## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the thesis titled "**Meaning-Making of Foodways: A Study of Food in Mizo Society**" submitted to Tezpur University in part fulfilment for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology under the School of Humanities and Social Sciences is an original work of research carried out by me. It has not been submitted in any form or part for any diploma or degree of any other institution, including this University.

Cathenine

**Date**: 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2024 **Place**: Tezpur, India

(Catherine Lalnuntluangi) Regn. No.: TZ201079 of 2019



तेजपुर विश्वविद्यालय/ TEZPUR UNIVERSITY (संसद के अधिनियम द्वारा स्थापित केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय) (NAAC Accredited A<sup>+</sup>) A Central University established by an Act of Parliament तेजपुर-784028 :: असम/ TEZPUR - 784028 :: ASSAM

Amiya Kumar Das Professor and Head Department of Sociology **Mobile: +91 9864565376** Ph: +91-3712-27-5805 E-mail: amiyadas@tezu.ernet.in

## **CERTIFICATE OF THE SUPERVISORS**

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "Meaning-Making of Foodways: A Study of Food in Mizo Society" submitted to the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tezpur University in part fulfilment for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology is a record of research work carried out by Ms. Catherine Lalnuntluangi under my supervision and guidance.

All help received by her from various sources have been duly acknowledged.

No part of this thesis has been submitted elsewhere for award of any other degree.

Date: 31st December, 2024

Place: Tezpur

Supervisor: **Amiya Kumar Das** Professor & Head Department of Sociology School of Humanities and Social Science Tezpur University, Assam

Co-Supervisor: **Dr. Dev Nath Pathak** Associate Professor & Chairperson Department of Sociology Faculty of Social Sciences South Asian University, New Delhi

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Above all else, I thank the Almighty God for His countless blessings and guidance throughout my academic endeavours. His grace and mercy have given me the opportunity to embrace a precious chapter in life, despite my shortcomings and unworthiness. Reflecting on the journey of this research, it is evident that His divine plan and perfect timing have brought me to this point, and for that, I am endlessly grateful.

I express my sincere gratitude to my doctoral supervisor, Prof. Amiya Kumar Das, for his patience, understanding and guidance throughout my research journey. His invaluable support, expertise, and knowledge have been instrumental in shaping this work. I am deeply indebted to him not only for his academic mentorship but also for his assistance with administrative matters and his empathy and understanding of my shortcomings and difficulties.

I am truly thankful to my Co-supervisor, Dr. Dev Nath Pathak, South Asian University, for his guidance and support. Despite the physical distance and infrequent meetings, his steadfast support and availability have been a constant source of motivation for me.

I am also grateful to the members of my doctoral committee. I sincerely thank Dr. A.S. Shimreiwung for offering insightful feedback and for helping me refine some of the key arguments in my work. I also thank Dr. Parasmoni Dutta for his feedback and suggestions during the initial stages of my work and for supporting me until the very end.

My sincere thanks go to the University for giving me the opportunity to pursue this research and for providing the essential resources and funding that made this work possible. I am also thankful to Dr. Ambedkar Centre of Excellence, Tezpur University, especially Prof. Kedilezo Kikhi, for giving me the chance to work as a Research Investigator on the project funded by the Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India, which provided both financial support and invaluable research experience.

I am also genuinely thankful to the faculty members and fellow research scholars of the Department of Sociology, Tezpur University, for their academic support. The insightful comments, constructive feedback, and engaging discussions during the progress report seminars each semester have significantly contributed to the development of my work.

I am truly grateful to all the informants and individuals I encountered during my fieldwork. I extend my heartfelt thanks for their time, patience, and generosity in sharing their knowledge

and delicious food with me. Their warmth and insights into Mizo foodways have been invaluable to this research.

I extend my gratitude to my seniors from the University of Hyderabad, who have played a significant role in shaping my intellectual outlook and have always been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement to me. I also thank the faculty from the Department of Sociology, Mizoram University, for encouraging me to embark on this research journey.

I sincerely thank my friends and batchmates, Dr. Pelesano and Dr. Silpi Sikha Dowerah, for their support, friendship, and encouragement, which motivated me to persevere through my research journey. Similarly, I would like to express my gratitude to my fellow research scholars under the same supervisor, particularly Ahana Choudhury, Dr. Denim Deka, and Dr. Mridusmita Dutta, for their academic support.

Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to my friends who have been a constant support system in this research journey and from whom I have learned so much. I want to especially mention Dr. Vanlal Chhanchhuahi (Tekawki), my soul sister and prayer partner, along with Ribha Arabella Shabong, for their unwavering emotional and spiritual support, which sustained me through the challenging moments. I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to my spiritual mentor, Ms. Lalremsangi, for her wise counsel and constant prayers, which have guided and uplifted me along the way. I am also grateful to my friends from the EU fellowship and the women's hostel prayer cell for their moral and prayer support throughout my research journey. My appreciation goes to Esther Ramdinmawii and my best friend, Vered Lalrinpuii, not only for their friendship but also for the valuable assistance they provided in my work, from which I have greatly benefited. I also thank my dear friends Lalhlenpui (Mimi), Lallawmzuali Sailo, Sylvia Lalrinpuii, and Dr. Vansanglura for their encouragement and cherished friendship. I would also like to thank Christopher Lallawmpuia Pachuau for his unwavering support, for sending me delicious food, and for patiently standing by my side throughout the completion of this work.

My family has been my pillar of strength, and I am deeply grateful for their love, patience, and unwavering belief in me. Through their emotional and financial support, they stood by me even in the toughest of times, never asking me to give up and continually lifting me with their prayers and encouragement. To my father, C. Lalthlamuana, my mother, Lalruatpuii, my brother, C. Lalnunpuia, my sister, Dr. Cory Lalbiakzuali and her family, as well as my precious nieces, Selene and Faith – I owe everything to you. Thank you for believing in me, even when I

struggled to believe in myself. This thesis is not just my work but a testament to their steadfast support and sacrifices.

Lastly, I would also like to dedicate this work to my late grandfather, Pu Lalmakthanga, whose memory and wisdom continue to inspire me.

Ka lawm e (Thank you).

## List of Figures

Figure 0.1 Map of Mizoram with neighbouring states and countries. (Prepared by D	r. Cory
Lalbiakzuali)	xviiii
Figure 2.1 Some traditional utensils displayed at the Mizoram State Museum (Photos ta the scholar)	aken by 54
Figure 3.1 Traditional salt container "Chibur" displayed at the Mizoram State Museum ( taken by the Scholar)	(Photos 91
Figure 4.1 Arsa sawhchiar (Chicken porridge) with onion chutney (Photo taken by the s	cholar) 117
Figure 4.2 Behlawi buhbai (long bean leaves porridge) (Photo taken by the scholar)	118
Figure 4.3 Arsa buhchiar (Chicken porridge with dried roselle leaves) (Photo taken scholar)	by the 118
Figure 4.4 <i>Maian bai</i> (pumpkin leaves bai with snake gourd and szechuan pepper leaf) taken by a respondent)	(Photo 120
Figure 4.5 Puii's Cookbook (Photo taken by the respondent)	123
Figure 4.6 Puii's saisu bai (plaintain pith) (Photo taken by the respondent)	124
Figure 4.7 Anhling tlak (Boiled black nightshade leaf) (Photo taken by the scholar)	127
Figure 4.8 Antam tlak (Boiled mustard leaf) (Photo taken by the scholar)	127
Figure 4.9 Boiled smoked pork with mustard leaves (Photo taken by the scholar)	130
Figure 4.10 Zo ar chhum (Boiled country chicken) (Photo taken by a respondent)	131
Figure 4.11 "Vawk kawchhung" - Pork offal prepared for a feast (Photo taken by a respo	ondent) 134
Figure 4.12 Beef innards for <i>Sachek</i> (Photo taken by a respondent)	136
Figure 4.13 Sachek prepared by Diki (Photo taken by the respondent)	136

Figure 4.14 Zawngtah bâwl (Stink beans with Mizo bird's eye chilli and fermented pork fat)		
(Photo taken by a respondent) 138		
Figure 4.15 A typical Mizo dinner (Photo taken by a respondent) 139		
Figure 5.1 "Saum bur" displayed in the Mizoram State Museum (Photo taken by the scholar)		
145		
Figure 5.2 Refrigerated Saum in a glass jar (Photos taken by the scholar)147		
Figure 5.3 Steps of fermenting soyabean by Pu Kiamlova (Photos taken by the scholar) 157		
Figure 5.4 Pi Khumteii checking her smoked pork (Photo taken by the scholar) 158		
Figure 5.5 Two varieties of smoked dried fish (Photos taken by the scholar) 159		
Figure 5.6 A variety of packaged dried vegetables available at the roadside market in Aizawl.		
(Photos taken by the scholar) 161		
Figure 5.7 A bowl of Sanpiau at a restaurant in Zokhawthar (Photo taken by a respondent)	1	
165		
Figure 5.8 <i>Tungrung</i> prepared by Diki (Photo taken by the respondent) 167		
Figure 5.9 Vaipaden prepared by Pi Mamuani (Photo taken by the scholar)169		
Figure 6.1 Mithun meat prepared by male "fatu" members (Photo taken by the scholar) 184		
Figure 6.2 Cutting mithun tripes and chillerlings etc. for Sachek (Photo taken by the scholar)		
184		
Figure 6.3 Fried Chhangban, black tea and kurtai (jaggery) (Photo taken by the scholar) 189		
Figure 6.4 Republic Veng Presbyterian Church. Photo retrieved from	L	
https://mizoramsynod.org/gallery/album/98 192		
Figure 6.5 Men collecting pigs for Christmas feast (Photo taken by a respondent)193		
Figure 6.6 Children feast before adults inside the Kohhran Hall (Photo taken by the scholar)		
196		
Figure 6.7 Church members queuing near the food counters (Photo taken by the scholar) 196		

Figure 6.8 The <i>fatu</i> members eating after serving all the feast attendees (Photo taken b scholar)	by the 197
Figure 6.9 Nupuii Catering at Aijal Club (Photo taken by a respondent)	201
Figure 6.10 One of the counters in a Christmas feast 2022 (Photo taken by the scholar)	203
Figure 6.11 Seating arrangements for senior members above 70 y/o. (Photo taken b scholar)	by the 204
Figure 6.12 Some of the female <i>fatu</i> members (Photo taken by the scholar)	206
Figure 6.13 A boy learning to cut meat among adults (Photo taken by a respondent)	207
Figure 6.14 Mizo feast spread on banana leaf (Photo taken by a respondent)	208
Figure 6.15 Traditional Mizo feasting style at Khatla Presbyterian Church, Aizawl. (taken by a respondent)	Photo 208
Figure 6.16 Packaged meat for the sick (Photo taken by the scholar)	209



Figure 0.1 Map of Mizoram with neighbouring states and countries. (Prepared by Dr. Cory Lalbiakzuali)