable. Had one drew a conclusion that *chhimhlei* is acceptable and *chhimhlei* is an unfavourite one, he might not have gone wrong because Vankhama was regarded as a renowned poet and well-verse in Mizo language and its usage. In addition to P.B. Shelley's designation of a poet, let's have a look into William Wordsworth's clarity of a poet when he says:

A poet is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that it is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them.

— Wordsworth 1802

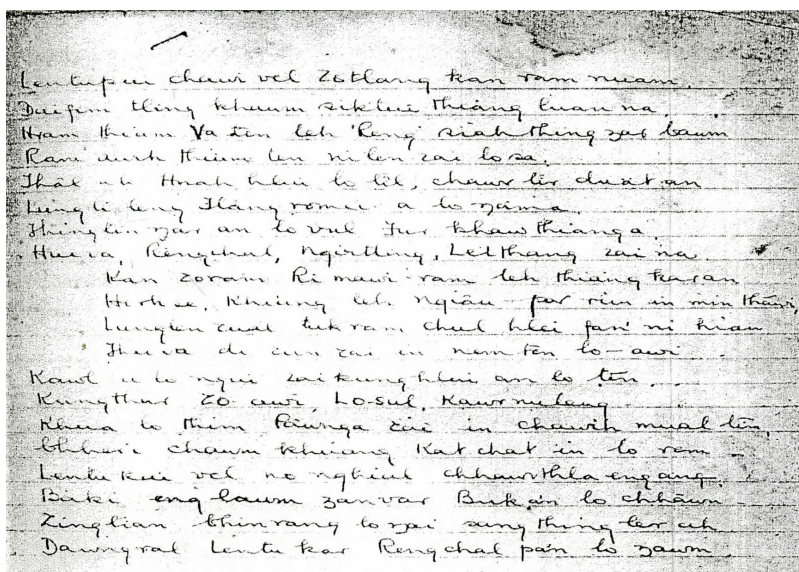


fig. 7.3: Vankhama: *Rimawi Ram* (handwritten manuscript)

Judging from the two cited critical definitions of a poet, it would be appropriate to say that Vankhama's manuscript justifies that the right word is *chhimhle* instead of *chhim lei*.

This makes to opine that a manuscript is a good source of knowledge and is helpful in solving disputes or in determining evidence over controversial or debatable words in language learning.

Again, there is a living debate on one poetical word used by Vankhama, i.e. *tlang romei* or *thal romei*. This is a well-known poetical word among the Mizo; but differently used by different poets. Even so, let us first investigate Vankhama's manuscript in which we will clearly see how he uses it in his poem *Rimawi Ram* (fig. 7.3).

In Mizoram, *romei* occurs mostly during November–May. Though according to the Mizo, the year has been divided into many seasons depending upon the condition of climate such as *thal*, *fur*, *favang*, *thlasik*; it is also broadly divided into two such as *fur leh thal* whereas the *fur* covers the whole rainy seasons, while the *thal* covers the whole dry season; or *nipui leh thlasik* whereas the *nipui* covers the whole warm season, while the *thlasik* covers the whole cold season. If we are going to follow a narrower classification, *thal* covers March to May, *fur* covers



June to August, *favang* covers September to November, *thlasik* covers December to February. If one speaks from the practical experience of the actual occurrence of climate, the number of months in one season might not be identical with the other; dividing equally into three months each is not practicable because of the actual incidence of climate. I go off from the main theme merely to specify the season during which *romei* occur in Mizoram.

It is presumable that Vankhama was in a dale while he was receiving inspiration for his poem from which he stared at the *haze* that spread over the mountain; and therefore drew his poetical word *tlang romei*.

In addition to Vankhama's use of *tlang romei*, one may be eager to quote R.L. Kamlala who uses *romei* in his song *Awmkhua a Har Tlang tin*, which runs as:

*awmkhua a har tlang tin ka har thlir a,  
romei a kai chiai e, aw, khawtlang a bawm*

Saihnuna (Liantawn) also uses *romei* as:

*han thlir the u, romei zam karah khian,  
an lenna zion tlang ah khian.*

Ch. Malsawma too uses *romei* in his poem *Buannel*, sung by C. Vansanga in which he plays his tunes as:

*romei zamin tlangtin mual tin  
a bawm chiai e lunglen an.*

These three poets use *romei* in connection with mountain. However, weigh up a manuscript of F. Thangkhuma on Awithangpa Zai (fig. 7.4).

And also see Patea who uses *romei* in his song, *Hmanah Mosian Kannan a Thlir a*, in the first and second lines of the second stanza in which he sings:

*kannan romei leh ni tla zam vel,  
hruaitu mosia chuan a han thlir chiam a*

It is evident that Vankhama, R.L. Kamlala, Saihnuna, Ch. Malsawma name after *romei* as *hang romei* where it is mostly seen, whereas Awithangpa and Patea name it *thal romei* after the season it transpires. Therefore, the reader is appealed to look carefully at the poet's circumstances or

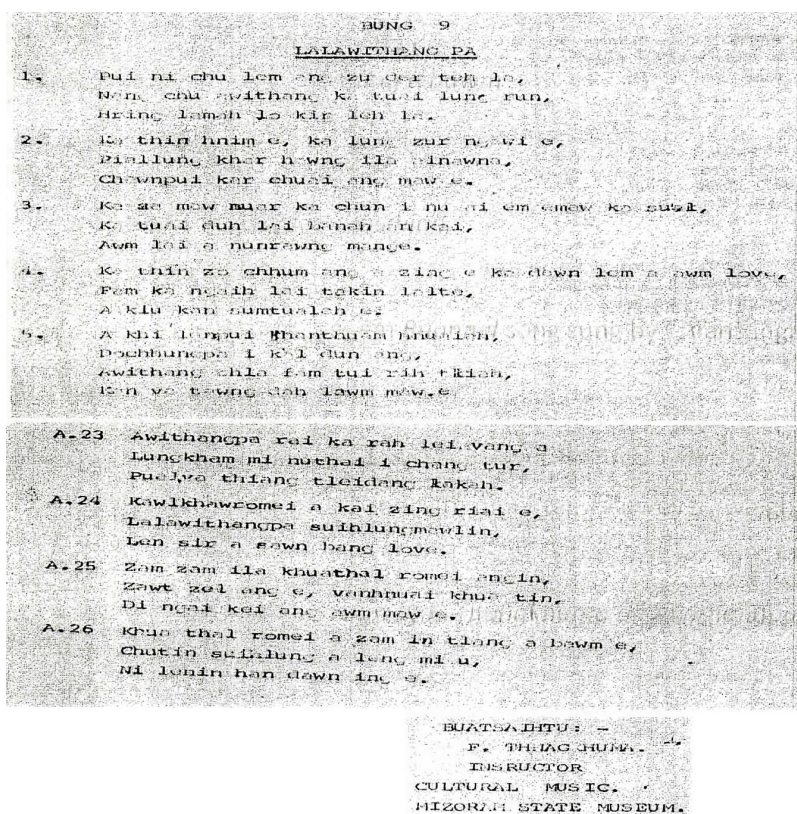


fig. 7.4: Manuscript of F. Thanghuma on Awithangpa Zai

the situations that at what condition do the poets utter *tlang romei* or *thal romei*. As already said earlier, *romei* occurs in Mizoram during the season of *thal*; hence some other poets use *thal romei*. That is why I appeal the reader to be cautious about the inspiration the poet received and the context of the lexicography of the chosen word.

### A Study of Language

Manuscript is an informative source for learning a language used in the past several years. If we look at Lalngurauva's manuscripts on *Synod sikulte leh Rambuai*, it is clearly seen that elderly educated Mizo men transliterate foreign words according to the expediency of Mizo tongue (fig. 7.5).

We see *sikul* in nine places. Among the scholars there are different

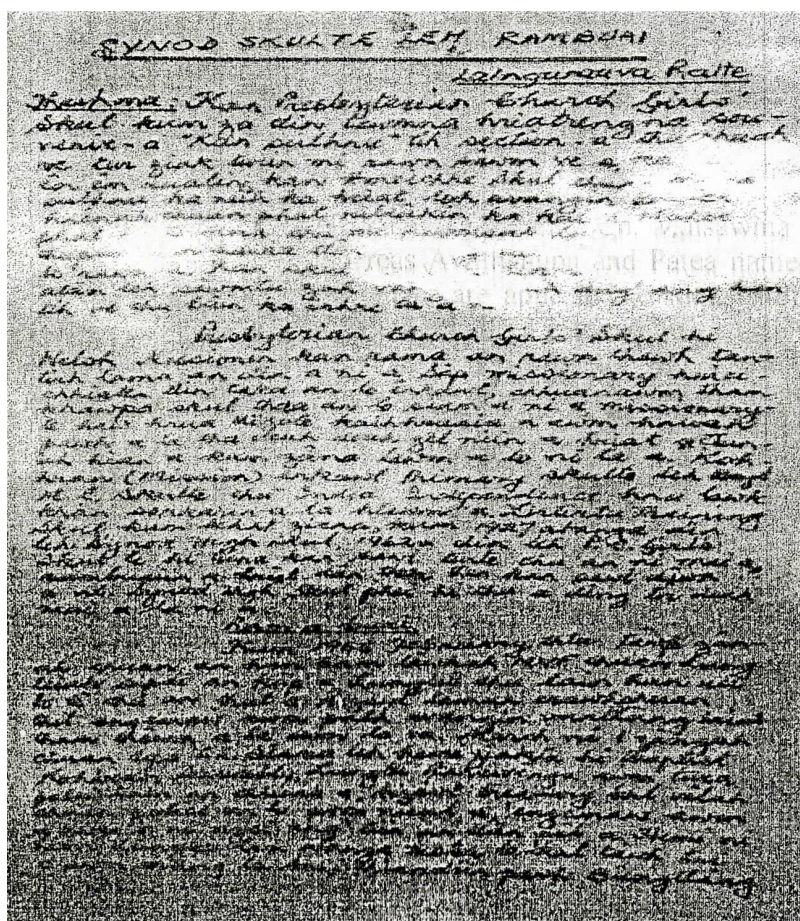


fig. 7.5: Manuscript of Lalngurauva Ralte

opinions on how to transliterate the borrowed words; some are of the opinion that it shall be written as pronounced; some feel that it must be written as it is, taking into account the various pronunciations within this small territory. For example, take the word “literature”, in some parts of southern side, it is pronounced as *licherechar*, and in some parts of northern side, it is pronounced as *literechar*, and while among the academicians, it is pronounced *litrachar*. So, the problem is whose pronunciation shall be transliterated. Take it for granted, it is clearly seen that earlier Mizo scholars used to write it according to their pronunciation.



Dawn has lin kimm dawn in vawoi in ni chuan,  
 Ka tsah ren lai chhing ka han hawng a  
 Jah chuan lunglen thim thla enchimloh leh  
 Biak thu di tham hna ka chhis chhuak a  
 Hmanah zava ang lung mual ve lai thuan  
 Ka tsam teta kumthuang then lo' tu in  
 A sak hmel maw thim thla parang min hlai  
 Thrah kumthuang lunglen pui tut hi  
 chihle, U Hlim thla ka chan tsak te hi  
 a vawng ang fam ka chan ve tima chuan  
 am hui chany dawn tam lung len na reng an  
 ghich leh pa: kumthuang re' cin ka te  
 Ka en hian nun hlin mual luan an haw then  
 Hal lo leh dutta kan taum lai ni;  
 Dawn chung ni aumve ang maw lungrik an  
 Khua ri leh a lungun a uai hi  
 Lung a dawn thei dawn nam maw kumthuang in  
 Khua nu tsah loh di par taum reng an  
 lung ka chhis engah taum pauch kan lo taum  
 Kumthuang lunglen na chang chhuat min ban.

fig. 7.6: Vankhama: *A Hlim Thla/Awmhar Tinkim Dawnin*

- G.18 Puma zai reng reng a chul dawn lo,  
 Tlang pawk chhingler in,  
 Chwmkhuang beng zel ang beng zel ang.
- A.19 Suihlunglenin mual leh tlang hlen nuam ing e,  
 Zawlpui khanthuam sirva lengah,  
 Chan ka nuam vung dang a e.
- A.20 Kan khaw kareh dai tui luang lo,  
 Knaumual thingsir cham reng e,  
 Biak ka nuam e, chohar chuingpui an ka tui ang nen duaikha,
- A.21 Tawh ka nuam e, vawoin ni ngeia'n,  
 Suihlung a leng ti khan nau ang,  
 Chaltuai mi tak pui mahna.
- A.22 Lung a leng e, chhinghnian i ka ngai mang e,  
 Mualkawi dungsei khanthuam  
 Nihliapah kan leng ve silove.
- A.23 Awithangpa rai ka rah lei vung a  
 Lungkham mi nuthai i chang tur,  
 Puelva thiang tleidang kakah.
- A.24 Kawlkhawromei a kai zing ri ai e,  
 Lalawithangpa suihlungmawlin,  
 Len sir a sawn bang love.

fig. 7.7. Manuscript of F. Thangkuma on Awithangpa



Here as we have seen, Laingurauva Ralte chooses to write *sikul* as an alternative to the original school; he uses *sikul* which is easier to pronounce for the Mizo. This plain manuscript tells us that manuscripts are instructive tools for learning a language.

On 10 October 2017, I attended Writers Association's Ruby Jubilee Celebration Function. While the chief guest was delivering his speech, in one part, he talked about the usage of Mizo language and urged the gathering not to be too strict and not to frighten. He said: *vawiin ni tih*

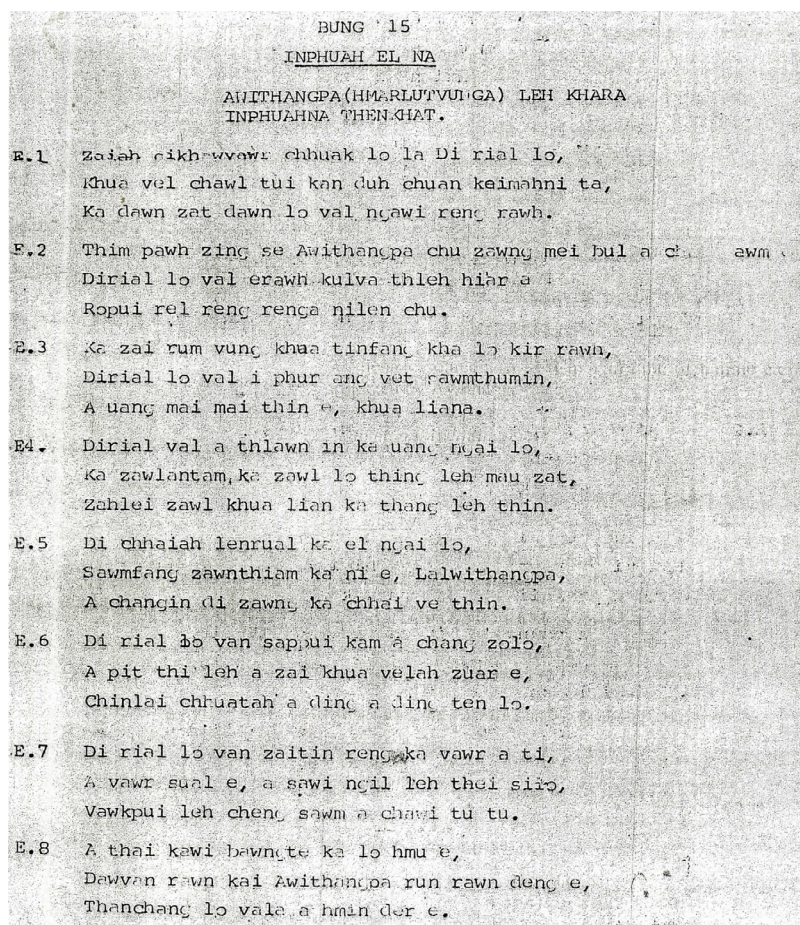


fig. 7.8: Manuscript of F. Thangkuma on Awithangpa

*hi a dik lo han tih tawl ang chi to hian mi a tihlauthawng thei a, insum a tha.* In this regard it is recommended to take care of the poet's selection of language which could not be the same in normal situation and academic use of language in which we are bound to use the social or grammatical precision. With regard to the use of *vawiin ni* let's have a look at the poet, Vankhama who uses it (fig. 7.6).

2. Zu hmun e, zan a khan e,  
Vala 'n "ka hrang" in ti chiei e,  
Ankhuon e, riel ri kailo, zolei e,  
Sathang thawn ka tluon e.
3. Tlang an e anrawn au ve,  
Runah naubang a thlir suok e,  
Leng lak e um viel le maw ram tuon e,  
Nau lung ti her sien la e.
4. Mi nun e, milo hmuok la,  
Zokhuo dawnlung a sireh e,  
Chier khuo e, kan tawr a ke zolei e,  
Hminglien ko kim un la e.
5. Zuopa e zuong in tho la,  
Thlafam pielral kai ta hnung kha  
I hrai e, lawi ang thang e tuoi an e,  
Hrang zu min dur un la.
6. Ka nu e, tap tap hla maw,  
Bilpuon khumlai rakhlip unla,  
Thlafam e, nghil nau e, maw kawl an e,  
Vaitum a zuong tlung e.
7. Run ngui e, thai ang tho la,  
Kanu, ar ang ka vai chu e,  
Ka pun e mi chawi sien la tlang angin,  
Sawng lawng ruol lak an e.

---

(E) RAL HLA DO

1. Kei chu e, ka sentet an e,  
Sale doral ka pieng pui e,  
Ka do e, rim nam pa e, thlang chem e,  
Ai kim ni ti un la .
2. Ka than e, khuo chin khuong e,  
Dar ang in e a ri love,  
Keini e kan vang khuo e laimi tho,  
Chinkhuong an ri dim i e.

fig. 7.9: Manuscript of H. Kaibuaia on Hla Do



Surprisingly, not only in Vankhama but also in the poem of Awithangpa we see *vawiin ni*. See *fig. 7.7*.

Under the poetic licence, Horace advises a poet to coin new words or arrange the existing words to go well with his convenience. Again here one needs to be cautious as in scholastic activities one has to administer one's faculty to expose the best language judging from grammatical and social binding and not to imitate the syllable so arranged that suit the same number of syllable for the sake of singing. In customary usage, *vawiin ni* is unacceptable but poets use it freely under poetic licence to encompass equal syllable for the sake of singing alone.

Some days back, there was a hot discussion about the meaning and usage of *dawvan* and *dawvan kai*. *Dawvan* is a raised floor or podium, a dais at the upper end of a Zawlbuk and a chief's house, it may as well be said chief's court; and *dawvan kai* is to request a special favour and to give a present, submission of bewilderment to someone or to chief in times of famine, etc. Now look at the usage of *dawvan kai* as projected by Awithangpa (*fig. 7.8*).

### A Representation of Culture

Manuscript is a useful medium for the study of the cultural behaviour of a certain tribe. Before orthography was introduced, it was a common practice to inscribe pictures representing ideas and thoughts on walls, rocks or memorial stones. For example, in ancient Mizo memorial stones, we will find portraits of hunter killing a wild animal which in turn indicates the Mizo culture of hunting; a man's hanging head signifies a war, conquering, etc. As of now, I am unable to present a pictorial manuscript with regard to culture, however, words manuscript might have sufficed its importance. See *fig. 7.9*.

As is seen, *Pasalṭha Hla Do* pasted is *Hmar Hla Do*. We have seen from this manuscript that the Mizo used to hunt wild animals in connection with belief; food and honour. The ancient Mizo society appreciated *pasalṭha* who protected them and collected food.

The above illustrations are ample proofs that manuscripts are a derivation of information.

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Manuscript of Lalngurauva Ralte

Manuscript of C. Sangzuala

Manuscript of K. Zawla

Manuscript of H. Kaibuaia

Manuscript of F. Thangkhuma

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

## Glossary

MS & MSS – MS is traditional abbreviation for manuscript and MSS for manuscripts, while the forms MS, ms or ms. for singular, and MSS, mss or mss. for plural (with or without the full stop, all uppercase or all lowercase) are also accepted. The second s is not simply the plural; by an old convention, it doubles the last letter of the abbreviation to express the plural, just as pp. means “pages”.

*romei* is haze that occur during September to May in Mizoram.

*chhimhlei* – *chhim* means south but in Mizo poetical word, *chhimhlei* signifies the earth, the corporeal world.

*thal* mean dry season.

*thlasik* means winter.

*Dawvan* is a raised floor or podium, a dais at the upper end of a *zawlbuk* and a chief's house, it may as well be said chief's court; and *dawvan kai* is to request a special favour and to give a present, submission of bewilderment to someone or to chief in times of famine, etc.

*zawlbuk* is a large house in a Lushai (Mizo) village where all the unmarried (sometimes married as well) young men of the community sleep at night. It is a social institution where etiquettes are learnt; it is famous for its disciplinary activities.

# The Introduction of Mizo Alphabet and Its Properties

## An Overview

*C. Vanlal Ruaia*

**Abstract:** In this paper, the evolution of the Mizo literature is emphasized in three stages: Mr Thomas Herbert Lewin, Superintendent of Chittagong; Brojo Nath Shaha, Assistant Surgeon and the missionaries of Arthington up to the introduction of school education. It also reflects on the characteristic features of roman script with suitable tonal adaptation of Mizo language. By reducing the writing of Mizo language, its preservation became easy and it helped the missionaries to interact and communicate with the native Mizo effectively. The article also makes a comparison of writing of folk tales of Mizo with the language in modern times. It also reflects on the language development that took place from the time of the arrival of missionaries to the present language used in education.

**Keywords:** Three stages of Mizo literature, missionaries, Mizo folk tales, Mizo alphabet and grammar.

### Genesis of Alphabet

The alphabet system was started in ancient Egypt around 2700 BCE. Egyptian writing had a set of some twenty-two hieroglyphs to represent syllables that began with a single consonant of their language, plus a vowel (or no vowel) to be supplied by the native speaker. These glyphs were used as pronunciation guides for logograms to write grammatical inflections and letter, to transcribe loan words and foreign names. In the middle Bronze Age an apparently “alphabetic system known as the proto-Sinaitic script was believed to have developed in central Egypt around 1700 BCE by Semitic workers and Phoenicians, but only one of these

early writings has been deciphered and its exact nature remains open to interpretation. Based on letter's appearance and names, it is believed to have based on Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Phoenician was the first major phenomenic script. In contrast to two other widely used writing system at the time, cuneiform and Egyptian hieroglyphs, it contained only about two dozen distinct letters, making its script simple enough for common traders to learn. The Phoenicians' thalassocracy allowed the scripts to be spread across the Mediterranean. The Greek took letters which did not represent sounds that existed in Greek and changed them to represent the vowels. This marked the creation of a "true" alphabet with both vowels and consonants as explicit symbols in a single script. The Greek alphabet was originally written from right to left. But eventually changed *boustrophedon* (literally turning like oxen) where the direction of writing alternated with every line. By the fifth-century BCE, the direction had settled into the pattern in which we now write: from left to right.

In earlier times there were many variants to the Greek alphabet, this caused many different alphabets to evolve from it. The *Cumae* form of the Greek alphabet was carried over by Greek colonists from Euboea to the Italian peninsula where it gave rise to a variety of alphabets used to inscribe in the italic languages. One of these became Latin alphabet which was spread across Europe as the Romans expanded their empire. Even after the fall of Roman Empire the alphabet survived in the intellectual and religious domains (Crabben 2011).

### **Mizo Alphabet**

We are now going to examine the evolution of Mizo alphabet in three stages, even though different script writers were there among the Anglo-Indian during the British regime.

#### **STAGE 1**

Before the advent of the British from Chittagong in 1871 the Mizo tribes did not have any written record as they had no scripts of their own. The verbal language and some signs were the only means of communication.

Thomas Herbert Lewin was the pioneer who had reduced writing the Mizo language (Lusei) and folk tales by adopting Sir William Jones'



Sir William Jones, a philologist, linguist and lawyer.

system of Roman script which had to be adopted by the earlier writers in Southeast Asia. The first publication was *Progressive Colloquial Exercise in the Lushai Dialect of the Dzo or Kuki Language, with Vocabularies and Popular Tales* by Captain Thomas Herbert Lewin BSc, Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Hill, published by Central Press Company, Calcutta, in 1874.

The author of this compilation helped the Mizos in learning their language giving a grammar structure and ninety exercises of vocabulary for teaching Mizo language (Lusei). This grammar and exercises of vocabulary are quite good to start with the study of Mizo language and conversation for who already know the English alphabet. Because T.H. Lewin (1874: 3) used English letters extracting from the twenty-six English alphabets and gave vowel signs as used in English to adjust the sound of Mizo vocal chord of tonal language, such as:

<i>a</i>	as in English	can
<i>a</i>	as in English	ha ha

<i>au</i> or <i>aw</i>	as in English	cause ( <i>khaws</i> )
<i>e</i>	as in English	pen
<i>ɛ</i>	as in English	has in a sound <i>a</i> in “cane” or in “ale”
<i>ei</i>	is not pronounced as in <i>eider</i> , nor as in <i>either</i> , but has two distinct sounds of <i>e</i> and <i>i</i>	
<i>ey</i>	is used a final <i>e</i>	
<i>ai</i>	has the power of the Greek <i>ai ai’ alas alas’</i>	
<i>i</i>	as in the English word <i>pit</i>	
<i>i</i>	as in the sounded a double <i>ee</i> or as the <i>ca</i> in <i>peat</i>	
<i>ee</i>	double <i>ee</i> or <i>ie</i> sometimes used as a finial in place of <i>i</i>	
<i>o</i>	as in English <i>on</i>	
<i>o</i>	as in English <i>over</i>	
<i>u</i>	as in English <i>nut</i>	
<i>u</i>	as in English <i>ooze</i>	
<i>oy</i>	as in English <i>coy</i>	
<i>oi</i>	as in Australian <i>coee</i>	
<i>t</i>	as in dental palatal	
<i>j</i>	as in <i>dz</i> in French <i>jour</i>	
ts, tsc, tsch	pronouncing sounds are not like sibilant like English <i>s</i> or <i>ts</i> nor like the <i>sh</i> in shall; the sounds are pronounced and softened between tongue, teeth, and palate.	

The following three combinations of letters were adopted to arrange the Mizo alphabet later.

<i>Aw</i>	as in English <i>awkward</i> ,
<i>Ch</i>	as in English <i>chalk</i> ,
<i>Ng</i>	as in English <i>bang, lung</i> .

Lewin prepared ninety exercises in his compilation. Again one exercise contained about twenty sentences of conversation which is very prospective learning of conversation to those who were coming from outside the community of Mizo.



*Explanatory Note:* In every exercise, notes and explanation of a particular term were given with an example, clearly indicating similar use within the same word by giving prefix. For example:

<i>English</i>	<i>Mizo</i>	<i>Sentence</i>
I (first person)	= <i>Ka</i>	e.g. I go = <i>Ka kal</i>
We (plural form)	= <i>Ka + n = kan</i> (plural)	e.g. We go = <i>kan kal</i>
You (second person)	= <i>I</i> (singular) + <i>n</i>	e.g. In (plural) = you go = <i>in kal</i>
They (plural)	= <i>An</i> (plural)	e.g. They go = <i>An kal</i>

*Interrogation:* The prefix interrogation like *em* indicating question-tag passages and usages is also shown. For example:

It is high = *Asang*  
 Is it high = *Asang em?*  
 You are well = *I tha* = Are you well? = *I tha maw?*

### Southeast Asian Method

Lewin adopted some particular usages in southeast Asia to the system which was suitable to oriental languages. In China some earlier writer had already adopted a system of logogram to represent the vocal chord of sound. For example:

<i>English</i>	<i>Mizo</i>	<i>South Asia</i>
Dao	<i>Chem</i>	<i>Tschem/Tshem</i>
Commoner	<i>Hnamchawm</i>	<i>Hnamtsawm</i>
	<i>Chenglung</i>	<i>Tschenglung</i>
Salt	<i>Chi</i>	<i>Tschi/Tshi</i>
Thin	<i>Cher</i>	<i>Tscher/Tsher</i>
	<i>Chinduin</i>	<i>Tschindwin/Tshindwin</i>
	<i>Chakma</i>	<i>Tsakma</i>

On these phonetics chord the tongue closes soft palate and when begins to open, the sound comes out initiating “T” sound as we pronounce in patient, potential, positive, the sound “t”. On the other hand, Lewin’s spelling and sound of the transcribing language are not in conformity. This is because Lewin studied and copied from non-Mizo or Bengali who used to speak corrupted pronunciation of Mizo/Lusei ordinarily from the frontier of Bengal. The transcribing spelling of sound like the same as modern Bengali who can speak Mizo may be one of the evidences of Lewin’s corrupted pronunciation of Lusei against the ear of native – Mizo/Lusei – people. For example:

<i>English</i>	<i>Mizo/Lushai</i>	<i>Lewins' Corrupted Pronunciation</i>
I am	<i>Keimah</i>	<i>Koymah</i>
You are	<i>Nangmah</i>	<i>Nungmah</i>
Good	<i>A tha Zo</i>	<i>Ahta Dzo</i>

There were some kinds of fallacy/deceptiveness in the writing form which was inherited from Chittagong Bengali during his time; there was no scholar among the native to correct this corrupt pronunciation. Otherwise written language was a new thing for the Mizo native for which they had no confidence and self-reliance even though it was their own language. Lewin had made dictionaries of Dzo–English vocabularies (about 1250) and English–Dzo vocabularies (about 1105) (1874: 91).

## STAGE 2

The most important second publication was *A Grammar of the Lushai Language: A Few Illustrations of the ZAU: Lushai Popular Songs and Translation from Aesops Fables* by Brojo Nath Shaha, Civil Medical Officer, Chittagong Hills Tract. It was published by the Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta in 1884. Brojo Nath Shaha published this grammar book after ten years of Lewin's publication. Further Shaha wrote in his Preface that Lewin was the first pioneer in Lushai language which inspired and encouraged him to publish of his book. From the work of Lewin, he got the impetus to study and publish the grammar of Lushai language. He had studied extensively the syntactic and semantic of Lushai language while interacting with his Lushai patients. Shaha was seem to be an intelligent person from the reflection of his works. His works became far more concrete than that of Lewin. His was a very good grammar at that time, having been supplied a concrete term of explanation, sign and pronunciation. His book is divided into three parts:

- Part I deals with orthography.
- Part II deals with etymology (the study of historical development of language particularly manifested in individual words). It has ten chapters: (1) Noun, (2) Adjective, (3) Numeral, (4) Pronouns, (5) Verbs, (6) Adverbs, (7) Preposition, (8) Conjunction, (9) Interpretation, and (10) Prefix and Suffix.
- Part III deals with syntax and has rules 1-26.

- Appendix: Lushai Popular Songs: In this book are given explanatory notes and context of vocabulary and words by means of six songs of Mizo and eight Aesop tales. After giving some explanation in the concrete chapters of syntax, the study of Lushai songs and etymology is given with reference to the textual contexts reflecting the historical account of Mizo migration and social interaction among the various clans. The song bears the names of their contemporary habitation:

E.g. *Sei-pui-zai, Ngente zai, Ralte zai*, etc.

*Dou ruma-pa zai. Chang duma-zai*

*Se-dai zai* = (*Sedawi zai* is appropriate modern usages. In Indian English “a” is pronounced as “o” sound, e.g. salt, talk, etc.)

### *Darthlalang Zai*

Readers might think that how could the Mizo (Lushai) know the mirror song of their society in 1884. It may be assumed that the Lushai expedition was launched in 1872, and from the influence of expeditors’ technology the Mizo people might have got the mirror song.

As we know from the publication of Shaha, the prevalent contemporary songs were: (1) *Nemdui zai*, (2) *Chang then zai* (*Chawngchen*), (3) *Ni-leng zai* (*nilen zai* in modern usage), (4) *Pathlay zai* (*pathlawi zai*), (5) *Khieng-ay-zai* (*khiang awi i-zai* in modern usage), (6) *Bu-zai-zai* (*buh za aih*), and (7) *Pa-ngai zai* (*pa ngaihna hla*).

### *Hmar Zai*

Mizo is the nomenclature of different ethnic groups of the inhabitants between Myanmar and India. Even Hmar is also a tribe under the Mizos. Hmar zai was also known in the south-western Mizoram (Khangte 2012). In Mizoram, ordinarily, the Hmar clan is scattered in the north-eastern Mizoram around the border of Manipur. Such songs are prevalent:

*bel lien a zu ka dan-in lung lal ka mal loh ve*  
*da tuan chung a en chim loh leng to nu*  
*in tan an shui-lung ka mal ta e.*

*tay khua zan pui ni-hliep a tual leng nu*  
*lal-dang thla fam khua a may loh ve*

*lal dang thla fam nao-ang kun ta la in  
kan shiellam dar mual a liem ta e.*

Aesops' fables were also very helpful in studying Mizo language for those who already knew the Aesops' fables and the statement which used to represent the story in clear expressive language.

### STAGE 3

The third stage deals with the coming of missionaries and their works. In 1894 James Herbert Lorrain and Frederick William Savidge, the two missionaries of Arthington, came to Mizoram. They settled in Thangphungas village, this place is now known as Macdonald Hill. They had attempted translation of the some books of the Bible. Before their arrival in Mizoram, they had studied the first two publications of Lewin and Shaha while living in Silchar and thus they could speak fluently with the natives. This made a brotherhood between these missonaries and the natives. In 1898 after having been transferred to southern Mizoram Lorrain and Savidge compiled *Lushai Dictionary*, sponsored by the Government of Assam, because southern Mizoram was now transferred as a district of Assam from Bengal.

After the transfer of Lorrain and Savidge to southern Mizoram, they continued their teaching among the Mizo; the alphabet was extracted from the twenty-six letters of English alphabet:

*a, â, aw, âw, b, ch, d, e, ê, f, g, ng, h, i, î, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, u, v, z.*

### Remarks

In reviewing the history of Mizo literature, some people give more weightage to the works of the missionaries without mentioning the earlier works done before them.

No one can negate the contributions of T.H. Lewin and Brojo Nath Shaha before the two missionaries set their feet in 1892 in Lushai Hill. Reads a letter of J.H. Lorrain to T.H. Lewin dated 25 April 1899 as:

It was here we come across some books on the Lushai language written by you ... During our stay in Cachar, we had come across your vocabulary and folklore and this we learnt by heart. We also got some help from a little book, published by the native Doctor of Rangamatri. ...

– Lorrain 1899

These two grammar books were kept with them before they could enter Mizoram, as they were waiting to get the inner line permit from Cachar Deputy Commissioner, W. Ward. They had enough time, almost two years, to study all available books and documents about the language of Mizo. As soon as they entered Mizoram they could speak fluently with the native. Lorrain remarks:

We built our house about a mile from Aijal, between two Lushai villages and set about learning the language in real earnest. From the time when we began to speak fluently the people looked upon us as members of their own community and we became fast friends.

– Ibid., para 15 of letter

As they already knew Mizo language and its grammar, they could open their school on 1 April 1894.

There were some other reasonable script writers of Mizo language, helping the students:

1. 1869 – *Chittagong Hill Tract and the Dweller Therein* by T.H. Lewin. Here there were about 183 word comparisons with *Tipperah phayre/mrung/kumi/mru/khyeng/bunjogi/pankho/shendu/looshai*.
2. 1887 – *A Short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribe in the North East Frontier District of Cachar Syhlet, Naga Hills*, etc. by C.A. Soppit.
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## Appendix

### A Report on National Seminar on Mizo Manuscripts at Aizawl during 1-3 November 2017



A THREE-day National Seminar on Writing in Mizo Manuscripts was organized during 1-3 November 2017 by the Department of Mizo, Mizoram University in collaboration with National Mission for Manuscript (NMM), IGNC, New Delhi as the Department consistently organized various seminars, consultations, refresher course and related literary programmes right from the beginning to uphold and enhance Mizo literature and language in different fields or areas.

The first-day seminar was conducted at Synod Conference Centre, in the heart of Aizawl. The official Inaugural Session of the Grand Exhibition took place at 10:30 a.m. at the main corridor enclosure of the Conference Centre, where LTL Library & Archives graciously made a very special display of old books, certificates, photos, first print books, newspapers and periodicals, including various archival and museum materials related to manuscripts, language, folklore and literature. Immediately after the exhibition of rare materials was inaugurated by Elder (Upa) Rochhinga, 107 years old, who is known to be the senior most Ordained Church Elder alive by cutting a ribbon at the main corridor enclosure of the Pi Zaii Conference Hall after all the invited guests reached the venue.

Then, Dr Ruth Lalremruati, Assistant Professor of Mizo Department, Mizoram University who compared the session, welcomed all the guests and explained the purpose of the whole programme, followed by the Keynote Address of Prof. Laltluangliana Khiangte, Head

of Mizo Department, Mizoram University and Coordinator of the whole programmes. In his address, he emphasized the need of proper development of Mizo language and also to promote the subject for studies in different universities of India. Systematic study of the manuscripts found in the state might be examined by the experts of NMM was the request made by him although the expected officials of IGNCA could not be seen in the function due to unavoidable circumstance. Prof. Khiangte also had mentioned about various activities of the Department for the systematic development of Mizo literature and language with his thought-provoking suggestions. Of course, with a request to NMM for the provision of more funds so that an in-depth study of Mizo manuscripts may be conducted at the University.

The chief guest of the programme, Chief Minister of Mizoram, Mr Lal Thanhawla, in his inaugural speech said that even though we have faced colonial crisis, one of our privileges is almost all the Mizos from different regions are bind together with one language, that is Mizo language. Therefore, to take this chance to use it as our stronghold and unity, writers play a crucial role. He further suggested that if there is another programme like this, it would be better to make broader information so that interested Mizo people from all regions could be called together. A new edited book entitled, *Theory of Literature*, carefully revised and enlarged after the first print by the Board of Studies, Mizoram University was released by the chief minister. This book will be used as a textbook in the undergraduate courses of studies under the Mizoram University.

Another important event in the function was a book release. Mr J. Malsawma; a renowned writer, released *An Album of Books*, after it was pre-viewed by Mr Lallungmuana, Head of Sociology Department, Pachhunga University College, Mizoram University. The book, consists of detailed summary of all the released books of the author with photocopy of its cover, was prepared by Prof. Laltluangliana Khiangte. It carries a brief account of the works of one writer who made consistent effort to write and publish at least one book every year for the last twenty-five years. A silver jubilee celebration of the same was highly appreciated by the senior-most living essayist of the Mizos, Mr J. Malsawma, the founder Secretary of the Mizo Academy of Letters (MAL is the apex



literary body of Mizoram). The inaugural function was solemnized with a thanksgiving prayer by the Rev. Lalnghinglova, ninety-two years of age, who is known to be the senior-most living Ordained Minister in the state of Mizoram.

Prof. Lalhmasai Chuaungo, Dean, School of Education & Humanities, Mizoram University had delivered a special address and vote of thanks for the inaugural function. The function was entertained by Mizo Department Choir and Selected Singers of Mizo Department with their beautiful voices.

The rest of the national seminar till 3 November was split into six paper presentation discussion sessions and the concluding session was on open discussion on Mizo language, literature, folklore, culture and prospect of Mizo language to be included in the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule of Indian Constitution. All the sessions were attended by more than 150 participants and students of Mizo Department served as volunteers with full dedication for the grand success of the three-day programmes.

During the whole seminar, Prof. K.V. Subbarao, New Delhi, a resource person presented informative and thought-provoking papers at every paper presentation session with a suggestion of using transcription for particular Mizo language and usage. Apart from him, Mr Rozama Chawngthu and Ms Lalmawipuii Chawngthu; Prof. Jeeni, New Delhi; Mr C. Vanlal Ruaia, Librarian, Government Aizawl College; Dr Lalrindiki T. Fanai, Department of English, Mizoram University; Mr Darchuailova Renthlei, Associate Professor, Government Hrangbana College; Mr C. Chawngkunga, Former Minister, Mizoram; Mr Lalhruaitluanga Ralte, Manager, Synod Press and Dr. Rema Chhakchhuak, Principal, HATIM, Lunglei and Prof. Laltluangliana Khiangte had presented scholarly papers mostly being the content of this book.

### **Initiatives of the Department of Mizo**

The Postgraduate Department of Mizo, opened in 1997 under the NEHU (MC) with a lump-sum grant of 1,600,000 from the Government of Mizoram, occupies seventh position in order of establishment under Mizoram University. From its inception the Department has been under perennial constraints in terms of academic infrastructure. The number of teaching posts still stands below that of sister departments within the

school. The present permanent building complex of the Department has sufficient space for opening of supplementary programme and development of studies in the language and culture of Mizoram.

There are indications that the Ministry of Human Resources Development is open to the studies in diverse ethnic cultures of the country. It is therefore prime time for embarking upon an expansive programme of studies in the life and culture of the people of this state the home of Mizoram University. The full proposal for the starting of Mizo Cultural Studies, as approved by the Academic Council of MZU, was submitted to the MHRD for its approval along with 13<sup>th</sup> Plan proposals.

Being the only Department for postgraduate studies in Mizo, even the syllabi for programmes like, master's degree, MPhil and PhD have to be framed by distinguished scholars of the University as and when need arises. The intake capacity for the first batch of master's degree in Mizo was just eighteen and after five years it has been increased to fifty for every semester. Research scholars (MPhil and PhD) are admitted according to the availability of seats since regular guides permissible as per Ordinance of the University can only be just two or three.

As for the reading materials and publication of books, including preparation of related reference books for learners, the Board of Studies and Experts of the Department made every effort to cater to the needs of the students and researchers. Activities like career guidance and counselling, parents-teachers meet, special lecture, village field trip, visit to monuments and ancient Mizo places of interest have never been neglected by the Department.

Several programmes like, Meet the Author, Poets Meet, Seminars, Workshops, Consultation, Meet the Native Scholar, Story Telling Session, Theatre Festival, Essayist's Ensemble, Symposiums and Book Fairs. had been organized as and when fund is made available. Recent activities showed that the Department has organized a good number Special Birth Centenary Seminars honouring several writers who have attained hundred years like Lalzuithanga, Zairema, C. Rokhuma, R. Zuala and it was held an International Seminar in 2018 to commemorate the Birth Centenary of L. Biakliana, the first Mizo Novelist who wrote his first novel in 1936. Before that, in 2012 there was a big celebration of the Centenary of Mizo Drama as organized by the Mizo Department. The platinum jubilee of

Mizo Novel was also celebrated having a seminar where the papers presented were published by the Department. A National Consultative Seminar on Mizo Language, Prospect of Linguistic Study & Preparation of Glossary of Evaluation Terms was also organized in June 2018.

A “Refereed Quarterly Journal of Language and Literature”, published by the Department from 2012 has been approved by the UGC on 22 June 2017. This has become the only official forum for the dissemination of Mizo language and literature in the country. Right from the start (1997), teachers and students of Mizo Department continue to publish at least two-three books every year and the present head of the Department alone had published more than fifty books on Mizo language and literature. This may be considered as a proof of the zeal and commitment of teachers and students of the Mizo Department.

**Laltluangliana Khiangte**

Editor



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# Index

- 1st Assam Rifles Regiment 13
- abbreviations, use of 38
- academic
  - infrastructure 109
  - use of language 94
- Academic Council of MZU 110
- Acts of Apostles 7-8
- Adi language 79
- adjectival adverbs 23
- Aesops' fables 104
- Aizawl Theological College 39
- alcoholic drink of the Mizo society 39
- alphabet A-AW-B 72
- alphabets/tablets 42
- American Baptist Mission 54
- Anal language 79
- ancient
  - Mizo memorial stones 95
  - mythologies 42
- Angami language 79
- Anglo-Indian script writers 98
- Annual Programme 2006-07 for Implementation of Official Language Act 1963 76
- Ao language 79
- Arpui sent te 72
- Arthington Mission 7
- Arthington, missionaries of 97, 104
- Assyrians 42
- Awithang-pa 10
- Awithangpa Zai 89
- Babylonians 42
- Bandyopadhyay, P.K. 48
- Baptist Church of Mizoram 10
- Baptist Mission 9
- Baptist Missionary Society 55
- barbarous condition 59
- Bawihchhuaka, H.K. 9
- beautiful cultural words 39
- beauty of a natural language in Lushai (Mizo) 59
- Bengali Script 75
- Bharat Adivasi Samman 14
- Biakliana, L. 10-11, 13
- Bible 8, 21, 54-55, 80, 84
  - translation of 7
- Bible Society of India 78
- Biblical principles, remarkable conformity to 48
- Big Bang theory 42
- birch-bark documents 84

- Birth Centenary of L. Biaklana,  
     the first Mizo Novelist 110  
 Bloomfield, Leonard 57  
 book of  
     God 53  
     wisdom 48  
 Book Fairs 110  
 Book of the Year 16  
 Britain and  
     Burma, dispute between 50  
     Foreign Bible Society 7-8  
 British  
     era literature 58  
     missionaries 74  
 Bronze Age 97  
 Buddhist  
     idolatry 53  
     manuscripts 84  
 Burma Lushai Association 11  
  
 Cahill, Michael 57-58, 65  
 census of 2001 78  
 Centenary of Mizo Drama 110  
 Central Kristian Thalai Pawl 12  
 Challiana, Rev. 8  
 Chamber, O.A. 105  
 Chamhlira, B. 75  
 Chawngnhuaia 11  
 Chawngkunga, C. 109  
 Chawngthu, Lalmawipuii 109  
 Chawngthu, P.S. 11-15  
 Chawngthu, Rozama 109  
 Chawngzika 13  
 Chhakchhuak, Rema 109  
 Chhange, Lalremthangi 61  
 Chhuanvawa, C. 15  
*chhimhle/ chhimlei* 86, 88  
*chhimhle* vs *chhimlei*, debate of  
     87  
 Chhuana 11  
 Chhura 72  
 China Inland Mission 54  
 Chittagong Bengali 102  
 Chittagong Hill Tracts 2, 4-6,  
     58-60  
 Christian  
     gospel 49  
     guidebook 10  
     Hymn Book 8  
     literature 8  
         composition of 10  
     love story 12  
 Christianity 45, 53  
 Christmas 12  
 Chuaungo, Lalhmasai 109  
 Chuautea, Rev. 8  
 civilization and culture, develop-  
     ment of 41  
 clear-cut semantics 43  
 collection of handwritten letters 83  
 Colney, Lalzuaia 15  
 composition of Christian literature  
     10  
 concept of script 43  
 Constitution of India 76  
 contemporary Mizo literature 11  
 copper plate 84  
 copy of the lost book 47  
 corrupted pronunciation of Mizo/  
     Lusei 101  
 Crabben, Jan van der 98



- cross-culture communication 54
- Crystal, David 57-58
- cultural
  - behaviour 83
  - wordings 25
- culture and
  - heritage 71-72, 76, 79
  - identity, preservation of our 81
  - our heritage 74
- Cumae* form of the Greek alphabet 98
- Damhauhva 10
- Darchhawna 14-15
- Darnehthanga 55
- Darphawka 55
- debatable
  - language, solution of 83-84
  - vocabularies 85
- debate of *chhimhlei* vs *chhimlei* 87
- Dengchhuana 14
- Devanāgarī 76
- development of
  - a successful orthography 66
  - civilization and culture 41
- development of Mizo
  - drama 13-14
  - language 57, 108
  - literature 9
- dialects of
  - Mizoram 81
  - Mizo tribes 69
- dictionaries of Dzo–English vocabularies 102
- dictionary making 40
- different tribes of
  - Mizoram 69
  - Zohnahthlak, unification of 81
- direct violation of Kenneth Pike’s phonemic principle 65
- dispute between Britain and Burma 50
- Distinguished Playwright Award 14
- Dokhuma, James 11, 14-15
- drinking, evil of 38
- Duhlian, tribe 70
- Dzo–English vocabularies, dictionaries of 102
- earliest
  - known alphabet 58
  - manuscripts of the Mizo language 26
- early history of Mizo writing 57
- Egyptian hieroglyphs 98
- eight Aesop tales 103
- Elder Thanga 10
- English Bible 10
- English, influence of 34
- English-medium schools 71
- Essayist’s Ensemble 110
- essential criteria 66
- ethnic groups of the inhabitants
  - between Myanmar and India 103
- etruscan texts 84
- etymology 102-03
- Euboea 98
- evil of drinking 38
- evolution of Mizo
  - alphabet 98
  - language 26

- literature 3
- expediency of Mizo tongue 90
- expression, propriety of 42
- fall of Roman Empire 98
- Fanai, Lalrindiki T. 109
- first
  - known daily newspaper of Mizoram 9
  - PhD programme in Mizo language 74
- first Mizo
  - fiction 11
  - journal 8
- First Mizo Novelist, Birth Centenary of 71
- five
  - maximums 66
  - vowels 57, 61
- folklore 109
- folk tales 2, 8, 98
  - of Mizo 97
- forefathers of the Mizos 2
- Fraser, James Outram 54
- Gangte dialect 70
- Garo language 79
- Gauhati University 74
- Giles, Herbert Allen 5, 60
- God
  - book of 53
  - Gwi'sha, messenger of 46
  - kingdom of 54
  - laws of 46
  - lost book of 48
- God-gifted sounds 43
- Gospel according to St.
  - John 7
  - Luke 7-8
  - Mark 54
  - Matthew 52
- grammar 97
  - of the Lushai language 5, 59
  - structure 99
- grammatic pattern 43
- grammatical
  - inflections 97
  - patterns 19
- graphization 65
- Great Prophet Mohammad 42
- Greek alphabet 98
- growth of Mizo literature 15
- handwritten
  - letters, collection of 83
  - word 41, 43
- Hanson 55
- Hawla, V. 10
- headhunters 59
- headhunting 47
- hieroglyphics 42
- hieroglyphs 39, 97
- Hill, Macdonald 104
- Hindi, status of 76
- historical
  - account of Mizo migration 103
  - linguistics 26
- history of Mizo
  - literature 104
  - writing 57
- Hluna, J.V. 55
- Hmar dialect 79

- Hmar Hla Do 95
- Horace 95
- Hrawva 10
- hunter killing a wild animal, portraits of 95
- Hunter, Willian 6, 61
- Hunterian system 3  
     of orthography 3, 61  
     of transliteration 66
- Hunterian transliteration 5-6  
     system 60
- hunting, Mizo culture of 95
- ICFAI University Mizoram 74
- IGNCA 1, 107-08
- inclusion of Mizo  
     as an optional paper in all competitive examinations 78  
     language in the VIIIth Schedule 81  
     subject in higher education 74
- Indo-Aryan 28
- influence of English 34
- intonation 19
- introduction of school education 97
- invention of the typewriter 84
- Jesus Christ about the Prodigal Son, parable of 7
- Jones, D.E. 8, 55
- Jones, Maric 65
- Jones, William 5-6, 60, 98
- Jones's system of transliteration 60
- Jonesian transliteration 6
- Joute tribe 70
- Judson, Adoniram 51-52
- Kamlala, R.L. 10, 89
- kammavaca* 84
- Kaphleia 10-11, 14
- Karai Kasang 53
- Karen  
     missionaries 54  
     sage 51  
     tradition 50
- Kenneth Pike's phonemic principle, direct violation of 65
- Khasi  
     Christians 8  
     tradition 48
- Khawlkungi, Siamkima 12, 14-15
- Khiangte, Laltluangliana 11, 14-15, 65, 103, 107-109
- Khiangte, Rokunga 11
- Khuma, C. 11
- kingdom of God 54
- Kuki  
     dialect 79  
     language 79  
     tribe 70
- Kuki-Chin languages 28
- Kut, Chapchar 69
- Lahu Christians 47
- Lai dialect 79
- Laizawna, C. 12, 14
- Laizo dialect 79
- Lalbiakliana, H.K.R. 14
- Lalhluna, R.K. 15
- Lalhmuaka 13-14

- Lalhriata 12  
 Lalkailuia 13  
 Lallungmuana, H. 12, 108  
 Lalmama 11, 13  
 Lalinghinglova, Rev. 54, 109  
 Lalngurliani, H. 12  
 Lalremruati, Dr Ruth 107  
 Lalremsiama 55  
 Lalrinchhunga, M.C. 79  
 Lalsangzuala 14  
 Lalsiama, H. 14  
 Laltanpuia 10  
 Lalthangliana, B. 15, 55  
 Lal Thanhawla 108  
 Lalvunga, K.C. 11-12, 15  
 Lalzuahliana 11  
 Lalzuithanga 10-11, 13, 110  
 language  
     academic use of 94  
     change 31  
     in oral-syndrome 43  
     use 40  
 language of  
     manuscript is parochial 42  
     music is universal 42  
     telegraphy 44  
 Laos–Cambodia areas 26  
 laws of God 46  
 Lewin, Thomas Herbert 2-5, 57-58, 60, 66, 101-02  
 Liandala 11  
 Liangkhai 73  
 Liangkhaia, Pastor 9  
 Liangkhaia, Rev. 10, 15  
 Liankhuma 9  
 Liansailova 14  
 literary conferences, non-native academicians in 81  
 Lisu long-lost book of God 54  
 logogram  
     pronunciation guides for 97  
     system of 101  
 Lord Christ 42  
 Lorrain, James Herbert 6-8, 55, 57, 60-61, 63, 65, 104  
 Lorrain–Savidge  
     alphabet 6  
     Mizo alphabet 63, 66  
 loss of palatalization of the sibilant 27  
 lost book/script 45, 52  
     of God 48  
         return of 52  
         tradition of 49  
     return of 45  
     story of 45  
 LTL Library & Archives 107  
 Lusei language 71  
 Lushai  
     beauty of a natural language in 59  
     dialect 4, 58-59  
     language 2, 4, 7, 58-59, 102  
         grammar of 5, 59  
         syntactic and semantic of 102  
 Lushai Popular Songs 103  
 Lushais (Mizos) 6, 60  
 Lushai Student Association 9  
 MacLeish, Alexander 53  
*Mahābhārata* 80  
 Malsawma, Ch. 89  
 Malsawma, J. 14-15, 108

- Mandarin Chinese, Pinyin Roman-  
     ization of 5, 60  
 Manipur University 74  
 Manipuri language 79  
 Manu 42  
 manuscript collection 83  
 manuscript is  
     not God-given 41  
     orthographical 42  
     parochial, language of 42  
 manuscript of Vankhama 86  
 manuscriptology 1  
 manuscripts are a derivation of  
     information 95  
 Mara dialect 79  
 massive development of Mizo  
     literature 15  
 maximum representation of speech  
     66  
 Mayek, Meitei 75  
 McCabe, R.B. 73  
 Meet the Author 110  
 Meet the Native Scholar 110  
 messenger of God Gwi'sha 46  
 Messenger of His "Benevolent" 42  
 MHIP 77  
 Middle Ages 84  
 MILLTA 77  
 Ministry of Human Resources  
     Development 110  
 Missing language 79  
 missionaries 45, 97  
     of Arthington 97, 104  
 Mission Veng 13  
 misuse of *zu* 39
- Mizo  
     as an optional paper in all com-  
     petitive examinations, inclusion  
     of 78  
     drama 12  
         development of 13-14  
     ethnic groups 69  
     folk tales 97  
     grammar 25, 80  
     manuscripts 1, 3, 25, 108  
     migration, historical account of  
         103  
     old usage of 33  
     orthography 7, 61, 65-66  
     people, songs as well as dances  
         of 71  
     phonological inventory 66  
     prose work 14  
     script 25  
     six songs of 103  
     society, alcoholic drink of 39  
     spelling 57  
         reform of 57  
         system 65  
     subject in higher education, inclu-  
         sion of 74  
     tongue, expediency of 90  
     tribes 98  
         dialects of 69  
     various tribes of 70  
     vocal chord of tonal language 99  
 Mizo Academy Award 15  
 Mizo Academy of Letters 9, 15-  
     16, 77, 108  
 Mizo alphabet 1, 3, 65, 97, 100  
     and orthography of language 66  
 Mizo alphabets 57, 61  
     evolution of 98  
     full form of 2  
     refinement of 57  
 Mizo culture of

- hunting 95
  - various tribes 69
- Mizo language 2, 71-76, 78-81, 83, 87, 93, 104, 111
  - construction 22
  - development of 57, 108
  - earliest manuscripts of 26
  - evolution of 26
  - first PhD programme in 74
  - in the VIIIth Schedule, inclusion of 81
  - into writing, reduction of 59
  - is different, use of an adverb in 19
  - popularization of 69
  - prospect of 109
  - reducing the writing of 97
  - script writers of 105
  - sense of 71
  - study of 5, 59, 99
  - to writing, reduction of 60
  - unique qualities of 19
  - uniqueness of 21-23
- Mizo language and
  - its grammar 105
  - literature 111
- Mizo literature 2, 8, 12, 14, 16, 80
  - and language, systematic development of 108
  - development of 9
  - evolution of 3, 97
  - growth of 15
  - history of 104
  - massive development of 15
- Mizo Literature Festival 71
- Mizo-medium schools 71
- Mizo National Front 73
- Mizo Novel 111
- Mizoram
  - dialects of 81
  - different tribes of 69
  - first known daily newspaper of 9
  - NGOs of 77-78
  - studies in the language and culture of 110
  - various tribes of 70
- Mizoram Gazette 73
- Mizoram Official Language Act 1974 73, 81
- Mizoram People's Conference and Zoram Nationalist Party 77
- Mizoram Presbyterian Church 10
- Mizoram Publication Board Bill 16
- Mizoram University 74-76, 107-10
- Mizo Union 72
- Mizo Union Party 9
- Mizo writing
  - early history of 57
  - history of 57
- Mizos, forefathers of 2
- mono-syllabic language 22
- Mooney, Damien 65
- moral content 12
- morphology 41-42
- morphophonemical symbols 43
- morphophonemics 43
- Mother Nature 41
- mother tongue, popularization and survival of 81
- MUP 77
- music is universal, language of 42
- Muslims 42
- MWA 77
- Myanmar and India, ethnic groups of inhabitants between 103

- Naidu, Venkaiah 71  
 nasal consonant 65  
 National Consultative Seminar on Mizo Language 111  
 National Mission for Manuscript 1, 107-08  
 National Phonetic Alphabet 5, 60  
 National Seminar on Writing in Mizo Manuscripts 107  
 national system of romanization in India 5, 60  
 nature of the pronunciation 25  
 NEHU 74, 109  
 New Testament 54  
 NGOs of Mizoram 77-78  
 Ningsang, Hpan Wa 52  
 non-native  
     academicians in literary conferences 81  
     Mizo sounds in the Mizo alphabet 65  
 North Cachar Hills 26  
 Nuchhungi 11, 15  
  
 Official Language Act 69  
 Old Testament 42  
 old usage of Mizo 33  
 oppressive Chinese rule 54  
 oriental languages 101  
 orthography 3, 44, 57, 102  
     development 65  
  
 Pachhunga University College 65  
 Padma Award 15  
 Padma Shri Award 13, 15  
  
 Paite dialect 79  
 palaeography 1, 42, 84  
 palatalization of the sibilant, loss of 27  
 palm-leaf manuscript 84  
 parable of Jesus Christ about the Prodigal Son 7  
 Parteous 7  
 parts of speech 25  
 Pasal̃tha Hla Do 95  
 Pasena, Ch. 13  
 Patea 89  
 phoenician was the first major phenomenic script 98  
 phonetics 41, 43  
 phonological properties 57  
     of the twenty-five Mizo alphabets 57  
 phonologically accurate information 66  
 phonology 41-42  
 Pinyin Romanization of Mandarin Chinese 5, 60  
 poetical word 83  
 poetic licence 83, 95  
 poets' meet 79, 81  
 Poets Meet 110  
 popularization  
     and survival of our mother tongue 81  
     Mizo language 69, 80  
 portraits of hunter killing a wild animal 95  
 practical orthography 65  
 Presbyterian Church of Mizoram 10

- preservation of our culture and identity 81  
 President of India 15, 76  
 printing mechanism 44  
 pronunciation  
     guides for logograms 97  
     nature of 25  
 prophetic and highly influential dream 55  
 Prophet Moses 42  
 propriety of expression 42  
 prospect of Mizo language 109  
 Pu Buanga 2, 8  
 Pu Chan 47-48  
 Puja Variety Show 13  
  
 Quran 80  
  
 Ralte dialect 70, 79  
 Ralte, Laingurauva 93  
     manuscript of 91  
 Ralte, Lalengmawia 12  
 Ralte, Lalhruaitluanga 55, 63, 66, 109  
*Rāmāyaṇa* 80  
 Rastriya Lok Bhasha Samman 14  
 recording/scribing 42  
 reduction of the Mizo language into writing 59-60, 97  
 refinement of Mizo alphabets 57  
 reform of Mizo spelling 57  
 remarkable conformity to Biblical principles 48  
 Remtluanga, C. 12  
 Renthlei, Darchuailova 109  
  
 return of the lost book 45, 52  
 Rice, Keren 57-58, 65  
 Richardson, Don 46-49, 51-53, 55  
 Rokhuma, C. 110  
 Rokima, F. 11  
 Rokunga 11  
 Rolands, Edwin 63  
 Romani 10  
 Roman Empire, fall of 98  
 Roman script 75-76, 99  
 romanization in India, national system of 5, 60  
 Romawia, R. 77  
 Rover Scout 9  
 Rowlands, Edwin 8, 10  
 Ruaia, C. Vanlal 109  
 Rynngnga, B. 48  
  
 sacred book, traditions of 55  
 Saiawi, Lalhmingliana 12  
 Saibela, K. 14  
 Saihnuna 89  
 Sailo, Buangi 15  
 Sailo, L.Z. 11-12, 15  
 Sailo, Lalsangzuali 15  
 Sailo, Lalthangfala 11, 13, 15  
 Salvation Army 9  
 salvation of Jesus, seed of 55  
 Sapupa 2, 8  
*sap vakvai* 2  
 Savidge, Frederick William 3, 6-8, 55, 57, 60-61, 104  
 school education, introduction of 97



- script
  - concept of 43
  - is morphological 42
  - writers of Mizo language 105
- seed of salvation of Jesus 55
- semantics and syllables in a grammatical system 42
- semi-savage tribe 59
- sense of Mizo language 71
- sentence constructions 19
- sequentology 43
- Shaha, Brojo Nath 2-5, 59-60, 66, 97, 102-04
- Shakespear, J. 9
- Siamliana, L. 10
- sign languages 39
- six songs of Mizo 103
- Smalley, William A. 66
- soft metallic sheets 84
- solution of
  - debatable language 83-84
  - debate 85
- songs as well as dances of the Mizo people 71
- Soppit, C.A. 3, 105
- Special Birth Centenary Seminars 110
- speech
  - maximum representation of 66
  - parts of 25
- spelling system 66
- spirit-appeasement 47
- standard usages and style of the language 38
- standardization 40
- standardized typographic and formatting rules 84
- status of Hindi 76
- stenography 44
- story of a lost book/script 45
- Story Telling Session 110
- studies in the language and culture of Mizoram 110
- study of Mizo language 5, 59, 99
- style of writing 38
- Subbarao, K.V. 109
- successful orthography, development of 66
- Sumerians 42
- sun-dried animal skin 55
- Supreme Being 48
- symbols, systems of 57
- Symes, Lieutenant Colonel Michael 50
- syntactic and semantic of Lushai language 102
- syntaxology 43
- system of
  - logogram 101
  - symbols 57
  - transliteration 5
- systematic development of Mizo literature and language 108
- Tarmita (J. Shakespear) 7
- TB family language speakers 79
- Tegenfeldt, Herman G. 55
- telegraphy, language of 44
- textbook preparation 40
- Thado dialect 79
- thalassocracy 98

- Thanga 55, 73
- Thangkhuma, F. 89-90, 92-93
- Thangliana 2
- Thangzama, V. 15
- Thanhlira, R. 73
- Thanmawia, R.L. 11, 15
- Theatre Festival 110
- The Pilgrim's Progress* 8
- thirty-two consonants 57, 61
- three  
     popular Mizo stories 4, 59  
     stages of Mizo literature 97
- Thuamluaia, C. 14
- Thu Hla hril kutpui 71
- Tibeto-Burman languages 69, 80
- tlang romei* 88
- Tom 54
- tonal  
     adaptation of Mizo language 97  
     language 21
- tradition of  
     a sacred book 55  
     lost book of God 49
- translation  
     is alphabetical-based 44  
     of the Bible 7
- transliteration  
     is morphophonemics based 44  
     marks 44  
     symbols 43  
     system of 5
- tribal peoples 49
- Tripura University 74
- twenty-five Mizo alphabets, phonological properties of 57
- typewriter, invention of 84
- UGC 111
- UNESCO 72
- unification of the different tribes of Zohnahthlak 81
- Union Territory 73
- unique qualities of the Mizo language 19
- uniqueness of Mizo language 21-23
- United Mizo Freedom Organization 9, 72
- University of Calcutta 74
- use of  
     abbreviations 38  
     an adverb in Mizo language is different 19
- Vaiphei  
     tribe 70  
     dialect 79
- Vankhama 87-89, 92, 94  
     manuscript of 86
- Vanhlupuii, Pi 85
- Vanlawma, R. 15
- Vansanga, C. 89
- various tribes  
     Mizo cultures of 69  
     of Mizo/Lusei 70  
     of Mizoram 70
- Veng, Thakthing 12
- VIIIth Schedule of the Indian Constitution 69, 75-78, 109
- Wade-Giles Romanization 6, 60
- Wade, Thomas Francis 5, 60
- Ward, W. 105

- ways of Y'wa 51
- Welsh
  - missionaries 8
  - missionary 55
- Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission 56
- Welsh Presbyterian Church 56
- Western alphabets 58
- white
  - men bringing their books 55
  - missionary with the Bible 45
- white brother 47, 50-51
  - with a book of the true God 53
- white faced teacher 54
- Williams, Rev. William 55
- Wilson, Dr 5
- Wilson's system of transliteration 60
- Winchester, Mary 4, 58
- wisdom, book of 48
- Wordsworth, William 87
- Writers Association's Ruby Jubilee Celebration Function 93
- writing, style of 38
- written script of the Mizos 55
- Wyman, Elnore 54
- Young and Karen missionaries 46
- Young Mizo Association 77-78
- Y'wa 50-51
  - ways of 51
- Young, Marcus 48
- Young, Vincent 48
- Young, William Marcus 46-47
- Zairema 15, 110
- Zau people 5
- Zikpuii-pa 14
- Zofa, Lalchhanhima 79
- Zofate Inpumkhatna 69
- Zomi tribe 70
- Zosapthara 73
- zu, misuse of 39
- Zuala, R. 110

