

306
HMA

T294

**ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE EXPRESSIVE BEHAVIOURS
OF THE HMARS OF ASSAM**

**A thesis submitted in part fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

Ms. Lalṭhakim Hmar
Registration No.010 of 2012



DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Tezpur University
Naapam-784028

November - 2013

INDIA

**ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE EXPRESSIVE BEHAVIOURS
OF THE HMARS OF ASSAM**

**A thesis submitted in part fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

Ms. Lalþhakim Hmar
Registration No.010 of 2012



DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Tezpur University

Naapam-784028

November - 2013

INDIA

ABSTRACT

The participation of women folks in the socio-cultural life of a community with a patriarchal form of social set-up is often judged within the context of patriarchal culture and its norms. Their role and identity have been defined in terms of men and when compared to men, they are often assigned a role subordinate to their male counterparts. This biased tradition of representation robs women of their complete view of the thought, feelings and their unified cultural behaviour. In the scholarly writings of such male transmitters who often overlook or ignore the differentiable cultural performances that had flourished within the domain of women, little is known about women's cultural performances except in being mothers, wives, daughters and sisters. And this is especially true of the Hmar women of Assam on which no scholarly research has ever been published either by male or female scholars. The study originates from the hypothesis that there exists a unified culture called, women's culture. The term 'culture' refers to the ways of behaving of a particular set of individuals in a particular situation with certain characteristic behaviours meaningful and relevant to the operation of their particular cultural tradition.

In this study, the term 'expressive behaviours' refers to those aspects of culturally-determined verbal and non-verbal behaviours which expressedly manifest the culture of the Hmar tribe, one of the emerging communities of Assam in particular, and North East, in general. The 'role of women in the expressive behaviours' of the tribe refers to the meaningful and relevant cultural performances and behaviours that are characteristically female-oriented in the cultural tradition of the Hmar. The study attempts to look mainly into the different expressive forms of the Hmar society where women's distinct traditional role gets reflected. The research looks at the Hmar women as a distinctive and identifiable group with their own distinguishable culture. It attempts to demonstrate the unified culture of women within the larger Hmar ethnic group. By focusing on the different expressive genres that flourish especially within the domain of women, the study aims to try to situate women in their rightful traditional value. While focusing on the women's expressive

behavioural aspects, the study also touches upon women's socialization in the ethnic Hmar society.

The study includes all folklore and folk life genres that flourish within the expressive domain of the gendered Hmar women. It traces and deals with their behavioural aspects, their projections of themselves – their essence, feelings, their artistic creativity, beliefs, experiences, their innermost recesses and temper, in one word, their identity and selfhood – as reflected in the different folklore and folk life categories like Verbal Art, Social Folk Customs, Folk Performing Arts and Material Culture. The geographical area of the study is delimited to the North Cachar Hills district and Barak Valley zone of Southern Assam comprising Hailakandi, Karimganj and Cachar districts where a substantial population of Hmars lives. The research universe consists of about one hundred sixty Hmar villages.

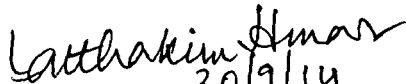
The objective of my study is to present a comprehensive and detailed picture of the traditional life of the Hmar women; their experience and their expressions of this experience in both verbal and non-verbal forms of expressions within their cultural context. In focusing on their expressive behaviours, the study has, by employing theoretical perspective, explored the tribe's folklore and folk life, the different genres and sub-genres previously downplayed or overlooked by scholars in the production of knowledge pertaining to the tribe. The aim of the study is basically to provide a perspective that relies on the Hmar women's traditional role and their cultural experiences and expressions.

In order to define the research topic and guide me through the research work, I have surveyed two forms of literature: folklore and folk life of the Hmars and Gender theories pertaining to my research work. In my literature survey of the tribe's folklore, I have come across a few number of books that give a general account of the tribe and one or two that focus on the oral traditions of the tribe. The theoretical foundation of the work is derived from a host of feminists' writers. The study incorporates feminists' claim that sexual difference provides the foundation for women's culture.

In the preparation and compilation of the work, two ways of data collection have been involved: data collecting through fieldwork and through deskwork. The work is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1, which is an introductory chapter, unfolds important information about the title of the thesis, the different genres included in the ambit of the studies, the position of the Hmars in the ethnic profile of Assam, the social position of the Hmar women and the methodology used in processing and compiling the work. Chapter 2 deals with the verbal art or the expressive literature part of folklore items which are “spoken, sung and voiced forms of traditional utterances”. It focuses mainly on the oral part of the Hmar women. Chapter 3, dealing with the social folk customs sector of folk life studies, includes the different social customs and ritualistic observances performed at the time of birth, puberty, marriage and death, generally known as ‘rites of passage’. It also highlights the rituals and customs associated with traditional festivals, indigenous modes of worship, folk medication and, hunting and agricultural customs of the tribe. Chapter 4 deals with the aspects of performing folk arts. It focuses basically on two performing genres of the tribe- musical instruments and folk dance. The Hmars have different kinds of musical instruments and dance forms performed on different ceremonies and occasions representing the sophisticated musical orchestra and the illustrating dance forms of the tribe. Chapter 5 deals with the physical objects, artifacts and any other concrete things created by the Hmars for the satisfaction of their social and cultural needs. Chapter 6 is basically the findings of the research, the author’s observations and summarization of the work. It reflects on dialectics of representation as manifested in representation of women in prose narratives and in folk-proverbs and ends with the author’s observation of the value of the Hmar women folks within their cultural context.

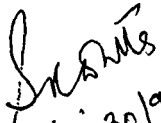
Declaration

I do hereby declare that the thesis titled, *Role of Women in the Expressive Behaviours of the Hmars of Assam* submitted by me to Tezpur University in part fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Cultural Studies under School of Humanities and Social Sciences, is my own and that it has not been submitted to any university including Tezpur University for any degree or diploma.


(Ms. Lalthakim Hmar)
30/9/14

Candidate

Registration No. 010 of 2012.


30/9/14

Dr. Sunil Kumar Dutta

Supervisor.



Dr. Debarshi Prasad Nath

Head, Department of Cultural Studies,

Tezpur University, Tezpur.



DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL STUDIES
TEZPUR UNIVERSITY
NAAPAM, TEZPUR-784028
ASSAM

DR. SUNIL KUMAR DUTTA

Professor, Department of Cultural Studies

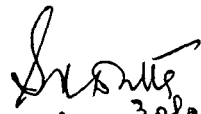
This is to certify that the thesis entitled, *Role of Women in the Expressive Behaviours of the Hmars of Assam* submitted to the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tezpur University in part fulfillment for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Studies is a record of research work carried out by Ms. Lalthakim Hmar 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: 30.9.2014

Place: Tezpur.


30/09/2014

Dr. Sunil Kumar Dutta

Supervisor

Designation: Professor

Department: Cultural Studies

School: Humanities and Social Sciences.

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to see my labour on the present work finally seeing the light of the day. In the long hazardous path trodden towards the final compilation of this work, I cannot but be fully aware of the several Daniels and Samaritans who manifested in different forms.

At the outset, I wholeheartedly acknowledge and express my sincere gratitude to my employer, the honourable Registrar, the honourable Vice Chancellor, the Executive Council of Assam University, Silchar for providing me a No Objection Certificate at the first step and further sanctioning me one year Study Leave to enable me pursue and complete my Ph D work in other University. I am thankful to the Head, Department of English, Assam University, Silchar for being kind in forwarding my application for the same. Equally thankful I am to Tezpur University- the honourable Registrar, the honourable Vice Chancellor and the Department of Cultural Studies for allowing me to pursue Ph D work in their University and, all the helpful faculty and office staff of Department of Cultural Studies including the Tezpur University Central Library staff for guiding me in all the necessary steps towards materialization of the abstract idea into this concrete form.

The academician who first instilled in me the idea to work on one of the ethnic groups of North East India with a very thought-provoking parable, "to know local people closer helps in knowing how to know foreign people", was (Late) Dr Parag Moni Sarma. He not only sowed in me the idea, he guided me with his scholarly knowledge and wisdom through years of my research till cold hand of death cruelly snatched him away on the 28/04/2012. Today, nothing more do I desire than (Late) Dr Parag Moni Sarma to be in a position to see the materialization of his suggested idea into a Ph D thesis. Sir, I am extremely grateful to you and, I wish you listen to and acknowledge my thanks-uttering voice from your celestial abode. Expressing my gratitude to my former guide, in no way, reduces my thanks to my present guide, Dr Sunil Kumar Dutta, to a lower rung. I am equally thankful to him for supervising me and enriching my work with his timely sound suggestion and advice I received each time I needed.

A group of Samaritans manifested in the form of informants whose names I have listed and attached at the end of the thesis. I, all alone, could have never come out with this final shape without their untiring contribution. They provided me with many important pieces of information on the expressive behaviours of the tribe which are gradually vanishing away from this planet due to the corroding effects of modern factors. They constitute the base from where the work blooms and develops into a Ph D thesis. I am extremely thankful to them all.

I owe special mention of names of Dr Vanlalthuanga Bapui, Dr Rev Hrirokhum Thiek, Dr Lal Dena, Dr L Ruoivel Pangamate, Sri L Keivom, Sri L Chawngtho, Sri S N Ngurte who, with their experienced wisdom, enriched my work and, Mr Sumneikung Thiek for his valuable assistance in the photo collection work

I am extremely thankful to Sri L Chawngtho Hmar and his comrades for having prepared and released a documentary on *Sikpui Lâмна Hla* (Sikpui Festival Song) in an mp3 format in 2013 Through the disc, one can joyfully re-live the past and re-visit the culture that was endowed with rich variegated folk songs I am equally grateful to Sinlung Hills Development Council, Mizoram for releasing a well-framed documentary in 2012 on Hmar Tribe titled *Sinlung, A Documentary On Hmar Tribe* This disc in particular, exposes the several discontinued cultural conventions of the tribe including some folk dance forms and social folk customs which many of the new generations have not even known them as part of their ancestors' culture I am also thankful to the District Museum, NC Hills district for enabling me click some few treasured photographs of Hmar artifacts which it has preserved since long The two above mentioned sources have provided me with a good number of photo clips which I have used as illustrating agents in the thesis

I appreciate and am thankful to my husband, Mr Aden Lal Chorei for enduring the whole period of my research work with calm disposition throughout and assisting me in many ways to enable me concentrate on and to finally come out with the final thesis I am equally grateful to my younger sister, Miss Emanuel Lalremruot Zate for constantly playing the role of a mother to my two little sons during my intermittent absence from home necessitated by the research work

I express my thanks also to those who have got involved –directly or indirectly- in the final compilation of this thesis

Date 30.9.2014
Place Tezpur

Lalthakim Hmar
(Ms Lalthakim Hmar) 30/9/14

Dedication

I dedicate this work of mine to my beloved father, (Late) Laihlihang Zate, also known as Thanga Hmar, whose joy and pride would know no bound today to see this work had he not left for his eternal abode so soon on the 27.06.1991.

Lalhakin Hmar
(Ms. Lalhakin Hmar) 30/9/14

Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>i-iii</i>
<i>Declaration</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Certificate of Supervisor</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>vi-vii</i>
<i>Dedication</i>	<i>viii</i>
Chapter 1: Introduction	1-22
1.1. Background of the study	
1.2. Defining ‘expressive behaviours’	
1.3. Genres included in the ambit of studies	
1.4. Feminist perspectives in the study of expressive behaviours	
1.5. Position and social role of Hmar women in society	
1.6. Aim of the study	
1.7. Methodology	
1.8. Limitations of the work and future directions	
Chapter 2: Expressive World of the Hmar Women: The Verbal Art	23-69
2.1. Defining Verbal Art	
2.2. Different sub-genres	
2.3. Folk Song	
2.3.1. Love Song (<i>Lenglai Hla</i>)	
2.3.2. Lullaby (<i>Nau Awi Hla</i>)	

- 2.3.3. Agricultural Song (*Lo Sin Hla*)
- 2.3.4. Festival Song (*Nipui Hla*)
- 2.3.5. Victory Song (*Hnena Hla*)
- 2.3.6. Children's Game and Frolic Song (*Naupang Inhnelna le Insukhlimna Hla*)
- 2.3.7. Girls' Game Song (*Nuhmeite Inlènna Hla*)
- 2.3.8. Young Ladies' Frolic Song (*Nuhmei Inlènna/Inhnelna Hla*)
- 2.3.9. Marriage Song (*Molawm Hla*)
- 2.3.10. Elegy (*Lusûn Hla*)

2.4. Proverb

2.5. Prose Narratives

- 2.5.1. Myth (*Thusim*)
- 2.5.2. Legend (*Thurachi*)
- 2.5.3. Folktale (*Tienami*)

Chapter 3: Expressive World of the Hmar Women:

Social Folk Customs

70-116

- 3.1. Defining Social Folk Customs
- 3.2. Different sub-genres
- 3.3. Rites of Passage
 - 3.3.1. Birth Rites
 - 3.3.2. Puberty Rites
 - 3.3.3. Marriage Rites

- 3.3.4. Death Rites
- 3.4. Religious Beliefs and Customs
 - 3.4.1. Traditional Holy Dreads
 - 3.4.2. Traditional Female Deities/Spirits
 - 3.4.3. Women in Religious Rituals
- 3.5. Hunting Customs
- 3.6. Agricultural Customs
- 3.7. Festival
- 3.8. Folk Medicine
- 3.9. Fruits and Vegetables Foraging
- 3.10. Institution of Courting (*Nunghak Lêng*)

Chapter 4: Expressive World of the Hmar Women:

Performing Folk Arts

117-125

- 4.1. Defining Performing Folk Arts
- 4.2. Different sub-genres
- 4.3. Musical Instrument
- 4.4. Folk Dance
 - 4.4.1. Festival Dance (*Nipui Lâm*)
 - 4.4.2. Victory Dance (*Hnena Lâm*)
 - 4.4.3. Young Ladies' Frolic Dance (*Nuhmei Inlêna Lâm*)
 - 4.4.4. Hunter Dance (*Ramlêng Lâm*)
 - 4.4.5. War Dance (*Indo Lâm*)

4.4.6. Agricultural Dance (*Lo Lâm*)

4.4.7. Marriage Dance (*Molawm Lâm*)

Chapter 5: Expressive World of the Hmar Women:

The Material Culture

126-148

5.1. Defining Material Culture

5.2. Different sub-genres

5.3. Hmar women in domestic activities

5.3.1. Food items and beverages

5.3.2. Animal Husbandry

5.4. Women's Costumes

5.5. Arts and Crafts

5.5.1. Pottery

5.5.2. Textile Processes

5.5.3. Hmar Traditional Cloths

Chapter 6: Conclusion

149-156

APPENDIX- I : PHOTOGRAPHS 157- 204

APPENDIX- II : LIST OF INFORMANTS 205

APPENDIX- III : TABLES OF HMAR POPULATION 206-207

APPENDIX- IV : GLOSSARY OF HMAR TERMS 208-220

APPENDIX- V : AUTHOR'S PUBLICATIONS 221

WORKS CITED 222-230

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background of the study:

Generally, women have been represented by men. Their cultural participation is valued or judged in a variety of ways, but nearly always within the context of patriarchal culture and its pedantic norms. They have been defined in terms of men and when compared to themselves, men often undervalued and under-represented them and assigned them a role subordinate to their own thereby failing to give a more complete view of the thought, feelings and the unified cultural behaviour of women. One of the ways in which women are represented culturally is through the segregation of certain kinds of cultural practices to them, which are seen as both feminine and inferior. Cultural practices like pottery-making, for instance, is generally done by women and is subsequently considered to represent the delicacy and decorativeness of the feminine, and this can be contrasted with practices like net-making, which entails the same skills, but which is exclusively considered masculine, and signifies the adventure of men, killing for food, beyond the home. In the past it was only man who acted as a custodian as to what was written and recorded. In the process of writing history, he impressed upon it only his own versions of women. The male transmitters often overlooked or ignored the differentiable cultural performances that had flourished within the domain of women. In the scholarly writings of such male transmitters, little is known about women's cultural performances except they were simply mothers, wives, daughters and sisters. Women are "heirs to a sociological tradition that treats women as essentially uninteresting and irrelevant, and accepts as necessary, natural and hardly problematic the fact that, in every culture, women are in some way subordinate to men." (Rosaldo et al 1974, 17). In relation to men, women, everywhere, lack generally recognized and culturally valued authority. Thus, by investigating the different expressive genres that are characteristically female-oriented, it is important to try to situate women in their rightful traditional value.

The Hmars are one of the emerging communities of Assam in particular, and North East in general. However, very little scholarly works have been done to represent their socio-cultural life. Amongst the works published on the Hmars are the few books written by the British colonial masters from the vantage of colonial anthropology, where the Hmars were considered to be a part of the larger Mizogroup. After Indian independence, a few Hmar scholars too have written on the Hmars but they mostly focused on the Hmars of Manipur, with only a couple of scholars concentrating on the Hmars of Assam. Moreover, there has hardly been any work done on the role or position of women in the Hmar society of Assam. As such, the present work would try to understand the traditional role and place of the Hmar women.

1.2. Defining 'expressive behaviours':

Human cultures are diverse: the diversity can be illustrated in the cultural behaviours which the cultures manifest. Indeed, a long catalogue can be displayed on the behavioural differences among the various cultures of the world. If the term 'society' refers to the individuals within a particular geographical territory and their relationships to one another, 'culture' may refer to the ways of behaving or the beliefs and behaviour characteristic of those individuals. A culture is said to have emerged when a set of individuals, united by common interests, comes together to form a group and consciously or unconsciously makes decisions affecting some sort of common enterprise. Thus, culture is best defined as the characteristic behaviours of a particular group of people, which also exists in the forms of the ideas, plans and common understandings that are acknowledged by the membership. Cultural differences distinguish societies from one another.

In large and complicated cultural systems, there is possibility that different classes have different ways of behaving. Even in the most compact society, the term 'culture' can be used to refer and explain the differences between groups of people. It is possible to speak of different cultures like- the culture of upper-class, the culture of

women, the culture of farmers, the culture of businessmen and the culture of religious monks. In each of this case, the term 'culture' refers to the ways of behaving of that particular set of individuals in a particular situation with certain characteristic behaviours meaningful and relevant to the operation of their particular cultural tradition. Culture influences all aspects of our lives. It involves subjective elements-attitudes, values, beliefs, opinions, temper, behaviours- and objective elements like clothes, food, utensils and architecture. Human activities and behaviours are the direct outcome of complex interactions among a variety of biological, psychological, historical and environmental factors that are perceived and displayed in terms of their relevance to the shared understandings and experiences constituting the cultural tradition. The activities and behaviours generated by most members of a particular culture can be regarded as a part of the behaviour characteristic of that cultural system.

The term 'expressive culture' is best defined as the outcome of human activity which includes stories, music, dance, legends, oral history, proverbs, jokes, popular beliefs and customs within a particular population comprising the traditions of that culture. The term refers to all forms of behavioural expressions in a culture existed in terms of different expressive genres like verbal expressions, ritualistic observances, performing arts and artifacts that communicate socio-cultural, ideological, political, aesthetic and personal aspects of living. The term 'expressive behaviour' in the context of the study, refers to those aspects of verbal and non-verbal behaviours which expressedly manifest feelings, attitudes, experiences, artistic creativity, beliefs, points of view, and the innermost recesses and temper that mark the attributes of the Hmar tribe. The 'role of women in the expressive behaviours of the tribe' refers to performances and behaviours that are characteristically female-oriented as found reflected in different aspects of the socio-cultural interactive life of the Hmar, including folklore. This will encompass, on a larger scale, the oral literature, material culture, folk performing arts and social folk customs of the tribe. The research will look at the Hmar women as a distinctive and identifiable group with its own

distinguishable culture and focus on the different genres performed by women. As a case study, the study will involve talking to the womenfolk, observing their activities and behaviours, considering the settings within which their activities take place, keeping track of and studying their verbal and performing behaviours. It will also trace the material artifacts and other works of art that they make and use and, to examine the impacts that their activities have upon the larger culture within which they operate. Starting from the privacy of the domestic sphere, the study will encompass the public arena- the different spheres where women's identity and selfhood get enacted. It will focus on woman as a subject – how she sees herself and what she has to say for herself rather than what other cultural groups say about her. Besides focusing on the women's behavioural aspects, the study will also touch upon how the ethnic Hmar society, which is essentially patriarchal in nature, had looked at and defined women in terms of men.

1.3. Genres included in the ambit of studies:

Genre is a term for a type of artistic or cultural composition characterized by a set of recognizable conventions of character. It is a conventional text type distinguished on the basis of typical content and internal organization. Any genre-specific stylistic characteristic is closely connected not only to the aims of individual producers in a given genre but also to expectations and ideologies among both producers and consumers of that genre. As genre is a means of classifying cultural production, sorting it into kinds, just as gender is a means of sorting people into kinds, this study attempts to look mainly into different expressive and cultural genres of the Hmar society where women's distinct entity and role get reflected. It attempts to demonstrate the unified and differentiable culture of women as a social group and its manifestation in various forms within the larger Hmar ethnic group. The study will include all genres that flourish within the expressive domain of the gendered women. It will trace and deal with their behavioural aspects, their projections of themselves – their essence, feelings, their artistic creativity, beliefs, experiences, their innermost recesses and temper, in one word, their identity and selfhood – as reflected in the

Verbal Art like love songs, social songs, religious songs, game songs, lullabies, proverbs and prose narratives; Social Folk Customs like customary practices associated with rites of passage, traditional beliefs and customs, rituals and conventions associated with social group observances on different occasions; Folk Performing Arts like conscious performances of folk dances and of folk musical instruments; Material Culture like food items and beverages, animal husbandry, arts and crafts like pottery-making and weaving or any other items of artifact that the womenfolk create and give cultural meaning to them.

1.4. Feminist perspectives in the study of expressive behaviours:

It is difficult to define a term 'Feminism' as it is never a uniform set of ideas. However, it is generally accepted as a form of politics which aims to intervene in, and transform, the unequal power relations between men and women. Joanne Hollows (2000, 3) cites Caroline Ramazanoglu as having offered a tentative definition of the term as 'various social theories which explain the relations between the sexes in society, and the differences between women's and men's experiences'. Like all politics, it has its roots in a political movement in the late 18th century that was associated with the writings in social theory, polemics and fiction of Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, the movement which grew in strength and organization in the second half of the 19th century in Great Britain and the United States when it was mobilized around the question of female suffrage. The roots can also be traced back to the 'second wave' feminism; most often styled 'the woman's liberation movement', which has been an active force for change since the late 1960s and 1970s. The woman's liberation movement participated in a dynamic moment of profound social and cultural change, including changed definitions of Culture and Politics. Second wave feminism was prompted by awareness that formal political equality had not brought social and cultural equality. It inaugurated a critique of patriarchy or patriarchal structure of society which refers to power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interest of men.

Feminist perspective results from the conflict and contradictions between dominant institutionalized definitions of women's nature and social role and the women's experience of these institutions in the context of the dominant liberal discourse.

Starting from the politics of the personal in which women's subjectivities and experiences of everyday life become the site of redefinition of patriarchal meanings and values and of resistance to them, feminism generates new theoretical perspectives from which the dominant culture can be criticized and new possibilities envisaged. Feminists believe that women's lived experience includes a different perceptual and emotional life; it is the source of knowledge, the authentic source of exploring and understanding their different expressive culture in the realm of dominant culture.

Through the 1980s, feminism had a transforming impact on cultural studies. In *Women's Folklore, Women's Culture* (1985), the editors, very convincingly, argue that until recently, folklorists concentrated their attention only on cultural performances that were characteristically male-oriented. In the process of exploring folklore and culture, those folklorists ignored or overlooked folklore and culture that had flourished within the domain of women. The genres that demonstrated women's unified culture were often considered 'minor genres' or 'just gossip'. It was only performances that were characteristic of men that had most interested folklorists as worthy of studies. Their present volume informs and helps change that kind of lopsided orientation in folklore scholarship by focusing on women performers and women's genres.

In *The Subordinated Sex: A History of Attitudes towards Women* (1988), the writers reiterate the important position women occupy in the reproduction and the existence of humanity. But despite that, little is known about women in the past except that they were simply mothers, wives, daughters and sisters. The little knowledge we have had of them too, comes from male transmitters whose records, impressed with their own versions, imply that women were subordinate to them. This work implicitly suggests the need for a more comprehensive perspective to look into women's lives and their experiences in order to understand their inherent values.

In their introduction to *Off-Centre: Feminism and Cultural Studies* (1991, 6), Franklin et al. has maintained, “*Women Take Issue* (Women’s Studies Group 1978) was an early example of feminist work within cultural studies....Looking at questions of cultural reproduction as well as production, *Women Take Issue* highlighted the need for cultural studies to engage with the ‘personal’ dimensions of culture in the political context of a feminist analysis”. The book enabled a shift from interest in issues concerning ideology and hegemony to those concerning identity and subjectivity. Since then, the impact of feminism on cultural studies has had an increasing significance.

In the article, ‘Strategies of Coding in Women’s Culture’ by Joan Radner and Susan Lancer in *Feminist Messages* (1993) by Joan Newlon Radner, the writers assert that sexual difference provides the foundation for women’s culture and, sexual dominance makes women express themselves through coded means. By ‘code’, it means a set of signals – words, forms, behaviours, signifiers of some kind – that protect the creator from the consequences of openly expressing particular messages. This establishes a vantage-point that recognition of coding is a crucial aspect of the reinterpretation of the women’s lives and cultures.

Fay Fransella and Kay Frost in their *On Being a Woman* (1997), undertake to study woman as a subject – what she has to say for herself rather than what others say about her. In relation to the social definitions of a woman’s place, they assert that in order to understand why people act as they do, we ought to know how they see themselves. They also maintain that what we do reflects our lives and our experiences and, we organize, interpret and reinterpret ourselves on the basis of notions that we already have of what we are about.

In *Women in Culture* (1998), Lucinda J. Peach argues that biological differences are not inherently inferior or secondary, but are deemed to be so by cultural ascription or designation. Thus, contrary to essentialist understandings of gender as primarily determined by biological sex differences, she espouses the view that culture is the primary determinant of gender and gender identity.

1.5. Ethnic Profile of Assam and the position of the Hmars:

If North East India is considered the homeland of a large number of ethnic groups who came from different directions at different historical times, so also is Assam. Assam is known as the settling ground for numerous tribal groups who profess different religious faiths and beliefs and speaking different languages and dialects with their own tradition, cultures, dresses and ways of life. In Assam, there are total twenty three notified Scheduled Tribes. As per 2001 Census,¹ there are total twenty three (23) notified STs in the state. The total population of STs in Assam in 2001 Census has been 3,308,570 persons constituting 12.4 percent of the total population of the state: the total population of the State being 26,655,528 persons. Among STs, Boro represents nearly half of the total ST population of the state (40.9 per cent). Miri (17.8 per cent), Mikir (10.7 per cent), Rabha (8.4 per cent), Kachari (i.e. Sonowal Kachari) (7.1 per cent), and Lalung (5.2 per cent) are the other major STs each having 5 per cent or above of total STs. Along with Boro they constitute 90 per cent ST population of the state. Besides them, Dimasa constitutes 3.4 per cent and Deori 1.2 per cent of the total ST population of the state. The rest of the Scheduled Tribes are very small in their population size (*Assam: Data Highlights: The Scheduled Tribes*).

The tribes of Assam may broadly be divided into two categories: plain tribes and hill tribes. The hill tribes are mainly concentrated in the hilly areas of North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong districts of the State and, the plain tribes mainly inhabit the plain areas of the State and they are the outflow of hill communities who have come down to the neighbouring plains and have adopted settled cultivation.

The largest population in Assam is that of the Tibeto Burmese descent known as the Bodo or Boro tribes. The Boro Kacharis constitute the largest tribal group in Assam who account for 40.9 percent of the total ST population of the State. They are recognized as a plains tribe in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. They settle in the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang of North-East India and in Nepal. Next to the Boro Kacharis, the Mishings, who were formerly known as Miris, constitute 17.8 percent of the total tribal population. They inhabit the districts of

Tinsukia, Sibsagar, Sonitpur, Jorhat and Golaghat, along the banks of River Brahmaputra. The Karbis, mentioned as Mikir in the Constitution of India, add to the bulk of the ST population of the State with 10.7 percent population. Besides inhabiting other districts of Assam like Dima Hasao, Nagaon, Golaghat and Kamrup, the Karbis are the principal tribal community residing in Karbi Anglong district of Assam. With 8.4 percent of population, the Rabha tribal community concentrates mainly in the two districts of Goalpara and Kamrup in Assam. The Sonowal Kacharis are a branch of Bodo Kacharis of Assam. They are predominantly inhabitants of Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Dhemaji and Tinsukia districts of Assam. The Lalungs (also known as Tiwa), originated from the Bodo race, are mostly found in the districts of Nagaon and Karbi Anglong. The Deori tribal community in Assam is found in the nearby regions of the Brahmaputra River. The language of the Deori tribal people is Deori language and it belongs to the famous Tibeto-Burman language family. Residing in Dibrugarh and Tinsukia district of Assam, along Dihing River, they are said to have come here from Thailand in the late 18th century. They speak Assamese language as well as Phake language.

In the Brahmaputra valley, some tribal communities are found who, in the recent past have come down to the plains from the neighbouring hills and have started settled farming. Some Garo colonies are found in areas far away from their homeland, (i.e., the Garo Hills of Meghalaya,) in the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Sibsagar, Sonitpur, Darrang and Karbi Anglong. The Hajongs are found mainly in the two districts -Dhubri and Goalpara of Assam. The Barmans of Cachar district of Assam is a branch of Dimasas Kacharis. They are plains tribe. They reside in Barak Valley, North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong (*Tribes of Assam- Assam Online Portal*). In Assam, the Khasi tribe is found mostly in North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong districts. Some reside in Barak Valley. A numerically small scheduled tribe of Assam, the Meches are found in Goalpara district. A small portion of the tribe is found in Khowang area of Dibrugarh district and Parakhowa area of Karbi Anglong district (*Tribes of Assam-Assam Online Portal*). Some Naga tribes from Nagaland are amongst various tribal communities who have settled down in the hills and plains of

the State, and have secured a place of prominence. All the colonies of tribal community coming down from the hills are adopting the way of life of the plains.

Assam comprises two hilly districts administered under the 6th Schedule of the Constitution of India. These districts are Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. The major community of Karbi Anglong is the Karbis who were formerly known as Mikirs. The major community of North Cachar Hills district is the Dimasa. They are said to be the only Bodo-speaking people living away from the Brahmaputra valley.

The Hmars:

The general description of the Hmars' physique is recorded by Rochunga Pudaite (Pudaite 1963, 32), 'In general, the Hmars have cultural and physical resemblance to the rest of the mountain peoples of northeast India and Burma. They are generally a short and sturdy race of men with goodly development of muscle. Their face is broad and round and their cheek bones are high, broad and prominent. Their eyes are small and their nose flat and short. Though they are of the Mongolian race, their skin is not yellow. It is rather a dark-yellowish-brown'. The Hmars are one of the indigenous ethnic tribes with distinct culture belonging to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo ethnic group of the Sino-Tibeto-Burman family of the Mongolian race. Forming one of the many hill tribes of India, the Hmars are found in North Cachar Hills district and Barak Valley of Assam and "the adjoining States of Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura in India and Bangladesh and Myanmar" (Dena 2008, 3). The Hmars believe Manmasi to be their progenitor. They call themselves as *Manmasi Nau* (descendants of Manmasi). Manmasi could be a corrupted form of Manasse, elder son of Joseph in the Old Testament. Being diasporic in different nations and many different States of North East India, the Hmars are outnumbered by the neighbouring tribes to a negligible minority in every State.

Origin of the term 'Hmar':

There are two prominent theories regarding the origin and meaning of the term 'Hmar'. The first theory suggests that the term might have originated from the term

'hmar'. The literal meaning of 'hmar' is 'north'. Different historians like Rev. Liangkhaia, B. Lalthangliana and L.Keivom, who support this theory, maintain that the then ruling Lusei clan of Lushai Hills (Mizoram) used to nickname those clans that left Lushai Hills and migrated northward and inhabited the northern part of Lushai Hills as 'Hmars', meaning 'northerners'. Gradually, the migrated clans "came to adopt the name as a common nomenclature." (Lal Dena 2008, 8) Due to absence of written records, it is not possible to suggest even the probable date of their exodus from Lushai Hills. But some scholars like Hrilrokhum Thiek surmise that the exodus of the Hmars from Lushai Hills took place in different batches from even "before the 15th century A.D" (Thiek 2013, 135). A Hmar great ruler, Mr. Chawnhmang, followed by many Hmar sub-tribes, "left Mizoram and settled in Tripura in the 13th century A.D" (Thiek 2013, 134).

The second theory is based on Hmar oral traditions and has been accepted as the origin of the term by *Hmar Tobul Seminar Hmasa Tak* (The First Seminar on the Origin of the Hmar) in 2004. Supporters of this theory argue that the term 'Hmar' was originally derived from 'hmarh'. 'Hmarh' is a name given to a typical style of tying a hair. It is "tying of one's hair in a knot on the nape of one's head" (Dena 2008, 8). According to Hmar tradition, Manmasi has two sons – Hrumsawm and Tukbemsawm. During his childhood, the younger brother Tukbemsawm, used to tie his hair in a knot on the nape of his head. His descendants who adopted Tukbemsawm's hair-style were called Hmars. Hrumsawm used to get his hair tied in a knot on the forehead. The Pawis of Mizoram whose males adopt this hair-style are believed to be his progenies.

Original Home of the Hmars:

Absence of written records renders problem in tracing their original homeland and the probable dates of their migrations. Hmar scholars like Dr. Lal Dena, Dr. Rev. Hrilrokhum Thiek and Dr. Vanlal Tluonga Bapui believe that the Hmars once led a semi-nomadic life. Dena (Dena 2008, 18) maintains, "...their frequent movements

and migrations were solely motivated by economic interest, that is, the search for better cultivable land.”

Dena (2008) keeps a record of three traditions regarding the original home of the Hmars. The first tradition, supporting Jewish connection, contends that the Hmars are the descendants of the Israelites. The *Hla Pui* (main song) of Sikpui Hla, given in the Second Chapter of the thesis, refers to the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and the different events the Israelites encountered with before and after they crossed the Red Sea. The song goes;

*“Sikpui inthang kan ur lai a,
Châng Tuipui aw, Senma hrili kang intan;
Keralawna ka leido aw,
Sûnah sûm ang, zânah mei lawn invâk e;
Ântûr asa thlu a ruol aw,
In phawsiel le in râifei leh zuongtho ro,
Sûn razula ka leido aw;
Kera lawna mei sûm ang lawn invâk e,
Sûnrazula ka leido aw,
Laimi sa-ang châng tuipuiin lem zova,
Ava ruol aw la ta la,
Suonglung chungâ tui zuongpût kha la ta la.”* (Louis L. Keivom 1990, 25)

(While we are preparing for the Sikpui festival,
The big red sea becomes divided.
As we march forward fighting our foes,
We are being led by a cloud during day and a pillar of fire during night.
Our enemies, O ye folks, are thick with fury,
Come out with your shields and spears,
Fighting our foes all day, we march along
As cloud-fire goes afore.
The enemies we fight all day, the big sea
Swallowed them like beasts.

Collect the quails, and fetch the water

That springs out of the rock) (Dena 2008, 10).

This particular song is believed by some to be self-explanatory of the tribe's Jewish connection. But besides this song, there are no other songs or written documents to support this tradition.

The second tradition contends that the primeval abode of the Hmars was Sinlung.

Below are some references in the tribe's folk songs that tend to support this theory;

"Tiena raw khuo ân siengin-

Khaw Sinlunga...

Kawtsiel ang ka zuong suok a,

Mi le nêl lo tam e,

Hriemmi hrai a..." (Thiek 2013, 40).

(My motherland, famous Sinlung,

Home of my ancestors.

Out of Sinlung,

I jumped out like a mithun;

Innumerable were our encounters,

The children of men.) (Dena 2008, 12)

Or,

(Khaw Singlungah kawtsiel ang ka zuong suok a,

Mi le nel lo tam e a;

Tlei dang chu ðhal tui ang lo kang rawh.

I sprang up like a bull out of Sinlung where there were many people and sand. Let others dry like the water in the lean season.) (Bapui 2011, 2)

The first four lines of a composition known as *Hranglâm Hla*, one of the tribe's Victory Songs, refer to Sinlung as the original home of the culture heroes, Hrangkhup and Thawnglai;

"Tiena rawkhuo an siengna khaw Sinlunga,

Hrangkhup le Thawnglai nun khuo lo pham;

Simbupa lai that tira awnthing lerah,

Thangchawi lo lam vatin bin gang an lo khai."(Bapui 2007, 224)

(A long time ago, coming out from Sinlung village, Hrangkhup and Thawnglai enjoyed their lives. They observed an owl on the branch of a tree, killing and celebrating success which they imitated).

Some lines of a composition sub-titled *A PÁ HLA*, under Paddy Seed Sowing Song too refer to Sinlung and the lines glorify the tribe's social life there;

*"Sinlung lam tlak a tha'n dang,
A pa lam tlak a tha'n dang."*(L. Keivom 1980, 4)

(My ancestors' footsteps were better, Sinlung's footsteps were indeed better) (Lal Dena 2008, 12)

One of the famous Hmar modern patriotic songs also points toward Sinlung as their once-upon a time abode;

*"Aw, kan Sinlung khawpui chul hnung;
Hung indin thar nawk la,
Thangthar lenghai di'n par angin hung vulla...;"* (R. Tawna Khawbung 2005, 28)

(O our faded homeland Sinlung; Get re-built again and bloom once again for the new generations)

The third tradition refers Shan to be the original home of the tribe. There are many folk songs that refer to Shan. Some of them are;

*"Shan kuoah lenpur a tla,
Laiinran do zo love;"* (Bapui 2007, 12)

(Famine struck Shan, Humanity could endure not)

*"Shan kuo fiertui tha var indang,
Naufan hnamchem ang an chawi;
Thlangfa nghaknu lien inthang,*

Lawnlei in sa, khawmuolin a hoi." (L.Keivom 1980, 5)

(Spring water in Shan was better, Our damsels were prettier, Our social life too was more pleasant)

*“Chung Pathienin Shan zuk siem a,
Shan khuo lung ang ngir na e.”* (L.Keivom 1980, 7)
(God created you, Shan. Stand like a rock)

Confusingly enough, a place named ‘Shan’ is found both in China and Burma. From the available sources (for instance, history books by Hmar historians) and verse materials (abundant number of folk songs referring to Sinlung), it is quite probable that Sinlung is the original home of the Hmars. “Nobody can tell their history or pre-history beyond Sinlung” maintains, Thiek (2013, 39). Hmar scholars and elders like J. Batlien in *Hmar Chronicles*, Lal Dena in *In Search of Identity*, H. Thiek in *History of the Hmars in North East India*, V. L Bapui in *Assam Rama Hmarhai* and L. Keivom in *Hmar Hla Suina* endorse this Sinlung Tradition. J. Batlien establishes Sinlung to be the early homeland of the Hmars and believes Shan in Burma to be one of the settlements of the tribe. Most Hmars seem to have believed this theory as they often refer to themselves as *Sinlung-suok*, meaning, ‘Sinlung originated’. There are many interesting stories about the nature and location of Sinlung. Some believe Sinlung to be a huge closed stone cave (*sin* in Hmar literally means ‘closed’ and *lung*; rock). However, it is generally believed to be a place in Central China. *Hmar Tobul Seminar Hmasa Tak* (The First Seminar on the Origin of the Hmar) in 2004, accepted Sinlung, Szechwan Province in Central China, to be the original home of the Hmars. This appears to be the most relevant and the most convincing theory with the greatest number of traditional folk songs to support it.

The traditional belief supported by Hmar folk songs maintains that the Hmar ancestors had to desert their homeland Sinlung due to “epidemics or natural calamities or some unfavourable circumstances” (Thiek 2013, 58). Hmar elders and historians believe that after their exodus from Sinlung, the Hmars along with their kindred tribes, began to lead a semi-nomadic life proceeding south-westward, crossing many hills and valleys till they reached Kachin State in Burma. From Burma, it is believed, the tribe moved on until their final settlement in northern parts of India and the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh.

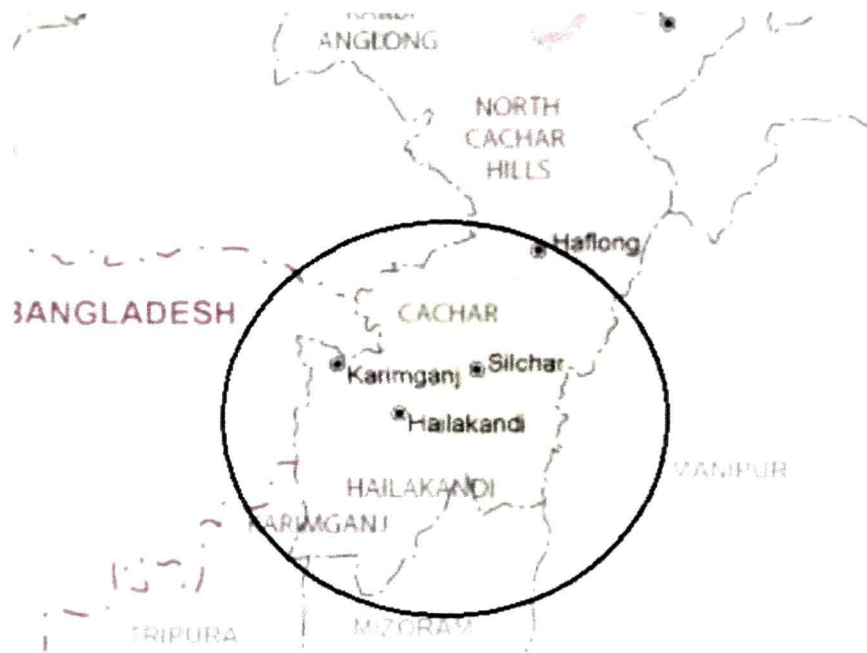
Hmars in Barak Valley and N.C Hills:

Belonging to the Kuki-Chin-Mizo group of tribes, the Hmars in Assam mostly reside in N.C.Hills district and Barak Valley zone. Demographically, Barak Valley is a southern region of Assam with Silchar as the main city of the valley. Named after the Barak River, Barak Valley consists of three main districts namely Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. Of the fourteen tribes in Barak Valley, the Hmars form the majority. The rest of the tribal population comprises the Khasis, the Reangs, the Rongmei Nagas and the other Kuki tribes. North Cachar Hills district, now known as Dima Hasao, is one of the least populated districts of Assam with a total population of 213,529 according to 2011 Census. The district is surrounded by Karbi Anglong (E) and Nagaland on North-east, Manipur on East, Nagaon district on North, Karbi Anglong (W) on North-west, Meghalaya on West and Cachar district on South. The major tribes inhabiting the district are the Dimasas, the Nagas, the Hmars, and the Kukis. Maps of Barak Valley and N.C. Hills District are given in the next page. The Dimasa tribe constituting 43% of the total population, the rest of the tribes and non-tribal constitute 57% of the population (*Dima Hasao District*).

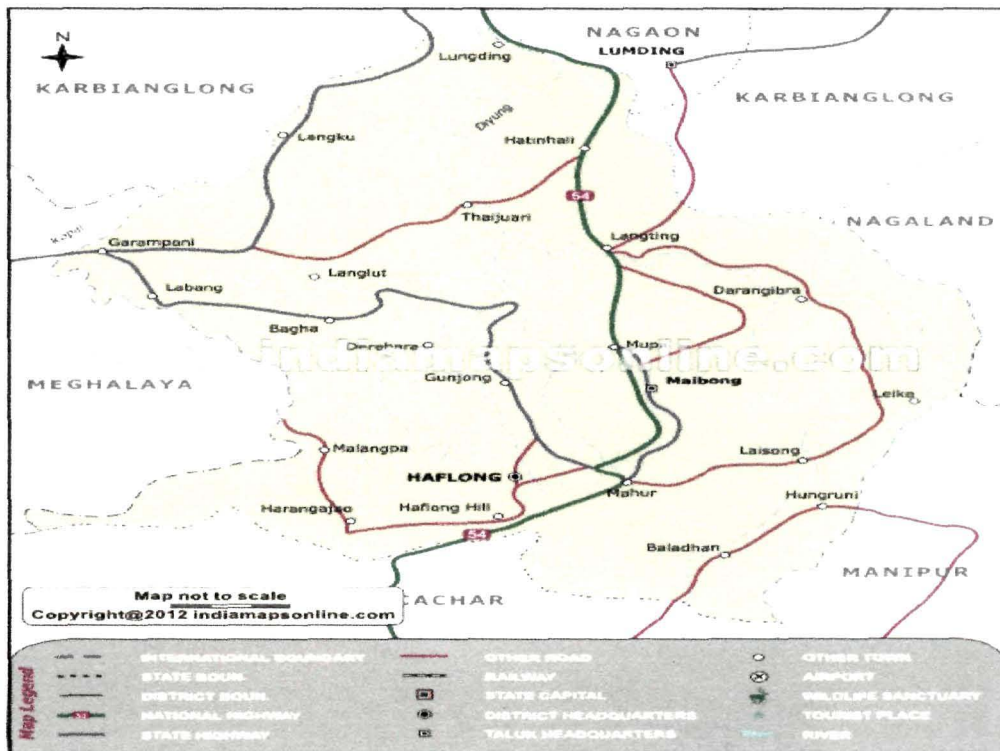
Bapui (2007, 15) records that the Hmars entered Cachar in 1609. Recounting the account of the early British Writers like Alexander Mackenzie, a Hmar historian and writer, Dr. Hrilrokhum Thiek, records that the Kookies entered Cachar (N.C. Hills included in those days) in the year 1748. This indicates that the various Kuki-Chin groups including the Hmars, “had already permanently settled in Cachar and North Cachar Hills in the early decades of the 18th Century A.D” (Thiek 2013, 76). The Kuki kindred tribes which include the Hmar tribes are assumed to be the earliest settlers of N.C.Hills and Cachar.

As per 2001 Census record, almost 30 different tribes were living in the district of N.C.Hills with an overall population of 1, 28,428. The Dimasas forming the majority with 63, 146 recorded speakers of the language, the population of the Hmars was 14,158 (Deputy Director of Economics and Statistics). According to *Manmasi Year Book of 2006-2007*, the total number of Hmar houses in N.C.Hills district was 2,459 with total population of 17,234. According to census on Hmar population in the

Map of Barak Valley.



Map of North Cachar Hills District



district conducted in 2011, there are 43 Hmar villages with 3,324 houses constituting a total of 20,768 populations (*Table of Hmar Population, Appendix-III*). Whereas in Barak Valley, according to census on the Hmar population conducted in 2011, there are 123 villages, 6,336 houses with total population of 44,353 (*Table of Hmar Population, Appendix-III*). Recent population record of Barak Valley is exclusive of the Hmar sub-tribes like Hrangkhoh, Chorai and Chiru. The present work does not reflect the expressive behaviours of those Hmar sub-tribes who, though retaining their ethnic identity, have been acculturated in various degrees as a result of living in close proximity or in close contact with the 'non-tribal' Sanskritized majority.

The Hmar tribe has gained recognition as one of the Scheduled Tribes as per the 6th Schedule of the Constitution of India. The Tribal List of India published in 1951 classed the Hmar as sub-tribe of Lushai along with other sub-tribes in Lushai Hills. The Government of India, in its revision of the List in 1956, declared Hmar as a separate Tribe of India, independent of the Kukis or Lushai Vide Notification Order No. S.R.O. 2477-A, dated 29.10.1956 (Ghosh 1992, 117). However till date in Barak Valley zone, the Hmars are not recognized as ST (Hills) though they constitute one of the emerging tribes of the valley.

General account of the tribe:

The Hmar society is patriarchal, a male-dominated society where the male-head of family is the sole authority both in family and clan matters. This social system, no doubt, gives authority to males. But, the women folks are not wholly dependent on the men folks in all walks of life. For instance, the tribe's economic activities may get limped without the enormous contributions of the fairer sex. In many of the Hmar clans, the youngest son inherits the father's property. There are many clans and hundreds of sub-clans in Hmar tribe. According to Dr. Vanlal Tluonga Bapui, there are about twenty-nine Hmar clans¹⁵, twenty according to Sri. H.V Sunga and, twenty-two according to Dr. Lal Dena (Dena 2008) besides hundreds of sub-clans.

The principal occupation of the tribe is agriculture. The tribesmen practise jhum cultivation. Most of their agricultural works are carried out in the form of community

labour and mutual assistance. Allotment of jhum land to each village family is conducted by the village council headed by the *Lal* (chief) and his *Khawnbawl* or *Siehmang* (courtiers). Their social institutions consist of a village council (consisted of a village chief and his council of elders), a *thiempu* (priest), a *tlângva* (village crier), a *thirsu* (a blacksmith), *val upas* (youth leaders) and *buonzawl* also called *zawlbûk* (bachelors' dormitory). Many Hmars still live in rural areas of the different States and districts of north-east India. Till date, "there is not a single town in the whole of Hmar area. In recent years, some families move to urban areas in search of better livelihood and a few of them have secured Government jobs" (Thiek 2013, 274).

The tribe's traditional religion was animism. In their traditional doctrine of god, the Hmars believe in a Supreme Being called *pathien*. *Pathien* is believed to be the sole creator of all things and lives in high heaven. The tribe does not worship and invoke this god except when sacrifice called *Rampui Inthawi* (sacrifice of jungle) is performed. The tribe believes in the existence of many subordinate gods (good spirits). There are about six good spirits who have been assigned by the tribe different roles to perform for the welfare of mankind. Ancestor worship known as *Pi-Pu-Rau Biek* was common in the past. The Hmars believe in the existence of the soul in man. They believe that *Kulsamnu*, a female spirit, is a caretaker of the souls of dead whereas, *Pu Pawla* is a gatekeeper of the land of the dead. When extraordinarily successful hunters called *Thangsuo* die, *Kulsamnu* takes care of their souls and directly leads them to *Pielral* (Paradise), place of eternal rest. They believe in the existence of evil spirits who are malignant and are therefore, utterly dreadful. There are about seventeen evil spirits in the traditional belief. These evil spirits are believed to be the source of all illnesses and miseries. The tribesmen offer propitiatory sacrifices to them in order to placate them and ward-off the sufferings caused by them. The Hmars are said to be highly superstitious whose mindset is always occupied by fear of curse from displeased evil spirits.

1.6. Position and social role of Hmar women in society:

Gender, as a concept, is the multiple ways in which maleness and femaleness are perceived, evaluated and stratified in a society. In a given culture, gender ideology is mainly perpetuated in symbols and rituals, patterns of verbal expressions and gender-based role assignments. But it is also a fact that though gender ideology is a real fact of life, the way it is constructed varies from one culture to the other.

The Hmar patriarchal society too seems to have endorsed and reinforced the biased concept of women's inferior status in the society as reflected in its verbal lore. Dena (2008, 35) describes in details about the position of the Hmar women through the ages. He says that the society which is basically patriarchal in nature has developed hyper-masculine bias towards women. He further acknowledges how this hyper-masculine pushed women to no superior position than to traditional familial roles. This biased attitude towards women gets highlighted in many forms of the traditional expressive behaviours of the tribe.

In traditional Hmar society, a woman has no rights within the family and society and as such, no inheritance rights or shares in the property of her father. Regarding the family institution, she is expected to be fully engaged with the household duties, but her status remains insignificant. She has limited freedom to choose her future partner which is considered the prerogatives of her parents.

The Hmar ancestors used to have certain principles in choosing a woman for a wife. Those are like: she must be a woman of good etiquette, skillful in weaving and needle work, good structured (physically), a light talker, active and agile in domestic work, must belong to a higher clan ('clan' is used metaphorically. It means, she must be free from evil practices like -witchcraft, robbery and murder).

Hmar parents used to hesitate to send their daughters to school, saying, 'who would work if the girls were sent to school? One reason behind this being, the girls were destined to do the household works. "Often a girl would come to school carrying her younger brother or sister", records Pudaite (Pudaite 1963, 50). Till today, there is a feeling among some sections of the people that girls need not go for higher studies. A

very well-educated girl instills an uncertain feeling in the mind of the general people whether she will face difficulty in getting a qualified husband.

As in other patriarchal societies, a Hmar woman's space in the traditional society is limited. For instance, she does not take part in political activities: warfare and village elections, for example, are considered the prerogatives of men. In a traditional Hmar society, there are three prestigious positions: the head of the village, *Lal* and his *Khawnbawl* or *Siehmang* (courtiers), the village selected or elected *valupas* (youth leaders) whose main responsibility is making and executing rules for the maintenance of the village youth. In none of these coveted positions can woman get membership. In their natural form of worship, men alone lead and participate in ritual activities except in two cases. Therefore, women are heavily dependent on men for most political and ritualistic services. Though the male-dominated Hmar society gives authority to males and thereby limiting women's participating space, women are not wholly dependent on the men folk in all walks of life. A Hmar woman plays a remarkable role in the economic activity of the society.

1.7. Aim of the study:

The aim of the study is to present comprehensive details of the Hmar women's experience and their expressions of this experience in various forms within their cultural context. It aims to study how a woman as a subject situates and expresses herself. In focusing on their expressive behaviour, the study will, by employing theoretical perspective, explore areas and genres previously downplayed or overlooked by scholars in the production of knowledge. The study will incorporate ideas from the theoretical paradigm of Gender Theory while exploring the existence and performances of the women amidst the dominant culture of the Hmar society.

The aim of the study is basically to provide perspective that relies on the Hmar women's cultural experience and expression which in turn reveals their identity and selfhood. Though utmost attempt has been made to study and focus solely on the expressive roles of the Hmar women folks, at times there was a problem in focusing only on the women in isolation of the larger framework of Hmar cultural society.

1.8. Methodology:

The research work was undertaken by following a multi-disciplinary approach: it concentrated on Ethnicity, Culture and Gender Studies. In the preparation and compilation of the work, two kinds of data collection have been involved: data collecting through fieldwork and through deskwork. Primary data are collected through field work in the forms of non participant observation, indirect oral examination and individual and group interview method. Secondary data are provided by works published on the tribe by scholars and, by books and articles relating to the work under study and, works related to Gender Studies. Internet sources and relevant journal articles have also been explored to generate a theoretical paradigm against which the work could be contextualized. But primarily, the work is field intensive and the generation of primary data has become crucially important toward the compilation of the work.

1.9. Limitations of the work and future directions:

This research work has much of limitations. Problems were encountered during primary data collection. Though modern factors like Christianity cannot be directly blamed to have thrown out one's culture, the Hmar's widespread acceptance of Christianity by the early decade of the twentieth century, followed by a direct contact with the western world through education have been found to have indirectly repressed much of the tribe's cultures and mores that specifically have had direct association with their form of worship. While describing the Hmar's wonderful traditional textile technology, G.K Ghosh (1992, 124) authentically records, "However, the Hmars skill described above is gradually decaying due to corroding effect of western wind that is blowing the Hmar land below the shadow of the cross."

In the same page, he concludes his detailed entry on the tribe, "The music, the dance, the handicraft, the philosophy, the religion and all taken together the culture of the Hmar tribe is gradually vanishing from the face of our planet." And he inspiringly recounts the dire need to put consolidated efforts into preserving the rich rhythm of the Hmar cultures "to add new dazzles and rendered glitters to India's glory".

Many of the Hmars of Assam became Christians from the 1920's. (Thiek 2013, 227) Many of my informants passed on to me about some of the traditional practices of their ancestors that had died decades ago which they too had heard of from their parents and grandparents. There are only very few Hmar men and women who have had the privilege of participating in the observances of certain now died-out traditional practices of the tribe. This wholesale conversion stands as an obstacle in unearthing many pieces of information on the tribe's cultural practices. Besides, availability of written records on the Hmars of Assam is far from being sufficient to rely to carry a research on; more so, when many of the aged tribesmen who have practically lived and experienced the pure traditional life have left for their heavenly abode. Under such circumstance, carrying field-intensive research proves really challenging.

Within this limited source, the research was carried out relying on the all- existing traditional ways and valuable pieces of information shared by my informants and, of course, some died-out traditional practices that have been kept alive both in memory and in written forms by some few scholars, mostly the Hmar scholars. As a result, this research work has its own limitations. Utilizing the present work as one of references, future scholars can come out with a more substantial research work by incorporating larger primary and secondary data sources.

Endnote:

1. No Scheduled Tribe List, Census 2011 was available till the time of final write-up of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Expressive World of the Hmar Women: The Verbal Art

2.1. Defining Verbal Art:

By 'verbal art' the work means 'folklore' or 'folk literature' or 'oral literature'. The definitions of the term 'folklore' have been offered by many folklorists including Theodor H. Caster, Richard A. Waterman and William R. Bascom, to name few. According to Theodor's definition, 'Folklore is that part of a people's culture which is preserved, consciously or unconsciously, in beliefs and practices, customs and observances of general currency; in myths, legends, and tales of common acceptance; and in arts and crafts which express the temper and genius of a group rather than of an individual'. Richard A. Waterman's definition of the term cites, 'Folklore is that art form, comprising various types of stories, proverbs, sayings, spells, songs, incantations, and other formulas, which employs spoken language as its medium'. Whereas Bascom defines, 'In anthropological usage, the term folklore has come to mean myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, verse and a variety of other forms of artistic expression whose medium is the spoken word. Thus, folklore can be defined as verbal art'. (Leach et al 1984, 398-403) Despite slight difference in their definitions, the above given definitions of the term make it clear that verbal art is that part of a people's culture that uses language as its basic medium of expression.

Oral literature or the expressive literature is "spoken, sung and voiced forms of traditional utterances". (J. Handoo 2000, 13) Deep Punia too offers a definition of Oral literature as a spontaneous outburst of the innermost feelings which emerge from the depths of the unconscious mind of the community. Oral literature has its roots deep in tradition and is treasured in the individuals' memory. "It is a better projection of the innermost recesses of the socio-cultural life of a society reflected in its ethos which is the important content of the culture dealing with qualities that pervade the whole culture. In other words, it is a system of values." (Deep Punia 1993, 17-18) In common traditional usage, this has also been known as folk literature. Thus, verbal art is a separate area of inquiry which is different from cultural anthropology. This part of the study will focus mainly on the oral part or the oral

literature of the Hmar women by underlining a clear distinction between verbal art and the other folk life sectors like social folk custom, performing folk arts and material culture, and for which separate chapters have been formed in the thesis.

2.2. Different sub-genres:

This section of study includes genres of verbal art that employ language as its medium of expression that are available with the tribe. Those are the huge body of folk songs, proverbs and the various types of stories like folktales, myths, legends. It excludes genres like incantations, spells, war cry called *hlado* and mantras which belong to the domain of men: especially a male priest.

2.3. Folk Song:

In Hmar, folk song means *hnam hla*. Written literature is often said to be the outcome of the cultivated faculties of the poets, whereas, oral literature as a spontaneous outburst of the innermost feelings which emerge from the depths of the unconscious mind of a community. It has its roots deep in tradition, preserved in memory and passed down from generation to generation. The Hmars are found to have a strong poetic bent of mind which gets reflected in the form of their rich traditional poetry. They are said to have been fond of singing and expert in composing. Thiek (Thiek 2013, 29-32) mentions the names of Hmar traditional poets and poetesses where there are three named poetesses and one unnamed poetess. The poetesses are Pi Chawngmuok (also known as Pi Hmuoki), Chawngchir (Bapuinu), Ṭuonpui and Mr. Khuongpuitlur's lover. Bapui (Bapui 2011, 76) makes a special record of the renowned female composer, Pi Chawngmuok (Pi Hmuoki), whose song composing talent was so great that the male counterparts were afraid that she would exhaust all possible topics for composition leaving little scope for the future generation to compose. So they burned her alive with a gong. Lal Dena (Dena 2008, 79) calls poetry 'the foundation of the Hmar oral literature.'

In the pre-Christian era, that was a period before the invention of the Hmar scripts, the tribe mainly employed verses to express their feelings, emotions and impressions

of life. They narrated their everyday life memorable adventures, epoch-making events, natural calamities, war with neighbouring tribes, and their experiences in the course of their wanderings from their original homeland (Sinlung in China) to their present habitats in different parts of North East India with beautiful and meaningful verses. The pre-literate Hmar people possessed highly developed powers of memory. These inspired poetical compositions were made suitable for oral transmission by the use of beautiful rhyme and were orally passed down from one generation to generations. On discovering numerous songs and verses narrating the different shades of their everyday life experiences- their social, economic, cultural, religious and political life- poetry can be considered the most important source of information about the tribe: the Hmar man's attitude and reaction towards life's incidents, the values and dreams that he cherished. Poetry, like a clear mirror, reflects their life and cultural practices. As a medium of expressing their everyday life experiences, the Hmars have extremely rich and variegated folk songs.

For the sake of convenience, the vast body of Hmar folk songs may be classified into various categories which further can be divided into sub-categories: Love Song (*Lenglai Hla*), Lullaby (*Nau Awi Hla*), Agricultural Song (*Lo Sin Hla*), Festival Song (*Nipui Hla*), Victory Song (*Hnena Hla*), Children's Game and Frolic Song (*Naupang Inhnelna le Insukhlimna Hla*), Girls' Game Song (*Nuhmeite Inlenna Hla*), Young Ladies' Frolic Song (*Nuhmei Inlenna/Inhnelna Hla*), Marriage Song (*Molawm Hla*) and Elegy (*Lusun Hla*). While some of the folk songs are functional, reflecting the social activities or occasions, many are simply narratives or anecdotes of some old incidents or of some individuals with no thematic relatedness with the occasion sung for. Many of these songs have remained unsung in modern Hmar society.

2.3.1. Love Song (*Lenglai Hla*):

Hmar Love Songs are called *Lenglai Hla*. *Lenglai* means unmarried youth, *Hla* means song. These are songs of young love and desire, exultation and expectation. Although some pieces may be sung at any time to express youthful love, some are specifically meant to be sung at night after all the children of the house go to sleep. The songs are mainly sung with the accompaniment of *khuong* (drum) but songs under *Rawsem Hla*

are sung with the accompaniment of a particular musical instrument called *rawsem*, a mouth organ made of bamboo. While some verses rhythmically express intense love, some express frustrated and unfulfilled desire. These songs do not have any religious or ritualistic association. They are sung and enjoyed with great relish by the youths of the society in social life. The tribe has a traditional way of courting called *nunghak leng* where young men in group would court a village girl at night at her home. The main suitor is among them, the rest of the company-friends are his friends-cum helpers. They would fervently croon these compositions as a means of communicating their sentiment. Occasionally, the girl would join with some romantic verses to express her emotions. Hmar Love Song may be divided into three broad types: *Liendang Hla*, *Semruk Hla* and *Rawsem Hla*.

Liendang Hla:

Liendang Hla is a name given to a collection of love songs bearing name of individual. The songs of this sub-category are said to be composed by Liendang (a male composer) and many other later songs composed by different composers including female composers. The wordings of the *Liendang Hla* are steeped in high seriousness as the song expresses pangs of separation of two young hearts. The song is a forceful expression of physical longingness and deep emotion between a grown up male lover and his beloved. Though the song is dominated by the man's voice, it is intermittently enriched by the audible voices of the beloved that too lament and pine for the lover's company. The tune is set to slow and melancholic beat to suit the plaintive theme.

Context of the song:

A certain young man passionately fell in love with a young woman. For some undisclosed reason, the beloved's mother remained thwarted to their relationship. She was used to displaying clear symbolic message by forming dark grimy face when the lover courted the beloved. This unsupported behaviour of the mother gave a disturbing blow to the smooth-flowing romance of the two young lovers. Though they were very much alive and might have been residing in the same village, *inlêng*

(courting; wooing) became next to an impossible-business. Thematically, this is the point where the song begins. It begins;

“Tiena pi pu’n thlafamin hranglung an phun,

Suilunglengah Chaltuoiin hranglung ka phun.” (H.V Vara 1985, 2)

(Our ancestors erected a tomb in memory of the dead; I erect a tomb of a living person)

“Si-arin bawm khatah anlawi sieu a,

Zawnsielnu le keini’ndi kan kar a hla.” (H.V Vara 1985, 2)

(The heavenly stars gather at a particular place; My beloved and I are staying wide apart)

“I sâlungin kham naw rawh zawnsielanu,

Keima sanghalhriem tâwnah lungkham bâng rawh” (H.V Vara 1985, 2)

(Worry not my dear beloved; Trust your worries unto me- a reliable hero)

Against the backdrop of such a serious emotional outpour of the lover, the beloved, who equally is drawn towards maintaining the relationship alive and glow, croons some emotional lines to express her suffering love:

“Zan thim khuoi ang zing rêk ni ka chûnnu,

Thadâng hai kha kan siengah lawi ta naw ni.” (H.V Vara 1985, 3)

(My mother may again display dark grimy face; Yet, I shall not entertain other suitors)

“Ka lo hnâwmah rengte pau tha’n uoi ngawi a,

Thadâng tawngsân ka sawn nau ang kân dawn.” (H.V Vara 1985, 3)

(At the bottom of my jhum, an insect (cicada) chirped; I responded mistaking it to be my lover’s voice)

“Ka chûn tawng am I hrieta ka zuo tawng?

Kan sângin hi râldai ang I zuong riel a.” (H.V Vara 1985, 3)

(Whose criticism has hurt you- my mother or my father; That you have boycotted my houselike an enemy's camp?)

"Ka burtui hi a al da leh um raw se,

Lienlai valpa thadângpui hmuom naw dingin." (H.V Vara 1985, 4)

(Let my tobacco juice (nicotine impregnated water) remain for my lover)

Semruk Hla:

Keivom (L. Keivom 1980, 72-73) has kept a rather surprising record that songs included in *Semruk Hla* were mostly composed by female composers. This record indicates the possibility that during their Shan sojourn, women occupied a higher status than their counterpart. Women composed songs and men sang them. This means the realm of love poetry was once dominated by women. But this trend soon got altered. In post-Christian era, large number of women composed religious songs. Women might have considered composing love song a somewhat shameful vocation.

Songs included in *Semruk Hla* are special songs of young lovers which are forbidden to be sung in the presence of children. They are not sung unless children go to sleep. They are mainly sung at night. It was considered almost a taboo for children to listen to them. The songs express the deep romantic relationship between lovers and hence; thus, a taboo for children. The songs were composed during their settlement in *Shan*, present Myanmar. *Semruk Hla* originated, according to Keivom, out of necessity. In a Hmar society, young lovers did not have ample opportunity to express their most inner feelings because of one obstructing community convention. Young men in group courting a young lady together and, even staying for the night together in the lady's house was a common practice. This community practice had stolen young lovers' chance of having a warm tit-a-tat on romance. The only convenient chance for lovers to express personal feelings was during jhum visits. Lovers often grasped the opportunity to go together to and come back together from jhum. On such occasions, songs in *Semruk Hla* were mostly sung.

Semruk Hla is said to be dominated by songs composed by a female composer named Zawltling. According to L.Keivom, Zawltling was the most beautiful woman of the village. Many suitors approached her. She had a lover whose name was Thilchung. But because of Thilchung's poverty her parents were against their marriage as they were in the look-out for a wealthier groom. One night a wealthier suitor from a distant land or a neighbouring village sent *palai* (go between) to Zawltling's house. Zawltling's parents readily accepted the proposal while Zawltling was fiercely fighting against her parents in favour of her poor lover.

The song is in a dialogue form. The dialogue takes place among a lover, a beloved and the beloved's parents. By analyzing some of the available verses of *Semruk Hla*, we can summarize the context and theme of the Song as follows;

A young male lover is courting his beloved at night at the latter's house. The same night, another group of suitor comes to the girl's house from another village asking for the hand of the same girl. The dialogue of the song reveals that this go-between represents a rich suitor. The girl's parents are in favour of them over their daughter's present lover who is comparatively poorer than the new suitor. This incident unfolds the materialistic greed of the parents who, obsessed with the idea of magnetizing a more affluent son-in-law, are ready to betray and abandon the present lover of their daughter. Simultaneously, the dialogue portrays the beloved to be a faithful lover, who, despite his low economic standard, is clinging on to him. She is steadfast in her genuine love for him and is deadly against betraying him even for a better prosperous life. The first few lines of the song establish that the lover is sleeping on the floor as the new suitor-group enters. The girl instantly invokes her lover to get up and declare that they are engaged:

“Singkhuol palai zânin antlung a,

Dawhônga zâl chinmak zuong tho rawh.” (H.V Vara 1985, 8)

(Hark! A new suitor is coming from afar; Get up from the floor, my .dear)

*“Daw ðuonga zâl chinmak zuong tho la,
‘Ramlai lien ang ka huolsa’ hung ti rawh.”* (H.V Vara 1985, 8)

(Getting up from the floor; Tell them that we are engaged)

The girl addressing her parents complains,

*“Alei sumpêk relzâwlah in sie,
Thadâng sumpêk daw ðuongah in sie.”* (L.Keivom 1980, 71)

(You keep a rich man’s bride-price safely in a trunk bottom; You keep my darling’s on the floor)

*“Sum tin tamin Sieli kal naw ning,
Khaw ðhâl tui ang Vuoia nghak de ning.”* (L.Keivom 1980, 71)

(I will not marry a man for his wealth; I will wait for my darling till I wither away)

The parents apply all sorts of tactics to thwart and subvert their relationship. To belittle the lover and make him realize his insignificance, the parents sarcastically address the lover,

*“Pasal taka râlrêl ngam lova,
Lânu pheiphung khamluah i nei.”* (L.Keivom 1980, 77)

(Man goes to battlefield to fight enemies; You here are sleeping on your lover’s lap)

This poignant remark pinches the lover. He replies back,

*“Chutitaka zâwnsielanu ðawng,
Pasal ka’n thang mi lo ngai ve rawh.”* (H.V Vara 1985, 10)

(Why such a pungent remark? You will one day witness my chivalric deeds)

Burned with the desire to soon display his chivalric deeds, the lover then joined his tribesmen to fight the village enemies in order to prove his valour. The day they all returned back in great triumph, his sister went to the village outskirts to welcome his hero-brother and asked him to join his comrades who danced a victorious dance. But nothing moved the man Khuongpuithlur to dance a merry dance: the news that

during his absence, his beloved was married to another man fell heavily on him. He was overcome with a sense of deep anguish and irreparable loss over his fate;

His sister: "*Zuong tho rawh, ka chin Khuongpuithlur,
I lènrul hránsár an lám zova.*" (L.Keivom 1980, 78)

(Get up, my brother Khuongpuithlur; Your comrades of war have danced a victorious dance)

Khuongpuithlur: "*Lám ta raw se, ka lèn aruolhai,
Lunghnèmmu'n kieng dang a awi tah ie!*" (H.V Vara 1985, 11)

(Let my comrades dance a joyful dance; My beloved has married another man)

Rawsem Hla:

This collection of songs is named after a traditional musical instrument called *rawsem*. The lyrics are sung with the accompaniment of *rawsem* (a mouth organ; a reed instrument). Almost all the verses are deeply romantic in the sense they express deep physical longingness of two young burning hearts. Some of the verses of *Rawsem Hla* that have been collected reveal intense love and extreme longingness for one's lover, sometimes with erotic imagery. From the analytical reading of the verses, it comes to light that all the verses in this category were composed by women composers. The strong expressions are addressed to and/or referred to a male lover;

*"Thingthuhring leh vala hung léng la,
Tāngnēm chûl ka da awm hliek nawh."* (H.V Vara 1985, 15)

(Come to me my love with a wood-burnt light; Breast side fondling will not render me faded).

*"Awi ka nu, Lalruongin ka ne a them,
Them si lova, rawsem hung tum,
Awi ka nu e."* (L. Keivom 1980, 128)

(O mother, Lalruong touched my breasts. He touched them with his rawsem wave. O mother.)

*“Kan di naw chun e,
 Theibuong hrui khawm hungkawm sien la khawm;
 Lo di naw ning e.
 Kân di pa chun e,
 Suonñek te te hung kawm sien la khawm,
 Lo di de ningah”.* (H.V Vara 1985, 16)

(If a man comes even with an exquisite headgear, he will not entice me.
 If my beloved comes wearing even a smeared rag, I shall still love him.)

2.3.2. Lullaby (*Nau Awi Hla*):

A lullaby is a quite, gentle song sung to put a child to sleep or, a soothing song with which to lull a child to sleep. “The lullaby is “originally, a vocal piece designed to lull a child to sleep with repeated formulae” and “it is simple, soothing, rhythmic and repetitive”.....although the lullaby is deemed to be simple music, it is “colored by the thoughts, beliefs and feelings of the nation or race from which {it comes}” (Lavoie, 2-3). “Babies in all societies are lulled to sleep and young children comforted with the help of lullabies and nursery rhymes.....” (Datta et al 1994, 86-87).

In Hmar, ‘lullaby’ means *nau awi hla* in which *nau* means baby, *awi* means rocking and, *hla* means song. The literal meaning of *nau awi hla* can be given a blunt interpretation as ‘baby rocking song’. The Hmars have a very few number of songs that can be ascribed as lullabies. It is mainly because “baby-sitters, mostly the mother or the baby’s grandmother, either concoct soothing verses or sing any other ready-made songs available with them when they rock their children to sleep”¹. Some of the collected ‘lullabies’ are found to be gentle in tune with indigenous rocking rhythm. Indigenous tune is slow, simple, sad, melancholic and soothingly tender. Most of the verses are shallow and, devoid of any deep meaning while, some compositions testify the tribe’s semi-nomadic life by referring to the different hills, valleys and rivers they had crossed during the course of their journey. All of them are

marked by images of loneliness, fear and tender love. Almost in every lullaby, there is a mention or, an invocation, of either animals or insects, as in;

“In aw, in aw e, ka sangte hi dam sienla, tui khawm thing khawm phurthei tang ata, tuka turik turik e.” (author’s memory)

(Sleep, sleep. If my sister remains healthy, she will by now carry water and firewood, tuka turik turik e) Tuka Turik is a bird.

“Awi awi e, ka naute hi a in naw le a mit khuoihnang in a bel pek ding.”
(author’s memory)

(Oi, oi e. If my baby does not sleep, a bee will sting its eyes). The verse threatens the lulled baby with a bee-sting and, it elicits feelings of fear if the baby declines to slumber.

*“Hukdum zuonglera,
Phuivawm hukdum zuonglera,
Ai i ie hukdum zuonglera,
Senvung khuoi kaina
Khamrang senvung khuoi kaina,
Ai..ii..ie senvung khuoi kaina.
Awn ruoi thingpui tlu,
Liena awn ruoi thingpui tlu,
Ai..i..ie...Awn ruoi thingpui tlu.”* (Isaac Lalmalsawm Songate)

(A black crow’s perching on an *inzuong* tree. The bees form a hive on a red cliff. The tree leans forward to fall)

The song asks the lulled baby to look at the crow perching on the tree and the bees forming a big hive on a red cliff. It asks the baby to try to fall asleep as the tree that leans to fall.

*“Chawra va thlir ning e, rengte khuong awl awl,
Kei chu ki lung lam an leng ai ai.
Bungpui kan phun e, a zik a lera,*

Huoiva lo chuong e, ai ai.
Builukham ka tliek bawk e, puolleng ka tawng bawk e,
Kei chu puolleng tawng thiem e ai ai.” (Sumneizir)

(Viewing a chirping cicada insect from an open porch, I feel lonely. We planted a banyan tree on which a bee sits. I break a *builukham* (plant) twig, I find a large hornbill. I am expert in finding a large hornbill).

This kind of verses throws an interesting light on the psychological state of the rocking woman. Through these lines, she expresses her loneliness which is heightened by the lonely-bird imagery. She compares her loneliness with an insect chirping all alone on one of the branches of a tree. The lullaby here is more of a reflection of the singer’s psychology than of and for the audience.

“Rûntui a lienin Hmar tlâng kawl a sun,
Lengzawng kan buolna ai ai.
Lengzawng kan buolna, vai puon kan sawpna,
Vai puon kan sawpna ai ai.
Vai puon kan sawpna, kuonglu kan vaina,
Kuonglu kan vaina ai ai.” (Sumneizir)

(Flooded RûntuiRiver affected the Hmar village. The river where we bathed and washed *vai puon* (non-traditional cloths): the very river where many of us used to struggle for a space for washing our clothes).

This piece of Hmar lullabies is significant in the sense it testifies the fact that during their semi-nomadic expeditions, the Hmars did settle near the Rûntui River. This kind of folk songs has indeed become one of the founding resources for the Hmar historians who have attempted to trace the migrations and settlements of the tribe. Hmar writers like Lal Dena have kept a record, “Crossing the Thantlang and Lentlang ranges, some Hmar clans followed the Rundung (Manipur River) and entered the present state of Mizoram at Champhai. Hmar clans trailed the Rûn River together with the Raltes (one of the Mizo tribes).....” (Dena 2008, 4).

“Khiva mazute khi, zarpuia mazute khi,

*Patchawn a be liei liei, hmuithal raput liei liei;
Kap ning maw, kap naw ning maw,
Phedek-phawdawk-Phung.*” (Bapui 2011, 81).

(Up there, a little mouse is on the beam of the house. He wears cotton fluff on the ears and carries the arrow of a spinning gin. Shall I shoot it or not? Phedek-phawdawk-Phung).

One significant and interesting fact about the Hmar lullabies is- almost all of them are marked by animals or insects imagery. This lyrical piece, though essentially meaningless, sings of the presence of a little mouse on top of the sleeping child. Eliciting feelings of fear, it attempts to lull the baby to sleep by coercion. Another meaningless composition with an insect imagery is;

*(Khuva ka zun zina, Bunglerah ka zun zin a,
Aiumtenu'n puon a khawng, a zie te chu ŋiel dit det;
Kutsebi pathum pali ka nei,
Sielkhawthang chu pen aw ning;
Thangzawni chau peng ka tih.*

I travelled down the branches of the banyan tree. The spider was weaving a nice cloth whose designs are stripped. I have three-four rings. I will not give any to Sielkhawthang, but I will give only to Thangzawni). (Bapui 2011, 83).

2.3.3. Agricultural Song (*Lo Sin Hla*):

The Hmars are cultivators. They practise jhumming cultivation, also called shifting cultivation, the agricultural method of which is very primitive. The striking characteristic of their food-production activity is *lâwm*. *Lâwm* is a community labour or a corporate work which comprises members of both male and female workers. It is something like a corporate work in which young village men and women assist one another in paddy seed sowing, weeding jhum field and paddy threshing rotationally in exchange for similar assistance received or to be received. For all these chains of

agricultural activities, the tribe has different beautiful rhythmic work songs meant for each activity: jhum clearing songs, paddy seed sowing songs, weeding songs, harvesting songs and paddy threshing songs respectively. Heavy energy-consuming agricultural works are often lightly carried out in groups of men and women singing songs together while at work. The most common agricultural songs are Paddy Seed Sowing Songs, Weeding Songs and Paddy Threshing Songs.

Paddy Seed Sowing Songs (*Butukhuonglawm Hla*):

This is a collection of seed sowing songs. Though the Hmar elders and scholars differ from one another regarding the exact number of songs that fall within this jhum-work related activity, it is undeniable that the Hmars have a good number of songs for this agricultural activity. According to H.V.Vara the Hmars have a total number of fourteen seed sowing songs, whereas L.Chongtho Hmar collects a number of twenty-five songs that fall within the framework of this jhum-work activity. However, after thematic analysis of the different items, it is found that while few of the songs are reflective of the working community's physical movements, most of the songs do not have any thematic relatedness with the activity. They are not pieces enlivening the proceedings at various stages of the activity. Many of them are named after names of individuals; some are named after different hours of a day and some, named after some Hmar clans. The fourteen lyrical compositions, according to Sri H.V.Vara are sub-titled as: *Túk Hla*, *Zíng Hla*, *A Pa Hla*, *Hmunin Hla*, *Thênzawl Hla*, *Khârzawl Hla*, *Hla Laisam or Hla Bak inse*, *Zaiin Fe*, *Hla Thuokinsam*, *Sûnbu Fâk Inlawina Hla*, *Chawhnu Hmapût Hla*, *Ruosur Hla*, *Fe Pha Hla* and *Khiengthar Hla or Pâr Thun Hla*. Most of these songs are long- regular and irregular in metre. There are songs even with twenty three stanzas. The first song in the serial, *Túk Hla*, literally means 'morning song'. Early in the morning of the appointed day of community labour, the female and male work partners meet together in the village outskirts called *tinmun*. The drummer begins and the community joins the song. The day's festive corporate work begins with this song.

The twenty-five seed sowing songs collected by Sri. L.Chongtho Hmar are sub-titled as: *Ma Inranna Hla*, *Hla Thuok Sam* and *Tùn Lawi Hla*. These three sub-titled songs together form a *Chawhma Hla* (morning hour songs). This *Chawhma Hla* is followed by *Chawhnu Hla* (evening hour songs) like *Buolván Hla*, *Pakhât Pa Hla*, *Thaimak Nu Hla*, *Chongi Hla*, *Faihriemhai Hla*, *Tuoichong A Hla*, *Ngurte Hai Hla*, *Thiekhai Hla*, *Vaido Lai Hla*, *Sawn Len Dona Hla*, *Nunghak Tlangval Hla*, *Mother Thabo Hla*, *Sawm Riek Thlangvalhai Hla*, *Nunghak Le Tlangval Indi Hla*, *Fe Pha Tieng Hla*, *Vangkal Lalpu Hla*, *Fe Pha Hla*, *Ruo Súrna Hla*, *Khawhrite Hai Tinná Hla*, *Lam Lâm Hla*, *Lalchunghnung A Hla* and *Fapâr Lâmna Tuol Lâm Hla*. While some of the songs like *Mother Thabo Hla* (lazy new-bride song) express the laziness of a newly wed woman who stays back at home whole day unwilling to visit jhum and perform jhum work, some songs like *Nunghak Tlangval Hla* and *Nunghak Le Tlangval Indi Hla* (both lovers' relationship song) are expressions of a passionate love relationship between a young man and a woman with a strong imagery.

As found in both the collections, *Fe Pha Hla* (Return Song) is an indicative song signalling time to plough back homeward in the evening. *Ruo Súr Hla* (Rain Song) is a song that invokes rain to pour down on the seeded earth. This rain-invoking song is sung only on the evening of the last day of the work when the community labour accomplishes assigned work for each and every house of the village. It is sung on the way home. According to Sri. L., Chongtho, *Fapâr Lâmna Tuol Lâm Hla* is sung in front of the house of the day's host's by the community where one of the *lawmnus* is made to dance a *Tuol Lâm*, also called *Fapâr Lâm*. In the two collections, the song lyrics greatly differ. In songs like *Ruosúr Hla* and *Fepha Hla*, some wordings are same.

Weeding Songs (*Lo Thlo Hla*):

This is another collection of work songs named after jhum-work activity called *lo thlo* (weeding grass). Like Seed Sowing activity, this agricultural productivity phase is also based on *lâwm*, community labour and mutual assistance (consisted of male and female work partners). Here too, the Hmar elders and scholars differ from one

another regarding the exact number of songs. In Sri. H.V Vara's collection, there are about fourteen different songs that rhythmically account the different expressive behaviours of the community at work. Whereas according to Sri. L.Chongtho Hmar, there are about forty-nine songs sung during weeding activity. Many of the songs, if not all, are believed to have been composed by female composers, recorded L.Keivom (1980, 242). Many of the songs in this category are named after names of individuals. Some are named after different activity-signalling times of a day. The Weeding Songs of the tribe as found in his *Hmar Hla Hlui* 1985 are sub-titled as: *Hla Pui, Zawllai Hla, Hbranchawn Hla, Tuoni le Neilal Hla, Zawlchawng le Hránga Hla, Inrennu Hla, Hraichawng Hla, Chawnpui Hla, Chawngngo Hla, Hla Bâkinse, Khuong Hma Hnaw, Hma Suo Tâwm Hla, Fe Pha Hla and Lam Lâm Hla (Inlawi Puma Sak)*.

The forty-nine weeding songs, according to Sri L.Chongtho Hmar's collection, *Hmar Hai Tobul Hla Bu Pakhat Na* 1987, are sub-titled as: *Zing Hla, Neltulien A Hla, Darsalien Hla, Vaichâng Pa Hla, Sirdem A Hla, Faihriem Hai Hla, Tusing A Hla, Lawikhal A Hla, Zuolin A Hla, Chawngninga Hla, Laltuoi A Hla, Chawndem A Hla, Khausenpa Hla, Hmasuo Hla, Thaianu Hla, Hmañumna Hla, Hma Ran Hla, Hlathuok Sam, Dit Puongna Hla, Neihril A Hla, Haungo Hla, Kângburhai Hla, Neirawi A Hla, Liensuo Pu Hla, Chawhmuhla Bul, Hrailien A Hla, Thachawngngur A Hla, Khuongpuingur A Hla, An Vângpa Hla, Darlawng hai Hla, Thainu Ruolhai Hla, Hlapui Thluk, Zuotuol A Hla, Lalchunghnung A Hla, Muollungpa Hla, Fepha Hla Awi, Saipa Hla, Zawllaii Hla, Huoimuolli Hla, Hrangpui A Hla, Neilal A Hla, Thlanrawk Pa Hla, Mitdel Chongi Hla, Dara Hla, Tuoingum A Hla, Man Ran Hla, Hmasuo Hla, Ma Zawltumna Hla and Fepha Hla. Thematic analysis of items in both the collections reveals that most of the songs do not have any thematic relatedness with the performed-activity. Almost all the songs are named after an individual person- male and female- who is perhaps the composer of the song and some, after a specific Hmar clan.*

As in Paddy Seed Sowing Songs, not only the sub-titles, lyrics greatly differ in both the collections. In songs like *Hma Suo Hla* and *Fepha Hla*, though the lyrics are different, we find the same thematic concerns. *Hma Suo Hla* (Near to-completion Song) expresses the ongoing work that is near to completion; *Fepha Hla* (Return Song) is an indicative song signalling time to plough back homeward in the evening.

Paddy Threshing Songs (*Buchîl Hla*):

Threshing of rice paddy is done mostly in *suorthlâk* (raised platform) and *hrizawl* (a threshing ground) in front of or nearby the jhum hut. It is mostly the young men who tread upon the paddy to separate the corn from the chaff, while young women make balls of chicken coop size out of the ears of paddy and pass them to the working men. The community often makes a festival out of threshing of rice paddy by giving melodious rhythm to the work in the form of singing Paddy Threshing Songs. While threshing, the working community sings *Hau Hla*. *Hau* is equivalent to 'hausá' (rich) in meaning. *Hau Hla* may be classified into different sub-categories like: *Laltuoi A Hla*, *Keiler A Hla*, *Haktuoi A Hla*, *Lâmsier Pa Hla*, *Neingo A Hla*, *Dawnpa Hla*, *Thildem A Hla*, *Chawndem A Hla*, *Dârdem A Hla*, *Kienglai Hla* and *Khuongngovi Hla*. (L.Chongtho Hmar 1987, 132-139). All the songs are named after names of individuals. The language of the songs is archaic and uncommon.

2.3.4. Festival Song (*Nipui Hla*):

The Hmars celebrate two types of festival (given in Chapter 3). During individual festivals, *Dârlâm Hla* and *Chawnlâm Hla* are mainly sung and danced by village young men and women. During *Bu In-Ei* ceremonies, besides the above two titled songs, other folk songs called *Budel Hla* and *Luopui Hla* are also sung. *Darlâm Hla* and *Chawnlâm Hla* are songs that glorify and praise the rich host. *Darlâm Hla* is an exaggerated narration about the consecutive days the community sings and dances in front of the house of the affluent hosts who pierce mithun:

“Zing inzâwn zing inzâwna e,
 Kan tuolhmai zing inzâwna ka lungdi aw e;
 Kum tin chalrâng kan suna e,

Kan tuolhmai zing inzâwna ka lungdi aw e.” (H.V Vara 1985, 17)

(Consecutive mornings, consecutive mornings,
In our lawn for consecutive mornings,
Every year we pierce a mithun,
In our lawn for consecutive mornings)

Chawnlâm Hla invocatively sings about the need to revive the pristine old cultures in the celebrating house of the victorious host:

“A mi’n anlo hril maw e,

Vân khin alo hril maw e;

An chawngchai rûn daw cham chungá;

Ei nun thiem ang sîr ta rawng e (3).” (Hmar MIL Monitoring Committee, 129)

(The crowd has apprised about it,
The heaven has apprised about it,
Let’s impersonate our culture
On the dais of the victorious).

Sikpui Lám has its own song called, *Sikpui Hla*. *Sikpui Lám* has about eight types of dances and many songs. According to Dr. Thiek, there are about one hundred and twelve *Sikpui* Songs. (Thiek 2013, 309) Eight of the sub-titled songs are: *Durte Hla* or *Buontlaw Hla*, *Thlawrân Hla*, *Hla Pui*, *Anrân Hla*, *Hlatlâng Hla*, *Saia Ke Tet Hla*, *Sim Sak Hla*, *Palsáwp Lámna Hla* and *Ṭinna Hla*. The *Hla Pui* (main song) as recorded by Sri. L. Chawngtho and Sri. H.V Vara is different in lyrics and theme. The *Hla Pui*, according to H.V. Vara’s collection can be considered one of the grandest epic songs of the tribe because of two reasons: it tells us about the adversaries the tribesmen confronted with while they were preparing for a *Sikpui* festival. Besides this, the song is, to quote Prof. Lal Dena, “self-explanatory and vividly refers to the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and the events that followed before and after they crossed the Red Sea” (Dena 2008, 10). Thus, based on this kind of self-explanatory folk songs, the Hmars have a tradition that links their origin to the

Israelites. There are some among the tribe who believe that they are the lost tribes of Israel.

HLA PUI:

*“Sikpui inthang kan ur lai a,
Châng Tuipui aw, Senma hrili kang intan;
Keralawna ka leido aw,
Sûnah sùm ang, zânah mei lawn invâk e;
Ântûr asa thlu a ruol aw,
In phawsiel le in râlfei leh zuongtho ro,
Sûn razula ka leido aw;
Kera lawna mei sùm ang lawn invâk e,
Sûnrazula ka leido aw,
Laimi sa-ang châng tuipuiin lem zova,
Ava ruol aw la ta la,
Suonglung chungã tui zuongpût kha la ta la.”* (Louis L. Keivom 1990, 25)

(While we are preparing for the Sikpui festival,
The big red sea becomes divided.
As we march forward fighting our foes,
We are being led by a cloud during day and a pillar of fire during night.
Our enemies, O ye folks, are thick with fury,
Come out with your shields and spears,
Fighting our foes all day, we march along
As cloud-fire goes afore.
The enemies we fight all day, the big sea
Swallowed them like beasts.
Collect the quails, and fetch the water
That springs out of the rock (Dena 2008, 10)).

2.3.5. Victory Song (*Hnena Hla*):

There are certain social achievements that are considered 'victory' by the tribe. Those are: a successful hunting expedition which the hunter beckons the villagers with from a pinnacle nearest to the village by chanting a *hlado* (a war cry; triumphant, victory song), the village men and women keeping wake with the head of the animal bagged for the one whole night celebrating the successful hunt amidst drinking, singing and dancing which the tribe calls *Salu Meng*. If a man returns home with enemy head/heads he has bagged, the village men and women would keep a wake of celebration with the head for the one whole one night amidst drinking, singing and dancing. Such nights are called *Rallu Meng*. The Hmars have songs for such nights of victory. Those are titled as: *Salulâm Hla*, *Rallu Lâm Hla*, *Sadel Hla* and *Zarva Hla*. All these are *Hranglâm Hla*.

Hmars have different *hados* for different animals. The texts of *hlado* are the most performed and narrative in nature. While *hados* are meant especially for and sung only by men-hunters, women take active part in the singing of the other victory songs. The victory songs, thematically, are expressions of the successful hunting expeditions. The full lyrics of Victory Songs are found in *Hmar Hai Tobul Hla Bu Pakhat Na*, 1987.

2.3.6. Children's Game and Frolic Song (*Naupang Inhnelna le Insukhlimna Hla*):

In Hmar, children means *naupang*, game means *inhnel*, frolic means *insukhlim* and song means *hla*. As is natural with children of all societies, Hmar children also play various games; many of which are accompanied by illustrating songs. Most of the Hmar traditional children games are open to both boys and girls. While they play traditional games, children sing the melodious and illustrating songs that explain the performed games. The games are joyously performed generally on moonlit nights till bed time. To perform such recreational activities, children mainly choose wide playfield of the village. Their games and songs are highly indicative of their traditional life, their philosophical outlook, their ability as minute observers of the

world surrounding them and their imitative talent regarding the different behaviours of the animals around. Some of the songs contain fragments of their legends concerning their physical movement in search of settlement. Besides games played on moonlit nights, there are a good number of games played during daytime. This category of children daytime games is mainly performance-based games with no much accompanying songs except some games like girls' game songs concerning weaving. While some of the traditional game songs are devoid of meaning, most of them contain deep significance. Below are some of the collected children songs:

Children kneel in a straight line on the ground keeping their two hands behind their back, palms open. One participant is made to sit alone in front of the kneeling line facing the children. One person with something in hand will move at the back of the lined children from one extreme end to the other end and place the thing in one of the children's open palms. The moment the child places the object in one of the palms, it will ask the child sitting in front to guess in whose palm it keeps the thing. If the person guesses it wrong, the game will start afresh with the song. If he guesses it right, the holder of that object joins his side and the song will continue afresh and go on until there is only one person left in the line. This game is interesting as it is a 'Find It Out' games that requires right guessing on the part of the guesser.

(Pi pe sai nawkah, sai nawka te changpan a,

Piring parang aikawm deng;

Khaw hin am ka sie hre thei rawh?

Dik dek takah, aikum rawk.

Grandma gave me something. It may be a snail shell or chutney. Now I am keeping it on someone's palm. Where have I kept it? Find out.) (Bapui 2011, 81).

The children look up at the sky. Addressing the different satellites of the Universe, they joyously sing this song. Thematically, the song may be of no much meaning but it is indicative of the tribe's knowledge of Universe and the different satellites.

"Thlapa puon mi pe pe,

Arasi'n a lak tah.

Arasi puon mi pe pe, Chawngmawi in a lak tah.

Chawngmawi puon mi pe pe, thlapa'n a lak tah." (author's memory)

(O Moon, give me cloth, the star has taken it. O Star, give me cloth, the pole star has taken it. O Pole Star, give me cloth, the Moon has taken it).

There is another interesting game representatively reflecting the tribe's main concern of defending family poultry from carnivorous animals like wolf, jackal and fox. Children stand in a straight vertical line holding the immediate predecessor's hip tight. One participant is made to stand in front of the line facing the others in the line and, that person metaphorically is the animal. The person makes earnest attempt to get hold of the last child in standing which metaphorically is the poultry. The children in line sing the short song over and over again as they sway right and left in the attempt of defending the poultry. If the person is successful in clutching the last standing child, it is assumed that the animal has got hold of its prey. The children sing as they play;

"Ka arsa fa naw ti nih,

Arkhang sa fa naw ti nih." (author's memory)

(You will not eat my chicken. You will not eat my cock)

Though most of the children game songs are devoid of great logical value, there are some verses that reflect philosophical insight of the children. There are lyrical pieces that reveal children as minute observers of surrounding objects- both animate and inanimate. Here, we get to know how well informed they are regarding the life span of a particular underground cricket called *khuongbai* which perishes in as autumn season sets in. They sing;

"Khuongbai uo chirit,

Thlaram pha leh ram ka ta,

Ka elpui hi pam ta raw se,

Khuongbai uo chirit." (L.Keivom 1980, 120)

(Woe unto me, a cricket! Come September and I perish. With my lovely thighs, oh, how sad! Woe unto me, a cricket! (Translated by L.Keivom)

Children let loose their hair and sing the song as they imitatively sway their head left and right as a lizard and sing;

*“Kīngā lu thlēleka,
Laikīng alu kīngālu thlēleka
Dārkaṅwl sum seka,
Ama Dārkaṅwl sum seka.”* (H.V Vara 1985, 75-77)

(Lizard sways its head; Lizard sways its head left and right, left and right)

At times, Hmar children- male and female- below fourteen years of age prepare *zu*, drink, sing and dance joyously together under moonlit nights. On such occasions, they mostly sing *Naupang Lawm Zu Hla* (Children Frolic Songs) and other songs titled as *Liendang Hla*, *Zawntui Hla* and *Khiengthar Hla*. Besides these, the tribe has Orphan Songs (*Nau Fahra Hla*): In Hmar, orphan means *nau fahra*, song means *hla*. This short verse contains in its simple wordings of a pathetic situation of parentless children who in evening time chant this melancholic line as they watch other parents of the village treading back from their jhum visit. Those parents come back with abundant jhum-produced edibles for their children at home. They bring young cucumbers which they break and share among themselves. The orphan children sing;

*“Mi nuhai hlak mi pahai hlak an hung zo tah a,
Fanghma tuoite an hung phur a;
Kāng berei sawk, kāng tliek bawk.”* (H.V Vara 1985, 83; L. Keivom 1980, 125)

(Others' parents have come back from jhum bringing young cucumber which they break and share among themselves)

2.3.7. Girls' Game Song (*Nuhmeite Inlenna Hla*):

There are traditional girls' recreational games where members of the opposite sex are excluded. While most of the game songs are meaningless, there are some that throw significant light on the socio-cultural life of the tribe. S.M. Channa maintains, “Children's games are primary means for socialization. Through them, carefully chosen and structured bits of reality are presented to participants. The games clearly

reflect patterns in adult life.The lessons of the games are indeed preparation for life, or more aptly, life itself.” (S.M Channa 1998, 11)

In Hmar, girl means *nuhmeite*, game means *inlénna/inhnelna* and song means *hla*. One noteworthy feature of Girls’ Game Songs is that, almost all the songs are highly reflective of the tribe’s physical movements in its semi-nomadic life. Some of the verses can be considered as valuable ballads of the tribe as they recount the different events, and encounters the tribe had faced with during their journey. Besides, from some of the Girls’ Games Songs, we get to know the name of the other ethnic tribes with whom the Hmars migrated and settled.

*“Rûn tui kawi e,
Râltenu le Râltepa leh kan inkawia,
Rûn tui kawi e.
Sielin a ki a zâr inhnuoiah,
Chalrângin a ki a zâr inhnuoiah.
Hrui sen e, hrui sen e,
Tahlaizawla hrui sen e, ele saw saw”.* (H.V Vara 1985, 81)

(We wade through the meandering Rûn River with Ralte men and women. Mithun lay down its horns on the ground. We harnessed it with a red rope.) (Lallawmkung)

This section of the Girls’ Game Songs contains fragments of legends concerning the physical movements of the tribe- the rivers they crossed as they moved southwest from Sinlung (their supposed homeland in China) or from Burma and the name of the other tribesmen they migrated along with. One of such rivers was Rûntui. These lines tell us that the Hmars moved along with the Raltes, another sub-tribe of Mizos. Some of the verses bear the name of *Zamadiei*. *Zamadiei* was believed to be their king during thir sojourn in Rakhen village in Burma. The king once visited China and brought home a beautiful glittering red neckless which was highly appreciated by all people. (J. Batlien 2007, 20). Thus, we have this part of the tribe’s history in the lines:

*“Zamadiei thi a tha ber,
Saktieng Rûn ral kawl a deng,*

Zamadieï." (L.Keivom 1980, 117)

(Zamadieï's neckless is the best. Its fame spreads far East)

Another Game Song of Hmar girls is reflective of the traditional position of female children in a Hmar society. In a traditional Hmar society, each mother cherishes and pays serious attention towards orienting her daughter with the art of weaving. Since childhood days, mothers make *tatebêm* (small imitative loom) for their daughters and teach them the art of weaving in their imitative loom. A Hmar woman's life is considered limped if she does not know the art and technique of weaving. The song reflects the immediate reaction of an inapt amateur weaver who is confused with the art:

"A zie sir bawkah,

Zie khang zie sir bawkah;

A dungin maw sir ka ti?

A khangin maw sir ka ti?

Zie khang zie sir bawkah." (R. Tawna Khawbung 2005, 243)

(How will I make the design- along the warp or along the weft?)

Another Game Song that too touches upon a weaving business testifies the tribe's belief in two different locations of human settlements: a group of people residing in hilly areas and, another group; in an underground. The verse below reveals the Hmars' belief in the existence of some underground men while they ascribe themselves as hillstribes:

"Keini chu tlângmi kan na,

Tlângkhangah puon kan khawng a;

Ta ta durlai, durlai e.

Nangni chu khur mi in na,

Khur sungah puon in khawng a.

Ta ta durlai, durlai e." (R. Tawna Khawbung 2005, 241)

(We are hillstribes; we weave on the hill side. You are underground men; you weave in the underground.)

2.3.8. Young Ladies' Frolic Song (*Nuhmei Inlênna/Inhnelna Hla*):

On moonlit nights, Hmar young ladies of marriageable age used to sing and dance frolic dances under clear starry sky. While some of the dances are merely performed for amusements, some dances like *Fahrel Tâwk Lâm* (Pestle Dance) and *Kawl Tet Lâm* (Loom Dance) reflect their traditional life: women's traditional responsibility of paddy pounding and weaving. Though a modern product, the traditional frolic song of *Fahrel Tâwk Lâm* is included in the Verbal Art of the tribe for a valid reason. This Pestle Dance, popularly known as Bamboo Dance has been one of the traditional dances of the womenfolk of the tribe. The beautiful Dance used to be performed without the accompanying-song. The history of the tribe reached a situation when it was felt to have an accompanying song to the Dance. The song was finally composed in 1952 by H.Suokhum of Muollien village, NC Hills district of Assam (Thiek 2013, 167) and the Dance was enthusiastically presented on the historic occasion of the Inauguration Day of the District Council in 1952 at Haflong. Since then, this festive song gained much popularity in all the Hmar inhabited places in North East part of India, mainly in Assam and is now widely sung today. *Fahrel Tâwk Lâm Hla* goes like this:

*“Zantieng vangkhuo sumtuol zawlah,
 Lenruol kimten nun kan nuom;
 Phei vawr sieusieu chawnban vai mawi,
 A ri'n vangkhuo a nghawr vel:
 Thlengthleng, tettet, thlengthleng, tettet;
 Chinlai lenruol zaleng an mawi,
 Sawrthlapui eng riei hnuoiah.
 Tiena pipu'n Tuolfasumsuok,
 'Lasi rauleng' ti'n lo ð;
 Keini ruolthar nunkhuo nuomna,
 Sikpui khuongchawi ieng lo nih;
 Lengi kân rawh, vâl mawi zui rawh,
 Ngûr sakhming mawi kawrvaipa tuol-*

Zawlah kan rem mawi sieusieu.” (L. Keivom 1980, 246-247).

(At eventide on moonlit night,
 Circle of friends, we gather;
 Falling in steps, sway to rhythm;
 As in festivals of yore.
 Tleng-tleng tet-tet, tleng-tleng tet-tet;
 One cannot but be in a jolly mood
 Amongst such a company.

In days of yore, ancestors fear
 Spirits and ghosts which abound;
 We now re-live past festivals
 As we enjoy life dancing.
 ‘Jump up lady’, ‘Follow young man’,
 We now enjoy life as we dance
 In the lawn of officials) (Thiek 2013, 171).

There are other forms of sing-and-dance genre which Hmar women alone perform. One of them is *Inchâwm Hla* (Jumping Song). Thematically, the song is ill-focused. While the first two lines talk of a bright full moon that jumps out like a mithun from its harness, the third and fourth lines emphatically express how a woman rejects a man (no matter how rich) she does not love while unconditionally accepting a man (no matter how poor) whom she loves;

“Sorthlapui tu siel ang zuong suok (Vanlaizawl a el).....2
Alirlaia Awkpa’n an lem (Sorthla pâw rawh ie).....2” (L.Chongtho Hmar
 1987, 142).

(A bright moon jumps out like a mithun,
 An eclipse swallows it at its brightest).

“Ke’n din aw kha chun (Theibuonghrui khawm zuong ahli sienla lo madi
naw ning).....2

Kan dipa kha chun (Suonṭek ṭek khawm zuong ahli sienla lo madi de ning).....2” (L.Chongtho Hmar 1987, 142).

(He whom I do not love may appear with a beautiful head-gear, but I won't choos him,

He whom I love may come with a raggd head-gear, I shall still choos him).

There is a weaving song that beautifully highlights the traditional handloom instruments, the cloth designs and the names of Hmar traditional cloths, ideally sung by women when they sit weaving in their handloom. The song is called *Nemrâng Puon*. It runs;

“Vawisun chu ram ṭuon zai khawm hi rel chuong lovin,

Rûnin sungah tapuon khawng zai ka rel;

Pheivawn le kawlseke, tliem le tukdet, tinbu,

Ṭaizel le tânhna, kawl le famkim in.

Ka khawng a, a zie te chu ṭel dît dît,

Rawng chi tinrengin ka chei.

Par ze tinrengin ka cheimawi a,

Nemrâng ka khawng.

Sawngtelaivel, lenbuongṭhuom, kikieu, thalpuï zie,

Kawkpuizikziel le disul, fanghma mu;

Dawichang, muthlakawi, harzai, siellutun hmaizâp,

Amkar le zawngdaikal, rawng chi tinrengin.

Sei! Ka khawng zo nemrâng puonlaisen, ngotekher,

Bawta puon le tui bo puon, thangsuo puon;

Dawi puon le lungum puon, hmar âm le khiengkawi puon,

Ngotlawng le Hmar puonhai, rawng chi tin hmangin.” (R.Tawna Khawbung

2005, 43).

(Free translation:

Today, staying back from jhum activity,
 I shall remain indoors, sitting with my loom;
 Pheivawn and kawlseke, tliem and tukdet, tinbu
 ʔaizel and tânhna, kawl and the whole set.

I weave a texture with tiny stripes,
 In different contrasting colours,
 Embroidering with varied flower motifs,
 I weave a *nemrang puon*.

Sawngtelaivel, lenbuongthuum, kikieu, thalpuie zie,
 Kawkpuizikziel and disul, fanghma mu;
 Dawichang, muthlakawi, harzai, siellutun hmaizâp,
 Amkar and zawngdaikal, using varied colours.

Sei! I have finished weaving *nemrang puonlaisen*, *ngotekher*,
Bawta puon and *tui bo puon*, *thangsuo puon*;
Dawi puon and *lungum puon*, *hmar âm* and *khiengkawi puon*,
Ngotlawng and all other *Hmar puon*, using varied colours.)

The tribe has *Rawsem Hla* (Rawsem Song) and *ʔingtang Hla* (Guitar Song). The songs of this category are sung with the accompaniment of the respective musical instruments. In *Rawsem Hla* category, there is a song called *Nunghak-Ruol Thing Lakhai Hla* (Young Ladies Firewood Foraging Song). The lyrics and wordings of the song are simple. It's all about the young ladies' encounter with a harmless tigress inside a jungle which instead of making an attempt to attack the bevy of ladies or run away, is dancing in front of the damsels;

"Kin thing fena kamkei an rum ie; zâm tum loin doite a lâm ie!

Zâm tum loin doite a lâm ie, Keipui zie ʔiel a va sa mawi de." (L.Chongtho Hmar 1987, 154)

(We saw a tigress where we foraged firewood. Instead of running away, she danced. How beautiful are the stripes on her body!).

2.3.9. Marriage Song (*Molawm Hla*):

Like other societies of the world, the Hmars too, have marriage ceremonial songs. Those songs are titled as *Khiengthar Lâmna Hla*, *Zawntui Lâm Hla*, *Mauleng Hla* and *Liendang Lâmna Hla*. (L. Chongtho Hmar 1987, 90). The titled songs are further divided into many sub-categories. The themes of each song, on analysis, are found not to have any close relatedness with the celebrated occasion. They mainly are the anecdotes of some bygone incidents or heroic figures. Of these, *Mauleng Hla* is especially sung during bride send-off ceremonies. All of these songs are also sung during other occasions like- *lawm zu dawn* and child naming. *Lawm Zu Dawn* is an occasion of social amusement where young men and women prepare *zu*, sing, drink and dance together at night.

One informant, Sumneizir, narrated that in the house of the groom, the arrival of the new bride is joyously celebrated by serving great lavish *zu*. After the celebration is over, women folks join in the joyous singing of *Mo Thuoi Hla* (Bride Song) A woman, generally the new bride, beats a drum while a man dances as the participants- male and female- joyously sing the marriage songs.

2.3.10. Elegy (*Lusân Hla*):

The Hmars have a number of elegiac songs. "But they do not sing them in all cases of death in the community. They sing mourning songs only on such occasions when a

rich man or an aristocrat of a village dies" (Ruolseikhup Puruolte). When such man dies, the tribe sings elegiac mourning songs titled as *Hla Thu Thiem*. The different songs that fall within this section are sub-titled as: *ThiVaithlâk Hla*, *Buolthlaw Hla*, *Hrangvawn Nu Hla*, *Pu Vawnhmang A Hla* and *Khuongpuithlûr A Hla*. (Hmar 1987, 143-145). Except the first sub-titled song, all of these songs are named after names of individuals. *ThiVaithlâk Hla* is forbidden to be taught to others. A man or a woman must learn by himself/herself. If at all someone need be taught teaching is given only

in *tinhmun*. Only those women who have reached menopausal stage and men who no longer have minor babies can participate in the singing of the song called *ThiVaithlák Hla*. Singing of this particular song is linked with soul departing moment. If the community fails to sing the song at that critical parting moment of one's soul, it is believed that the deceased will fail to arrive at the land of the dead.

Besides all the above-categorised folk songs, the tribe has other short social songs titled as *Hlachawm Hla* (Short Song), *Muchiei Hla* (Sleep Song), and *Lung Lák Hla* (Stone Collecting Song).

2.4. Proverb:

'Women and men are two of the most frequently manifested stereotypical categories in the proverb material', writes Daniel Andersson and 'these categories are created and maintained within a social context and that the distinction between them is fundamental for the culture in question' (Wolfgang Mieder 2007, 235). And in proverbial literature, woman has been often made a prominent theme for criticism and comment. 'Proverbial philosophy has long agreed that woman is a complex creature, little understood', says T.F.Thiselton-Dyer (Dyer 2009, 5). 'In many patrilineal ideologies, women are seen as unnecessary or superfluous, yet at the same time vitally important to men.....yet theirs is a power opposed to formal norms' (Rosaldo et al 1974,32).

Many paremiologists, including Wolfgang Mieder, find it difficult to offer a clear cut definition of term, 'proverb'. But proverbs are generally conceived as statements of wisdom and absolute truth of humanity. While being conceived as short and concise statement of truth, it is important to note that proverbs illustrate and reflect cultural practices and values and transmit them from one generation to generation while revealing many 'hidden aspects of a people's culture and way of thought' (Storm 1992). Frank J.D'Angelo (1977) categorically mentions one important value of proverbs- that they embody habits of thought, customs and moral values.

In Hmar, proverb is called *thuvar*. In some cases, it is also known as *thurosie*. But *thurosie* mainly refers to sayings pertaining to superstitious fears. In this section, I use

the word 'proverb' in a rather broad sense, including all sayings and statements that are prevalent among the tribe and which, the tribesmen often employ as ready-made comments on personal relationships and social affairs. I have separately dealt with the concept of *thurosie* and how the Hmar men internalize and reflect it in their social life in Chapter 3. While collecting the proverb materials, utmost care was given to only those pithy statements that explicitly refer to men and those that implicitly or metaphorically refer to the male sex. Before displaying the few women proverbs collected, I want to focus and highlight the Hmar women in representation in the verbal behaviour of the Hmar tribe to get to see their socialization and positioning in the community as manifested through the use of language in proverbial lore.

Traditional proverbs about women:

Nuhmei le ui chu lo inrum lungawi ve mei mei raw hai se. (Let a woman and a dog bark as they like to pacify themselves.) This statement literally means that women are treated as inferior beings. A woman is given a property that is expressed metaphorically: the dog's inferior position in the animal kingdom is transferred to the human domain.

Nuhmei le pal chu nuom hun hun a thleng thei. (A wife and a fence can be replaced at will). This reveals how wives are traditionally supposed to remain voiceless and passive even under the most unpleasant condition. The quality of an inanimate object (fence) is transferred to a wife.

Nuhmei varin tuikhur ral a kai nawh. (A woman's wisdom does not travel beyond a village water-hole). While selecting site for a village, the availability of a water-hole was given utmost importance. Fetching water from there was considered a part of a woman's domestic job. The wisdom and intelligence of a woman is limited to the household affairs where she best performs her role as a woman. Her wisdom does not go beyond her realm.

Nuhmei var le bui mei tawi. (A woman's wisdom is like the tail of a mole-rat). The meaning of this saying is similar with the above mentioned one. A mole is believed to possess a short tail.

Nuhmei thu, thu ni lo, aisa, sa ni lo. (A woman's word is not a word as crab is not a meat). This statement refers to the negligibility of a woman's words by drawing animagery of a crab's scanty amount of flesh which is not considered as a full-fledged meat.

Nuhmei le bahra chu a ngul zir. (The growth of a woman and a yam depends on the trellis). It is said that yam vines grow up to 50 feet tall (if it is growing on trees). Since this is not recommendable, yam should be provided something to climb on like, a fence or a trellis. Yam plant can be invasive if grown in warm wet areaseor,if not mowed or attended to.

Nuhmei le khuoihliin umna ding an hriet nawh. (Woman and boils do not know where to situate themselves). Boils are mostly found on the back, stomach, underarms, shoulders, face, lip, eyes, nose, thighs and buttocks. But they may also be found elsewhere; anywhere. A woman referred to here is an unmarried one. The context is: she is stupid and does not apply any rationale in choosing a husband.

Nuhmei le pilbel chu a dawm thiem thiem. (Woman and earthen pot need a caring hand). This cliché is to the same effect as the German proverb: 'Frailty, thy name is woman'. A woman is a fragile thing and as such, she must be gently handled failing which, she breaks.

Nuhmei pakhat enkawl theitu chun rambung pakhat a enkawl thei. (A man who can look after a woman can look after a nation). Proverbial philosophy has long agreed that a woman is a complex creature, little understood, most inconsistent and full of contradiction. A man who can understand such a complicated creature is considered a 'truly clever man' (Dyer 1906, 5).

Nuhmei le uite chu dai pei thu thu. (Woman and puppy are attracted towards those who caress them). This refers to the hollowness and the undecidedness of a woman.

Nuhmei tawng le vawk kawng dawng. (Woman's words and pig's trails end nowhere). Woman's words do not contain deep meaning as pig's trails never cross a village boundary.

Keipuiin a zie a thup thei nawh. (A tigress can not hide her colour). In this metaphorical aphorism, animal imagery is used in passing a satirical comment on the allegedly chameleon-like nature of a woman. No matter how an unmarried woman conceals her true nature, it gets exposed after marriage as a tigress can not hide her true colour. This saying is generally uttered in reference to the fiery temper of a newly married woman.

Sakhipui a sen, a te khawm a sen (A red hind breeds a red fawn). Like a red female deer breeds red children, a wicked mother (not father) breeds wicked children.

Nuhmei le aiin sakhuo an nei nawh. (Women and crabs have no religion). A married woman has to join her husband in his faith no matter what her original faith was. She has no will of her own.

Nuhmei tawng le zantieng a va in hram dawn lo ding. (A woman's word and a bird chirping at evening should be ignored).

Nuhmei naunei le uipui inte mani-a in rel fel ding. (A woman (wife) and a dog giving birth should take care of themselves.)

Nuhmei thalo le thir thalo. (Bad wife and bad metal). A metal not hammered properly is re-sent to the blacksmith the process of which is likened to a wife who can be 'hammered' correct by the husband.

Nuhmei var in kawt a kân nawh. (The wisdom of a woman does not cross a door). This statement signifies that a woman's traditional territory is her household. Her wisdom does not cross beyond her domain.

Nuhmei tha chu a pasal ta dingin rangkachak mawitak le lunghlu nek khawm in a mawi in a hlu lem. (A good wife is more preferable than glittering gold and diamond). This saying indirectly indicates the rarity of such good wives.

Against this many a saying on the women folks, sayings that explicitly or metaphorically refer to the male sex are very less in number. In this connection, one of my informants, Mawia Pudaite said, "Hmar women hardly spoke out. Silence was essentially, their prominent trait. The wives considered obedience to their respective husband their obligation. They hardly challenged the then prevailing social norms."

This information seems reliable and authentic as supported by my field work experience. Despite my utmost attempt to extract sayings on the men folks, all my informants took time to recollect pieces of any such proverbial lore. The few proverbial expressions that explicitly or metaphorically refer to the men folks are:

Thing phur khat le pasal invai ding a um nawh. (There's no dearth of a single load of firewood and men)

Pasal thangtlâwm le lungsen nuhmei hmaa naw chun tuiang a nem el ngai nawh. (An angry fierce man dissolves in front of his wife)

Do le râl hmaa tlâwm ngailo vâl khawm, a thai tâwnah dawl ang a zawr. (Even a persistent soldier in the battlefield dissolves like a taro plant (*Colocasia esculenta*) in front of his wife).

Hmeithai in a luma, parawl in a dei. (A widow's house is warm, a widower's; desertedly cold)

Nuhmei in a pasal a ð ngai nawh. A hmangai a ni ruok chun a pasal lungril ditzawng in a um hlak. (A wife does not fear her husband. It's only because she loves him that she acts to please him).

Nuhmei varin In a bawl. (A wise woman builds a home)

Nuhmei thu awi chu pang damna. (Obedience to women saves skin)

Thus, if we make a kind of 'compare and contrast' between the two manifested stereotypical categories given above, we find that much more than women passingsharp pungent statements against men, men make more acutepungent criticism against the women.

No doubt, culture shapes and influences verbal behaviour of social groups in profound ways. In Hmar traditional society, women hardly spoke out their innermost mind: they were profoundly obedient and submissive to their husbands/ men folks. Most probably because, since time immemorial, men had controlled access to language, speech and to education and they maintained the conventions and norms of certain genres of speech that may represent women as marginal or inferior. In this connection, Sri Mawia Pudaite again remarked that Hmar women felt unease to speak out their innermost feelings as expression of such feelings is a kind of challenge

against the tribe's social structure with men at the apex of the hierarchy. Joan Swann too, in her article, maintains that women feel unease at 'speaking out' which is symptomatic of their alienation from patriarchal language.

2.5. Prose Narratives:

According to William Bascom's definition (Alan Dundes 1984, 7), 'prose narrative' is "an appropriate term for the widespread and important category of verbal art which includes myths, legends and folktales". These three forms of the verbal art are related to each other in the sense that they offer detailed account of a series of events in a free form of text. This sub-division of the Section will include the different forms of oralliterature in prose or prose narratives.

In Hmar dialect, any composition narrating stories, a series of events or ideas or even anecdotes in prose form is called *thusep*. This classification can also include modern literary forms like, essay, autobiography or article the names of which sub-genres are not available in the ethnic terminology. Going by the features of all the traditional prose tales available, the Hmar's prose narratives can broadly be classified into three forms: *thusim*, *thurachi* and *tienami*. *Thusim* accounts for the origins of living creatures and other phenomena in the remote past. *Thurachi* accounts for both victorious deeds of culture past heroes and the history of migration of the tribe in recent past. *Tienami* accounts for amusing and entertaining stories revolving round timeless and placeless human or non-human characters. *Tienami* can again be classified into different sub-forms depending on their respective features. Thus, the ethnic categories correspond to Western categories as represented by Bascom's tripartite scheme of myths (*thusim*), legends (*thurachi*) and folktales (*tienami*). Among the tribe under study, it is mostly the mothers or grandmothers who narrate these tales to their children and grand children. This folklore genre falls within their domain.

2.5.1. Myth (*Thusim*):

Myths as one form of prose narratives are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past. "Myths are prose narratives which, in the society in

which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past. They are accepted on faith; they are taught to be believed; and they can be cited as authority in answer to ignorance, doubt, or disbelief" (Alan Dundes 1984, 9). Myths are testimonies that attempt to explain the world, the culture, the society and the cosmological concepts of the tribesmen. As they are taught to be believed, they are blindly accepted on faith. Many of the Hmar myths are aetiological by nature: they are not necessarily associated with theology and ritual. The main characters are of two types: human beings and animals or insects with human attributes and the actions are set in the earlier or other world (the sky or underground, for instance) than our present world. All myths available with the tribe mainly recount one account- origin of the different phenomena of nature. Below are given some of the most famous myths available with the tribe: The Origin of the Eclipse (*Thla Áwk Lem Inṭanna*), The Origin of Earthquake (*Lir Inhning Inṭanna*), Origin of some domestic Animals (*Ran Thenkhat Hung Suok Dân*), How the Dog Lost His Horns (*Uiin a Ki A Sukhmang Dân*), The Origin of Man and Creation (*Mihriem Bul le Thilsiem*), How the Crow Became Black (*Va-ak Hung Dum Dân*).

The Origin of the Eclipse (*Thla Áwk Lem Inṭanna*):

One day, a certain powerful king enjoyed an evening nap. In his dreams, he saw partial solar eclipse of the moon. When he was awake, he explained to his courtiers and subjects how he himself had converted into the eclipse and was trying to swallow the moon and that he was unsuccessful in his attempt. On being surprised by such news, the subjects closely examined their king's lips and to their utter surprise, they found that his lips were indeed badly injured and cracked. The next year, the king passed away and he ascended the sky and converted into the real eclipse. That night happened to be a full moon night and the eclipse tried to swallow the moon. But because of the large size of the moon, he failed. The next night when the moon size became smaller, he tried again. On seeing this, the people started making noise by beating drums, gongs and cymbals. The eclipse being frightened by the noisy sound released the moon. To this day, whenever an eclipse occurs, the Hmar people start making tumultuous sound to drive away the eclipse.

The Origin of Earthquake (*Lir Inhning Inñanna*):

Once, a dung beetle dug a hole deep into the earth so deep that he reached the nether world inhabited by the dead. The inhabitants of the dead village became skeptical of this unwarranted visit and took this uninvited guest to be a spy who came down from the upper world to spy on them. In order to defend himself and save his skin, the beetle began concocting a story to their king named *Hnuoihmangpa*, that all the people in the upper world had perished and he himself was the lone survivor looking for a shelter. Thereupon, in order to verify his claims, the king shook the pillars that were supporting the upper world. Consequently, a great earthquake occurred on the surface of the earth and the living beings there shouted, "We are alive, we are alive" and began making all sorts of tumultuous sounds by beating drums and gongs. The dung beetle got caught with his false statement and they severely punished him by pinching his lying lips with the blacksmith's pincers. To this day, that incident is believed to be the reason why the dung beetle has flat lips. And during earthquakes, the Hmar people often loudly shout, "We are alive, we are alive" hoping that the earthquake will quickly pass and leave them secured and safe.

Origin of some domestic Animals (*Ran Thenkhat Hung Suok Dân*):

Most of the domestic animals have their own anecdotes concerning their origin as the tribe believes that they are born in different ways. The cow is believed to be born out of *ofúmmu* (oom-moo, that is gourd seed) and that is the reason why when they make sound, call sound like *úmmu*. This crying sound, to the tribe's belief, justifies its origin. The pig is said to have come out of Ri Lake, a lake that flows between Burma and Mizoram. Because of this place of origin, when the Hmar people make a summoning call to their pig, they say *ri ri ri* or *ri-te ri-te ri-te*. And it is believed that the pig recognizes and responds to this summoning call. The fowl is said to have come out of a boggy marshy place which is called *chir* in Hmar dialect. So the Hmar people summon the fowl by making a sound *chir-chir-chir* or *chiri-chiri-chiri*. And it is believed that the bird recognizes and responds to this summoning call (Bapui 2011).

How the Dog Lost His Horns (*Uiin a Ki A Sukhmang Dân*):

It is believed that in the beginning, the dog had two sharp horns. One fine day, the mistress of the dog pounded roasted sesame seeds in a mortar. The sweet aroma of the pounded sesame that filled the air reached the dog. It tempted him to lick the mortar after the mistress had taken out the maothwatering paste. As the dog tried to insert his head inside the mortar to lick the remnants of the paste, he was unable to reach the bottom with his horns. He opened his horns, kept them on a clothes-line and he started to have the paste with great gusto. Just at that moment, a he-goat which was then deprived of any horn passed by. On seeing the horns, the he-goat felt tempted to try them on his head. He tried and they were perfectly fit on him. Just then, the dog looked up only to find that his horns had been suitably fitted on the goat's head. He asked for them but the goat refused and began to run. The dog chased him and ever since that incident, according to the tribe's belief, the dog runs after the goat whenever he finds one. This seems to justify the tribe's famous expressive phrase *ui le kêl ang* whose literal meaning is 'like dog and goat' that metaphorically express a condition of enmity between two persons or groups.

The Origin of Man and Creation (*Mihriem Bul le Thilsiem*):

There was complete darkness upon the earth that caused untold disturbances and miseries to the people. As there was no firewood, the successful hunters burnt the skulls of the hunted animals. But that did not last long. All of a sudden, drastic human transformation occurred: human beings were transformed into different types of animals. Finally the whole world was peopled by animals of different species.

There was a great king who had anticipated such a grievous tribulation. He had hidden his treasures inside a stone cave and closed the entrance with a stone slab. In course of time, human beings were born out of that cave. That cave was called Sinlung. It was from that Sinlung, human beings were led out in couples to inhabit the world. After several couples came out, the cave keeper closed the lid of the cave again. All these couples later became the progenitors of the different ethnic groups that are now found on the earth.

How the Crow Became Black (*Va-ak Hung Dum Dân*):

Once, there was a man named Zawlpal. His beautiful wife, Tuolvung was snatched away by a man named, Phunthie. The two separated lovers, forced to stay in different villages, longed for each other in unfathomable degree. Zawlpal, out of sheer loneliness, touched no food and drinks for months and months together. At last he died. The villagers of Zawlpal decided to send someone to run an errand to Tuolvung. Since the path to the village where Tuolvung stayed was too dangerous and risky, they decided to send birds. First, they requested a crow to be the messenger. "Crow, can you carry and convey the message to Tuolvung?" "Yes", the crow replied. "How would you deliver it?" "Caw caw" replied the crow. "No, you can not do" said the angry villagers and they dyed him in black.

Though the main characters in Hmar myths are not human beings, they are found to have human attributes. The characters- birds, animals, supernatural power, village chiefs, deities- with human attributes account the origin of the world, of mankind, of creation, of earthquake and of eclipse which the tribe considers them as the embodiment of dogma.

2.5.2. Legend (*Thurachi*):

In comparison with the myths, the legend is a traditional story sometimes popularly regarded as historical. "Legends are prose narratives which, like myths, are regarded as true by the narrator and his audience, but they are set in a period considered less remote, when the world was much as it is today." (Alan Dundes 1984, 9). Hmar historical legends exist only in the form of stories narrating about social heroes. They are believed to have been set in a period less remote where the principal characters are human. The main characters are believed to have inhabited the present world in the recent past. More secular than sacred, most of Hmar legends tell about the past folk heroes in relation to their victories, ruling dynasties and physical prowess. In Hmar legends, more than the narratives, the legendary figures become important and, well remembered and cherished by the tribesmen. Some of the tribe's famous legends circle round adventures of great culture male heroes like Sura, Lalruong, Lersi and

Zingthlo, Hrangkhup and Thawnglai, whose accounts are believed to be true.

Thus we have the legends after the names of the heroes.

Sura:

Sura, popularly known by the Hmar children as a clever trickster, is the name of the famous legendary figure of the tribe. He lived in the village of Khawtoṭim and belonged to the Hrangchal-Lawitlang clan of the tribe. He is said to have been born during the tribe's sojourn in the Himalayan region during the course of the tribe's journey from Sinlung (their original abode in China) to Burma. He is famous for possessing uncommon personal traits in him. He is known to be the most stupid and numskull figure of the legendry heroes. At the same time, there are many anecdotes that recount him as an uncommonly clever and intelligent man. He is said to have possessed a robust physical structure with awesome physical strength. He married a Misimi lady whose name was Thairawnchawng whom he doted with utmost love and care.

Sura was the progenitor of the Hrangchal-Lawitlang clan who ruled over Champhai plains of Mizoram, a village which was inhabited by more than 7000 persons. That indeed was a big settlement for their time. He enriches the world of Hmar prose narratives with his many amusing anecdotes.

Lalruong:

Lalruong also known as Ralngam was the lovely son of Zauhrang and Zawtleipui. Zawtleipui was the adopted daughter of the Chief of Tasuong village. Since his pre-natal stage, when Lalruong was barely three months in his mother's womb, it was aware of weather. It used to forecast the weather and advise its mother when the latter was preparing for jhum. Even his birth was miraculous. As soon as it came out of the womb, it slipped through the hole in the bed and caught a rat under the bed and showed it to its mother. Lalruong grew up to become a very strong powerful man. He even inherited magical powers from a fairy named Vanhrik. He was a good hunter who many times saved his village from the danger of wild animal attacks. There is a

popular folk song called *Thlunglu Chán Ei Tiu* invoking folk heroes like *Lalruong, Lersi* and *Luopui*;

*“Kan pu Lalruong, pu Lersi le Luopui,
Aw kan ngai cheu mi ̣huoitu dingin...”* (author’s memory)

(O our heroes- Lalruong, Lersi and Luopui,
We long for you to lead us)

Lersi and Zingthlo:

During the tribe’s settlement in ShanState of Burma (Myanmar), there were a great many chiefs including Lersi, Zingthlo and Luopui. Lersi and Zingthlo were brothers: Lersi ruled over territories in the south and, Zingthlo ruled over northern territories. They were rich, righteous and benovelent chiefs who captured the ardent admiration of their subjects in their respective kingdoms. The famous Khompat Banyan Tree in Burma is believed to have been planted by Luopui (Thiek 2013, 95- 97).

Hrangkhup and ̣hawnglai:

Hrangkhup’s period belonged to the historical period just after the Hmars had entered into the Indian territories. Hrangkhup was a poor orphaned boy who later was adopted by the chief of Zielung village. In course of time, Hrangkhup grew up to be a fine brave man and he earned many credits for defending his village. He later came to be known as ‘The Protector of Zielung village’.

Just about the time when Hrangkhup was ruling the Zielung village, there emerged another strong warrior named ̣hawnglai from a Biate village. A war broke out between the two sub-clans of Hrangkhup and ̣hawnglai. That was believed to be the first war waged on fellow tribesmen. The savage killing of that war is recorded in the following verse;

*“Tiena rawkhuo an siena khaw Sinlunga,
Hrangkhup le ̣hawnglai nun khuo lo pham;
Simbupa lai that tira awnthing lerah,
Thangchawi lo lam vatin bin gang an lo khai.”* (Bapui 2007, 224)

(A long time ago, coming out from Sinlung village, Hrangkhup ang Thawnglai enjoyed their lives. They observed an owl on the branch of a tree, killing and celebrating success which they imitated).

2.5.3. Folktale (*Tienami*):

It is generally believed that folktales are primarily told for entertainment. And, “they are believed to be fictitious” (Dorson 1972, 60). “Folktales are prose narratives which are regarded as fiction. They are not considered as dogma or history, they may or may not have happened, and they are not to be taken seriously.....Folktales may be set in any time and any place, and in this sense they are almost timeless and placeless” (Dundes 1984, 8). But, contrary to the most common claim that folktales are told only for amusement, for the Hmars, they serve as another form of lullaby. Among the Hmar tribe, tale-telling tradition is carried on by women. Hmar folktales may be considered as ‘nursery tales’ as they appeal mostly to small children: mother often narrates them to her children especially during bed-time until they go to sleep. Hmar folktales do not only recount the adventures of animal or human figures, there are narratives where fairies, ogres and even deities appear. Among the tribe, folktales are not narrated in public gatherings. The hundreds of fantastic folktales of the tribe with diverse themes can be classified into different sub-types depending on their respective features. The different sub-forms of Hmar folktales are: *Human tales*, *Love tales*, *Animal tales*, *Human and Fairy relationship*, *Stepmother tales* and *Orphan tales*.

Human tales:

Many of the tales centre round human characters, mostly males. The identity of all the males is constructed as superior in terms of physical prowess, authority and status both in household and society. They are generally portrayed as strong and successful hunters. Some of the famous Human Tales are ‘Chemtattepu’, ‘Tawtaw’, ‘Paruol Pasari’ (The Seven Brothers) and ‘Lahmang’. ‘Chemtattepu’ is an amusing tale about a certain man called Chemtattepu, who was sharpening his dao in a river. It tells us a story how, during the process of his work, a crayfish came and pricked his testicle. And how, angered by the incident, he sliced off the bamboo nearby. ‘Tawtaw’ is a story of two sisters the younger of whom is named Tawtaw. Tawtaw, the greedy and

selfish sister did not want to share a cucumber with her elder sister. Angered by this, the elder went to the mound in their garden and get herself completely buried inside the mound. 'Paruol Pasari' tells the story of seven brothers who had gone out to the wild forest to avenge the death of their father. But in the process, they were outwitted by the tiger and he killed them all. 'Lalmang' is a story about how Lalmang, a great king asked several questions to his councilors and that he who would give correct answer would be promoted as his chief councilor. In all the given questions, his cook named Berbawr outwitted all the other councilors and Berbawr was later promoted as the chief councilor as promised by the king.

Love tales:

Hmar Love tales account three types of relationships: one is genuine love affairs marked by true painful longingness undergone by the two lovers; second one is marked by the characteristic of imbalanced or out of equilibrium relationships where a very beautiful maiden is married off by an ugly man; third is marked by features of marriage on auction where pretty maidens are given out by parents with selfish conditions. To the first sub-type of this type belong tales like 'Tuolvung le Zawlpal' and 'Tuoni le Neilal'. 'Tuolvung le Zawlpal' is a story of a young man named Zawlpal and his beautiful and faithful wife, Tuolvung. A certain magician named Phunthie, who was charmed by Tuolvung's beauty, married Tuolvung with magic spells. Ever since Phunthie carried her off, Tuolvung and Zawlpal have been forced to stay separately in different villages. And the rest of the story is about how the couple misses each other to the point of death. 'Tuoni le Neilal' accounts a romantic story of the two lovers Tuoni and Neilal who even after having undergone a long period of longingness could not finally get united because of Tuoni's mother pointless apprehension that their marriage did not seem to be ordained by God. To the second sub-type belong tales like 'Mauzungrakal' and 'Sawrlai'. 'Mauzungrakal' is a story of how a very beautiful daughter of a village chief, Chawnpui had to marry a very ugly village man named Mauzungrakal. Chawnpui was the most beautiful maiden of the village whose hand every young man of the village coveted. But, Mauzungrakal, a very ugly man who also suffered from leprosy impregnated her and married her. 'Sawrlai' is a story of how the only daughter of a great king, Sawrlai was forcibly

carried and married off by an undeserving man of the village whose name was Vawmpahrawng. To the third sub-type belong tales like 'Vanchunglaizuor' and 'Pawthir le Hrangchal'. 'Vanchunglaizuor' tells a story of how Tlumte gets the hand of Vanchunglaizuor, the most beautiful girl in the eastern land. Vanchunglaizuor's parents agree to Tlumte's marriage proposal with conditions that Tlumte arranges firewood for them to last life time and also never ending fountain by the side of their house. Tlumte fulfills these two conditions with the help of animals through magic spell. Monkeys help him by bringing a huge heap of firewood from the forest and crabs help him by filling the well Tlumte had dug with saliva. In 'Pawthir le Hrangchal' tale we find that a very beautiful maiden named Kungi, under the magic spell of Sairampa, suffered from a serious illness which her parents could not cure even after trying all sorts of animal sacrifices. Finally, the disheartened mother of the maiden made a public announcement that anyone who could cure her daughter should marry her irrespective of his position or social standing. Here we have the very magician who was the cause of Kungi's illness, came forward. And having got this golden opportunity, he married her despite Kungi's reluctance.

Animal tales:

There are a good number of tales with animal and bird characters. Some of the famous ones are: 'Artuite' (Egg), 'Rungnu le Zawngte' (Rungnu and Zawngte) and 'Chungleng le Hnuoileng Indo' (War between Flying Creatures and Walking Creatures). Animals are attributed with human qualities.

Human and Fairy/Demoness relationship:

There are a number of tales that account for the human-like relationship between human males and fairies or demonesses. Those are tales of: 'Sichangnei', 'Sarhang', 'Sakhilawngdar', 'Ngamtawn', 'Sirate', 'Neithangzai' and 'Buonhlele le Lasi' (Buonhlele and Lasi). Fairies are generally beautiful, endowed with enchanting power in their hand.

Stepmother tales:

There are also tales with very conspicuous motif of step-motherly treatment meted out to orphaned children. For different reasons under different circumstances,

husband's child or children receive cruel treatment from their mother-in-law. Rivalries are formed among the same gender generally between a stepmother and a stepdaughter. Some of those tales are: 'Mauruong', 'Lawmtling le Chaltawn' (Lawmtling and Chaltawn), 'Thala le a Sangpa' (Thala and his Brother) and 'Thuitling le Ngambawng' (Thuitling and Ngambawng). In these selected pieces of folktale, conflict between stepmother and stepdaughter is the main thematic concern: the stepmother's partiality of her own daughter over the stepdaughter. The conflict is often beyond control. The stepmother's figure is emphasized by accentuating her cruelty: the step-daughter's by exaggerating her sufferings. There are no tales found that characterize co-wives.

Orphan tales:

There are also tales that simply narrate the situations of orphan children in the most pathetic heart-touching manner as in 'Lamlir' and 'Liendo Le a Sangpa' (Liendo and his Brother).

Conclusion:

In this section of folk life studies of the tribe, we get to know the traditional value of Hmar women. While lullaby as a sub-genre of folklife studies is dominated by women, it may not be an exaggeration to say that female composers dominate the Love Song genre as well. There are a good number of female composers who have contributed in large volume to the *Semruk Hla*, a sub-category of Love Song. Some of the renowned female composers like Pi Chawngmuok (also known as Pi Hmuoki), Pi Chawngchir (also known as Bapuinu) and Tuonpui (also known as Tuoni) composed catchy songs in praise of nature, in praise of individuals, in praise of someone's house and in praise of someone's horses. Few composers, Tuonpui being one of the few, composed romantic songs of love, yearning and enduring passion (Thiek 2013, 29- 32). Other female composers named Chawngngo and Hbranchawn, who lost their respective family members, composed mainly elegiac songs.

(L.Keivom 1980, 46 & 57) Zawllai, another female song composer composed songs of romantic content. (L. Keivom 1980, 48) Most of the songs in *Semruk Hla* were composed by another female composer named Zawltling (L. Keivom 1980, 71). This indicates the possibility that during their Shan sojourn, women occupied a higher status than their counterpart. Women composed songs and men sang them. This means the realm of love poetry was once dominated by women. Besides Lullaby and Love Song, tale-telling tradition is carried on by the women. Tale-telling, for Hmar mothers, serves as another form of lullaby as they often narrate these to their children during bed-time until they go to sleep.

Chapter 3: Expressive World of the Hmar Women: Social Folk Customs

3.1. Defining Social Folk Customs:

Social Folk Custom is another very important area of folklore and folk life of a community. Its studies mainly concerns on the community observances of the people rather than the individual skills or performances. “Here the emphasis is on group interaction rather than on individual skills and performances” maintains Handoo (J. Handoo 2000, 17). Of community observances of the people, we generally refer to the different social customs and ritualistic observances performed at the time of birth, puberty, marriage and death, generally known as ‘rites of passage’. This area of studies also includes the rituals and customs associated with traditional festivals, indigenous modes of worship and agricultural activities. Other customs and ritualistic practices that are observed for the sake of rains and agricultural prosperity and for warding off natural calamities such as floods and famines are also included within the ambit of this section. Folk Custom comprises the part of cultural life that people of that community have created, practised and transmitted in their endeavors to satisfy their needs at various stages of their cultural social life. Deep-rooted in the cultural life of the community, folk customary practices are passed down from generation to generation in a temporal dimension and spread from one place to another in a spatial dimension. This folk custom is a community process. It acts as a dynamic resource for collecting the social data of that community. It provides a point through the people’s culture from which the values intrinsic in that community may be easily gathered. Thus, the study of Social Folk Custom provides us a good understanding of the society and the culture of that community.

3.2. Different sub-genres:

The different sub-genres that will be included within the ambit of this section here are the different customary practices associated with ‘rites of passage’, the nature of belief in supernatural powers like the traditional beliefs and customs, traditional holy dreads, traditional female deities the tribe believes and worships and, role of women

in religious rituals; their different rituals and customary practices associated with group observances in hunting and agricultural activities, festivals, folk medicine, fruits and vegetables foraging and institutionalized custom of courting girls where female members of the society get importantly involved.

3.3. Rites of Passage:

A 'rite of passage' is a ritual event that denotes marking a person's transitional phase from childhood to the last stage of human's life. It is the social customs and ritualistic observances performed at the time of birth, puberty, marriage and death. The Hmars do not have much elaborate set of rituals performed on events related to birth, puberty, marriage and death. But they have their own set of social customs in every transitional stage except for pubertal stage.

3.3.1. Birth Rites:

As mentioned earlier, the community performs a simple set of traditional observances at different transitional phases of life starting from childhood to the last stage of human's life. Even event of birth is marked by simple ritualistic observances (with less explicit religious aspect) with the tribe's own social customs of tending the occasion. Fertility is considered the completion of a woman and it is the most cherished and desired incident in her life. If a wife miscarries babies after babies or, if her successive children die shortly after their birth or, if she is barren, the Hmars perform a fertility rite called '*Theibabul Inthawi*' (Sielmat Bible College 2010, 77) to ensure fertility to the wife. In this sacrifice, *thiempu* invokes heavenly god and earthly god to enable the woman get conceived to give birth to a number of living children. An informant, Lalramhnem said, "If a new bride shows her fertility by conceiving the month she gets married, it is greatly welcomed by the in-laws. We even used to mark such joyous incidents by killing animal, inviting the entire kinsmen to feast on it." A pregnant Hmar woman generally develops a great desire to eat sour things or sweets. Some pregnant women desire to eat small pieces of sandstone called *lungbuot* and some; *ziel vâm* (cigarette ash).

However, there are no folk songs sung on child-birth events. But event of child-birth is marked and solemnized with a simple community observance. The Hmars are said to be equally happy at the birth of both male and female child. In patriarchal societies like the Hmar society, continuity of the lineage, no doubt, depends on a son. Practically, preference is to have at least one son, the biological root of the family. Yet, there is no record of a girl child being less desired or less welcomed.

Moreover in Hmar culture, a girl's marriage does not involve heavy expenditure for absence of dowry system like we find in other communities of India. Birth of a child in a family, irrespective of the sex of the child, is considered a happy event. However, there is one remarkable thing at the time of child-birth. The tribe has a less elaborate set of birth rites called *piengni sakhuo*. After a child is born, *Nau Lai Ât* is performed. *Nau Lai Ât* is cutting the umbilical cord "with *tlaihnât* (a sharp blade made of bamboo). *Tlaihnât* is obtained from the right pillar (from inside) of the main door for a son, and from the left pillar for a daughter" (Mawia Pudaite). This customary practice of *Nau Lai Ât* is performed "generally by an expert old woman of the village" (H. Thangzo). If a female child is born, those relatives or other people sitting near the mother never fail to remark, '*se man ding*' (for the price of a mithun). This refers to one of the Hmar customary practices of '*mo man*' (bride-price). A girl child is often nicknamed *Sieli* or *Sielpui*, a female *siel* which means 'mithun'.

"Seven days following the birth, the new born is *Ser-awp*. *Ser-awp* is a custom of confining the baby within the four walls of a room" (Ngulkhumchawng). This customary observance is entrusted to the child's caretaker- either its lactating mother or its grandmother. During these seven *Ser-awp* days, *Sâwlhna* (a bunch of green twigs) is hung in the two exterior sides of the main door with a stem of *aihriela* laid across the head of the main door. Informant, Ngulkhumchawng informed that *Aihrie* (a plant of tall grass of ginger family) is traditionally believed to have the power to prevent any kind of harmful germs. Hanging of *sâwlhna* and *aihrie* is an indicator that the family observes *ser-awp* and that no visitors or guests are allowed to enter that house. "On the seventh day, inmates of the family observe *umni inkhâm* (staying back from all kinds of works including jhum work) as this day is called *lu inmat*

ni(the day the two sides of the child's skull get joined)" (Mawia Pudaite). As most infants die before or on the seventh day, a new-born child outliving this day is expected to live. On this day, the child's caretaker would with one hand carry the child and in the other hand, would bring a *thingthubawng* (wood-burnt light; a log burning at one end) and a *patzânte* (a short thread piece) and go out of the house up to *silphit* (doorstep connecting the lawn and the house). In the doorstep, she would burn the thread piece in the burning log and say out loud,

"*Naute meisentuol kan in suo ta ie*" or "*Meisen leh tuolkan suok ta ie.*"

(Lienchawngtho)

(With a burning log, we have stepped out of the house)

This is a rite that indicates the *ser-awp* period is over. Visitors and guests, including *thiempu* and *thiempi* are now allowed to enter the house. During the *ser-awp* period, the lactating mother is treated with most gentle care. She is made to bathe in the *namthlâk* (downhill side of the house, raised about one foot above the main floor). "She does not perform any domestic work including cooking because, she is impure" (Lienchawngtho).

According to H. V Sunga, in one of the immediate days following the seventh day, naming of the new-born baby is solemnized where the parents summon a *thiempu* or a *thiempi*. The *thiempu* (priest) or *thiempi* (priestess) performs *Zu Sâwr Pei* ritual or *Tui Pei* ritual. It is a ritual that requires the performing priest to put a mouthful of *zu* in his/her mouth and instantly throw it out while chanting a mantra. This mouthful of *zu* is *khawhri*'s share. *Khawhri* is an evil spirit who the tribe believes need to be pacified with *zu*. This observance centres round the tribe's belief that *khawhri*, an evil spirit used to visit each and every new-born child. "If *khawhri* is not pacified with *zu*, he is believed to take revenge on the parents by killing their new born child" (H.V Sunga). Mostly near and dear relatives are invited for the *hmingsakna* (naming). The naming of the baby is performed either by the child's paternal grandparents or maternal grandparents; preferably, the paternal grandparents. On that auspicious day, *nihai* (paternal aunts or, female members of the baby's father's clan) used to make *patsum-bangle* and tie it in the wrist of the baby. *Patsum-bangle* also called *patbun* is a strand of white cotton yarn. Before tying the bangle, the two extreme ends of the thread is

soaked in turmeric dyes. This custom is performed with a traditional belief to ensure healthy life, long life and good wishes to and for the baby (Bapui 2007, 59).

A community ceremony known as *khawduop* is performed every year for all the children born in the same year. This ceremony is observed to ensure sound health to the babies (Bapui 2007, 58). This ceremony requires little preparation like; hanging of a bamboo piece called *tlek* at the end of a long bamboo which is planted at the centre of the selected spot around which small branches of trees and bamboos are temporarily planted. As the ceremony begins, the young men play *rawsem* (a mouth organ) and mothers, with their child carried on the back or held in their arms, dance as they sing lullabies, “I lull my babe; I lull my babe for a couple of years” (Thiek 2013, 299). Whereas according to Sri. Lienchawngtho, during this community ceremony which is solemnized generally toward the fag-end of a year, parents who have begotten a son during the year would make an imitative bird with *hnâng* (traditional cord made of immature bamboo) which they hang it at the end of a long bamboo like a fishing pole. They gather together at the selected spot – either at the house of the village chief or any chosen spot of the village- where mothers would rock their son and sing lullaby,

“*Nau ka awi,*
Nau ka awi a,
Lenbuongthuom ah nau ka awi a.
Simzawngin nau a awi a,
Nau ka awi, ka awi a”. (Lienchawngtho)

(I lull my babe, I lull my babe, I lull my babe in a banyan tree, A monkey lulls her babe, I lull my babe, I lull my babe.)

This community ceremony is performed as a thanksgiving ceremony as well as a sacrifice to ensure the sound health of the little children. This is one kind of festival where community mothers participate with great enthusiasm amidst drinking lavish *zu*. Ceremonies related with Coming of Age occasions are non-existent with the tribe. Perhaps, due to ignorance, many babies used to die a *hlamzui* death. *Hlamzui* death is a term used to refer to death at birth or, a baby which dies within a short period after

its birth. A mother, who begets babies which dies successive *hlamzui* death, takes the first next new born baby to *Buonzawl* after its umbilical cord is cut and is bathed clean. In the *Buonzawl*, the child is customarily displayed for mock-sale as a slave and a couple who has begotten and successfully raised living children would buy it. The new parents would take the baby to their home, lay it on their bed, boil an egg for it, make a *patsum*-bangle made of warp thread and tie it on its wrist and then, they would send it back to its rightful parents. As the baby advances in months, a chicken is killed and nicely skinned in the foster parents' house and the meat is consumed with great relish in the house of the child's biological parents. This ceremony is performed to ensure living life to the baby (Bapui 2007, 58).

3.3.2. Puberty Rites:

This is one of the remarkable transitional phases in a female's life. Sue defines this crossing of the threshold as, "Puberty is defined as the age or period at which a person is first capable of sexual reproduction, in other eras of history, a rite or celebration of this landmark event was a part of the culture. This is true of tribal societies that exist today, but for most of us, puberty as a specific event is part of a much more complicated piece of our lives called adolescence." An investigation into the tribe's social customs reveals total absence of any ritualistic observances performed in connection with pubertal phase of life. All my informants individually confirmed the absence of puberty rites in Hmar Social Custom. Rather than any kind of social observances in relation to pubertal phase, "We were shy about it. We never shared with our family members, especially the males" (Sumneizir). On this subject, a male informant, H.V Sunga informed that in most cases, the menfolks came to know about their women's pubertal stage of life only after a year or two as they used to conceal it from them due to shyness. "We do not develop any sense of disgust or detestation to a menstruating girl" (Lienchawngtho). This being the behaviour of the tribe in connection with the pubertal stage of their female folks, it may be so that the tribesmen consider pubertal stage of life as natural as teeth-falling stage of an infant. Another male informant claimed, "If need be, I even wash my wife's inners smeared

with her menstrual blood” (Vanlallawmsang). This may be interpreted as the tribe’s profound internalization of the concept that a husband and a wife are one body. Because of its total non-existence, there is no ethnic terminology for this particular rite.

3.3.3. Marriage Rites:

The tribe has a more elaborate set of customs in matters of marriage (*inneina*) performed not necessarily as part of religious but of traditional or secular ceremony. The tribe’s marriage institution contains simple rules and procedures. There are no much rituals other than the traditional system of marriage negotiations, payment of bride-price, the special role played by *far* and *zuor* (sisters, cousin sisters or women folks who belong to the same clan of the person/s concerned) and the *Pu*’s, *thiempu*’s and parents’ blessings to the girl. Marriage rites is called *inneina sakhuo*.

Traditionally, there are “three ways of marriage: *Chawngmolak*, *Sawngpui*, and *Inrúk*” (H.V Sunga). Whereas according to Lal Dena (Lal Dena 2010), in a traditional Hmar society, there were four types of marriages: *Sawngpuia Innei*, *Chawngmolak*, *Arasi Hnuoia Innei* and *Intlun*. Under *Intlun* marriage, if the girl succeeds in spending even a single night in the house of the boy, irrespective of having or not having any sexual intercourse, they are considered married. If the boy or his parents refuse to accept her and send her away, they are to pay a *hmaimawk man* (fine for disgracing someone) of Rs 500/-. Likewise, if the boy succeeds in hanging his haversack in the house of the girl, irrespective of having or not having any sexual intercourse, he is considered successful. In case of the boy sacrificing himself to the girl for marriage, he is required to stay in the girl’s house at least for two consecutive years. Having completed two years’ stay, he can evade payment of bride-price.

Hmar Hnam Dân (2001) mentions six ways of marriage including Christian way of marriage: *Sawngpuia Thuoi*, *Chawngmova Lák*, *Kohran Dána Innei*, *Inrúk*, *Tlun* and *Mákpa Súngkhum*.

Chawngmolakor Chawngmova Lák is a form of marriage that takes place between a small young boy and a small young girl, before the girl reaches maturity. It is the primitive form of child marriage. In such cases, after *thirdam* is kept in the girl’s

house, the girl is taken to the groom's house with her parents' consent. *Thirdam*, literally a living iron, is a metallic tool, mostly an axe or a hand hoe wrapped with a cloth. The cloth is called *Puondam* which literally is a living cloth. It can be *Hmar-âm* (a traditional cloth) or any piece of loin-cloth, mostly black cloth (also *thangsuopuon* in modern days). *Thirdam* is a symbol of engagement. She does not instantly get treatment of a bride in her in-law's house. Rather, the girl would not sleep with her would-be husband but she is made to sleep with her in-laws until she reaches marriageable age. As soon as she reaches marriageable age, she is handedover to her husband to serve and act as a full-fledged wife. The marriage is now treated as *Sawngpuia Innei*. This form of marriage is now discontinued.

The second form of marriage is *Sawngpuia Innei*, perhaps the most respectable form of marriages. This marriage takes place between a matured young man and a matured young woman. This form of marriage requires a certain set of procedures. First, the groom's parents send *palai*, go-between, which mainly is a group consisted of at least three members. All selected members must all be married men and women among the kinsmen and, inclusion of *mâkpa* is a must who also is the leader of the party. A *mâkpa* is their son-in-law or a man who has married into the clan. "The inclusion of a married lady in the team is preferred" (Bapui 2011, 93) If the girl is from the same village, a larger number of *palai* is preferred. The go-between is the integral part of the business from the beginning till the final marriage. Even after successful marriage, if any misunderstanding takes place between the husband and the wife, the *palai* becomes the first main consultant. The *palai* informs the girl's parents before hand of its plan and date of their purposeful visit. This proposal visit called *Inbiekna* generally takes place at night so as not to disturb day's work. On the firstvisit, *palai* carries a pot of *zu* (replaced by tea after conversion into Christianity) which the two parties sip as they discuss the matter. "This visit is called *Sarawk Dêng*" (H.V Sunga). It being the first visit is understood as a way of feeling the opinion of the girl's party. If negotiation goes fine during the first visit, a second visit is carried out with a more customary approach. During this second visit, the *palai* carries a *Thirdam* wrapped with *Puondam*. If the girl's parents agree to the proposal, the *palai* leaves the *thirdam*

with them which is now under the custody of the girl's parents and which they retain with utmost care. The girl is now betrothed to the boy. What now remains is another meeting between the two parties to decide and fix the date of marriage. If ever the symbolic metallic piece is returned, it is understood that the girl has retraced and nullified the agreement. In such rare cases, the girl becomes the victim of social disapproval and criticism and the whole society treats the girl as unreliable and indecisive. The night before the marriage day, another round of meeting between the parties is held where payment bride-price is made by the groom's party. "Bride-price is paid in terms of *siel* (mithun) which is a unit of measurement in monetary values" (Thiek 2013, 279) and is paid on a *leidâr* (a winnowing sieve). Payment of bride-price is a traditional symbolic significance used for sealing a marriage bond. "The bride-price was often very high, especially for Chief's daughters" (Lalremsiem 1988, 76). It has now been regulated from time to time by the community representative. For instance, Chapter 2 of *Hmar Hnam Dânc* clearly lays down the different categories and the share of each category that fall under the term 'bride-price': *Pa Ina Lût Ding* (the girl's father's share)= Rs 820/-, *Pu Ina Lût Ding* (the girl's maternal uncle's share)= Rs 120/-, *Man Siper* (miscellaneous fee)= Rs 100/-, *Man Chuonghai* (other necessary fee)= Rs 265/- for marriage that takes place in the same village and, Rs 330/- for marriage outside one's village and, *Man Thungpha* (returnable fee) Rs 50/-.

The marital relationship under this way of marriage can be said to reveal gendered culture. For instance, a man requests (active) the hand of a girl for marriage, while a girl is requested (passive). After marriage, the man takes the girl to his homestead. This simply indicates that men are possessors while women are the possessed, bought with *mo man* (bride-price). Further, a word *inrai* (becoming pregnant, passive) is used for women, while *sukrai* (impregnating, active) is used for men.

The girl is sent off to her new in-law's house with her *Pu*'s and parents' blessings. *Pu* (one's maternal uncle; mother's brother) is "highly revered in the Hmar society... The *Pu* would arrange a special feast for the girl- his *Tunu* - and gives gifts" (Thiek 2013,

280-281). The girl's parents- either the father or the mother- would also bless hersaying,

“Ka naunu, malsawmna tamtak phurin, vawi a sari, chang a sari, In khang lien, In dung sei, nuruol sari, paruol sari i lutna Inah lut pui rawh”
(Lienchawngtho).

(My daughter, carrying lot of blessings you enter into your in-laws' to increase the length and breadth of their house.)

On the day of marriage, Hmar women play an important customary role. The new bride is followed by the groom's *far le zuorhai* (the sisters and cousin sisters). “In some cases, the *zuors* smear the groom's party with murky mud or charcoal as a symbolic sign of their hesitation to part with their *zuorpui* (sister)” (H.V Sunga). It is the responsibility of the bride's *zuor* to accompany the bride to her in-law's house. *Zuors* are the cousin sisters of the marrying girl or the women folk from the same clan of the girl's father. Hmar traditional form of marriage is devoid of any oath-taking ceremony or wedding-ring. As the girl is already betrothed to the boy since placing of the *thirdam*, she is plainly sent away after *thiempu* incants mantras. Before she moves out of her father's house, *thiempu* wets her feet with a wetted broom while chanting words of blessings;

“May Khuonu/Khuopa bless you with thousands and hundreds of paddy sacks. May you be fertile and increase the length and breadth of your in-law's house” (Hlinei).

After the priest finishes reciting these words of blessings, the girl steps out of the door putting her right leg out first, followed by her maid, *zuors* and the other invitees. Each *zuor* carries the bride's properties according to her capacity. Generally, the bride's properties consist of “clothes, baskets, necklace, a country loom, spinning wheel, sometimes animals and other personal belongings including a big cloth known as *Puonri*.....The dowry is never given in cash. Sometimes, the girl's dowry exceeds her Bride-Price” (Thiek 2013, 281). The properties can also include items like *hreipui* (an axe), *dawrawn* (a very large closed basket used extensively during harvest), *kawngvâr* (open baskets meant for carrying things of larger materials), *thuthlaw* (hand

hoe), *thingrem* (wooden box), *rêl* (a basket with a lid and locking arrangement), *bêlvâr* (silver cauldron), and *hmui* (gin or charkha like instrument). Besides this, she can also carry her personal belongings like dress, shoes, *relpuon*, skirt etc. to distribute among her husband's sisters and cousins. This is called *mofam*. *Relpuons* are cloths, thicker and warmer than loin-cloths, made with loin-loom. On reaching the groom's house with all the bride's assets, it is customary for the groom's party to distribute *zuor man* (zuor price) to each and every *zuor*. Literally, *zuor man* may be interpreted as items carrying charge. *Zuors* are of two types: *zuor upa* (senior *zuor*) and *zuor naupang* (junior *zuor*). "Traditional *Zuorman* is a petty amount. Junior *zuor* is paid *seki* (twenty five paisa) where as, senior *zuor* gets *duli* (fifty paisa)" (Lienchawngtho). In modern days, *zuorman* is fixed at Rs 10/- for senior *zuor* in one's village and, Rs 20/- outside one's village, and Rs 5/- for junior *zuor* in one's village and, Rs 10/- outside one's village. Practically, in modern days, *zuor man* payment is made depending on the financial strength of the groom. The *zuor* will not take their seat unless being paid *zuor man*. This customary practice of the *zuor* standing in demand of *zuor man* is known as *Zuor man Thîn*. On receiving the payment, the *zuors* go back to the bride's parents' house and dine a small feast arranged for them and in their name known as *Zuor Thlêng*. On such day, the girl's parents kill a pig. Excluding the head and the intestines, the killed animal is divided length-wise into two halves; one half is consumed by the girl's kinsmen while the other half with the tail called *sahrâp* goes with the girl. Killing of pig is symbolic by nature. The tribe believes that of all the animals, the pig is fertile and it begets a good number of offspring. Killing it on such auspicious day symbolizes the parents' warm wishes that their daughter too becomes fertile and bears a fruitful offspring (Bapui 2007, 47).

In the house of the groom, the arrival of the new bride is joyously celebrated by serving great lavish *zu*. After the celebration is over, women folks join in the joyous singing of *Mo Thuoï Hla* (Bride's Song). "A woman, generally the new bride, beats the drum, a man dances while all men and women sing" (Sumneizir). Sri Chawngtho maintains that on bride-coming celebration day, the tribe sings mainly four songs: *Khiengthar Hla*, *Mauleng Hla*, *Liendâng Hla* and *Zâwntui Hla*. He further contends

that on such auspicious day, a woman, generally the new bride, beats the drum while a single male dancer dances.

Marriage of the third form is called *Inrûk Innei*, which is elopement. *Inrûk Innei* is less respectable as it evades the elaborate custom of sending *palai* and the different series of marriage negotiations and settlement. But it does not escape payment of bride-price which is paid-off after the marriage. After the bride-price is paid, the girl's parents, according to their convenience, solemnize a send-off ceremony for their daughter. On such send-off ceremony day, an animal, generally a pig is killed where the parents invite all their kinsmen to dine the feast. On this day, the *zuors* perform their traditional role of carrying the girl's assets to her husband's house which is followed by *Zuor Man Thîn*.

Another way of marriage is *Kâwnghlaw*. This form requires the boy staying in the house of the beloved girl for a good number of years. After staying for the mutually-consented number of years, the boy takes the girl to his house. In such form of marriage, payment of bride-price is waived as the boy's hard toil during his stay in the girl's house is believed to have well exceeded the bride-price (Bapui 2007, 48).

Three types of engagement:

Engagement can be initiated in three types: from a boy's side, from a girl's side and, mutual engagement with a proper witness. If the marriage negotiation is initiated by the boy's side, the go-between gives the girl's party *Thirdam* as a token of engagement. If the initiation is to spring from the girl's side, there is a system called *Zâwlpuonpha* (Hmar Youth Association 2001, 9). If the girl's mother has a special liking for one of the wooers to be her *mâkpa* (husband of her daughter), after all other group members have left; she would prepare a *zawlpuon* (spreading sheet of cloth signifying sleeping arrangement, generally on the floor) for him. If the boy agrees to the symbolic proposal, he would sleep on that spread sheet for the night. Irrespective of having or not having any sexual intercourse with the girl during the night, it is considered a sign of his acceptance. He is now engaged to the girl. If the boy later breaches his promise and rejects the girl, he is convicted and fined to pay Rs 500/- as *hmaimâwk man*. If a boy and a girl mutually want to get engaged, they can swear so

in the presence of their respective parents or any other witnesses. *Hmar Hnam Dán* approves such form of engagement and if any of the parties breaches the engagement later, penalty will be paid by the wrong doer.

Divorce System:

In Hmar, divorce system is called *inthe dan*. The bond of matrimony is loose. In the case of a girl seeking a divorce, she simply has to persuade her parents to agree to refund the price they had received.

This is called *suminsuo*. “In the case of the boy seeking a divorce, he simply makes *mák man* (divorce fee) payment of Rs 500/-” (Hmar Youth Association 2001, 17) to the girl’s parents or kinsmen and takes her to her parents’ home with her dowry. If the two had separated by mutual agreement called *Péksachang* and *Inthatthe* and wish to re-marry, they can do so without making any bride-price payment. In matters of divorce, the existing Customary Law imposes customary penalty on the wrong doer. The husband does not enjoy monopoly power over the wife. In spite of social disapproval, divorce does take place in the society.

Widow re-marriage (*pasal nei nawk*) is sanctioned by the tribe and is prevalent among the people. “But, a widow is not supposed to re-marry until and unless she performs *hringinkîr*” (Lallawmkung). *Hringinkîr* is a feast prepared by the widow’s *ṭahai* (brothers) in the presence of reliable witnesses or the dead husband’s kinsmen for a public recognition that their sister is going back to her biological parents. This customary practice signifies that she is now fit to re-marry. If before arrangement of such public recognition through a feast she happens to fall in love with a man or if she re-marries, she is considered an adulterous. (Hmar Youth Association 2001, 30) Whereas according to Bapui, a widow is not supposed to re-marry until and unless memorial stone of her late husband is laid. If that happens, she is considered an adulteress (Bapui 2007, 62).

3.3.4. Death Rites:

The Hmars categorize death into five main groups; i) *Hlamzui Thi* (death at birth or a baby that dies within within a short period after its birth, generally, three months of

its birth), ii) *Ramte Thi* (death of infant under one year), iii) *Thi Tha* (natural death), iv) *Miṭha Thi* (death of distinguished people) and v) *Thi Sie* (unnatural death).

Hlamzui Thi is visited and condoled only by elderly people of the village who themselves prepare the grave and perform the burial service. The dead body is either wrapped with a cloth or put inside an earthen pot and is buried beneath the house after naming it. Death of this kind is not mourned by the community. No wake is supposed to be observed. Near relatives and even the mother never shed massive tears mourning. *Ramte Thi* too receives the same kind of light community treatment as *Hlamzui Thi*. A set of death rites is called *thinisakhuo*.

Victims of *Thi Tha* and *Miṭha Thi* receive community treatment in the most natural and befitting manner. Funeral service is rendered by the whole community. The village men and women gather together for consolation at the house of the bereaved family. The *tlanglakte* (young lads) of the village under the guidance of their leader are responsible for carrying logs and bamboos required for the burial of the dead. They also collect one cup of rice from each house of the village for the bereaved family. The *tlangvals* (young unmarried men), under the guidance of *VálUpas*, dig the grave. They are responsible for performing all the requisites for decent burial of the dead. The making of *hlâng* (a stretcher made of bamboo) is considered the duty of the village old folks. The *nunghaks* (young unmarried women), under the guidance of *mákpa* (a man marrying into the clan of the bereaved family), collect three strands of firewood from every house of the village for the bereaved family. In case of *nupa tâng the* (death resulted in couple separation), the young women increase the number of firewood strands to five. This is a sign of utmost condolence and sympathy shown to the left-behind partner. Besides being engaged in the collection of firewood, a group of village maidens join the grave-diggers and, another group joins the condolence party at home whom they occasionally serve with *zu* (now replaced by tea). *Far le Zuor* (a group of women folks who belongs to the same clan of the bereaved family's) would make a point not to fail to *râl* (to visit to console the

bereaved family with sympathy) and cover the deceased with a cloth, generally a black cloth.

All the unnatural deaths resulting from suicide, beast attack, childbirth and other accidents are called *Thi Sie* also known as *Sâr Thi*. Such unnatural deaths are abhorrent to the society. *Hmar Hnam Dân* (26) proposes that people who die a *Thi Sie* should not be kept for a single night. Death resulting from beast attack, especially tiger attack, is considered the most serious *Sâr Thi*. Of all forms of unnatural death, a woman's death due to child-birth complications known as *Raiche-a Thi* is the most feared, especially among the Hmar women folk. The subsequent psychological reaction to this form of death that emanates from the village women folk seems to reveal another superstitious nature of the tribe. Thiék (Thiék 2013, 300) records that in the past, the superstitious tribesmen believed that the soul of the ill-fated woman could be going around from house to house to invite others to go with her and her entry to other houses would bring about the same kind of death to the family. For fear of this, every family would hang a branch of tree above the front door to show their refusal of her entry into their home. In some places, the people would bury an axe, a hand hoe or a dao with her dead body with a belief that her way to the spiritual realm was too rough and blocked and she would clear her own way with such implements. The village damsels would not even go to the village water-hole to fetch water, nor would they venture out of the house. "They are afraid that the spirit of the dead woman will catch hold of them and they will meet the same fate later in life" (Bapui 2011, 134). The soul of a woman who dies a *Raiche Thi* is believed to follow a very rough path. As such, the community would place an axe in her coffin for the departing soul to utilize it in clearing her path to *Mithi Khuo* (land of the dead).

On occasions of death in a village, young women play an important traditional role. When someone (above one year) dies in a village, it is the responsibility of the young women to serve the grave diggers in the graveyard and those bereavers (villagers at the deceased's house) with *zu*. If the death requires a wake, young men and women together, under the guidance of *Val Upas* keep the wake. The young men and women, under the guidance of *val upas* pay condolence visits to the bereaved family the

following three nights of the burial ceremony. However “women are restricted from taking part in three social occasions: i) *Hlamzui Thi*, ii) *Khawser* (religious offerings observed for and on behalf of the whole village) and iii) *Bersi* (offerings to evil spirit)” (Sumneizir).

The Hmars have a traditional custom of glorifying certain dead body: the dead body of *Thangsuo*. *Thangsuo* is a man or a woman who has made an extraordinary achievement during his/her lifetime. And the tribe heavily reveres, honours and respects such persons. Such traditional admiration and full appreciation is shown to them both during and after their life. A *thangsuo* is believed to bypass *mithi khuo* (land of the dead) and directly go to *Pielral* (Paradise) where their souls do not get engaged in hard toil any more: whereas, the souls of the commoners go to *mithi khuo* where they still have to toil hard for survival as on the earth. In order to be *Thangsuo*, a man, during his life, has to kill an elephant, a wild bison, a bear, a tiger, a deer, a wild boar, a barking deer, a lemur, a hawk and “a venomous snake called *rûngân*” (J. Batlien 2007, 113). A man who has bagged all these wild animals marks his extraordinary achievement by arranging a grand public feast during life-time by killing a mithun or a cow or a pig for public consumption and recognition. This achievement-commemorating grand feast is called *Sa-In-Ei*. Likewise, a festival connected with abundant harvests is called *Bu-In-Ei*. In order to be glorified after death, a man must have organized during his life-time at least five festivals. The credit of bountiful harvest of a family goes to the mother of that family. If a certain family arranges at least three grand public feasts commemorating abundant agricultural harvests, then the mother of that family is *Thangsuo*. When she dies, records Batlien (J. Batlien 2007, 119) the community would honour and glorify her dead body by carrying her in a *hlâng* (a stretcher made of bamboo) and take the body to each and every *sumphuk* (the front platform of a house) of her brothers. The brothers would serve the corpse-carriers with lavish *zuand* and fire their guns.

In the past, Hmar women played another important customary role in connection with deaths in the community. On the days following the death of an adult until preparation of final farewell feast for the departed soul, the eldest female member of

the deceased family used to light fire every morning at the graveyard. A crude bamboo raised-platform used to be made near the buried place in the graveyard on which a small portion of the family dish would be placed every morning and evening for the soul of the departed one. (Bapui 2011, 135) Performance of that customary piece of the tribe's traditions was the prerogative of that female member.

3.4. Religious Beliefs and Customs:

The nature of Hmar traditional belief was animism, animism in the sense that the tribesmen believed that spirits could reside in certain spots and places. Though they did not attribute living soul to inanimate objects, they believed the dead could exist through soul and could reborn and reappear in the form of living creatures (insects or animals), for which last farewell rite for the dead called *thiñn* was performed. The Hmars did not worship nature or any celestial body. Practice of totemism was non-existent in their belief. Taboo, "another sacred belief which is rather negative custom of any belief" (Vidyarthi and Rai 1976, 243), was an integral part of their traditional belief. Violation of taboo, they firmly believed, resulted in immediate disaster. Magico-religious form of sacrifice and healing was another backbone of their traditional religious life. *Pipu Rau Biek* (Ancestral Worship) occupied an important and significant place in their religious life. They believed that the souls of their ancestors had interest and intervening power in their worldly affairs. Spirits of dead ancestors were believed to have powers to decide the destiny of the living souls. Polytheism is another feature of the traditional belief of the tribe. The tribe believed in the existence of a cluster of gods and goddesses whom the tribesmen identified and grouped according to their respective departments and areas of influence.

The Hmars were deeply religious and, religion occupied the most pivotal place in their social, familial, economic and political life. Their intricate religious customs had a magnificent influence on their socio-cultural life. Each and every little act of their cultural life was carried out in conformity with their religious precepts. In this context, Ms. Lalremsiem has rightly quoted, "In a tribal society, a distinction cannot be made between religious, social and political elements. If one is affected, all are affected" (Lalremsiem 1988, 101).

The tribe believed in the existence of three types of spirits – protective or benevolent spirits, evil or malevolent spirits and ancestral spirits. In the traditional belief, evil spirits outnumbered benevolent spirits. Thiek (Thiek 2013, Chapter 15) records that there are six good spirits and seventeen malignant dreaded evil spirits. The tribesmen assigned each good spirit with different functions to perform towards them. These good spirits were regarded as benevolent and sacrifice to them was considered needless except observances of thanksgiving-related ceremonies solemnized either in private household or in public arena. They also worshipped the good spirits to invoke abundant blessings for sound health and for success in their agricultural harvest. But generally such occasion along with ancestors worship was limited to a family domain with the *thiempu* performing the sacred rituals. The Hmars had a kind of family devotion called *Sungbing Inthawina* or *Inronei* hosted by a family. This occasion is related with ancestor worship where the souls of the dead ancestors were invoked to bless the family. Incantation of mantra and killing of the offered animal were done either by the family *thiempu* or the male-head of the family (Bapui 2007, 77-79).

The good spirits were believed to be under the direct control of pathien (creator). As regard the belief in the existence of evil spirits called *ramhuoi*, the tribe identified and called them by different names. They firmly believed that evil spirits were the source of all illnesses, calamities and deaths. As such, sacrificial offerings called *inthawina* were considered mandatory. The tribe therefore offered propitiatory sacrifices to evil spirits to propitiate them as they feared that they might displease the evil spirits unknowingly and unintentionally. “The belief in different kinds of spirits who are mostly malignant is prevalent. Most of the spirits are believed to be at the root of all kinds of illnesses, misfortunes and afflictions. So, at all times they try to appease the different spirits through sacrifices” (Bapui 2011, 12). Being deeply religious, much of their act was accompanied by divination. Starting with settling of a new village site to a post-harvesting occasion, divination known as *Aisân* is performed. They also had elaborate forms of worship, thanks-giving related ceremonies and animal sacrifices. What is noteworthy in this context is, most of the sacrificial and religious related activities are performed by the *thiempu* with the assistance of his male *berva* leaving

little performance opportunity to the ordinary men and women. “There was a common priest for the whole village. Some clans and even some families had their own priests. The tribe also had a *thiemp* (priestess) who, however, could not perform all the religious rites the male priest was entitled to perform” (Lienchawngtho).

The tribe had a good many complicate forms of worship and animal sacrifice. In almost all these rituals and divinations, the women folk, who otherwise take active part in other non-religious activities, render little participation. Rather than a signifier of deep religious participation, this culturally-determined silence is motivated by the tribe’s ideological dogma; a proof that human’s behaviour is subject to cultural ideology. Women are not to take active part in all the religious and sacramental matters. This being how women have been oriented into the tribe’s religious sphere, silence becomes a very important and significant aspect of the women in religious domain. In all the occasions of thanksgiving and *inthawina*, *thiempu* and the seven or more male *berva* (priest’s male assistants) carry the whole lot of work to and in the *bawlhmun*- carrying and slaughtering the offered animal, carrying rice, wood, water, cauldron, burning fire and other necessary ingredients for the sacrifice, preparing the altar, placing god’s portion called *sa ser* on the altar or any other major or minor work required for sacrificial ceremonies. (Sielmat Bible College 2010, 45) The *thiempu* does the incantations. “Their womenfolk are never given role to play in the sacred ceremonies except in some religious occasions which are considered the prerogative of the women folks. They can simply take the sacrificial meat as and when thanks-giving ceremonies or sacrifices are solemnized inside or nearby individual’s hut as their going and taking part in the *bawlhmun* is unbecoming” (Lienchawngtho).

3.4.1. Traditional Holy Dreads:

Taboo, also known as ‘holy dread’ (*thurosie* in Hmar) is “an objectified fear of the demoniac power thought to be concealed in the tabooed object.” Preservation of taboo may be taken as “safeguard ritual operations to protect religious persons and places of worship and prevent irreligion from spreading” (Vidyarthi and Rai 1976,

243). Bapui (Bapui 2011, 12) comments, “The Hmars are very superstitious and their lives are often controlled by such superstitions and beliefs.” Superstition is a term for belief in supernatural causality. People who believe it tend to restrain their physical behaviours and even perform rituals and sacrifices to ward off future undesirable events that the present event can cause its occurrences. Due to superstitions, there are great many an occasion when the Hmars restrain their physical behaviours and even perform a good number of ritualistic sacrifices to ward-off future undesirable incidents. Though there is no history that records practices of human sacrifice in connection with superstitious beliefs, the tribe practices animal sacrifices on and for different occasions. As there are a good number of superstitions prevailing among the tribe, many kinds of physical behaviours or expressive movements are considered inappropriate and taboo by the tribe. Below are some of the taboos the Hmar men and women internalise and for fear of which they regulate and restrain their life. Most of the taboos centre round the womenfolk, mostly pregnant mothers. Those are;

One’s name should not be pronounced in front of a python; the named person will die soon.

Crabs must not be burnt in the forest; a tiger will appear.

Members of the same family should not travel to opposite directions on the same day; accident will occur.

A pregnant woman must not consume fruits or vegetables wedges in between stones or twigs; it will render child delivery difficult.

A pregnant woman should not uncover her abdomen; otherwise, the evil spirits will see the fetus inside the womb and destroy it out of jealousy.

A pregnant woman should not clip the nails of any living creature; that will result in the birth of a deformed child. (J. Batlien 2007, 126).

Husband of a pregnant wife should not kill a snake; that will result in birth of a deformed child. (J. Batlien 2007, 126).

A pregnant woman must not cross a river; that will cause miscarriage.

The tribe believes that the moon can bless the children. In the evening, mothers often invoke the moon to bless her children.

A plump baby should never be described as heavy. A jealous evil spirit will cause harm to it.

A woman should not weave for the whole night; it will result in sudden death in the family.

Besides this selected list of few one-liner *thurosie*, there are many other traditional beliefs which regulate the mindset of the tribesmen. They consider certain sights as dreadful and signalling some mishaps. Though devoid of any logical relatedness, the tribe firmly relies its conviction on a massive set of beliefs. *Hmar Pipu Sakhuo Le Inthawi Dán* offers an exhaustive detail of those superstitious beliefs which serve as a traditional medium of future prediction;

While choosing a jhum site in the jungle, if *tuivamit* or *khursie*¹ is found on the earth surface, that site is deemed unsuitable for jhumming cultivation as that spot is believed to be guarded by an evil spirit. If someone persistently engages that spot of land for jhumming purposes, the guardian will be angered and the concerned person will die soon.

While clearing a land for jhumming purposes if one finds a *zâwng lukawrawk* (skull of a monkey) that place is believed to be the habitat of evil spirits. If one persistently engages that spot of land, he will definitely die.

Thlangfaawi is one of the common birds. But the Hmars give its warbling a different symbolic connotation. If the bird warbles '*thlangfaawi awilek, awilek*', and a person hears it, it is considered a bad omen. It is firmly believed the hearer will surely die. Be it a jungle or a jhum, the person who has heard it will head straight towards home.

If the tribesmen find *leiruongtuom* which is a grave like hollow earth in the forest, that spot is believed to be inhabited by evil spirit. People generally avoid even looking at such uncanny site. If a person who has come back from a day's forest or jhum visit feels slightly uneasy in the evening, immediately a *thiempu* is consulted to perform sacrifice.

A tiger is believed to have the ability to recognize an adulterous man. If an adulterous man goes to a forest and encounters a tiger, the latter never fails to attack him. As such, during community hunting of a ferocious tiger, an adulterous man stays back at home on the pretext of illness.

The colour of jhum huts remains the same all through the year. If one's jhum hut changes its colour and transforms into somewhat whitish, that is considered an ill omen. The hut would then be burnt into ashes and a new one would be constructed. If someone persists in occupying the hut, it is believed some calamities will befall the family that owns the hut.

There is an owl-like bird called *thizul* which chirps like its name. If a person or the community hears the chirping of the bird, it is considered an ill omen heralding serious calamity, even death.

There exists a strange snake called *khangchawm* measuring same length and breadth. Seeing of any living creature with same length and breadth predicts sudden death. Any person who has seen such a creature sadly broods day and night inside his dark house.

“The gargling sound heard in the atmosphere or sky before rain during the rainy season is called *Fânfa-Tui-Inchu*. The belief is that the souls of the dead infants scramble for water and the *Fânfa-Tui-Inchu* is the noise made by them. So, mothers whose infants have died recently do not rinse their wet clothes on such a day” (Thiek 2013, 288).

The Hmars believe in the existence of three types of *thlarau* (soul): *Thlarau Innghâk* (a living person's soul that always guards the house), *Thlarau Ramlêng* (a living person's soul that loiters hither and thither) and *Hmutheilo Thlarau* (a person's soul that leaves the body when the person dies) The tribe believes in the existence of *thlaṭap*. *Thlaṭap* is weeping sound heard inside a deep forest. It is believed that the soul of the person (*Thlarau Ramlêng*) who has visited that area of the forest remains there and tarries alone and is now crying as it loses its way. When they come across such sound, they try to recognize the owner of the *Thlarau Ramlêng* by its voice. If it happens to be a certain child's voice, the mother or the father of the child will

immediately go to that area with a baby-holding cloth and call, “O my babe, do not cry. Come back home with me. I will carry you on my back” (Sielmat Bible College 2010, 66) and they would lower down their back.

Under such superstitious beliefs, the whole tribesmen including the women folk restrain their physical movements and regulate their mindset according to the tune of the beliefs. In addition to this, the tribe performs certain ritualistic divination and sacrifices in order to propitiate and pacify the evil spirits which, they believe, have been displeased knowingly or unknowingly and, to ensure future security. Generally, they “offer domestic animals like fowls (hens or cocks), dogs, pigs, goats or mithuns as demanded by the displeased spirits or demons. This is the reason why the Hmars with their priests readily accepted the Christian Faith when the Gospel of love and salvation was preached for the first time in 1910” (Thiek 2013, 292-293). *Hmar Pipu Sakhuo le Inthawi Dân*, Chapter 8 records as many as seventeen propitiatory sacrifices to different evil spirits.

3.4.2. Traditional Female Deities/Spirits:

The tribe believes in the existence of a Supreme Being, subordinate gods or good spirits and evil spirits. There are about eleven female spirits- most of them are believed to possess the position of a powerful goddess, while some are beautiful and harmless and few are malignantly harmful with dreadful horrific appearances.

Chawngtinler:

The tribe believes that all wild animals have a custodian who is called Chawngtinler. On behalf of hunters to wish and ensure successful traps, the priest or priestess performs divination by cutting an egg length-wise. This ritual called *Sapi Biekna* is propitiatory in the sense it is an attempt to appease the custodian to allow the hunter bag animals of great value. The mantra chanted during this divination, perhaps, is addressed to Chawngtinler.

Fapite:

She is a goddess, an old woman with a godly power to bless mankind with abundant agricultural harvest. Her name is invoked during thanks-giving related ceremony called *Bu In-Ei Na*.

Hmuithla:

Hmuithla is believed to be a spirit who manifests like a female; more like a mother. Categorically, she belongs to the evil spirits. But she is essentially harmless but she possesses a dreadful and horrific appearance. Generally, she is believed to appear during sun-set.

Kawlpuinu also known as Tapuinu: “is a goddess of weaving” (Lienchawngtho).

Khawchawm:

Categorically, the sex of this spirit is not fixed. At times, it manifests like a dark gigantic woman. For her she-manifestation, the tribe gives her a female nomenclature as *Chawmnu*. She dwells and resides in dark valleys and sunken areas. She is dreadfully harmful as she feeds on blood of human beings and chickens.

Kulsamnu:

She is a caretaker of the souls of the dead. She is the doorkeeper of this land. She does not easily allow the souls to bypass the land without harassing them by engaging them to do certain manual works. She does not spare even the souls of infants. But over the souls of *thangsuo*, she has no power.

Lasi:

Lasi is a beautiful pretty female spirit who dwells in cliffs and precipices. Her beauty often mesmerizes male hunters and they often fall in love. She is also believed to have power over wild animals. She can vanish at will.

Sihai:

Sihai is a group of harmless spirits. They manifest in different forms-men, women and children. They are believed to be lenient and soft-hearted. If abused or treated with contempt, they together attack the culprit in a mild way.

Simbak:

She is a goddess of harvest. She is believed to have monopoly power over agricultural products. During harvest, a harvest rite called *TharlákInthawi* is performed and the sacrifice is made to Simbak.

Vanchunglaizuor:

She is a harmless heavenly goddess and a very beautiful maiden. She is believed to be imbued with a power to bless mankind with rain. She is a goddess of rain.

Vanhrít:

Vahrít is believed to be a good spirit who manifests like an old woman. She is the goddess of knowledge of wisdom. The Hmars make a sacrifice to her, invoking her name for granting wisdom and intelligence to the fool and obtuse.

Zasam:

Zasam is an evil spirit who manifests like a ragged lactating mother. She carries uncombed hair, an appearance that makes her look dreadful and scary. She carries human beings away.

3.4.3. Women in Religious Rituals:

In the traditional form of religious observances and sacrifices including indigenous modes of worship, hunting and agricultural-related ceremonies, it is mainly the male priest and his male assistants who carry out the work. However, Ngulkhumchawng maintained that there are some occasions where *thiempí* can take the place of *thiempu*. According to her (the claim supported also by Lienchawngtho), there are two religious occasions which *thiempí* and other women folk alone perform.

Like a male priest, *thiempí* held certain religious privileges to perform for, and, on behalf of the community. In the first place, she was expected to be holy both in physical appearances and in eating habits. It was considered unholy of a *thiempí* to participate in the community condolence of a dead or to join a wake. She was understood not to take impure meat. By 'impure meats' the tribe means dog meat and meat of wild animals of unidentified killer known as *satlaw* in Hmar. She was to consume *zu* within limit so as not to appear drunk before the public. She should not drink impure water and should not trim hair. She too learnt some mantras which she chanted as she performed the rituals as privileged by the cultural norms. There were certain religious observances where she could replace the male priest and, in some religious occasions, she alone was privileged to perform. During child birth, a *thiempí*

(*thiempu* also can) could cut an egg and recite a mantra for the long life of the baby. During Child Naming occasion, *thiempi* (or *thiempu*) could perform a rite called *TuiPei*, symbolizing propitiation of evil spirits and wish for the baby's sound health. *Tui Pei*, also known as *Zu Sâwr Pei*, is spraying of *zu* (traditionally believed to be the share of an evil spirit who would otherwise may get displeased) across the room. She would then recite,

“*Khuo lo tlai,*
Khuonu lo tlai,
Pansaka nu lo tlai,
Panthlanga nu lo tlai.” (H.V. Sunga)

(Be pleased god. Be pleased goddess. Be pleased thou, up there. Be pleased thou, down there).

“During settlement of a village site, the community used to perform a divination. In the absence of a *thiempu*, a *thiempi* could perform the divination called *artui suongaisân* (divination by boiling an egg). She would first make a miniature fireplace where she could place the egg. She would then make a small hole in the egg and boil it. If on boiled the albumen and yolk overflow the eggshell, she announces the site suitably healthy and good for a village” (Lienchawngtho).

The Hmars believe that wild animals have a custodian, a female spirit named *Lasi*. The head of *Lasi* is *Chawngtinler* (Louis L. Keivom 1990, 18). A *thiempi* or a *thiempu* performs divination for and on behalf of hunters to ensure successful traps by performing egg-cutting ritual amidst chanting of mantras. In the footprints of the hunted animal, *thiempi* would keep a leaf upside down, few morsel of rice and a thread and then she would cut divided an egg length-wise with her sword and incant mantras,

“*Heidur! (3)*
Nang Sapinu, Nang a Kungnu,
Nang lo tlai, ka artuiin lo tlai,
I sahrang lu ka dit. Chai!” (Lienchawngtho)

(Heidur! Thou, female custodian of beasts, be pleased with my egg. I need heads of thine beasts. Chai!).

This divination is propitiatory by nature in the sense it is an attempt to appease the female custodian to grant the hunter animals of value. The tribe does not consider animals like monkeys and barking dears as animals of value. It holds in high esteem hunting that brings home wild ferocious animals like tiger, bear and swine. While incantation, the *thiempu* would not breathe. She loosens her hair and carries it open.

There are two occasions where *thiempu* cannot substitute a *thiempu* and where men folk do not attend. Those are women-related occasions and *thiempu* alone in the presence of other women folks performs the religious rites. Those are *Bu In-Ei Na* and *Puonri Pui Khâwng*. *Bu In-Ei Na* is a thanksgiving-related ceremony offered to goddess called *Fapite*. This exceptional right is given to them as it is traditionally believed that the owner of rice, *Fapite*, is an old woman. This kind of ceremonies is solemnized in a family the year when that family is abundantly blessed in its agricultural harvest. In other thanksgiving occasions, *thiempu* does all the incantations invoking the names of the family's forefathers and other male gods. In this *Bu In-Ei* worship programme, incantation is performed either by a female priest or the female head of the family invoking the names of their female ancestors and the goddess *Fapite*.

"There is another occasion where women alone participate. This occasion is called *Puonripui Khawng* (weaving heavy mattress)" (Lienchawngtho). When a woman starts stretching the warp of her weaving, *thiempu* worships and invokes a female weaving goddess called *Kawlpuinu* also known as *Tapuinu*. She then performs *TuiPei* round the room three times and invokes,

"Nang Puonpuinu,

Kawtpui khawng ngai,

Kawtte khawng ngai,

Lo tlai rawh.

Ka tuidam, ka patdam, ka zupui lo chang hmasa rawh.

Kawlpui ka khawng mi khawng pui rawh.

Nuruol, paruol zalna ding.

Dam min hlaw rawh. Chai!!” (Lienchawngtho).

(Thou goddess Puonpuinu, be pleased with my wine. I weave a rug for a large family. Guide me throughout).

The same is repeated when the weaving process is accomplished. *Kawlpuinu* is a goddess of weaving. This is a ceremony where male members never take part. This divination is performed because the Hmars believe that *Puonripui Khawng* is a fatal process as the work is heavy and taxing.

3.5. Hunting Customs:

Hunting is called *ramvák* in Hmar. The Hmar man hunts animals, birds and fish for supplementing his diet. Most of Hmar men are *Ramvachal* (successful hunters) and *Pasaltha* (a heroic man who had bagged ferocious wild animals). The return of every successful hunting expedition is well publicized by the hunter chanting a *hlado* (triumphant, victory song). *Hlado* is sung out loud from a pinnacle nearest to the village. The tribe has a different *hlado* for different kinds of animals. On hearing the rhythmical sound of the victory song, it is customary for the the sisters of the hunter or the village damsels, keeping aside all their domestic works, to rush to the *tinmun* (a village outskirts where tired villagers- travelers, hunters or jhum-goers used to relax) with local-made beer called *zu* to welcome and entertain the successful hunter. “Along with *zu*, it is customary that the young ladies take *tawnlairang* (an ornament head-dress worn by heroes and successful persons) with them and greet the successful hunters by donning them in *tinmun*” (H. Thangzo).

In connection with animal killing and hunting customs, we get to know how the tribe ascribes value to its women folks. In every event of successful animal hunting, the hunter’s sisters have a share of the killed called *Farnu Sa* (a sister’s share of a meat). In case of the hunter having more than a single sister, this share is distributed among the sisters in a rotation system. Generally, the bagged animal’s front rib cage is considered the sister’s share. On receiving her share, she is customarily expected to carry a *zu bêl* (wine pot) to her hunter-brother’s house. On the event of the death of

the hunter-brother, the sister must cover him with a cloth. Even during *Sungbing Inthawi* (family worship) which is mainly ancestor worship, one prized boar is generally pierced for family and relative consumption. On such occasions, it is customary for the host performing the sacrifice, to give one forelimb each to his sisters. And such sisters are expected to contribute one pot of *zu* each for the brother's family members.

Besides *Farnu Sa*, the tribe has another custom which marks the tribe's valorization of their women folks. That custom is called *Farnu Vawk*. *Farnu Vawk* is a nomenclature given to a sister's share of a portion of meat when a brother kills a pig. When a man kills a pig, he gives the fleshy thigh or the shoulder of the killed to his sister.

In Hmar tribe, men catch fish with *ngakuoi* (angling), *lên deng* (throwing nets) or *ngawi daw* (traditional fish trap made of bamboo splits). The women folks smoke the fish caught and putrefy it for use as seasoning agent at later time. This putrefied fish is called *ngathu* (*nga*-fish, *thu*-smelly). In case of big wild animals killed by a male member of a family, the family would distribute the larger part of the meat to the whole village community. The remaining slices of meat which the concerned family can not finish up in a single or couple of meals are smoked and preserved on the *rap* by the family women members. The smoked pieces of meat hanging in the *rap* are called *satâwl* and they can be consumed any time in future.

The Hmars perform divination for all actions of life including hunting expeditions. A *thiempu* performs divination for hunting and traps and blesses it with mantras and some ritualistic observances to ascertain successful hunting or trapping. During such divinations, the female spirit-guardian of all wild animals called *Chawngtinler* is invoked and offered mantras to. This customary practice is called *Sapi Biekna*. Lienchawngtho informed that a *thiempi* could also perform this rite.

Successful hunting expeditions – slaying of enemies or wild ferocious animals- are celebrated by the community. They observe *umni inkhâm* (no work day), sing and dance victory songs (given in Chapter 2) for a whole night and a day amidst drinking *zu*. Keeping a wake over slain enemies' head is called *rallu meng*, over slain

animals' head is called *salu meng*. While they sing and dance *hranglâm* in a village open space, the hunter/hunters trigger a number of shots from their muzzle loading guns an act that symbolizes their pride in successful expeditions. Though women do not dance, they take active part in such ceremonies in singing the songs and serving the audience with *zu*.

3.6. Agricultural Customs:

The Hmars are agriculturists. The striking characteristic of their food-production activity is *lâwm* (community labour and mutual assistance; Fig.3.1.i and ii) and *lo hla* (jhum-work songs given in Chapter 2). There are various stages of food-production which involve community labour and mutual assistance. Those are *lovât* (clearing of forest or jungle tracts for cultivation), *lo raw* (burning of the fell trees and bamboos), *thlaichi thlâk* (vegetable seeds sowing), *butukhuonglâwm* (paddy seeds sowing by community labour), *hlo thlo* (weeding), *bu sik* (paddyharvesting), *buchil* (threshing rice paddy), *bu thak* (storing) and *bu suk* (pounding of grain). In all these stages, women folks play a very important role.

Lo Vât (clearing of forest or jungle tracts for cultivation):

During every year end, a village council selects a certain part of a forest for jhumming purpose for the whole village community. The first agricultural act that follows is *lo vât* which generally takes place in the month of January. Jhum means *lo*. Women folks are generally exempted from this agricultural phase as the process requires utter physical strength and prowess. After cutting down trees, bamboos and bushes, it is time for the community to relax allowing the fell trees to get dried. This period, generally February- March, is called *Chapchar Awillên*. This lay-off season is very crucial for both the village men folks and womenfolks. As this period is regarded as 'leisure', women laboriously toil in their loom trying to weave as many cloths as possible. During this leisure period, in every village, there is a kind of competition among the womenfolks as to who can produce more *rel puons* (*rel puons* are those fabrics thicker than ordinary cloth that can be used both as mattress and quilt). These cloths are woven both for domestic use as well as for their marriage dowry. Hmar brides who carry a good number of their self-produced *rel puon* to their

groom's house is used as an indicator of their essence as conventional Hmar woman. Mothers would also weave *puonri* (heavy mattress) for their daughter's dowry. On the other hand, besides collecting and hoarding house building materials, the men folks utilize this lay-off season for hunting and begging as many wild animals as possible. The number of wild ferocious animals bagged by a man sets itself as a kind of yardstick to measure the weight of a traditional Hmar man.

Lo raw (burning of the fell trees and bamboos):

Chapchar Awillên is soon followed by *lo raw* and *hmang fawm*. *Lo raw* takes place mostly in the months of March-April and *hmang fawm* is clearing of the unconsumed timbers. A senior priest then performs a divination near the jhum "to cool it down and to ensure availability of water nearby all the year round" (Bapui 2011, 19).

Thlaichi thlâk (vegetable seeds sowing):

The day following this, women folks would take out their dried vegetable seeds from *ûmte* (dried hollow gourd used for storing vegetable seeds) or *rawthei* (dried bamboo with a single node) which they have been drying in the *rap* (it is a bamboo construction of about 4 feet high above the hearth to dry crop seeds, firewood, paddy, corn and meat) since long. Carrying the seeds in *paikawng* (carrying basket), they proceed towards the jhum field to sow them. Batlien (J. Batlien 2007, 96) records that the womenfolks are followed by their husbands who are also burdened with *hnâng* (a traditional cord made of immature bamboo), *mansapui* (haversack) and *dumbêl* (smoking pipe). In the field while the husbands get engaged in constructing a *h̄u* (jhum hut), the wives meticulously decide and select the most fertile and conducive spot where they sow the vegetable seeds.

Butukhuonglâwm (paddy seeds sowing by community labour):

As mentioned above, community labour or mutual assistance is the striking feature of the Hmar economic activity. The community practices a kind of corporate labour known as *lâwm* and mutual assistance. Community labour is designed and planned by the village council. As paddy seed sowing is a taxing and an energy-consuming process, it is generally carried out by way of community labour. The village authority fixes a date for a one day *lâwm* for the commoners. This sowing of paddy seed by

community labour is called *butukhuonglâwm*. Paddy seed sowing takes place mostly in the months of April-May. “*Lâwm* is consisted of three layers of *lâwm* grouped on the basis of seniority: *lâwm bêl*, *lâwm lai* and *lâwm neu*” (Mawia Pudaite). *Lâwm bêl* comprises senior and most experienced men and women, *lâwm lai*; young men and women, *lâwm neu*; young inexperienced boys and girls of the village. Male work partners are called *lâwmpa* and, female work partners are called *lâwmnu*. *Lâwm* generally starts the sowing work early in the morning. The community workers would start sowing from the furthest field and move on to other fields one after another. This way, in a single day, the corporate labour easily finishes paddy seed sowing activity for each and every family of the entire village amidst singing *butukhuonglâwm* songs (given in Chapter 2). The Hmars have a number of Paddy Seed Sowing Songs that would last for a one whole day. There is a traditional male drummer called *khuongpu*. He beats the drum and the working community, following the rhythm, joyously sings the songs as it sows the seed. Thus, the community makes a festival out of it.

Hlo thlo (weeding):

Like a community labour engaged in *butukhuonglâwm*, *lâwm* is arranged for a weeding activity as well. As in *butukhuonglâwm*, the Hmars have a good number of weeding songs (given in Chapter 2) that would last a full one day. The working community starts the work early in the morning; it continues throughout the day till it ploughs homeward in the eventide. Like in *butukhuonglâwm*, the community starts the weeding from the furthest field and moves on to other fields one after another.

On days of seed sowing and weeding by community labour, it is the responsibility of the *lâwmnus* (female work partners) to carry the jhum instruments and tiffin of their *lâwmpas* (male work partners) from *tinmun*. Jhum instruments are generally hand hoes. In the evening, they are to carry home in their *paikâwng* their *lâwmpas*' smeared dresses. If the dresses are wet, the *lâwmnu* would carry them straight to her home; dry them at night near the fireplace. She does not retire at night until and unless she thoroughly dries them. It is the responsibility of the young women to see that the jhum dresses of their *lâwmpas* get ready for the next-day wear.

The later phases of agricultural activity are *bu sîk* (paddy harvesting), *buchil* (threshing rice paddy), *bu thak* (storing) and *bu suk* (pounding of grain). The first jhum harvest is made in August/September and the second and the major harvest in November/December. There is another lay-off season called *Favang Awillên* between these two harvests. During this season, the *lâwmpas* together in a group would go out hunting in the forest. Their successful expedition is heralded by their *hlado*. On hearing such signals, *lâwmnus* would hurry towards *tinmun* with *zu* and *tawnlairâng*. At night, *lâwmpas* and *lâwmnus* together sing *Victory Songs*, dance *Victory Dances* and drink the whole night celebrating the successful hunt. The night is called *Salu Mêng* (keeping wake with the head of the bagged animal).

During major harvest, harvesters consisted of men and women go out in a group carrying *paikâwng* and use *kâwite* (sickle) to cut off the ears of grain. Threshing too, is done by community labour. Threshing of rice paddy is done mostly in *suorthlâk* (a raised platform) and *hrizawl* (a threshing ground) in front of or nearby the jhum-hut. It is mostly the young men who tread upon the paddy to separate the corn from the chaff, while young women make balls of chicken coop size out of the ears of paddy and pass them to the working men. The community often makes a festival out of threshing of rice paddy by giving melodious rhythm to the work in the form of singing Paddy Threshing Songs. While threshing, the working community sings *Hau Hla*. *Hau Hla* may be classified into different sub-categories like: *Laltuoi A Hla*, *Keiler A Hla*, *Haktuoi A Hla*, *Lâmsier Pa Hla*, *Neingo A Hla*, *Dawnpa Hla*, *Thildem A Hla*, *Chawndem A Hla*, *Dârdem A Hla*, *Kienglai Hla* and *Khuongngovi Hla*. (L. Chongtho Hmar 1987,132-139). Before the grain is taken inside the *ḥu* for storage till final transportation to the family granary in the village, it is customary for the owner/host to give “basketful of rice paddy to his sisters and to other relatives” (Bapui 2011, 115).

Final transportation of the grain to respective family is done by both men and women. The last phase of this categorical activity, that is, *bu suk* (pounding of grain) is considered the sole responsibility of the women folks.

The Hmars have a different social customs incorporating the different sets of their rituals relating to their agricultural activities. Every year, the Hmar ancestors create a water-hole at the bottom of their jhum-field. It is the village priest accompanied by one obedient lad of the village who performs the ritual pertaining to creation of the water-hole called *tuikhur siem*. This is one of the most important rites performed in the first phase of cultivation. It is a part of magical practices.

On days of community labour in jhum-field, the tribesmen carry a *bufûn* (tiffin). Just before eating the lunch, it is customary for the priest to recite propitiatory *dawihla* (mantra) and throw asunder small portion of morsel or rice around to please the evil spirits loitering in and around the jhum. This practice is called *khuotlai*. (Louise L. Keivom 1990, 18) No men or women present around the priest stuff morsel of rice inside their mouth unless the mantra is chanted. This ritualistic observance is maintained with a traditional belief that if not propitiated with their share, the evil spirits may get displeased and take revenge on them or on their crops.

Suggestion for arranging community labour, both *butukhuonglâwm* and *hlo thlo* is initiated and given by the village young men and women called *lâwm tlangval* and *lâwm nunghak*. *Lawmlaisa* (consisted of four members, two pairs of one male and female each) has a very important role to play. It is *lawmlaisa's* duty to get up early in the working mornings, to invite and remind other members of the Community including the *zaipu* cum *khuongpu*, beating a drum in *tinhmun* and inform the host of the day's corporate work. *Lawmlaisa* is entrusted with this responsibility and it carries out until and unless community labour finishes working for all houses of the village. In the jhum-field, a pair of young man and woman is made responsible to attend the need of *zaipu* and *zaipanghak* and to forage piles of firewood for all members to carry for the day's host in the evening. This foraging of firewood is called *Fapâr Thing Lâk*.

In the evenings of corporate work days, *lawmnus* and *lawmpas*, each carries a load of *Fapâr Thing*. While *lawmnus* carry them in their *paikâwng*, *lawmpas* generally carry a long single log of timber on their shoulder. Together, they walk back amidst singing and dancing and, proceed toward the house of the host. In front of the host's house,

they unload themselves and sit together on the ground forming a circle. Then they sing *Tuol Lâ̄m Hla* (also called *Fapar Lâ̄m Hla*). In the middle of the circled chain, one *lawmnu* dances *Tuol Lâ̄m (Fapâr Lâ̄m)*. This is a beautiful entertaining sight to watch. Every night of the corporate work days is a night of mini-celebration. *Lawmpas* and *lawmnus* celebrate a drinking feast dancing *Liendâng Lâ̄m, Zawntui Lâ̄m* and *Khiengthar Lâ̄m* (Hmar 1987, 25).

In both paddy seed sowing and weeding activities that involve community labour, the night of accomplishment is joyously marked with great enthusiasm in the form of singing, dancing and drinking in the house of *lawm upa*. This is called *lawm inhruoi tuolsuok Lâ̄m*. (Hmar 1987, f).

Thuite Ko:

The Hmars believe in the existence of three types of *thlarau* (soul): *Thlarau Imghâk* (a living person's soul that always guards the house), *Thlarau Ramlê̄ng* (a living person's soul that loiters hither and thither) and *Hmutheilo Thlarau* (a person's soul that leaves the body when the person dies). It is believed that the soul of a living person (*Thlarau Ramlê̄ng*) who has visited a jhum can remain there and tarry alone. So, after every annual major harvest, the male head of a family performs *Thuite Ko Inthawi* (Thuite Call Offerings) by calling out the names of every family member- male and female-, incanting mantras and performing other necessary sacrifices, generally a cock. *Thuite* means a living person's soul that loiters hither and thither. This custom is an important engagement which is performed every year without fail. It is believed that if this rite is not performed, the loitering soul will tarry alone and cry until death due to loss of way to home. (Sielmat Bible College 2010, 65-66). Unless this rite is performed, no one is allowed to pee or pass stool in or near the water-hole of the jhum-field.

On the first harvest of paddy, even before any member of the family chews a single morsel, a family performs a harvest rite cum thanks-giving ceremony called *Tharlâk Inthawi* to goddess *Fapite*. On the first day of paddy threshing, the tribe, besides singing Paddy Threshing Songs as given in Chapter 2, performs propitiatory rituals called *Fângko Inthawi* to goddess *Fapite* (Sielmat Bible College 2010, 61 & 68).

3.7. Festival:

Datta et.al (Birendranath Datta et. all 1994, 151) explains, “Festivals are the external expression of social behaviour.” And most, if not all, of the societies of the world periodically set aside portions of time for celebration. (Dorson 1972, 159) Like other living societies of the world, the Hmars too, find time to escape from work and celebrate a number of festivals where men and women, young and old joyously take part. There are two types of festival- individual and community hosted-festivals. Not to be misguided by the nomenclature of ‘individual festival’, celebration-participation is not limited to only genetic kinship groups, but the whole community- males and females. These two kinds of festivals are religious by nature as they are organized in the form of family worship. All the individual festivals hosted mainly by the rich or *thangsuo* involve great expenditure and they are set generally to commemorate and honour special occasions connected with the personal extraordinary achievement of the host. This kind of celebrations marks their social movement from one social status to a higher one. And the celebration moments are generally enlivened by lavish feasting, drinking and dance.

Festivals organized by individual have different names depending on the occasion commemorated. One of them is called *inchawng* (ceremony of a rich man (can be the chief) feeding his villagers and the villagers showing their gratitude by carrying him on a pall). It is usually connected with family worship. *Inchawng* festivals are of two types: *Siel Sun* and *Khuongchawi*. Some of the individual festivals are: *Sahlâng Dawm* (a festival organized by prominent hunters and warriors by entertaining the whole village with a big feast) and *In-Ei* (a triumphant festival hosted by an individual marking his successful bagging of a wild animal is called *Sa In-Ei* and a festival marking his bountiful harvest is called *Bu In-Ei*). *Sielsun*, the pompous entertainment hosted by the rich would last mainly for two to three days during which there is much drinking, dancing and eating. (Thiek 2013, 303) The main dances performed on such festive occasions, according to Mawia Pudaite are *Chawnlâm*, *Dâr Lâm*, *Chawngchên Lâm* and *Hlakawi Lâm*. And the songs sung are “*Chawnlâm Hla*, *Dârlâm Hla*, *Budel Hla* and *Luopui Hla*” (Lienchawngtho).

The community or general festival of the Hmars is *Sikpui Lám* (Sikpui Dance) where every member of the community- men and women, young and old, the rich and the poor, boys and girls could participate. *Sikpui Lám* is the most important and the grandest social festival of the Hmars. It is celebrated with a sole purpose of propitiating and placating a goddess called *Fapitenu* (a goddess with a power to bless mankind with abundant agricultural harvest. (Faihriem 2002, 6) *Sikpui Lám* is organized and celebrated during autumnal lay off season called *Áwillên Lai*, before major Winter Harvest. Considering the time of this festival celebration, some scholars call it a Winter Festival, while some call it a Harvest Festival, thereby endowing the festival with a characteristic of seasonal festival. The festival displays features of both agricultural festival and lay off season celebration. In modern days, it is celebrated on the 5th of Dec. It is a form of social merry-making celebrating the lay off season when all jhum works for the year were more or less completed. The festival is a marker of peace, harmony and the spirit of unity which used to be celebrated only in the years when there were bountiful harvest and peace. *Sikpui Lám* was never celebrated if there was any death in the village within the year.

The preparation for this festival celebration involves a great expenditure of energy of the entire community. Each family of the village community prepared *zu* (country beer) in abundance and brought it to the village wide open space. This wide space is called *Sikpui Zâwl* or *Lám Zâwl* (Sikpui Venue).

The festival lasts at least for a fortnight. If the atmosphere was congenial and festive enough, it could be prolonged for a month. (Bapui 2007, 112) However, the festival could hardly be organized every year: it was a festival of peace and harmony. If any death occurred among the community prior to the festival, the programme would stand cancelled. “The last Sikpui Festival in the traditional fashion was performed in 1959 at Khawhmunlien, Cachar district, Assam” records Thiek (Thiek 2013, 310).

Sikpui Lám has its own song called, *Sikpui Hla* and dances called *Sikpui Lám*. *Sikpui Lám* has about eight types of dances and many songs. According to Dr. Thiek, there are about one hundred and twelve Sikpui Songs. (Thiek 2013, 309) Some of the main

Sikpui songs are *Durtelâm Hla* or *Buontlaw Hla*, *Thlawrân Hla*, *Hla Pui*, *Anrân Hla*, *Hlatlâng Hla*, *Saia Ke Tet Hla*, *Sim Sak Hla*, *Palsáwp Lámna Hla* and *Jinna Hla*. While the first two songs are especially meant for children to sing and dance, the rest of the songs are for men and women- young and old. The names of the dances are given in Chapter 4 (4.4.1).

In both the two types of festivals, excluding the priestly lore- the divination and invocation of the gods and spirits, which is exclusively preserved for the *thiempu*, the participating audience- male and female- used to take part with great enthusiasm.

3.8. Folk Medicine:

There are two varieties of folk medicine (*ram damdawi*). “Of folk medicine there are essentially two varieties, two branches: (1) natural folk medicine, and (2) magico-religious folk medicine. The first of these represents one of man’s earliest reactions to his natural environment, and involves the seeking of cures for his ills in the herbs, plants, minerals, and animal substances of nature. ...The second branch of folk medicine is the magico-religious variety, sometimes called “occult” folk medicine, which attempts to use charms, holy words, and holy actions to cure disease” (Dorson 1972, 192). Of these two forms of healing, the latter may require priest’s incantation and spells, but the former form of healing is basically domestic, household remedy, the kind mothers and grandmothers normally apply to their children especially in villages.

Dorson’s classification of forms of healing is applicable to the Hmars as well. The Hmars, since pre-scientific era, have been employing the form of herbal/rational treatment till today; whereas, the magico-religious form of healing has been discontinued since the tribe’s wholesale conversion to Christianity. The home remedies have been passed down from generation to generations. From the tribe’s lore of rational cures, we get to know many kinds of herbs, roots, barks, plants, insects, tobacco and even animal substance and organs that are endowed with special curative ability: some medicinal materials even take us to the point of wonder. In their family garden, most Hmar women plant herbs, fruits and plants for culinary purposes. Among the vegetables, we always find herbs and plants with curative

ability being planted and taken care of by them. I have shown the tribe's two forms of healing – rational and magico-religious treatment, in two separate paragraphs.

Rational Treatment:

Diseases	Treatment
Bedwetting in older children.	The baby is made to eat the meat of roasted bat, or, It is made to carry a small hen coop and go round a house at least for three rounds saying as it revolves, "I shall not wet the bed again."
Gastric	To chew <i>lambak</i> (<i>centella asiatica</i>) raw or drink the grinded juice. To boil the bark of <i>pasaltakaza</i> (<i>heicia robusta</i>) and drink the juice.
Fresh cuts/wounds	To apply one's urine in the local area or, to grind <i>japan hlona</i> and bandage it on the cut.
Loin cramp	To boil <i>mañau hna</i> (leaf of <i>elaegnus latifolia</i>) and drink the juice.
Toothache	To smash <i>hlo nuor</i> (<i>mimosa pudica</i>) and drop the extracted juice on the aching tooth, or, To poke the aching tooth with a hair of an elephant's tail.
Dysentery	To smash <i>hnakhat zung</i> (root of a wild plant) and drink the juice, or, To eat boiled egg, or, To chew <i>thingfanghma hna</i> (papaya leaf) and swallow the juice, or, To eat dog meat prepared with lots of pepper.
Worms	To smash <i>ngaidi zung</i> (root of <i>glyceria maxima</i>) and drink the extracted juice.

Stomachache	To chew <i>thingrai hna</i> (agar leaf) or <i>thingsfanghma hna</i> (papaya leaf) and swallow the juice.
Kidney pain & Jaundice	To smash <i>puolchangkaw zik</i> (tender leaves of a wild tree) and drink the juice.
Itches caused by insects	To smash <i>hlorimsie</i> (<i>ageratum Conyzoides</i>) and paste it on the area, or, To rub the area with raw rice.
High BP	To eat cooked <i>anphui</i> (<i>clerodendrum colebrokianum</i>).
Cancer	To grind <i>hnathap</i> (cancer medicinal plant) and drink the juice.
Low BP and scanty milk in lactating mothers.	To eat cooked <i>dawlzik</i> or <i>dawlung</i> (<i>colocasia esculenta</i>).
Jaundice	To smash <i>behlieng hna</i> (leaf of pigeon pea) and drink the juice.
Thorn/tiny stick under skin	To smash <i>phawngphawdet</i> (antlion) and paste it on the area.
Gastric	To chew <i>kawlthei zik</i> (tender leaves of guave plant) and swallow the juice.
Eye ache	To smash and drop the juice of <i>simbuthut</i> (wild plant), or, To drop milk of a lactating mother on the affected eye/s.
Bronchitis	To eat roasted/cooked meat of <i>sawkkhe</i> (gecko tokay)

Migraine	To eat roasted/cooked pig's testicle, or, To wrap an egg with a good number (seven to eight) of <i>anphui</i> (clerodendrum colebrokianum), to roast it on fire and eat the inner roasted leaves along with the egg, or, To slightly pull the victim's forehead hair and slightly bite the forehead while pulling the hair.
Baby with excessive froth of mouth	To let the baby eat roasted <i>khauhlâng</i> (cockroach).
Bee sting and ant bite	To apply <i>changal</i> or soda (curry tenderizing agent) or tobacco (golden) juice on the area.
Freckle on cheek/face	To eat <i>thingthupui</i> (dysoxylum gobara) raw or boil it and have it. It is believed to have a curative ability for dysentery problem as well.
Diabetes	To boil the leaf of <i>hmurkuong</i> (wild shrub) and drink the liquid.
<i>Sakihrik</i> (flea) bite	To apply grinded ginger on the area.
Kidney stone problem	To boil <i>khuongbaihlo</i> (one type of a small plant) with its root, grind it and to drink the juice.
Inactive baby	To cook <i>zawng lutluok</i> (monkey cerebrum) and to let the baby have the cooked cerebrum.
Excessively high fever temperature	To grind <i>hlumpuol</i> (maggot) raw and swallow it.
Snakebite	To drink the warm blood of the snake, or, To cut divided a tamarind seed length-wise and paste one half on the bitten spot. It sucks the poison.

Boils	To crush leaves of <i>hlonuor</i> (<i>mimosa pudica</i>) or leaves of <i>tawtawrawt</i> par (thorn apple) and paste it on the area. The boils burst fast.
Malaria	To swallow <i>khumfât</i> (bed bug), or, swallow raw <i>rultuha</i> (snake) bile.
Constipation	To compress anal with warm oil, or, Taking stale chicken curry.
Skin patches	To apply the white substance of <i>tumlawi</i> (cactus family) or <i>thumriethnai</i> (<i>alstonia scholaris</i>) on the area.
Leech bite bleeding	To apply ashes of ignited matchsticks or burnt paper. It stops the bleed.
Tonsil & Ulcer	To grind the stem, leaf and fruit of <i>vaakpahrui</i> (<i>lobelia angulata</i>) and drink the juice.

Besides traditional way of healing using herbs or insects/ animals as medications, the tribe practices magico-religious treatments which are magical rites. Magico-religious forms of treatment used to be performed upon the suffering patient by the *thiempu* who examined and diagnosed the ailment and prescribed the animal/s to be sacrificed according to his understanding of the nature and cause of the ailment. Illnesses were believed to be caused by provocation of spirits. His prescription was never questioned and challenged by the tribesmen who readily handed over it to him. As much as forms of herbal medication, ways of magical treatment were many and large. It was an era when belief in superstitions was great and high in degree. Chapter: 8 of *Hmar Pipu Sakhuo Le Inthawi Dân* 2010 records about twelve (12) forms of magico-religious treatment operated upon an ailing individual or society. The tribal religious treatments were mainly concerned with the immediate 'quick fix' for everyday needs and not with ultimate issues of sin and salvation. Magical rites were performed mainly in two levels- *Khawtlâng Inthawi* (corporate sacrifice, for example *Khuothlai Inthawi* which is performed to cure the whole village of flu epidemic. A pig is killed on such

occasions) which is performed mainly “to ensure good health and all round abundance and welfare” (Bapui 2011, 17) and a good number of *Mimal Inthawina* (individual sacrifices). When an individual falls ill, he calls a *thiempu* (priest) who examines him and prescribes a sacrifice according to the ailment. The *thiempu* employs a variety of techniques: he mostly achieves his ends by making animal sacrifice. The Hmars perform many forms of propitiatory sacrifices to cure patients of their illnesses:

Rampui Inthawi is a worship of the forest. It is offered for cure of serious illnesses like typhoid and pneumonia. A cock is generally offered on such occasions. For patients suffering from TB-like disease, a sacrifice called *Inung Inthawi* is offered. A dog is offered on such occasions. To cure a person suffering from mental imbalance, *Vabuzêl Inthawi* is performed. A pig or a dog is offered on such occasions. For patients who could not be cured through *Inung Inthawi* and *Vabuzêl Inthawi*, *Invêl Inthawi* is performed. This is an expensive sacrifice which commoners cannot afford. A good number of goats are offered. In case of insufficient goat, a pig or a dog can substitute. To cure a patient suffering from serious skin blisters or boils, *Puplût Inthawi* is offered. *Tuikhur Inthawi* is offered to propitiate the river spirit that can infect the water of the water-hole with disease and germs. A goat and a cock are offered on such occasions. A sacrifice for rheumatism called *Rutliek Inthawi* is offered. No animal sacrifice is done here. For a patient suffering from painful swollen skin (caused by insect-bite), *Invûng Inthawi* is offered. Only mantra incantation is performed and no animal sacrifice is done in this sacrifice. For any theft or robbery that takes place in the society where the guilty refuses to confess, a sacrifice called *Thingkhuondêng Inthawi* is performed pressurizing the culprit to confess. The mantra incanted during this sacrifice invokes evil spirits to punish the culprit/s with serious misfortune. *Thuite Ko Inthawi* is performed after every annual harvest by calling out the names of every family member- male and female-, incanting mantras and performing other necessary sacrifices, generally a cock. *Thuite* means a living person’s soul that loiters hither and thither. This custom is an important engagement which is performed every year without fail. It is believed that if this rite is not performed, the loitering soul will tarry alone and cry until death due to loss of way to

home. In order to cure a witch or a black magician who have been afflicted by evil spirit called *khawhring*, the tribe performs a sacrifice called *Khiengsunhlák Inthawi*. Another sacrifice called *Theibabul Inthawi* is meant exclusively for wives who often miscarry babies or cannot bring forth living children. On such occasions, in place of animals, fertile fruits are offered in the sacrificial altar. For children suffering from serious complicated illnesses, *Nauhri Inthawi* is offered. To cure stomach ailments including dysentery, cholera and gastro-enteritis, *Phingnat Inthawi* is offered.

3.9. Fruits and Vegetables Foraging:

Fruits and vegetables foraging is one of the subsidiary occupations of the Hmar women folks. Besides having a kitchen garden where essential vegetables needed for daily consumption are grown, the Hmars have a traditional convention of foraging wild fruits and vegetables called, *hmeruo zawng* in the ethnic term, from deep forest. The fact that Hmar women have a traditional norm of foraging fruits and vegetables from wild forest is clearly highlighted in some lines of their folk songs. In one of the categories of *Lenglai Hla* (Love Song) called *Liendang Hla*, there is a line,

*“A ziek dawng chu la naw ro uo Thien,
Thangngo Liendanga nun a kha ting a tih.”* (L.Keivom 1980, 64)

(Friend, spare the tender shoots of the plants,
Lest, Thangngo, Liendang’s mother finds the plant bitter)

This line reflects work activity that is purely related with vegetable foraging. This particular line is sung by one of the young foraging ladies and the line is addressed to the other work-partners present beside her. The essence of this song is: the young lady falls in love with a certain young gentleman called Liendang. She imaginatively wants to bribe Liendang’s mother with her collected vegetables. As the uppermost part of a plant tastes bitter, she asks her work-partners not to collect that part of a plant lest, her lover’s mother finds it bitter.

About the tribe’s traditional norm of vegetables foraging, Bapui also records, “The Hmars depend, to a large extent, on supply of wild vegetables and fruits from the

forests. Many kinds of leafy and fleshy vegetables as well as fruits and food supplements are collected and taken. Edible mushrooms, bamboo shoots, young spikes of various palms and ferns, leaves, flowers, roots, stalks and stems, and buds of different species of plants are collected and taken as vegetables. In fact, food gathering from the forest is a part-time occupation with some members of the family” (Bapui 2011, 111).

Although women do not go out for animal hunting or trapping, they do get engaged in foraging edible wild fruits and plants. They work in gardens, which the family sections off, where they grow and harvest different items of edible plants, roots and fruits. Varieties of roots of rare plants, leaves and stems collected from gardens, *jhums* and wild forests are the ingredients used for preparing delicious indigenous Hmar dishes. This includes wild mushrooms and bamboo shoots. In regards to meat, it is not an exaggeration to claim that the tribe cannot go without meat, especially, pork.

The Hmar women collect varieties of *thei* (fruits) and *ram hmeruo* (wild vegetables) from the forest. There are varieties of fruits and wild vegetables on which the tribe heavily depends. Fruits:-*aitlâng, bântlangra, bel thei, boroi, changchaldawn, haivamim, hlingtheihmi, hmurkuong, inhmui, inrainu thei, intun, kawlthei, kha-ûm, khawnghma, lâmkhuong, limbu, matau, mâwt, muolhoi, muolvai, nisathei, pangkai, pelte, rabel, ramser, saisêr, sakhithei, samphawk, sapthei, sarzuk, sekithei, sertawk, serte, serthlum, simkerlek, sipuinu thei, sisu, suhlu, taitaw, tãtpawng, thei arasi, thei hmuorkawi, thei-ârbâwm, thei-archal, theiba, theibufai, theichang, theiher-âwt, theihmi, theikel ek, theikhawng, theikhuongchawm, theilaikuol, theiphak, theipui, theipumlien, theirelsin, theiriêl, theisuongsen, theisuvawr, theite, theitehmul, theithit, theivar, theivañhukñhu, theivompui, thingtheihmi, tingra, tlengher, ðuoiñt, uiluokthei, vuokdup* and *zawlphâi*. Names of some of the vegetables collected are-*aichir, aihretil, ainem, aipar, aisen, aiva, anbawng, an inhram, an inpang, ankhapui, ankhat, annel, anpangñhuom, anphûi, ansapui, ansate, anthûr, anzo, aithâng, antumbu, bachikhawm, baibîng, bakhate, batlingpar, buordap, buorje, chaldâwng, changhrât, hlephlawp, hlingthufir, hmawnglawr, hnachang vûi,*

hnachangkâwr, inhmun tiek, kângtuihaw, kawcha, kawtebel, khanghmuk, khuongbai hlo, lambak, maitâmtawk, ngatedawl, pa arasi, pa chawkhawnâl, pa hnachang, pa uithin, pahnakhar, papal, pa-inthlung, pasisaw, papar, paruomau, phai-an, phaidawlzik, ram bethlieng, rawlhlo, aichaldon, runhmoi, ruotuo, saisuo, samtawkte, simbuthut, singzuor, sizo, thingthupui, thinghmarcha, tingdawn, tîrhrep, uiluvun, vai an, zawng maihna and zawngtâ.

Many of these wild fruits and vegetables have become unknown to the new generations, while few of them are still commonly available even today.

3.10. Institution of Courting (*Nunghak Lêng*):

A Hmar society is a free-mixing society where boys and girls have full freedom of mixing among themselves. This institution of courting is recognized by the tribe and is an institutionalized way of a boy approaching a girl of his choice. Dena (2010) records the fact that the Hmar society was an open society where there was free-mixing between young unmarried men and women. *Inlêng* or *Nunghak-lêng* was very common and it was rather the institutionalized way of approaching a girl. Soon after his evening meal, a boy would woo a girl. Boys in group would sit around a girl gossiping, cracking jokes and discussing topics of common interests till late at night. After she reaches marriageable age, a Hmar girl entertains her *inleng* (suitors; wooers) till late at night while doing some domestic works like spinning or needle-work. Types of *Lenglai Hla* (Love Song) are given in Chapter 2 (2.3.1) of this work.

The village boys in group, soon after their evening meals, would woo a girl of their fancy. They would sit around the girl gossiping, cracking jokes, and discussing topics of common interests and assisting the girl in her domestic works till late at night. A lover staying overnight at the house of the beloved is one of common traditional behaviours of Hmar young men as found in one of the oldest love songs called *Semruk Hla*, given in Chapter 2;

“Singkhuol palai zânin antlung a,

Dawtônga zâl chinmak zung tho rawh.” (H.V. Vara 1985, 8)

(Hark! A new suitor is coming from afar; Get up from the floor, my dear)

"Daw ꯃuonga zâl chinmak zuong tho la,

'Ramlailienin ka huolsa' ti rawh." (H.V.Vara 1985, 8)

(Getting up from the floor; tell them that we are engaged)

Conclusion:

From the above discussion, we find that the Hmar women had little space in matters of sacred ceremonies carried out either in family or in public domain. A woman could not become a member of *berva*. Though a female priest called *thiemp*i existed, the number of such priestesses was less and she could not perform all kinds of religious rite and sacrificial offering. In the absence of modern forms of denominations, theological institutions or convent, a woman had no prospect of sanctifying herself for religious sake; rather it was beyond the thought of human mind. Had any woman desired to spend her life single either in the village or in jungle in communion with the gods or goddesses, she would have been under social disapproval and a cute criticism. A Hmar woman might have prayed for a happy marriage or for a male child, but she did not seek publicly nor even could she expect to find a personal relationship with a god or goddess. That was a period when practice of sanctification for religious matters was non-existent even for the men folks. This less participation of women in religious matters signifies that they were not considered an integral part of the fabric of religious world.

Thus we find that in traditional Hmar society, a woman enjoyed limited space in the sphere of religious matters. Rather, the Hmar's traditional customs barred women's free participation in religious practices. There was no religious ceremony that gave young women and girls exposure to the society at large. But in other social spheres, she actively participated with great zeal. In the economic life of the community, like food-producing activities for instance, she played a very important role with her tremendous contribution towards filling the family granary to the brim.

Endnotes:

1. *Tuivamit* is a small collection of water in a forest having no noticeable source or course and considered sacred or taboo.

Chapter 4: Expressive World of the Hmar Women: Performing Folk Arts

4.1. Defining Performing Folk Arts:

Performing Folk Arts is one of the most important sectors in the study of folklore and folk life. It “primarily concerns traditional music, dance and drama” (J. Handoo 2000, 18). The word ‘performance’ in the growing new thought of folkloristic, may be said to be associated with every delivered item of folklore, irrespective of its generic applications. However, in the present context, meaning of ‘performance’ is given only to those folklore and folk life items that are consciously performed and the art forms carried on by individuals and groups from one generation to another. This includes conscious art forms like dance, drama and folk music. If we compare this set of conscious art forms with other folklore items like telling a tale, it is discernable that the latter set of art form looks more casual in nature than the former. This idea is endorsed by Richard M. Dorson who says, “They are more casual in nature than the conscious presentation of these arts by individuals or groups with folk instruments, dance costumes, scenario props” (Boro 2001, 19).

4.2. Different sub-genres:

The most important genres of Performing Folk Arts sector are said to be folk dance, folk music and drama. Depending on the availability of genres with the tribe under study, this chapter focuses on two performing folk arts genres – folk dance and folk music. Dramatic form of art as a unified genre is non-existent in the artistic heritage of the tribe. But this does not necessarily mean that the tribesmen are totally ignorant of a dramatic form of expression. A minute observation of their folk dances reveals that their dances are immensely endowed with veritable dramatic performances. The dancers wear colourful and elaborate costumes. While dancing the selected dancer or dancersexaggeratedly chant some of the lyrical lines in the form of rhetorical dialogue. The Hmar folk dances generally involve singing, dancing and mimetic acting reflecting in the most exaggerated way the occasions celebrated. The dialogue form is both functional and aesthetic in regard to its effect.

4.3. Musical Instrument:

According to Bruno Nettl, “Folk and primitive music have traditionally been described in terms of several distinct elements of music, such as scale, mode, melodic contour and meter...” (Dundes 1965, 175). Traditional music is generally without written or printed musical score; it is passed on by ear and performed by memory down from generation to generations. Musical instruments of the tribe generally do not cross generic barriers as they are reserved mainly for use in singing and dancing. Of all the instruments, *khuong* (drum; Fig.4.1) and *zamluong*, also called *darkhuong* (gong; Fig.4.2) have the maximum usages: the beating of them can serve as signaling tidings – good, bad or neutral.

The Hmars are rich in culture. Cultural embellishes are being identified in the Hmar tradition of revering dance forms, festivals and music. The Hmars show their expertise in these conventional folk dances, folk songs that nicely represent events of adventure, battle, love, victory, and other experiences throughout history. Their culture is enriched with brilliant tribal songs and dance forms. Varieties of musical instruments decorate their orchestra. They play a kind of drum called *Khuong* during their tribal dance and song performances. Some of the other musical instruments are *Theihle* (bamboo flute; Fig.4.3), *Seki* (set of mithun horn; Fig.4.4), *Darbu* (set of small gongs of different size with different rhythmic sound; Fig.4.5.), *Ruo Tingtang* (guitar made of bamboo; Fig.4.6), *Pheiphit* (a set of three whistle made of bamboo producing different sound; Fig.4.7), *Ruo Khuong*⁴ (a guitar like instrument made of bamboo, struck with a stick; Fig.4.8), *Darmang* (flat brass gong), *Darkhuongor Zamluong* (a big and heavy brass metal gong to give a majestic sound; a gong) *Chawngpereng* (a bamboo pipe instrument), *Rawsem* (flute made of dried hollow gourd and small sized bamboos; Fig.4.9), *Darbenthek* (cymbals; Fig.4.10), *Theikhuong* (a big hollow bamboo generally comprising two internodes with a node at the extreme end; Fig.4.11) *Darlai Pâwng* (heavy gong of brass metal), *Hna Mút* (Leaf instrument; Fig.4.12), *Ruo Tawtawrâwt* (Fig.4.13) and *Úm Perkhuong* (Fig.4.14). Many of these musical instruments are generally played by men. “Of these, one of the *pheiphit* whistles is played by women” (Lalramhnem). “*Khuong* is played by women mostly when dances are performed during marriage ceremonies”

(Sumneizir). “Regarding musician, there is no restriction and no convention in favour of a particular sex. Both men and women can play them. Women participants often played *Darbenthek*, *Pheiphit*, and *Theikhuong*” (Lienchawngtho). “Of all these musical instruments, *tingtang* and *rawsem* are considered male-oriented instruments” (Lienchawngtho).

4.4. Folk Dance:

Folk dance is called *hnam lâm*. This is one important field in the performing folk art sector. Singing and dancing together constitute features of festival celebrations of the Hmars. The tribe has a variety of *Lâm* (dance) forms which are performed by men and women, young and old with great enthusiasm during their various festival ceremonies and occasions. The origins of many of Hmar folk dance can be traced back to pre-historic times. The dances are illustrative of the different events of socio-cultural life of the tribe. They are performed on different occasions serving as expressive commentaries of the solemnized occasions. Most of the dance forms, perhaps those which were profusely connected with old religious practices accompanied by lavish drinking of *zuso* symbolizing old values of life, have been forgotten due to discontinuation. I have classified the various dances into different sub-headings. Some of the dance-forms are still in practice while many of them have remained oblivious:

4.4.1. Festival Dance (*Nipui Lâm*):

As has been given the details in Chapter 2 (2.3.4), the festival dances of the Hmars can be divided into two main categories: Dances for Individual and General Festivals. During Individual Festivals, the young men and women mainly perform dances like *Dârlâm*, *Chawnlâm*, *Hlakawi Lâm*, *Chawngchên Lâm* and *Hlachawm Lâm*. In Assam, *Chawnlâm* (Fig.4.15. i and ii) is one of the most common dances performed during individual festivals. It is performed with the accompaniment of various folk musical instruments like *khuong* (drum), *dârbu* (a set of gongs of different size and rhythmic sound), *thihle* (flute) and two other instruments called *rawsem* and *chawngpereng*. “A female participant used to beat the drum (*khuong*)” (Sumneizir). This includes *Khuol Lâm* and *Lal Lâm* or *Vai Lâm* to the social festival dances of the tribe. To him

*Khuol Lâ*m (guest welcoming dance) is performed by young men and women as a gesture of warm welcome to the distinguished guest who comes to visit their village. This dance is also performed during *inchawng* festivals in honour of the host. *Lal Lâ*m (royal dance) is performed on occasions of coronation of new village chief or other high officials for the entire community is endorsed both by Dr. Bapui (Bapui 2011, 106) and Dr Thiek (Thiek 2013, 316). One of the informants managed to recall three lines of *Khuol Lâ*m song,

“*A mi iengzat tam sienkhawm,*
Ka Pu.....(name of the quest) chau,
*Ama inpâkin ka lâ*m ie” (H.V Sunga)

(Among multitudes, I dance to glorify the one and only Sir.....)

“During *Chawngchen Lâ*m, a dance which is performed to glorify the host (Fig.4.16), a female participant used to beat the drum and *dâr*bu” (Lienchawngtho).

*Sikpui Lâ*m (Fig.4.17.i and ii) constitutes the general festival of the tribe. I have not included here other dance forms though they too carry feature of general festivals, because they all are occasion-specific. They are placed under different sub-categories of this section.

This grand and elaborate festival requires at least a fortnight during which the participant group- children, young and old, men and women- performs at least eight types of *Sikpui* Dance and sings about one hundred and twelve songs (Thiek 2013, 309) with zeal and gusto. Eight of the sub-titled dances are: *Durte Lâ*m, *Thlawrân Lâ*m, (the first two dances are children dance), *Lâmtluong Lâ*m, *Ketet Lâ*m, *Anrânlai Lâ*m, *Thlawrân Lâ*m, *Sim Sak Lâ*m, and *Palsawp Lâ*m, also called *Tinna Lâ*m. The festival may continue for a longer period. In both the singing and dancing the Dances, the women folks take active participation.

*Sikpui Lâ*m is beautifully begun by young men and women standing alternately in horizontal line. Each female in line holds the hand of the nearest female’s from across the back of the male dancers standing near her. Male dancers too, form a chain by holding the hands of their neighbouring male dancers’ from across the back of the female dancers standing near them. Viewed from their back, their posture looks

immensely beautiful like a beautiful lattice. They together sway their legs to and fro following the rhythmic beats of the drum. The dancing styles of all the *Sikpui* Dances differ from one another. (Faihriem 2002, 26)

4.4.2. Victory Dance (*Hnena Lâm*):

The occasions for performing Victory Dances have been enumerated in Chapter 2 (2.3.5) of this work. The dances that fall within this category of folk dance are- *Hranglâm* (Fig.4.18.i and ii). *Hranglâm* is called by different nomenclatures according to the nature of the hunting expedition. If the community celebrates the head of the bagged animal, it is called *Salu Lâm*. If the celebration is for head of enemies, it is called *Rallu Lâm*. *Pheiphit Lâm* (Fig.4.19.i and ii) is another common victory dance form that is performed for any of the occasions. *Pheiphit* dance is another form of victory dance that is beautifully performed by male and female dancers who are positioned alternately. Dancers alternately sway their legs to and fro to the rhythmic beats produced by the instruments. The dance is performed mostly during *Sa In-Ei* ceremonies. *Pheiphit* being a set of three musical instruments, the dancers- male and female- play them as they dance in the dancing ground. "There are three types of Pheiphit Dance- *Lamtluong*, *Saruol Pheikhai* and *Sai Khupsuk*" (Lienchawngtho).

Hranglâm is the most ancient dance form of the tribe. It is performed in honour of successful hunters and great warriors. In the past, women folks hardly took part in the dance. They joined their male counterparts in chanting the songs. In modern days, they are active participants in the dances. Dancers sway their right and left legs with arms akimbo as they move forward in a round circle to the tune of the song-accompanied music.

4.4.3. Young Ladies' Frolic Dance (*Nuhmei Inlênna Lâm*):

As described in Chapter 2 (2.3.8), the Hmar young ladies perform traditional frolic dances under starry sky at moonlit nights. Some of the dances that fall within this dance category are- *Fahrel Tâwk Lâm* (Pestle Dance; Fig.4.20.i and ii), *Kawl Tet Lâm* (Loom Dance) and *Inchâwm* (Jumping). Thiek (Thiek 2013, 317, 319 & 320) maintains that there were folk dances traditionally performed only by women. He

names them as *Faithlák Lám*, *Vaki Fachawi Lám*, *Chembe Insui Lám* and *A Vakâwl Uo Zuong Lám* (Hornbill Dance). *Faithlák Lám* “is a small basket or receptacle for measuring rice. It is a group dance. Each dancer carries a *faithlák* completely filled with rice on her head and dances in an admirable balancing art.” *Vaki Fachawi Lám*, he claims, is a parrot dance. It is “a group dance performed by girls in imitation of parrot’s movements during the harvest season.” *Chembe Insui Lám* is very popular and hair-raising dance as claimed by Thiek. “The dancers dance over the sharp edges of daos or daggers with extra-ordinay skill.” *Á Vakâwl Uo Zuong Lám Uo* (Hornbill Dance; Fig.4.21.i and ii), another frolic dance of young ladies, requires at least four dancers. The dancers cross their right or left legs one another forming more or less a square. Then they dance with their right or left legs as they clap their hands and sing the song, ‘*Á vakâwl uo zuong lám uo.....*’ meaning, ‘hornbills are dancing.’

Fahrel Tawk Lám, one of the most frequently performed dances is a pestle dance that is beautifully rhythmic and is associated with little acrobatics. This dance is popularly known as Bamboo Dance as because bamboo poles are often used in place of pestles. It is a beautiful dance form where dancers, generally female, step in and out of the striking pestles with their beautiful costumes. Pestles are horizontally placed in perfect parallel to each other. Each of other two participants holds and continuously strikes the extreme end of both the pestle pole in a regular rhythmic way. More dancers can participate if number of striking pestles is increased. Other participants sit around and sing the *Fahrel Tawk Lám* Song (given in Chapter 2). *Kawl Tet Lám* is a dance solely performed by women dancers with shafts of country loom in imitation of the mechanical movements of weaving in a country loom. This dance form has also been out of practice now. In North Cachar Hills district, *Kawl Tet Lám* is called *Fahrel Tawk Lám* whereas Dr. Thiek disputes the notion that *Kawl Tet Lám* should be confused with *Fahrel Tawk Lám*. He says *Kawl Tet Lám* is a deviation of *Fahrel Tawk Lám*.

Inchâwm Dance is performed under moonlit nights. The songs are given in Chapter 2. Two straight lines of female participants stand face to face keeping a wide space in between. Each line can comprise three/ four or five (depending on the space of the dancing ground) participants. As they sing the song, one line jumps forward and backward to be followed by the other line in the same fashion. This dance form is immensely frolic by nature. Being a young frolic dance performed for amusement, this dance does not require any costumes or additional ornaments.

4.4.4. Hunter Dance (*Ramlêng Lâm*):

The Hmars have two types of Hunter Dance which is reflective of their hunting expedition movements. The dances are called *Feitung Tâwl Lâm* by Dr. Bapui and Dr. H. Thiek, and *Sâwl Bula Lâm* by Sri L.Chawngtho. These hunter dances are performed during *Sa In-Ei* ceremonies¹. With spears in hands, dancers of this dance form imitate the physical movement of a hunter during hunting. These two dance-forms have gone into oblivion.

4.4.5. War Dance (*Indo Lâm*):

Vaituksi is the name of Hmar War Dance. This is one of the discontinued folk dances of the Hmars. “Each of the dancers carries a shield in his left hand and a sword in his right. He brandishes the sword and moves the shield swiftly as he dances” (Bapui 2011, 106). Thiek remarked that this dance form is forgotten since long.

4.4.6. Agricultural Dance (*Lo Lâm*):

A jhum-work related dance called, *Fapâr Lâm* is exclusively performed by a woman. It is also called *Tuol Lâm*. In the evenings of corporate work days in jhum-field, each of the *lawmnus* (female work-partner) and *lawmpas* (male work-partner) carries a load of firewood called *fapâr thing*. Together, they walk back amidst singing and dancing and, they proceed toward the house of the host. In front of the host’s house, they unload themselves and sit together on the ground forming a circle. Then they sing *Tuol Lâm Hla* (also called *Fapar Lâm Hla*). In the middle of the circled chain, one *lawmnu* dances *Tuol Lâm (Fapâr Lâm)*. This is a beautiful entertaining sight to watch. Every night of the corporate work days is a night of mini-celebration.

Lawmpas and *lawmnus* celebrate a drinking feast dancing “*Liendâng Lâm, Zawntui Lâm* and *Khiengthar Lâm*” (L.Chongtho Hmar 1987, 25). Chawngtho claimed that *Khiengthar Lâm* is called *Puma Lâm* (Fig.4.22.i and ii) by some, including the Biates, one of the sub-tribes of Hmar.

4.4.7. Marriage Dance (*Molawm Lâm*):

On occasions of marriage ceremony, the Hmars sing common occasion-related songs and perform dances in the houses of the new bride and the groom. The dance is performed by two groups of dancer- one active dancer in the middle and the other group encircling the lone dancer. In a strict sense of the term, the lone dancer is the dancer while the other group of participants forming the circle can be called the public-cum-audience. But since this supposedly non-participant group too comes out of the general public to participate in the dancing activity, it may be clubbed as passive group of dancer. The active dancer in this folk dance category is generally male while the passive group consists of men and women. The two groups of dancers sing the songs (given in Chapter 2) “with the new bride generally beating the drum” (Sumneizir). This is one of the discontinued forms of dance.

Besides these dance forms, a well-renowned Hmar writer Dr. Thiek claims that there were other dance forms and he names them as *Lâmpalak* and *Pâr Lâm*. “*Pâr Lâm* is performed with *rawsem*; there is no accompanying song” (Ngulkhumchawng).

Conclusion:

In all the occasions, there is no instance where male alone sing and perform folk dance without their female counterpart. Even in single dancing occasions where only a single male dancer dances in the middle of the dancing ground, female participants either sit or stand around him singing thereby playing the role of less active participants. On dancing occasions involving a single female dancer, the singing males are still participants, though less active than the dancer. But many of the traditional dance forms have died out most probably due to “the tribe’s perception

that those dances are associated with paganism” (Dr. Hrilrokhum Thiek). The spirit of Hmar traditional dances is deeply intertwined with drinking *zu* and recognition of indigenous gods and goddesses. The wholesale conversion of the Hmars to Christianity in the early part of the 20th century which is internally linked with the tribe’s unconditional acceptance of the new set of beliefs and practices is perhaps one of the reasons for discontinuation of most of the dance forms. “The Christian missionaries used to repeat mainly one statement to convert the Hmar men. They would say, ‘Trim your hair, break your wine pot and follow Jesus Christ. You will only then be saved’ ” (H.Thangzo).

The Hmar men used to keep long hair then. This simple way of teaching and convincing the tribe in the fashion of this verbal form must have been supported by Biblical verses like 1 Corinthians 11: 14 that allege a long hair for man as a disgrace for him and, Biblical verses like Ephesians 5: 18 that warn against getting drunk on wine which leads to debauchery. The early male converts strictly regulated their life to the tune of this new teaching. Drinking *zu*, considered taboo, was then taken seriously as very offensive that would even lead one’s soul to hell after life. “Any man, who would, after conversion, taste a *zu* even with his fingers, was considered fit to be ex-communicated from the church” (The Evangelical Free Church of India 2010, 87). While these were the basic concerns of the new teaching, all of the Hmar traditional dances are profoundly associated with lavish drinks and ritualistic thanksgiving to the pagan gods and goddesses. In modern days, except the *Sikpui Lâm*, there are literally no occasions to facilitate the performance of the other dance forms. The traditional gods and goddesses have been replaced by Jesus Christ; *zu*, the basic spicy ingredient that renders festive look to the social celebrated-occasions has also now been substituted by tea. Perhaps, because of the disappearance of these two basic indigenous items from the tribe’s social festive gatherings, most of the dance forms have gone into oblivion.

Endnotes:

1. It’s a triumphant festival hosted by an individual marking his successful bagging of a wild animal.

Chapter 5: Expressive World of the Hmar Women: The Material Culture

5.1. Defining Material Culture:

In contrast to verbal art or oral literature which is aural, material culture is physical folklore. It refers to the physical objects and resources that people use to define their culture. Physical objects can include architecture, sculpture, painting, clothing, furniture, quilting, woodworking, metalwork, knitting, weaving and any other forms of arts and crafts. This area of folklore studies concerns the whole realm of human activity that is basically related with “craft”, the traditional aspects of how objects are made and used. Handoo (J. Handoo 2000, 14) says, “material culture responds to techniques, skills, recipes and formulas transmitted across the generations and subject to the same forces of conservative tradition and individual variation as verbal art.” With a special focus on the objects themselves, this section is concerned with how objects are designed, made, and used, and what they mean to those who make and use them.

5.2. Different sub-genres:

This section of the work deals with the physical and visible objects, artifacts or any concrete things created by the Hmars for the satisfaction of their needs; for the sustenance and perpetuation of their everyday life activities on which they are wholly dependent. It will emphatically focus on those material aspects of the tribe where women folks display an active creative role; their craftsmanship. Depending on the availability of different materials and artifacts of female-oriented, this sector will focus on material items like the tribe’s traditional food items and beverages including traditional dishes, culinary styles and the different seasoning agents, animal husbandry, costumes, arts and crafts including pottery, textile processes and traditional cloths. The different kinds of gadgets, tools and weapons like making of axe, hand hoe, dao, spear, guns and traditional norms and aspects of folk housing, the shapes, sizes and designs of buildings etc- are intentionally excluded from this section as they fall within the domain of male-creative arts.

5.3. Hmar women in domestic activities:

The father, being the head of a house, represents the family in all public meetings, directs the family affairs, and provides food for the householders. The mother's chief duty is to raise the children and look after the household. She prepares meals for the entire family, tends the chickens and the domestic animals, fetches water from the village pond and sometimes brings firewood from the jungle.

From childhood, a Hmar girl child plays a role that is subordinate to boys. As soon as she is capable of helping her mother at work, she helps her in carrying water or wood, spinning, weaving and some needle works. Even after marriage, she is expected to engage totally in domestic works like fetching water and wood, pounding grain and looking after children. In villages, daughters at the age of 8/10 already learn the art of cooking from their mothers. By the time they reach marriageable age, they become expert in preparing traditional food items. The Hmar society is a free society where girls and boys have total freedom to work together in jhum-lands and mix together in society. No matter how late she keeps awake at night, she is expected to get up early in the morning. A late rising practice brings disgrace to her fame. It is considered the foremost duty of a woman to get everything ready before sunrise. It is her responsibility to fill up every *theikhuong* (bamboo used as water container) with water and to husk rice by pounding. For the whole day, she spends her time at *lo* (jhum-field) in weeding the grass along with men. Besides weeding grass, she prepares food for them, collects vegetables from the jhum to take home for the family. In the evening, she walks the weary way home with collected vegetables and foods for pigs along with men's attire and dao smeared with dirt, while men walk back home freely or carrying log of wood or a bundle of bamboos. But despite being purely patriarchal, there are no strict customary laws that govern or control the womenfolk, though virtues like chastity, obedience and laborious personality are revered for women.

The average Hmar house is built on stilts and consists of four parts: *sawngka* (the open porch), *sumphuk* (the enclosed verandah), *in sung* (the main room) and *namthlâk* (*namthlâk* is the downhill side of the house, raised about one foot above the main

floor). The mother, with the accompaniment of other female members of the house, husks paddy in the *sumphuk*. She piles up her collected stack of firewood in one corner of the *sumphuk*. In addition to these, she performs other household activities like making of handicrafts, ginning, spinning and weaving in this enclosed verandah. She has baskets hung in the *sumphuk*'s wall in which her fowls lay eggs and hatch. On the downhill side of the wall, she keeps a chicken coop which is supported by wooden posts and connected from the ground by a ladder for the fowls to climb.

In absence of modern forms of weights and measures, a Hmar woman employs traditional weights and measures which are relative rather than being absolutely accurate. To measure the quantity of rice, for instance, different standard measurements of quantity are used like “*tlam* (bushel), *paikawng* (basket), *leikhawr* (bread-basket), *faithlak* (large cup or mug) and *haifien* (large bamboo spoon)” (Pudaite 1963, 55). To measure any flat object, she employs *pher* (mat), *buhak* (mat for husking grain), *leidar* (winnowing sieve for cleaning rice) and *thlengdar* (plate). Besides, she measures length in terms of the length of little finger to the size of one's jhum-rice field; depending on the size of the measured object. She measures distance in terms of the nearest or the farthest jhum or, by a walking travel a man can make before *sûnbu fâk hun* (mid-day meal) or a walking travel a man can make in a day. In absence of watch or sundial, she measures time in terms of the divisions of a day. Time (seconds, minutes and hours) is measured in terms of the different traditional activities with different time-consuming tendency; the nature and duration of time consumed by such activities is supposedly shared by the whole social individuals. She lives in the economic world of ‘give and take’. In absence of money economy, means of exchange is barter system. And she measures values in terms of cattle and paddy or rice. She employs special term for addressing her equal age comrades; she calls them *thien*. Women smoke *tuibûr* (a smoking pipe; Fig.5.1), supplying the family members, generally the elders, with the nicotine impregnated water known by the same name ‘*tuibur*’ in a small hollow dried gourd (Fig.5.2).

5.3.1. Food items and beverages:

This sub-section of the tribe's folk life studies deals with folk cookery. According to Don Yoder (Dorson 1972, 325), "The study of folk cookery includes the study of the foods themselves, their morphology, their preparation, their preservation, their social and psychological functions, and their ramifications into all other aspects of folk-culture." Among the Hmar tribe, the responsibility for maintaining domestic duties and chores, excluding animal killing, is conferred exclusively on the womenfolk. Except during public events, religious and customary feasts, cooking is performed solely by the women.

A Hmar woman generally follows simple culinary steps and methods to appease the family's food habits and recipes. Hmar writers like Dr. Bapui (2007) and Dr. Pudaite (1963), in their respective books, have kept a record of the simplicity of the culinary styles of the tribe. For poor families, meal can simply mean a platter of rice and *hmarcha deng* (chutney). Indeed, for a Hmar man, a meal means a steaming platter of steamed rice with a simple curry and a drinking water. The curry is simple as it avoids oils and spices. A Hmar traditional curry is defined best by the usage of minimalist spice but heavy pepper with any of the seasoning agents. Generally, a woman prepares curry that is bland, hot, aromatic and fleshy. The dish items are healthy as the ingredients are generally boiled with some seasoning agents.

Some of the famous dishes of the tribe which every traditional Hmar woman is expert in making are: *chartang hme* (mixture of meat, vegetables and hot pepper), *hmepawk* (stew), *changal hme* (vegetables or meat cooked with hot pepper and *changal*, (a tenderizing agent), *changal ngathu hme* (vegetables cooked with hot pepper and *changal*), *chi al hme* (vegetables cooked with pepper and *ngathu*, (fermented fish), *sathu hme* (vegetables cooked with hot pepper, *changal* and *sathu*, a smelly seasoning agent made of pig's fats), *sithu hme* (vegetables cooked with hot pepper and *sithu*, a smelly but tasty seasoning agent made of sesame seeds), *bekanthu hme* (vegetables cooked with hot pepper and *bekanthu*, a smelly seasoning agent made of soybeans). Besides these, she enriches the family's meal with *hmarcha deng* (chutney). *Hmarcha deng*, a garnish during a meal, can be of different types

depending on the ingredients used for the process. The most prominent *hmarcha deng* is made of roasted chillygrinded with roasted *ngathu*. If *sathu* replaces the *ngathu*, then the *hmarcha deng* is called *sathu deng*: if replaced by *anțamthu*, it's called *anțamthu deng*, and so on. Below are the recipes of traditional food items that every Hmar woman is highly expert with.

Traditional Culinary Styles:

Chartang hme:

'It is a mixture of meat, vegetable and hot pepper' (Pudaite 1963, 46). While some maintain that oil is one of the necessary ingredients of *chartang hme*, some claim that 'it can be of any other vegetables cooked with hot pepper without oil' (Dr. VL Tluonga Bapui). The most distinguishing feature of a *chartang hme* is that it is a curry that is prepared with or without oil and is very hot. It requires a less complicated, a more simple way of cooking as meat or vegetable is simply cooked with a lot of hot pepper. If at all vegetable is added to the *sa chartang hme* (meat *chartang hme*), mostly it is *changlawng* (edible banana stem). This mixture is cooked in liquid in a *hmebel* (curry-cooking-pot).

Hmepawk:

The making of *hmepawk* requires few handfuls of rice, *changal* and edible leaves, either *sizo* (edible wild leaf; Fig.5.3) or *anțam* (mustard greens). Most common forms of *hmepawk* are *sizo sa hmepawk* (meat stewed with *sizo*) and *anțam hmepawk* (mustard greens stew). *Vawksa hmepawk* (pork stew; Fig.5.4) is the most esteemed way of preparing pork among the tribe. Pork can be stewed in two ways: with *sizo* and *anțam*. Preparing *vawksa sizo hmepawk* requires *vawksa*, *sizo*, a few handfuls of rice, hot pepper and *changal*. These ingredients are slowly cooked in liquid in a pan and the cook has to take meticulous care by continuous stirring so that the dish does not get burned. In preparing *vawksa anțam hmepawk*, the cook replaces the *sizo* with *anțam*: the process remaining the same.

Changal hme:

With *changal* tenderizing the ingredients, *changal hme* is the easiest and fast-to-cook way of preparing a curry. A vegetable cut into fleshy size is cooked with *changal*, hot pepper and *ngathu* in liquid in a *hmebel*. If *sathu* replaces *ngathu*, then the curry is called *sathu hme*: the process and the ingredients remaining the same.

Chi al hme:

Chi-al hme is a vegetable curry prepared in the same way as *changal hme* with *ngathu* but without *changal*.

Bekanthu hme:

The making of this curry item requires the vegetable, hot pepper and the *bekanthu*. *Changal* may be used according to the nature of the vegetable cooked. *Changal*, being a tenderizing agent, is used mainly for the purpose of tenderizing or softening the vegetable cooked. If *bekanthu* is replaced by *anṭamthu* or *sithu*, the curry is named after the seasoning agent used.

Indigenous Seasoning Items and the Methods of Preparation:

Every Hmar woman possesses a fair knowledge of how to make seasoning agents. Traditionally, women make them for family consumption only but in modern days, they prepare the items in large quantity both for family consumption and for sale in the society.

Ngathu (fermented fish):

Needless to say, the modern Hmar man now totally depends on the abundant availability of fermented fish in open markets. 'The Hmar has a traditional way of fermenting fish. He catches fresh fish from a river which he either half dries it in the sun or half roasts it in fire. Throwing away the bones, the meat is tightly crammed into a hollow bamboo piece (a bamboo with a node) and is closed with a tight lid with little ash sprinkled in both the extreme ends of the pole. This is kept in the *tap* (a large hearth made of earth, solidly kneaded like brick within a wooden frame) or on the *rap* (a raised platform of wood construction hanging just above the hearth used for drying

wood, meat or paddy). “This fermenting period generally requires at least seven to eight days” (Dr. VL Tluonga Bapui).

Sathu (fermented pig’s fats; Fig.5.5):

This is a strong smelly seasoning agent made of pig’s fats, mainly the leaf fat. “The fat is cut into small pieces and is half boiled with a small quantity of water in a pan. The half boiled fat along with the oily liquid is put inside a *sathu ûm* (dried hollow gourd used for fermenting and holding the seasoning agent) with a tight lid. In the unavailability of *sathu ûm*, wide mouth jars or wide mouth bottles are used as *sathu ûm*. The well-tight *sathu ûm* is kept near the hearth or on the *rap* for about consecutive six to seven days. If the fermenting period is too long, the substance emits strong nauseating smell that is not fit for human consumption” (H.Thangzo). *Sathu* is used for preparing *hmarcha deng* as well.

Bekanthu (fermented soybeans; Fig.5.6):

This smelly seasoning agent is prepared with soybeans. “Soybean is washed and cooked in a heavy thick pan continuously for almost eight to nine hours. When it is cooled down, a little sodium bicarbonate may be added and then it is wrapped up tightly all around in leaves. This tight leafy package is kept on a *rap* for about three to four days” (Khâwmnu). After four days, the package is opened and is now ready for consumption. The fresh *bekanthu* can also be dried to enable it last for a longer period of time. It may be dried by leaving it openly either in the sun or on the *rap*. The two forms are both used for preparing curries and chutneys.

Sithu (fermented sesame seeds; Fig.5.7):

This seasoning agent is made of sesame seeds. Sesame seeds are fried lightly for few minutes. After frying, the seeds are grinded and then warm water is poured over the fried seeds. Mixture of the grinded seeds and the liquid is kept in a well-tight *sithu ûm* (dried hollow gourd). “If *sithu ûm* is unavailable, wide mouth jars or wide mouth bottles are used in substitution” (Suohnem).

Anṭamthu (fermented mustard greens):

This is another smelly seasoning agent made of mustard greens. “Mustard greens collected from the gardens or *jhums* are cleaned up. Then the leaves are wrapped with a banana leaf and the leafy package is idly kept inside the shady house for three to four days. On the fifth day, it is unwrapped and then the flaccid yellow mustard greens are grinded properly in a *sum* (rice mortar). The juicy grinded leaves are then kept inside a well-tight cauldron for four days. After four days, the lid is opened and the fermented smell fills the air. Some women prefer to squeeze and throw away the grinded raw materials while some prefer to have it mixed with the final product” (Thilchungro). This seasoning agent is used both for preparing curries and *hmarcha deng*.

Tuoithûr (bamboo shoot souring agent; Fig.5.8):

This seasoning souring agent is made of *ruotuoi* (bamboo shoots). “Raw *ruotuoi* is washed and cut into small pieces. The sliced pieces are kept inside a container to which water is added. The desirable proportion of the two items – the sliced bamboo shoots and the water- is that they must be of the same level. Then the container closed well-tight is left to lie for about two weeks to get transformed into a souring agent. This *tuoithûr* fermenting process does not require being placed beside a fireplace or on the *rap* which other seasoning agents like *ngathu*, *sathu*, *bekanthu* or *sithu* require in their fermenting process” (H.Thangzo).

In a traditional society, the art of cooking is passed down from a mother to a daughter. With the tribe population getting expanded followed by urbanization due to modern education, employment or entrepreneurship, it is found that the Hmar young generations which have seen a makeover in their residence and lifestyles, are slowly discarding their traditional cuisines generally for two supposed reasons: the smelly nature of the traditional food items and the rare availability of the ingredients in towns. If this tendency is not checked, Hmar traditional dishes have a fair chance of becoming extinct in time and the younger generations will become wholly uninformed of their own traditional cuisines and recipes. The food cuisines, the food habits and the recipes remain largely unchanged in the villages.

The Hmar eats very simple food items. A bowl of *bu* (cooked rice) supplemented by salt is also sufficient for him. The mother prepares almost identical items every day. To the tribe, food means cooked rice and nothing else. The average mothers prepare three heavy meals a day, but sometimes, mid-day meal is replaced by boiled *bahra* (wild yam) or boiled *bâl nate* (small buds of edible arum), which indeed are tribal food supplements. The mother prepares dishes to the taste of the family. The Hmar takes lot of hot chilli (pepper) and very little spice. Some of the dishes the mother alternately or simultaneously prepares are *chartanghme* (mixture of meat, vegetables and hot pepper), *hmepawk* (stew, hotchpotch of meat and rice or vegetables and rice with soda from the ashes) and *changalhme* (vegetables or meat cooked with hot pepper, fermented fish and soda from the ashes). She serves these items with rice. In all these traditional dishes, there is no scope for adding spicy ingredients, as spicy items like *jeera*, *masala*, *black sesame* etc are unavailable to her. It is only after urbanization and getting mixed with plainsmen that some mothers start introducing the plainsmen's food ingredients into their cuisine. In the traditional food items, vitamin that can enrich a man's physical health is found to be less present. As a result, general health is greatly affected by the poor diet. Till today, educational content makes no impact towards understanding of food value.

During meals, while dining with other members, the mother generally sits near the *bubêl* (rice cooking-pot) and serves the members with *bu*. *Hme* (curry) is generally kept in the middle; the members take it according to their needs. During meals, the mother serves only water or nothing as the Hmar takes no other forms of drink, except sipping the *hmetui* (the liquid in which a curry is cooked) occasionally. After meals, she serves *thingpui sendawng* (sugarless red tea) to the grown-up family members. Sipping *thingpui sen dawng* is considered almost mandatory after meals. It functions like a traditional dessert.

5.3.2. Animal Husbandry:

In Hmar traditional society, the practice of setting of traps for beasts and birds in the jungle called *chângkam*, falls within the domain of men. Tending poultry and domestic animals like pigs, cows, and goats called *dran vaiis* mainly considered the

responsibility of the women folks. Most Hmar families also own and tend mithuns, bison, buffalos, dogs and cats. The tribe's poultry mainly includes chickens and duck. A traditional Hmar woman has baskets hung in the *sumphuk's* wall in which her fowls lay eggs and hatch. On the downhill side of the wall, she keeps an *âr-ril* (a large chicken coop) which is generally supported by wooden or bamboo posts and connected from the ground by a ladder for the fowls to climb. She also has several basket type smaller coops for chicks called *âr-bâwm* made. She fixes several nests called *âr-bu* on the inside wall of the house for hens to lay eggs and incubate. She tends the poultry mainly for domestic consumption and for sacrifice during *inthawi* (sacrificial offerings) and for barter-based economy. The eggs are hardly taken (except in cases of employing them as home remedy to family members suffering from low blood pressure) and they are generally led to incubate to enable the hens get multiplied in number. On occasions of having fewer numbers of guests, it is also convenient to serve her guests with her poultry birds.

Life is simple and theft is unknown. Animals, including pigs, are mainly let loose. The animals feed on whatever they have an access to in the village. A woman feeds her pigs in a trough made of wood called *vawk-kuong* or *taikuong* just near the *sumphuk*. She generally prepares food for pigs by cooking a mixture of i) leftover food of the family or rice, ii) chaff with iii) *dawl* (taro plant) or *mâwt kûng* (banana plantain). In modern days, pig-sties have been constructed in many villages. These domestic animals are kept to sleep either outside or under the floor of the house. The Hmars have a traditional norm of housing: they construct a house with a raised floor called *chungchawi-in* or *in-chungchawi*.

5.4. Women's Costumes:

Don Yoder (Dorson 1972, 295) defines folk costume as, "Folk costume is the visible, outward badge of folk-group identity, worn consciously to express that identity.... In every case the costume is distinct and identifiable; it identifies the wearer to the outside world as well as to his own community; it is prescribed by the community and its form is dictated by the community's tradition." Folk costumes in the context of the present work refer to the dress of the rural women folks in the time before the tribe's

contact with the western or non-tribal world. It means the form of attire which outwardly symbolizes the identity of the Hmar women both in ordinary and ceremonial or festival occasions. The concept of ‘costume’ here includes style of dressing, dress, apparel and garb.

Hmar dress is simple. In ordinary occasion, while man mainly wears a tunic-like shirt and *hrenpereng*, “loin cloth of five by two feet around his waist” (Pudaite 1963, 47), a woman wears “an unseamed petticoat, fastened with a string at the waist.” Men used to keep long hair which they tied up in a knot at the nape of their head. This hair-style of men ‘*hmarh*’ was indeed the base for one of the traditions supporting the origin of the term ‘hmar’ (given in details in Chapter 1). Women, usually with long hair, used to divide their hair length-wise at the centre of the head. They would then plait into two braids on each side of the head. “The plait on the right side is taken round the back of the head and over the left ear, while the plait on the left goes round the back of the head and over the ear. They are tied at the front above the forehead” (Thiek 2013, 325).

The costumes of the Hmar tribes are exquisite. The men folks of this group wear *Thangsuo Puon*, *Pasaltha Puon*, *Rukrak Puon*, *Daraki*, *Paihar*, *Ngotekher*, *Lukawm*, *Puondum* (all different types of lower garment cloth), *Lukawm* (headgear; Fig.5.9) and *Hmar Puon*, and the women wear *Hmar - Am*, *Tharlaizawm*, *Hmar Puon*, *Ngotlawng*, *Tawnlo Puon*, *Ngotekher*, *Puonlaisen*, *Puonropui*, *Arasi Puon*, *Puonkernei* (another different types of lower garment cloth). These dresses are excellently woven and they stand as the evidences of artistry.

Hmar men decorated themselves with special ornaments like *thi* (necklaces), *dampa*, *zochal* (Fig.5.10), *tawnlairang* and *sawn*. Traditional women used to wear *thi* (necklaces; Fig.5.11) of different cornelian beads and earrings of ivory and silver like *thival* and *thihna* (Fig.5.12). Besides this, they wore special ornaments like *nabe* (generally big sized earrings made of silver), *tapheng banbun* (Fig.5.13), *banbun* (bangles; Fig.5.14) “*chaupheng* (Fig.5.15), *hARBAN* (Fig.5.16), *ngaingawn* and *ting-khim*” (Thiek 2013, 324).

During festival occasions like dancing *Sikpui Lâm*, all performers- male and female- put on their best traditional costumes. The male young performers put on a highly decorated headgear named *Tawnlairang*. This special kind of headgear is made of bird's feathers. Another kind of headgear is also worn which is called *Lukhum* which is made of bamboo. *Hmar puon* is also worn by the male performers. Traditionally, young female participants used to put on *ilângdungvêl* (a knee-length cloth tightly wrapped from round the chest.) fastening their waist with a *ngaingâwn-kawngchùn* (a belt made of shining brass strands). They decorated their ears with *hawlawl* (a large size earring made of bamboo) beautifying the *hawlawl* with red threads called *patsum-sen*. The rich daughters afforded to wear *hawlawl* made of shining silver. In general, female participants wore different kinds of necklace: *pûmhril-ṭhi*, *ruongthei*, *ṭhim-ṭhi* and *theibuonghruì*. "They decorated their arms with bracelets called *chauphêng-bânbun* and *bonsai*" (Faihiem 2002, 17). In modern days, the female participants put on different cloths and ornaments like *Hmar puon*, *ṭhi* (seeded necklace), *ṭhi hna* (beaded ornaments), *Kutsabi* (ring), *ṭhi val* (beaded ornaments), *Nabe* (earrings) and *Banbun* (bangles). They put on delicately embroidered *Zakuo* (blouse), *Puonbil* (skirt) and *Puon* (lower garment cloth).

The female performers do all make-ups to appear in their best looks. They covered themselves with *Senfen* (red attire). They tie their hip with a silver plated thread known as *ngaingawn-kawngchun*. They decorate their ears with earrings called *hawlawl* (a large size earring made of bamboo). The hollow *hawlawl* is mainly decorated with flowers or *patsum-sen* (pieces of short red yarn). Those who afford, make their earrings with silver with the size and length same as with bamboo *hawlawl*. They wear different types of seeded necklace called *pumhril-thi*, *ruongthei le thim-thi* and *theibuonghruì*. Their hands are beautifully decorated with different types of bangles known as *chaupheng-banbun* (made of brass, about six centimeters long, in a shape to fit the shape of the hand, highly flexible that can be opened and closed at will) and *bunsai/saiha-banbun* (made of elephant bone, about three centimeters long). They further decorate their hand with *harban-banbun* (armlet made of silver of big toe size, worn just above their elbow).

Most of these ornaments and the social costumes have been discarded now after many of the tribesmen have adopted the corroding western life-style and non-tribal costumes since the early decades of the 20th century.

5.5. Arts and Crafts:

Folk arts and crafts are generally believed to be objects of material culture that simultaneously give pleasure and offer some practical social and economic end. To quote Handoo (J. Handoo 1989, 17), 'If a pleasure-giving function predominates the artifact is called art; if a practical function predominates it is called craft.....' 'Arts' is a term generally used to refer to the sense of aesthetics rather than function as found in the products and practices of painting, sculpture, paint making and 'crafts' to those of ceramics, weaving and wood and metalwork. If we rely on the difference of this evaluative connotation then, we may say that the Hmars have predominantly crafts and fewer arts. But during the field work, it was found that the crafts available with the tribe are both decorative with the main aim as 'practical function'. In the field of arts and crafts, Hmar women play a very important significant role. Bapui (2011, 124) cites, "...the main art of the women folk is the production of cotton, weaving and provision of clothes for the entire family."

5.5.1. Pottery:

"Pottery is the work of the woman among the Hmar people and she is very clever at it" records Rochunga Pudaite in his book (Pudaite 1963, 46). The Hmar men give great importance to the availability of *bepil khur* (potter's pit) when selecting a village site. The entire pottery work is done by hand. They do not use any instrument like wheel for manufacture. A woman goes to the clay pit and digs out a basket full of clay. She brings the clay pit home, meticulously pours water on the dug-out clay and pounds it in a small mortar until it becomes thoroughly soft and plasticized. Then she molds it by hand. After she makes a rough shape, she holds a small pallet in her right hand and a smooth stone, the size of an apple, in her left. Placing the stone against the uneven spots from beneath, she applies light hitting over and over with the pallet until it gets smooth and even. She then places the finished pots and pans in the shade and

sun. After a month or more, she burns them in an open furnace until they are burned red-hot.

The varieties that the potter designs are not too many and the same pattern is followed by year. Within these limited varieties are the *bubêl* (rice-cooking-pot), *hmebêl* (curry-cooking-pot), *thlengbêl* (covering and eating plates), *nganbêl* (distillation for fermenting rice beer), *zubêl* (rice beer pot) and *dumbêl* (a smoking pipe) of different shapes and sizes. (Pudaite 1963, 47) Very little designs are made in the pots. In the smoking pipes, she makes designs of the head of animals and birds.

While mothers are busy in making different designs, their daughters watch them all day from the first day to the final hour. They imitate their mothers with the crumbs of the clay. By the time they reach marriageable age, they have acquired a full knowledge of this art.

It is generally the men who are responsible for the production of other cane and bamboo artifacts for domestic use. Some of the artifacts believed to be made by men are- *rêl* (a basket with a covering lid; Fig.5.17), *paikâwng* (a carrying basket; Fig.5.18), *dawrawn* (a large closed carrying basket), *kawkte* (a small open basket for storing materials), *paipêr* (a small loin basket), *buhak* (a flat square closed mat), *leidâr* (a winnowing sieve), *pher* (mat), *zampher* (a small mat), *tunatieng* or *tuntieng* (a mat with holes at intervals), *leikhâwr* or *leikum* (a short closed basket) and *bêmkhuong* (a closed flat basket container). In the production of all these crafts, “some women are equally expert” says Bapui (Bapui 2011, 124).

5.5.2. Textile Processes:

In addition to domestic and agricultural activities, a Hmar woman is expert and adapt in various handloom industrial activities like ginning, spinning and weaving. Since a very young age, a girl is taught the art of weaving. Once she has imbibed the basic technique of weaving, she can innovate new patterns and designs built on the old patterns. The Hmar womenfolks are great weavers in their tiny loin looms. They dye their homespun yarns into different colours and weave exquisite clothes both for

domestic use and social market. “They extract natural dye colour from wild plants, fruits and roots” (H.Thangzo). Women make and wear different kinds of attire. From Weaving Song (given in Chapter 2) we get to know the different traditional handloom instruments, the different cloth designs and the names of different Hmar traditional cloths.

Cotton is one of the principal products of tribal jhum fields. The laborious process, starting from collecting the raw cotton from the jhum to weaving, is performed by the womenfolks. The process involves raw cotton collection from jhum, ginning, spinning, carding, starching and dyeing with varieties of indigenous colours. This whole chain of process is performed by the women folks on their home-made instruments made of bamboo and wood. The spun yarn is woven into different shades and designs.

To transform raw cotton to fine yarn, she requires instruments like- *her-awt* (wooden ginning machine; Fig.5.19). *Her-âwt* has two wooden rulers revolving in opposite directions with a handle to operate which is capable of separating the seed from the cotton. The ginned cotton is then made puffy with *patsai* (Fig.5.20) before it is spun into a yarn. With *hmui* (Fig.5.21), she spins the cotton into a yarn. *Patding* (Fig.5.22) is a hand-made instrument that helps to straighten the strands of yarn. The woman then dyes the yarn in various colours for decoration and design. The yarn from *patding* is transferred to *sûthlâm* (Fig.5.23) from where balls of yarn are rolled to begin the warping process with.

The dyed yarn is woven into fabrics with magnificent designs and patterns by traditional small handloom known as *puonkawl*, which is a simple back strap type loom, otherwise known as loin loom. “One end of the loom is attached to a bed, a wall or a veranda rail and the other is held taut by the seated weaver by means of a strip of *siet* (mithun) skin passed round her waist” (Lalremsiem 1988, 68). Besides supplying for family consumption, young ladies keep a good stock of cloths for their dowry items. As self-made cloths are considered as indicator of the bride’s essence, marriage is often postponed because of the girl’s inability to fill her hope-chests prior to the wedding.

From the first stanza of the Weaving Song, we get to know eight names of different traditional handloom instruments, like- *pheivawn* (Fig.5.24), *kawlseke* (Fig.5.25), *tliem* (Fig.5.26), *tukdet*(Fig.5.27), *tinbu* (Fig.5.28), *ƣaizel* (Fig.5.29), *tánhna* and *kawl*. Besides these, a Hmar woman employs several handloom instruments like- *khawthei* (Fig.5.30), *puonnangna* (Fig.5.31), *puonsun* (Fig.5.32), *puonzethlangna* (Fig.5.33), *sâtthlau* (Fig.5.34), *talaidan* (Fig.5.35), *tawmkal* (Fig.5.36), *thiemtuipêk* (Fig.5.37) and *tlaihnât* (Fig.5.38). There are about twenty-two cloth designs she weaves, like- *sawngtelaivel*, *lenbuongƣhuom*, *kikieu*, *thalpui zie*, *kawkƣuizikziel*, *disúl*, *fanghmamu*, *dawichang*, *muthlakawi*, *harzai*, *siellutun hmaizâp*, *amkar*, *zawngdaikal*, “*puonropui*, *motorke*, *vankawthler*, *senior*, *zawrabang*, *rengchonghoi*, *pangpar*, *sakeizângzie* and *van chabi*” (Siekkhohen 2013, 25) and variegated traditional cloths.

5.5.3. Hmar Traditional Cloths:

Among the Hmar tribe, cloths are generally hand-woven made of purely local products. The Hmars are basically agriculturists, growing varieties of crops in their jhum land. Besides other crops like sugar cane and turmeric generally grown inseparate patches, cotton crop may be considered most importantly valuable as, cotton products are found to serve two important ends: Individualistic- the artistic taste of the tribes finds expression in the cloths they weave and utilize, and, Utilitarian-the social customs and mores demand the objects. In modern times, the pure local material has been replaced on a large scale by mill-made yarn which is abundantly and readily available at a cheaper rate in the market. This easy availability can be one of the reasons why, among the once cotton-grower tribe, production of cotton and indigenous handloom items are slowly losing and fadingaway. But even amidst shortage of indigenous material, weaving still occupies a very important place among the community and is still one of the most important forms of the Arts and Crafts of the tribe. Weaving has now become one traditional craft that every Hmar woman performs with great artistic flavour. The Hmar women produce mainly cotton cloths of both simple and exquisite designs in their looms. It is now a wonder to see new designs in textile- intricate designs that signal the emergence of Hmar traditional cloths with a modern taste and touch - which have become enormously varied.

In Hmar traditional society, weaving is done mostly by women through loom, a traditional form of weaving. Besides transformation of raw cotton to fine yarn, the main art of the womenfolk is weaving and provision of cloths for the entire family. They are deft in this art and it may be considered the exclusive monopoly of women. Weaving tradition is handed down from a mother to her daughter.

Starting from a simple light cloth to heavy bed cloths like *Puonri* (rug), weaving is done by women alone. The dresses and cloths of the Hmars are simple and, as mentioned earlier, rough hand-woven. In daily life, they wear very few set of dresses. The menfolks traditionally wear a short dhoti like loincloth called *Dierkei* that gets passed between the thighs and secured to cover the genitals and the buttocks, while the womenfolk wear *Puon*. Some of the main dresses of the tribe are highlighted below:

Thangsuo Puon:

In olden days, *Thangsuo Puon* (Fig.5.39) existed only in one style and one form-as lower garment cloth. Later, shawl was made with longer length and woolen material. Shawl, made of woolen yarn is used as *puonbat* and, lower garment cloth, made of single cotton yarn is used as *puonbi*. The unmodified original *Thangsuo Puon* is woven simply in plain vertical stripes in black, deep red, white, yellow and green of which black is made prominent, followed by deep red. It is a special kind of attire made for a special person who has excelled in the society with remarkable or distinguished achievements. Successful persons who deserve to be called 'hero', are few and, the title is highly appreciated and revered. In the Hmar society, a man who has achieved enormous achievement in the fields of hunting or crop production is called *Thangsuo*. The social recognition of such successful person is marked and culminated with the society garlanding him a *Thangsuo Puon*. Though the name *Thangsuo* is neutral and gender-free nomenclature, it is conferred only to men.

Three new forms of *Thangsuo Puon* with same colour combination of the original form have become highly fashionable and are extensively used by Hmar people. The first new form (in both shawl and lower garment cloth types) is same and identical

with the original in every form except that a little design called *fanghma mu* (cucumber seed design) is incorporated in the white stripe (Fig.5.40). The next two adapted forms (in loin cloth form only), which wear a totally different look from each other with least resemblance to the original plain structured *puon*, are also called by the same name by modern weavers. In these items, the designed stripes are horizontal in shape unlike the vertical stripes of the original. These two modern forms of *Thangsuo Puon*, played off as traditional dresses, remain loyal to the original only in terms of the colour combination as they are new modern creations. The different intricate designs are markedly conspicuous as shown in the pictures (Figs.5.41& 5.42). “The demand for these modern *Thangsuo Puons* is rising high in the social market” (Lalrinkim Hmar).

Pasaltha Puon (Fig.5.43):

The name given to this *Puon* is indicative of the implied owner. *Pasaltha* (hero or knight) is he who has firmly stood his grounds with exclusive bravery in the face of the tribe’s enemies or ferocious animals. Such persons are rare in number, and the society expresses its appreciating recognition in the form of garlanding them with *Pasaltha Puon*. It is a black cloth with red and white stripes in vertical shape. The stripes are evenly situated during warping process with a distance of about three inches. While the red stripe is simple and plain, the white stripe is interwoven with a little design in pink, blue, red and green colours. The design is named *fanghma mu* by modern weavers. This loin-cloth exists in woolen shawl form as well.

Hmar Puon:

The *puon* is named after the tribe. It is a simple *puon* with red, white, pink and black stripes in vertical shape. Of the colours, red is made prominent. It is a common dress for both men and women. In modern days, *Hmar Puon* like *Thangsuo Puon*, exists into two forms- lower garment cloth (Fig.5.44) and woolen shawl. The original *Hmar Puon* is a simple stripe with no embroidery or intricate designs. The modern weavers have now added a little simple design called *fanghma mu* in the middle of the white stripe. Yet, among the tribe, this reworking and modification with a little design does not seem to undermine the value of the original *puon*.

Tâwnlo Puon:

It is a small designed piece of chaddar that Hmar women folks use to cover their breasts (Fig.5.45). *Tâwnlo* means 'forbidden to be touched'. Not only the part of the body that the *puon* covers is segregated, but the cloth itself is. It is generally called the upper garment of the women. The covering is done not in the fashion of the modern Indian women's dupatta; the *puon* is tightly wrapped around the chest. "The designed weft is white against any colour as main background" (Siema Hmar). The name of the intricate design is *lienbuongthuom*. During field work, in a visit to the Barak Handloom, I saw a new wonderful modification brought upon the *puon*. The weavers there converted the small designed piece into a full-length cloth.(Fig.5.46) The designed portion, that is the white *Tâwnlo Puon*, is placed at the hem of a simple plain purple cloth. When asked, the manager of the Industry confidently replied that the white *Tâwnlo Puon* remaining the same, the background cloth can be of any colour which they can produce according to the aesthetic taste and preference of the customers.

Hmar-Âm:

It is a specially designed cloth for aristocratic womenfolk. It is woven in *lienbuongthuom* design, white weft against black. The white design is horizontal. It extends upto the knee and is worn as a mini-skirt (Fig.5.47). This *puon* is also mainly used as dance dress. Of the same colour combination, modern weavers have made *Hmar-Âm* in full length (Fig.5.48) that extends to the ankles with a slight modification of the design.

Ngotekher:

It is also called *Ngoteker* by some. It is another lower garment cloth for women with black and white stripes in vertical shape (Fig.5.49). The white stripes occupy greater space than the black. Both the edges are black in colour. Against these vertical stripes, vague black stripes run horizontally at regular space. These horizontal stripes are not supposed to appear prominent. As these horizontal stripes are almost

indistinct, the making process requires utmost care and deftness on the part of the weaver.

Technically, this design is called *kher/ker*. Besides this, there are two black very prominent embroidered designs of about three inch size each that horizontally divide the *puon* into three parts. When worn, wearers take utmost care that buttocks are well placed between these two black embroidered designs. During visit to Barak Handloom, I was shown the so-called modern *Ngotekher* (Fig.5.50). It bore a totally different look altogether. There was nothing in the new design that a novice audience could recognize and accept it as *Ngotekher* or even as modified *Ngotekher*. Whereas the original *Ngotekher* is white and black stripes with the white occupying greater space, the re-worked *Ngotekher* has only one colour background: black. The *puon* is exquisitely woven with two beautiful designs. It is a stylized design that is wonderfully re-worked upon. At the same time, the new modern *Ngotekher* expresses the innovative talent of the weavers. It has white intricate designs called *lienbungthuom* over the black background. Besides this *lienbungthuom* design, the *puon* also has intricate beautiful designs called *sakei zangzie* in red, brown, yellow, deep green and light green colour combination. “The present wholesale price of original *Ngotekher* is Rs 500/- and the modern *Ngotekher* is Rs 1500/-” (Lalrinkim Hmar).

Ngotlawng:

It is also a *puon* for women. It is white in colour with designed stripes in black or green that run horizontally. There are two types: one (original) in single black design over white background (Fig.5.51); the other (modern designed), two green stripes with a *kutpui ziel zie* design over white (Fig.5.52) The stripes, about two inches and the other half an inch, are arranged alternately.

Thlanlam Puon:

This is another full-length *puon* Hmar women and young ladies wear on mourning day in the society: both in the residence of the bereaved and in the graveyard. The original *Thlanlam Puon* (Fig.5.53) was simply a black coloured cloth.

On the black background, modern weavers have reworked and have invented two new modern forms of *Thlanlam Puon* (Fig.5.54) To the first new form, they have added a little design: small vertical stripes in white. The stripes- one plain white and the other with little design in it- are arranged alternately with regular intervals. Towards the hem, plaited threads of about six inches long are made to hang. This gives a far better look to the cloth. The second form of the *puon* appears more beautiful and attractive with the artisans' grand artistic sensibility. This second modification is designed horizontally with *lienbuongthuom* design and *disul mu* designs which are arranged alternatively.

Puonlaisen:

This is perhaps the most beautiful and colourful designed *puon* (Fig.5.55). The design is named *sakei zangzie*. Red, green, yellow, sky blue, black, white, pink, maroon are the colours importantly involved in the making of this exquisite *puon*. Originally, this costly and heavily designed cloth is meant for women of the rich families. Now, it is accessible to all the ladies but, it is segregated for use mainly on wedding days. During Field Work, in a visit to the Barak Handloom, I saw a new modified form of *Puonlaisen* (Fig.5.56). While the intricate patterns of the *puon* remain true to the original, some modifications in the forms of additional designs like *Puonropui zie* have been added which have transformed the *puon* into a far more attractive and exquisite attire.

Puonropui:

Puonropui is one of the most exquisite cloths a Hmar woman weaves. Of all the traditional cloths, colour motif involved here is the maximum. The original (Fig.5.57) is slightly modified by modern weavers, as shown in (Fig.5.58).

In modern days, with changes in social and aesthetic tastes brought about by different modern factors, the Hmars must have felt the need of producing Hmar necktie (Fig.5.59) with full dosed of their own ethnic traits. In the social market, necktie, made of different traditional cloths, is available. There are neckties made of *Hmar Puon*, *Thangsuo Puon*, *Hmar-Ám* and *Ngotekher*. These neckties are used by men folks mainly during social gatherings. Besides necktie, modern weavers innovate

Hmar muffler (Fig.5.60) made of different traditional cloths and, Hmar bag with a strong ethnic traits called *khiengkawi bag* (Fig.5.61) in Hmar dialect.

Besides these, there are other cloths that add to the bulk of the traditional assets of the tribe. Those are *Rukrak Puon*, *Tharlaizawm*, *Puon Kernei*, *Dawipuon*, *Dawnpuon*, *Fen Ngo*, *Lungumpuon*, *Bawta Puon*, *Tuibopuon*, *Puondum*, *Puonlaikhik*, *Raupuon*, *Thuithumpuon*, *Rengte Puon*, “*Puonphawk*, *Vawkpui Dang*, *Hnachangkawr Puon*” (Siekkhohen 2013, 23-24) and *Arasi Puon*. *Rukrak Puon* is said to be a prestigious long cloth which only important and influential persons like village aristocrats of a society can possess. Like *Hmar-Ám*, the possession of it is an indicator of social status. It is striped and strangely designed. On seeing a man clad in *Rukrak Puon*, any Hmar man will understand that the wearer’s social status is beyond ordinary men’s. *Tharlaizawm* is learnt to be one of the *puons* for womenfolk. The cloth is said to have a stripe of black over white at the back of the wearer. *Puon Kernei* is a finely woven breast wrapper for the village maidens. *Dawipuon* is exclusively meant for a priest. The priest puts on it during magico-religious ceremonies. *Bawta Puon* is thicker in size than ordinary cloth. It is meant for bed stuff. *Puondum* is one of the treasured cloths of the tribe. It becomes an indispensable traditional artifact in matters of marriage settlement as it is mostly clubbed with *thirdam*. *Thirdam* is a metallic tool, mostly an axe or a hand hoe wrapped with a cloth; a symbol of engagement. *Raupuon* is meant only for the soul of the dead. It is hung in the crude bamboo raised-platform used to be made near the buried place in the graveyard or nearby the victim’s house during *thiñn* ceremonies. *Thiñn* is a part of death rites which means a farewell feast for the departed soul.

These are some of the dresses Hmar women generally weave for family use as well as for social markets. Besides these, there are cloths like *puonripui* (rug; Fig.5.62) and *puonrite* (small and lighter rug; Fig.5.63) meant for use as bed cloths. These are heavier in form and, a special type of loom is required for making such warm and heavy cloths. In traditional Hmar society, weaving plays such an important role in the social life of the Hmar young ladies that, unless they fill a *rêl*, a long and spacious basket with a lid, with their hand-woven cloths, they do not think about marriage. Till

today, in villages, weaving skill has often been used as an indicator for a lady's eligibility for marriage. Even if a certain lady gets married without or before having filled the *rêl* to the brim with her woven cloths, she generally goes back to her parents after marriage to weave and fill the basket.

Conclusion:

This sector of the tribe's folk life is dominated mainly by the females. Starting from domestic chores through pottery work to textile processes, it is exclusively the responsibility of the women folks to serve and supply the community with its basic requirements. Besides being fully informed of the art of culinary and serving her family members with indigenous food items, she supplies all kinds of cloth to the family. In today scenario, traditional hand woven dresses have become rare due to factors incorporated with modern technology and taste. The so-called traditional dresses are rapidly re-worked upon with machines in terms of designs, colour motifs and yarns in a more refined innovative style. Machines do come out with better products. Along with that, with the growth of population, the demand for traditional dress items increases. This rising demand establishes an optional course of profession to the womenfolk which paves a new prospect for overcoming their economic constraints. As such, weaving remains not merely an art form, but a craft.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

'Representation' is the ability of texts to draw upon features of the world and present them to the viewer, not simply as reflections, but more so, as constructions. Hence, the images do not portray reality in an unbiased way with 100% accuracy, but rather, present 'versions of reality' influenced by culture and people's habitual thoughts and actions. As a result, representations are influenced by culture and in much the same way, have the capacity to shape culture and mould society's attitudes, values, perceptions and behaviours.'" Commenting on the importance of the concept of representation in the study of culture, Stuart Hall writes, 'Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture', (Hall 2003, 15).

Exploring 'representation' as a signifying practice in a rich diversity of social contexts and institutional sites, Stuart Hall maintains that objects and people do not have a constant meaning, but their meanings are fashioned by humans in the context of their culture, as they have the ability to make things mean or signify something. 'Things don't mean,' writes Hall, 'we construct meaning, using representational systems-concepts and signs' (Hall 2003, 25). Michel Foucault studied discourse as a system of representation. Discourse can be said to refer to a group of statements, an institutionalized way of thinking that can be manifested through language. It produces knowledge, power and idea of 'a regime of truth' (not 'what is true' but 'what counts as true'). Foucault did not believe that any form of thought could claim an absolute 'truth' outside the play of discourse- all political and social forms of thought are inevitably caught up in the interplay of knowledge and power. He believed that knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of 'the truth', but has the power to make itself true.

It is alleged by feminist writers like Rosaldo, Michelle Zimbalist and Louise Lamphere (1974) that due to the facts of female biology, and woman's domestic role, the so-called 'feminine personality' is combined to encourage cultural definitions of

the female that tend to be degrading. This constitutes the base of how women have been represented down through the history. The Hmars' ideological bias against women reinforces male authority over women and perpetuates the norm of male heterosexuality as the model of natural sexual identity. This hierarchical binary opposition of male/female reinforces patriarchy and sexual privilege to the disadvantage of women, (lesbians and gay men). Male activities (as opposed to female) are always recognized as predominantly important and cultural system gives authority and values to the roles and activities of men. Male actions are justified and rationalized by a fine societal classification: women as inferior, weak and frivolous. A woman comes to be seen as more 'natural' and less 'cultural' than man, hence, to be subordinated, controlled and manipulated in the service of culture's end. This explains that 'representation' is a human idea; it may be asserted or assumed by some and questioned by others. 'This has (indeed) led some theorists to a kind of 'reductionist realism', to the assertion that representation exists if and only if people believe in it' writes Pitkin (Pitkin 1967, 9).

Needless to say, "Gender is not something we are born with, and not something we *have*, but something we *do*.... something we *perform*" (Eckert and Ginet 2003, 10). It has become almost a cliché saying that sex is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex, which means, gender does not naturally flow from sex. The newborn initially depends on others to *do* its gender, and the 'others' come through in many different ways, not just as individuals but as part of socially structured communities that link individuals to social institutions and cultural ideologies. From infancy, for instance, male and female children are interpreted differently, and interacted with differently. Eckert and Ginet (2003, 17) have supported this claim by reporting, "Parents use more diminutives (*kitty, doggie*) when speaking to girls than to boys..... They use more direct prohibitives (*don't do that!*) and more emphatic prohibitives (*no! no! no!*) to boys than to girls". With such differential treatment, boys and girls eventually learn to behave and speak differently.

Dindia et al (2006, 28), citing John Gray's *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus* (1992), reports the latter's statement that "not only do men and women communicate differently but they think, feel, perceive, react, respond, love, need and appreciate differently. They almost seem to be from different planets, speaking different languages". Carol Gilligan (an American feminist, ethicist and psychologist), arguing from a psychological perspective, states that 'female identity revolves around interconnectedness and relationship' " (Mulvaney 2004, 225), which means, when asked to define herself, a woman often describes her identity in terms of relationships: of being a daughter, wife, mother, lover or friend. Conversely, Gilligan argues that, male identity 'stresses separation and independence'. Contrary to the descriptive words of attachment chosen by women, men select a vocabulary of self-reference that is clearly individualistic. The male "I" is defined by separation. Men distinguish themselves from others by their accomplishments. This is due, at least in part, to differences in the way men and women generally look at the world. This establishes the fact that women behave and speak differently because of their fundamental differences in socialization and biological experiences. This pair of different socialization and biological differences causes women to conceptualize conventions of talking and expression which in turn, engenders sensuality, sensitivity and a psyche of different nature.

Hmar Women in Representation: In Hmar folklore and folk life studies, we find women represented in two major folklore genres- in folktales and proverbs. As folk tales originate from a culture, it is that culture which decides the content and form of tales. In other words, tales reflect the temper and attitude of a culture. Dena (1995, ix) endorses, like any cultural theorists, that the Hmar 'folk tales reflect the totality of a Hmar's attitude towards life.....the traditional values that he cherishes'. Many Hmar folk tales, both mythical and legendary, like 'Chemtattepu', 'Sirate' and 'Sakhilawngdar' deal with a manly, a very handsome hero and a good hunter. Whereas the women portrayed are either a demoness who transformed herself into a

full blooming flower in order to trap a very handsome hero, who under normal situation, was beyond her worth and reach (Dena 1995, 21) or a wicked mother, who, after the death of her husband, eloped with a man leaving behind her two minor kids hungry and weeping (Dena 1995, 160-62). If at all the folk tales deal with a beautiful woman, she was either forcefully impregnated by a very ugly man (the hero) (Dena 1995, 27) or she could not free herself from the clutch of an ugly young man (Dena 1995, 33) or she was a witch (Dena 1995, 35) or a half human and half tigress (Dena 1995, 38). Juxtaposed against such manly heroes like Chemtattepu, we have a woman, a widow, who causes unspeakable miseries to villagers by passing 'stool at the source of the village pond' (Dena 1995, 5).

Focusing on the representation of women in many of the tribe's folk tales it is found that young unmarried maidens are generally beautiful, of good character, skillful in domestic works. But such beautiful maidens are married or impregnated by undeserving or deformed men like Chawnpui in 'Mauzungrakal' and Kungi by Sairam in 'Pawthir le Hrangchal'. Maidens with a freedom to select a life partner for themselves are generally daughters of village chief (Tuoichawng in 'Liendo and his Brother'), but the final outcome of selection often enrages their parents. Some daughters who get married to a man whom their parents dislike are auctioned by the enraged parents to any other man who can snatch them away from their husband (like Kungi in 'Pawthir le Hrangchal'). In another case, a father gives his daughter to a man who can pacify him with his demands (like the king in 'Lalmang'). Step-daughters are generally presented as innocent, modest, obedient and harmless who suffer great tortures at the hand of their step-mothers like Mauruong in 'Mauruong' and Thuoitling in 'Thuoitlinge Ngambawng'. Beautiful maidens whose beauty is the talk of the whole village, and whom the village young ladies feel jealous of are forcibly married by any man on applying magic, like Sawrlai by Vawmpahrawng in 'Sawrlai' and Kungi by Sairam in 'Pawthir le Hrangchal'. A daughter of a king, kept inside a protective palace with layers and layers of protective wall can still be bluffed and married by a common man as we find in cases like Sawrlai by Vawmpahrawng in 'Sawrlai'.

Hmar folk tales little portray conventional mothers (conventional mothers here means, caring and loving towards their husband, children and kinsmen; expert and adroit in domestic works). Heartless mothers betray the faith of their deceased husbands; abandon their minor children and elope with other men (mother of Liendo and Tuoisiel in 'Liendo le a Sangpa'). Step-mothers are cruel, cunning and shrewd. They favour their daughter/s over their step-daughter/s. They even favour their own daughters to the suitors of their step-daughters (like the step-mother of Mauruong in 'Mauruong' and Thuitling's step-mother in 'Thuitling le Ngambawng'). While labelling all sorts of negative personal traits on the women characters, such kinds of human tale are completely silent about the nature of fathers.

Old women and not old men are generally portrayed as playing the role of an unwarranted adviser to young unmarried men in love. Young ugly undeserving men go to them seeking their advice on how to succeed in marrying beautiful maidens they want to marry (as found in 'Sawrlai' and 'Pawthir le Hrangchal') whom otherwise, they don't at all deserve to even dream of. Those old women are mostly gifted with powerful black magic spell to rein the heart of the unfortunate victims.

Another proof of the tribe's gender bias in representation is found in the dominance of male characters in legends. Those tales that are claimed to be historical focus only on the most heroic deeds of folk heroes like Sura (Dena 1995, 113), Lalruong (Dena 1995, 126), Neilal (Dena 1995, 215) and Chawnhmang (Dena 1995, 217). There is no legend that focuses on great female individuals. For instance, in the world of folk verbal art, we have quite many a name of great female song composers. In the past, many renowned female composers like Pi Chawngmuok (also known as Pi Hmuoki), Pi Chawngchir (also known as Bapuinu) and Tuonpui (also known as Tuoni) composed catchy songs in praise of nature, in praise of individuals, in praise of someone's house and in praise of someone's horses. Few composers, Tuonpui being one of the few, composed romantic songs of love, yearning and enduring passion. (Thiek 2013, 29-32) Other female composers named Chawngngo and

Hbranchawn, who lost their respective family members, composed mainly elegiac songs. (L.Keivom 1980, 46 & 57)

Zawllai, another female song composer composed songs of romantic content. (L. Keivom 1980, 48) Most of the songs in *Semruk Hla* (given in Chapter 2) which young unmarried men and women used to croon were composed by another female composer named Zawltling (L. Keivom 1980, 71). Yet, these heroes could never easily succeed in drawing the attention of the male historians or folklorists to have immortalized their names in the tribe's history of prose narratives.

In the tribe's proverbial lore, we find 'representation' at its worst manifestation. Yet, proverbs, usually conceived as short and concise statement of truth, become very important instrument in exposing the cultural practices, values and ideologies. They reveal many 'hidden aspects of a people's culture and way of thought' (Storm 1992). Frank J.D'Angelo (1977) categorically mentions one important value of proverbs- that they embody habits of thought, customs and moral values. He says that proverbs are a kind of consensus of opinion, manifest truths that may be useful in the conduct of life. Proverbs are, indeed, besides many other definitions, interesting linguistic phenomena in that they are linked with the culture in which they are used. 'In many patrilineal ideologies, women are seen as unnecessary or superfluous, yet at the same time vitally important to men.....yet theirs is a power opposed to formal norms' (Rosaldo et al 1974, 32).

Among the tribe under study, proverbs are frequently employed and are numerous in number. Like proverbs among the Anang people of southeastern Nigeria (Dundes 1965, 299), among the Hmars, proverbs are used in all manner of situations- as a means of amusement, in educating the young, to sanction institutionalized behaviour and to "provide ready-made comments on personal relationships and social affairs." (W.Mieder 2004, 1) In Hmar proverbial literature, woman has been often made a prominent theme for criticism and comment. We find them been represented in a negative light. But, it is a fact that proverbs are not radical historical instruments, nor are they factually oriented. They do not seem to provide us with any traditional

historical data, but, the culture's perception of its micro world simply gets reflected through them. Proverbs can, no doubt, help a folklorist locate the image of yesterday's man who is but a part of modern man.

Determined by the engulfing cultural ideology, a woman might be at the receiving end with very little space of her own in matters of religion. Though she might have been made to occupy the bottommost rung of the religious and social ladders, she definitely was an integral part in other spheres of social life. In food-production activities of the tribe, for instance, the contribution of the women folks was great in terms of their rendered labour. Indeed, the tribe's economic situation would have limped without the valuable service they rendered in each and every stage of food-production activities.

Though Hmar women's significant role in the socio-cultural life of the tribe has never been satisfactorily given due recognition by historians and scholars, we find that in Verbal Art section female song composers dominated the different sub-genres of Folk Song. Lullaby is a female-dominated genre. Tale-telling tradition has been carried alive by mothers and grandmothers who narrate stories to their children and grandchildren. In many of the Social Customs-related rituals, they have played an important irreplaceable role starting from cutting of an umbilical cord of a new born baby, through feeding of souls of the dead, to festivals, vegetables foraging and agricultural-related customs. They have enjoyed full freedom in religious matters related with *Bu In-Ei Na*¹ and *Puonripui Khâwng*². Besides, customary practice of *Farnu Sa*³ and *Farnu Vawk*⁴ well explains their weight in the socio-cultural life of the community. The tribe's agricultural life can not even be dreamt of without women's co-operation. In the tribe's folk life section of Performing Arts, we find how important a position a woman occupied. Folk dance was not performed without their participation. "There was no social event celebrated without the participation of the women folks" (Lienchawngtho). They dominated much of the genres under Material Culture section as well. The women folks supplied all kinds of cloth – light and heavy- for family consumption. In traditional handloom, they reigned with their artistic creativity, making variegated intricate designs and highly colourful traditional

cloths. This shows that the Hmar women were an unrecognized integral part of the socio-cultural life of the tribe.

Endnotes:

1. It's a thanksgiving-related ceremony offered to goddess called *Fapite*.
2. Stretching the warp of *puonripui* (heavy rug) is often preceded by worship and a divination called *Puonripui Khâwng* where *thiempi* (priestess) worships and invokes a female weaving goddess called *Kawlpuinu*, also known as *Tapuinu*.
3. It's a sister's share of a meat. In every event of successful animal hunting, the hunter gives his sister/s their share of the meat. It is generally the bagged animal's front rib cage.
4. It is a nomenclature given to a sister's share of a portion of meat when a brother kills a pig. When a man kills a pig, he gives the shoulder or the fleshy thigh of the killed to his sister.

APPENDIX- I : PHOTOGRAPHS



Fig.3.1.i



Fig.3.1.ii



Fig.4.1.

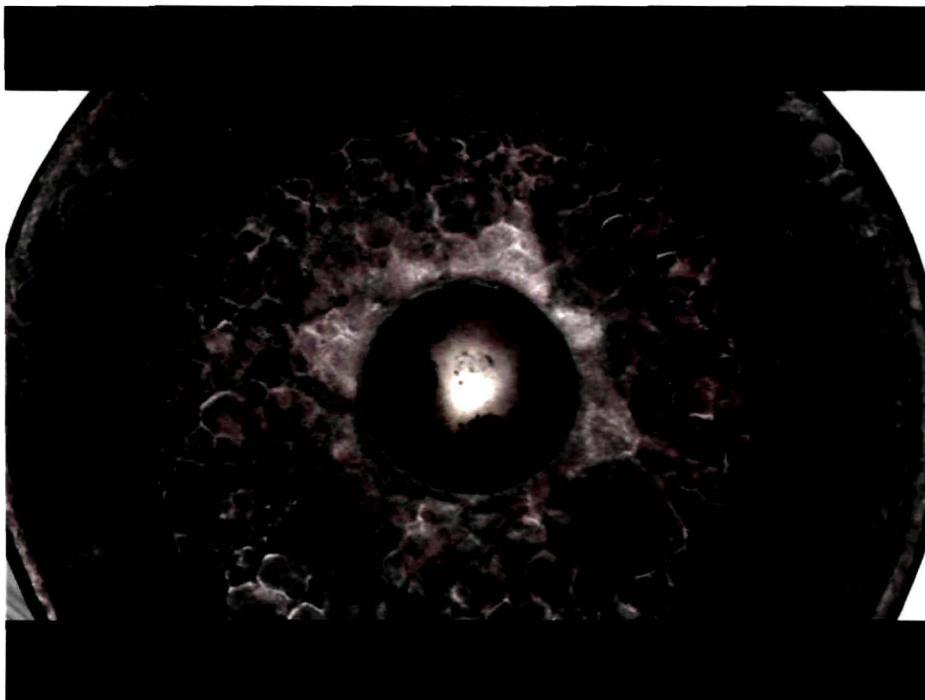


Fig.4.2.



Fig.4.3.



Fig.4.4.



Fig.4.5.

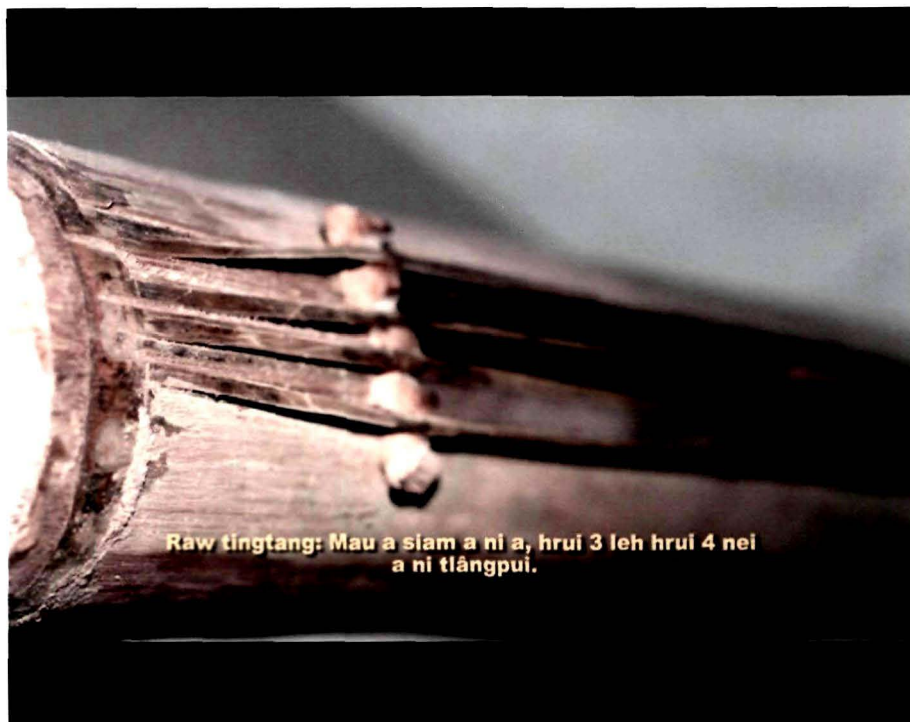


Fig.4.6.



Fig.4.7.

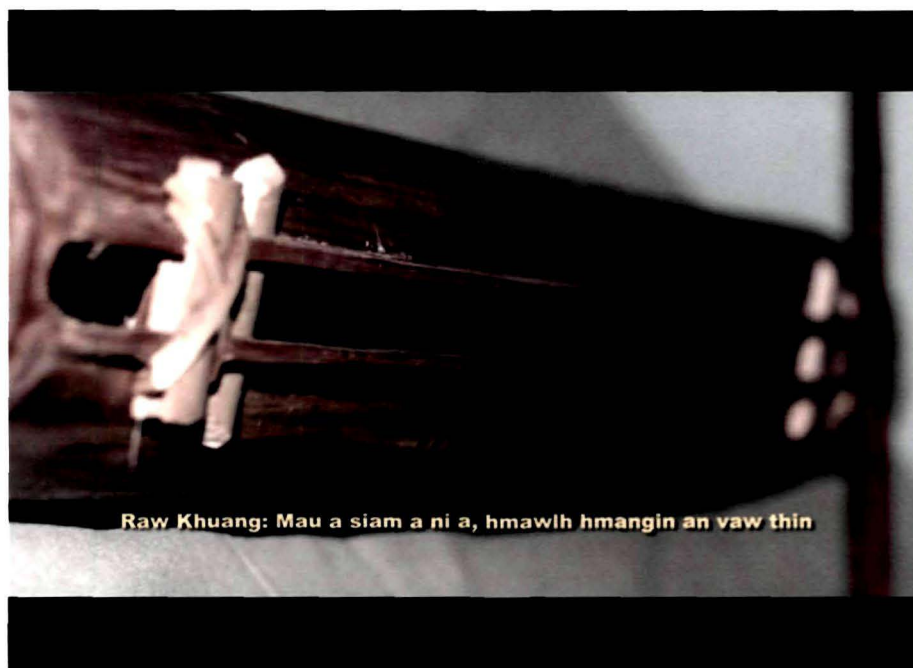


Fig.4.8.

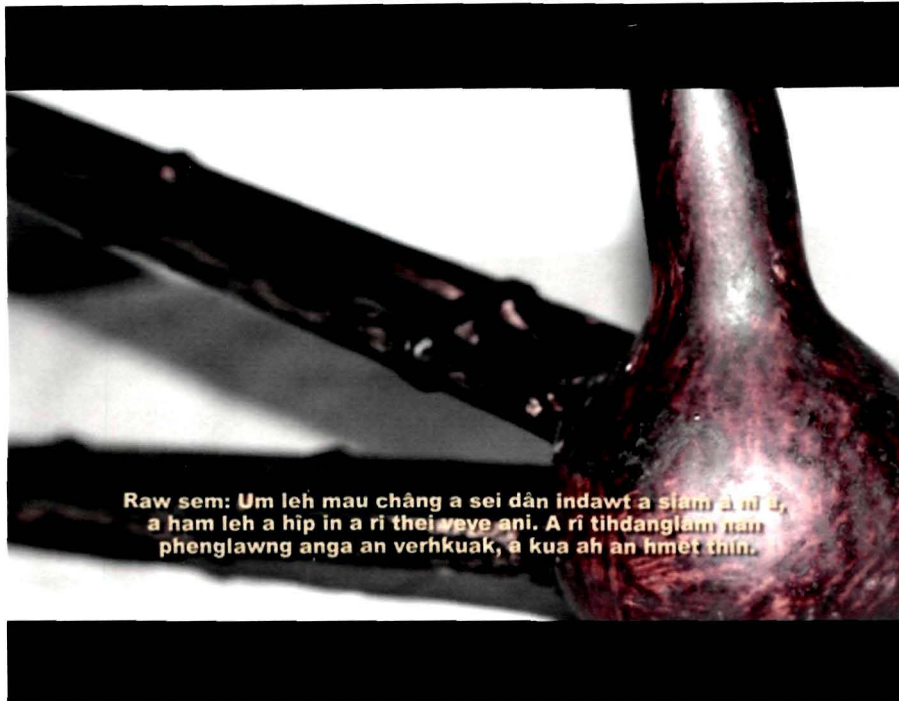


Fig.4.9.



Fig.4.10.



Fig.4.11.

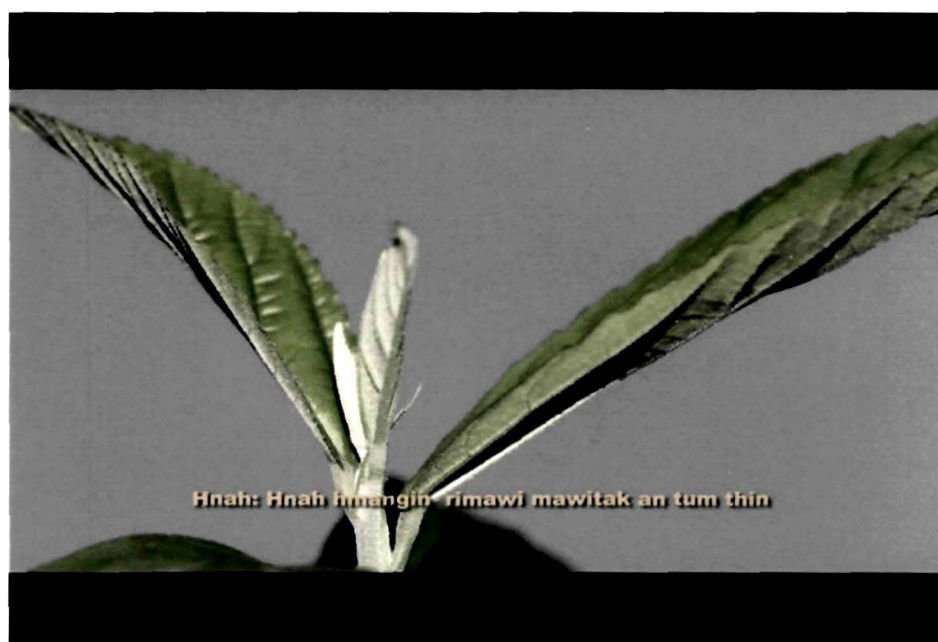


Fig.4.12

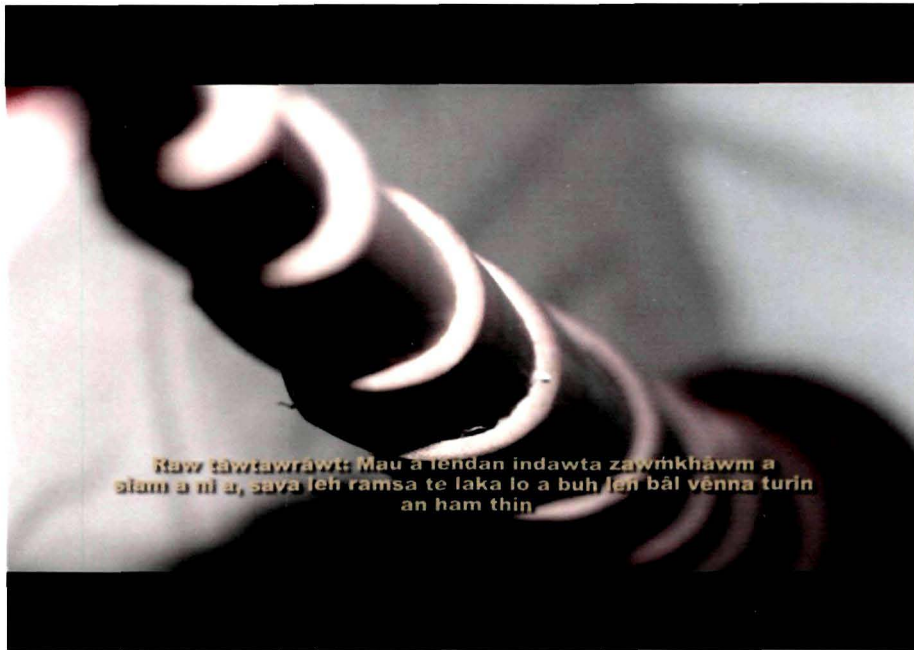


Fig.4.13.

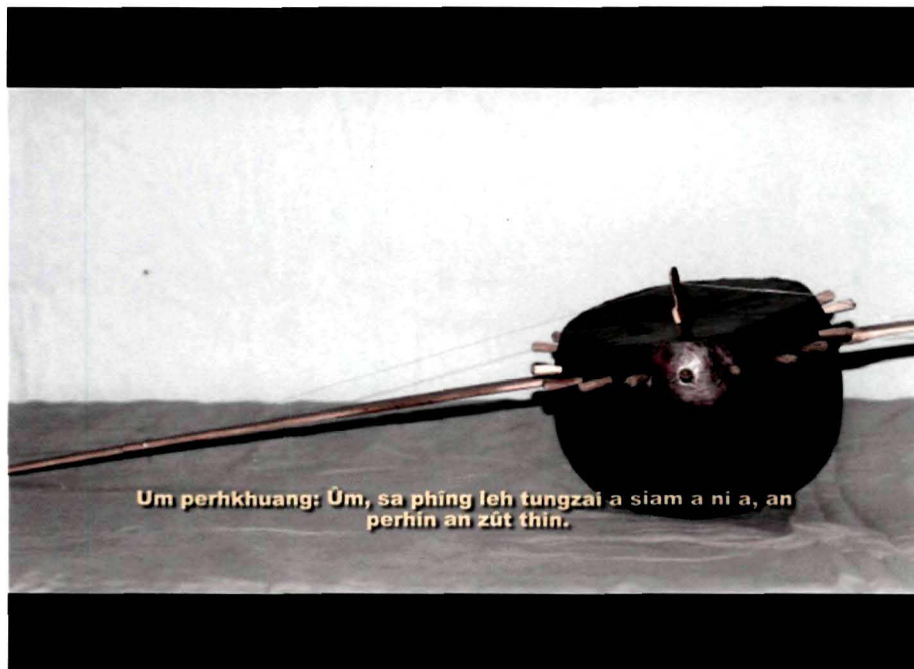


Fig.4.14.



Fig.4.15.i (chawnlâm singers)



Fig.4.15.ii



Fig.4.16.



Fig.4.17.i



Fig.4.17.ii



Fig.4.18.i



Fig.4.18.ii



Fig.4.19.i



Fig.4.19.ii (pheiphit instrument being played)



Fig.4.20.i



Fig.4.20.ii



Fig.4.21.i



Fig.4.21.ii



Fig.4.22.i



Fig.4.22.ii



Fig.5.1.



Fig.5.2.



Fig.5.3.

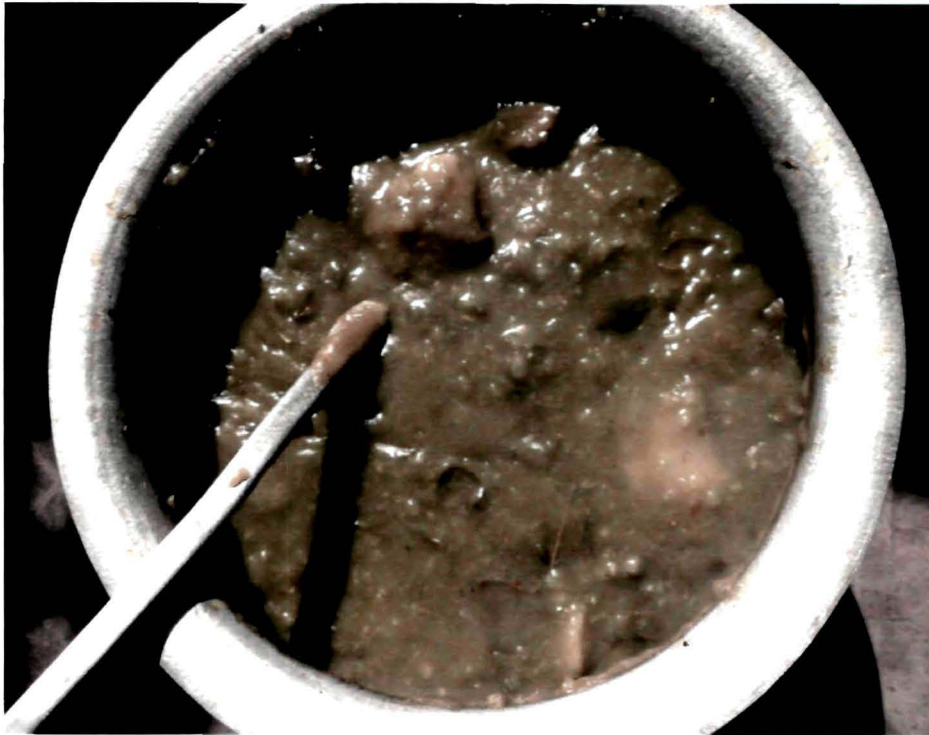


Fig.5.4.



Fig.5.5.



Fig.5.6.



Fig.5.7.



Fig.5.8.



Fig.5.9.

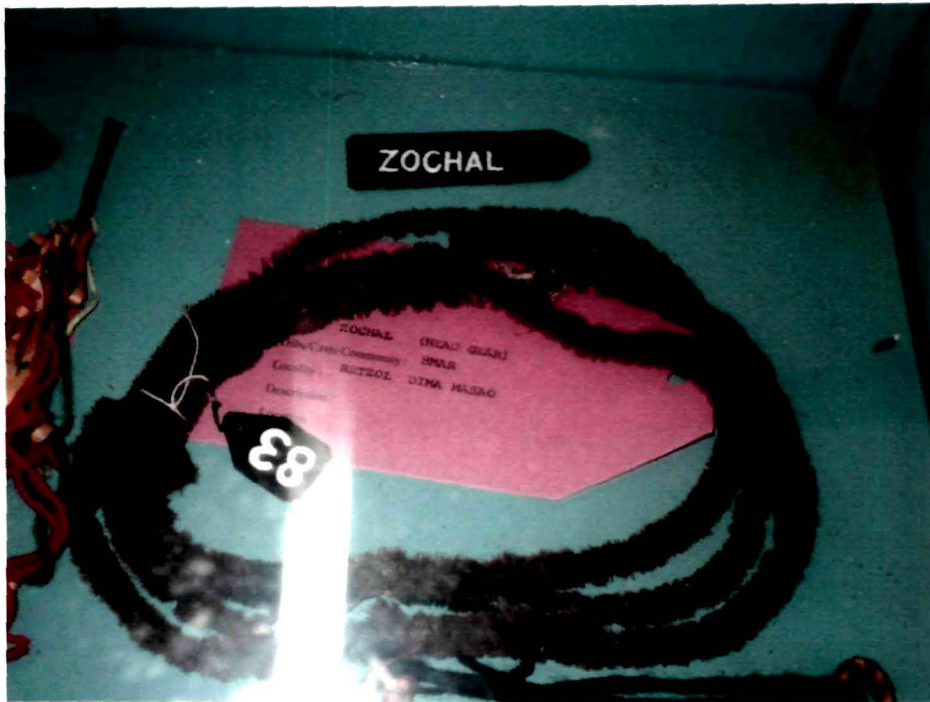


Fig.5.10.

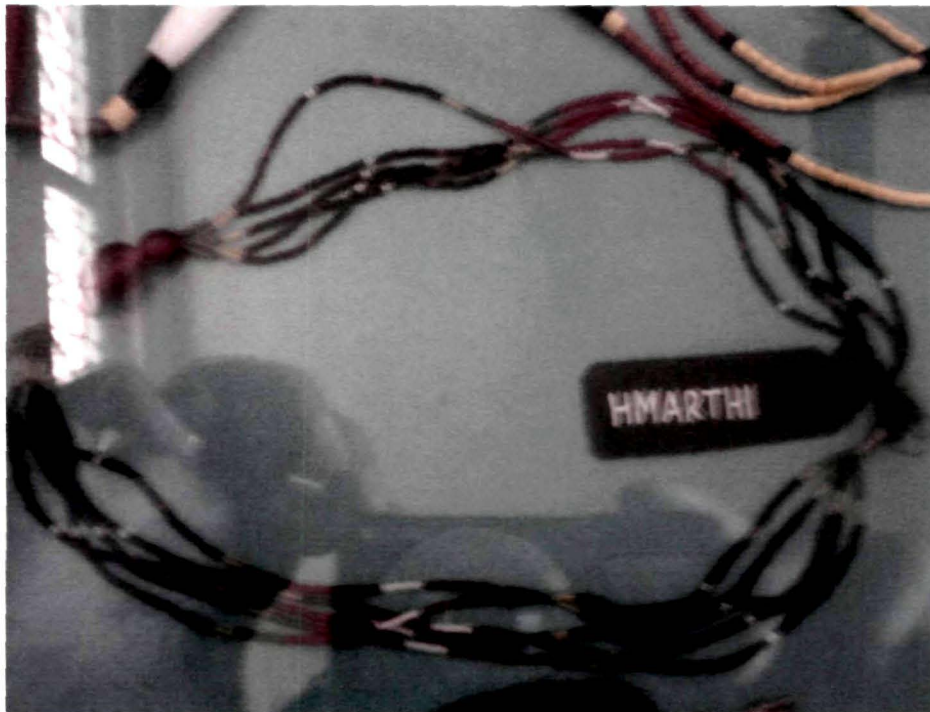


Fig.5.11.

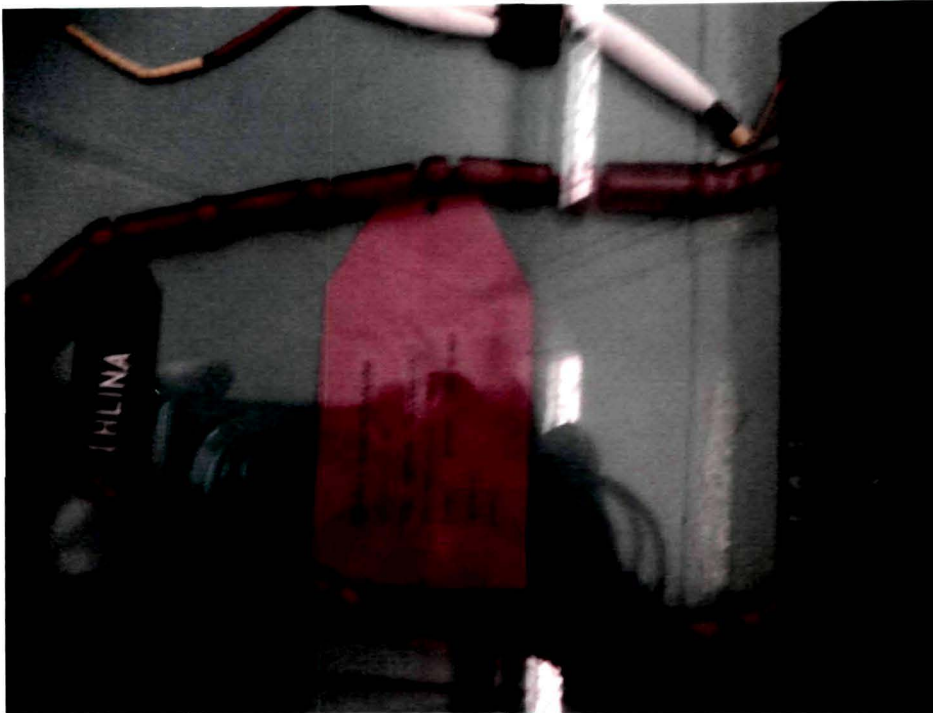


Fig.5.12.

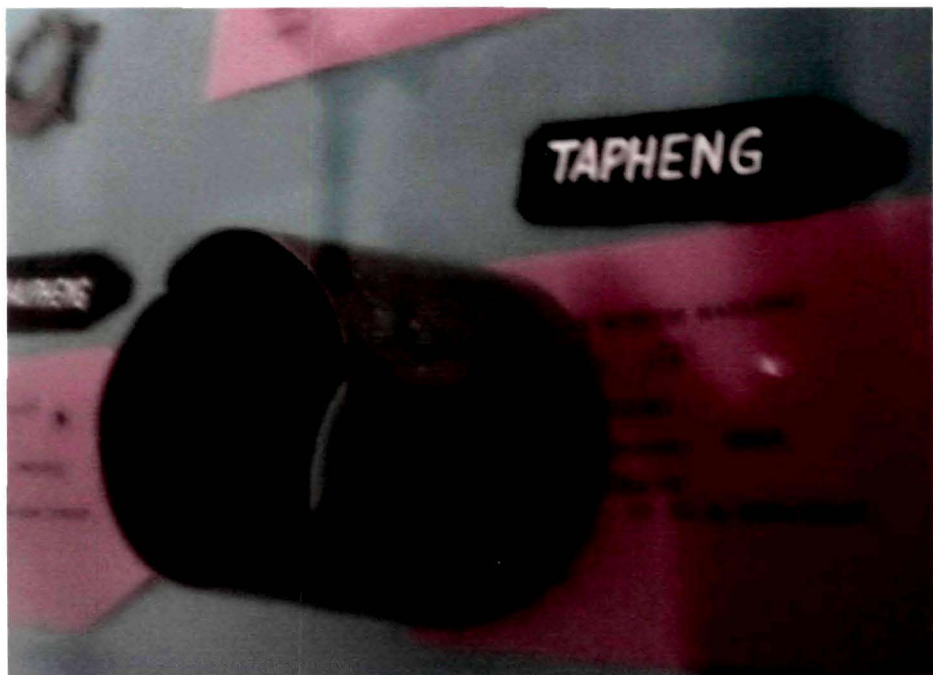


Fig.5.13.



Fig.5.14.



Fig.5.15.



Fig.5.16.



Fig.5.17.

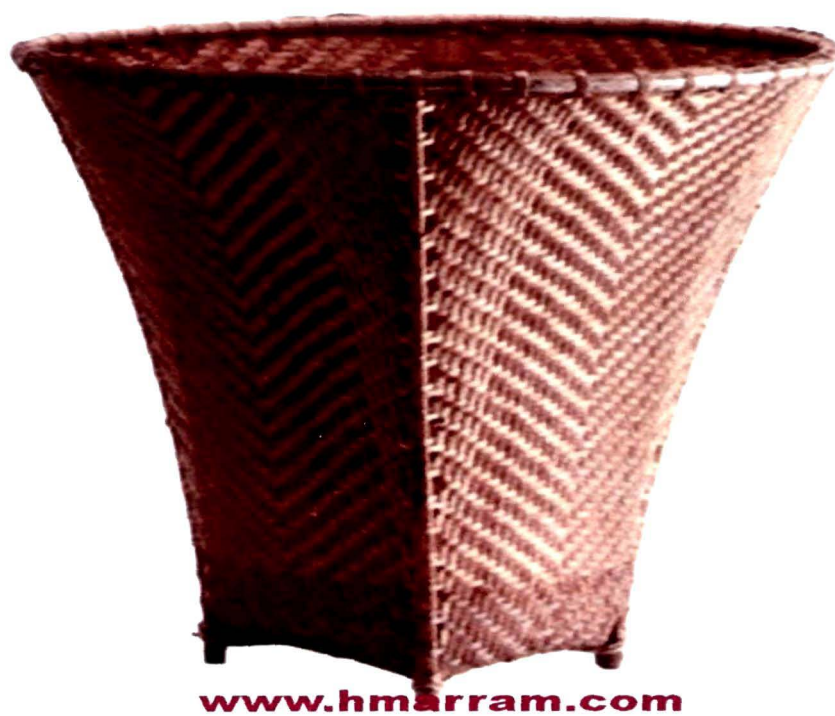


Fig.5.18.



Fig.5.19.

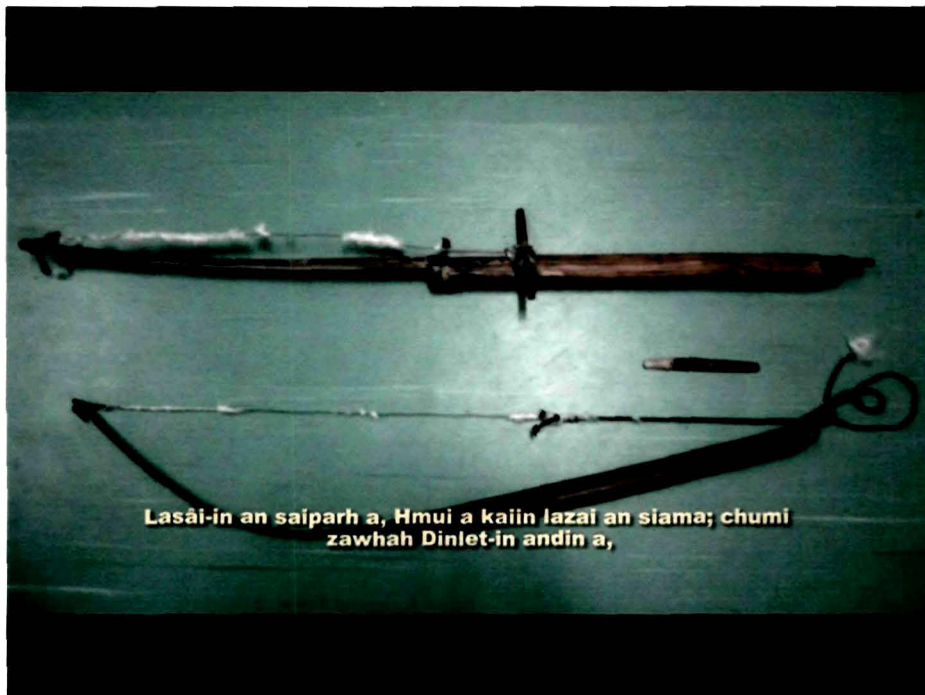


Fig.5.20.

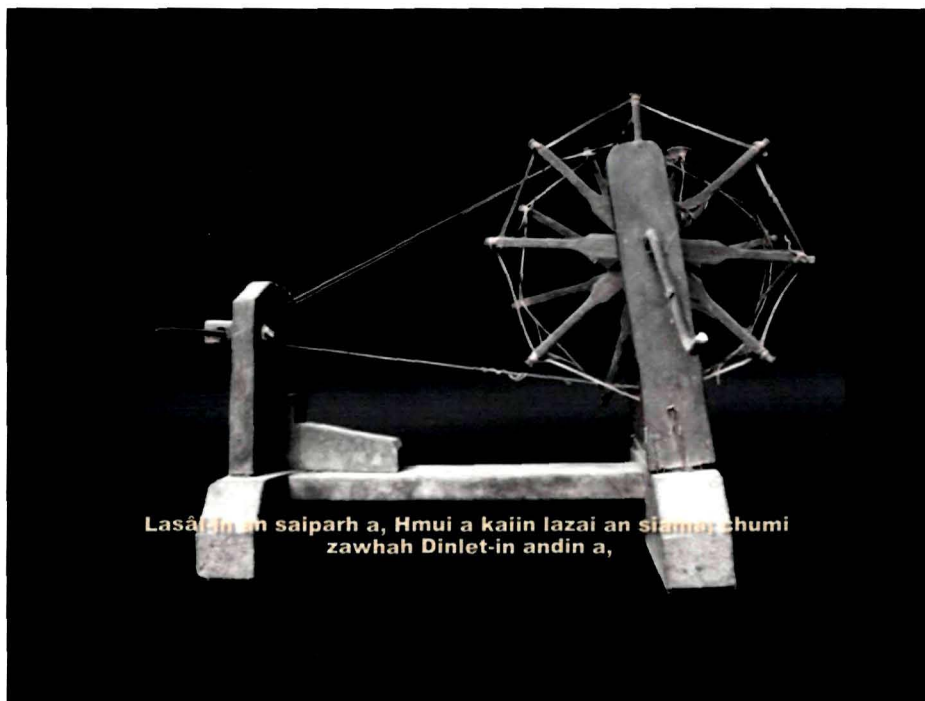


Fig.5.21.

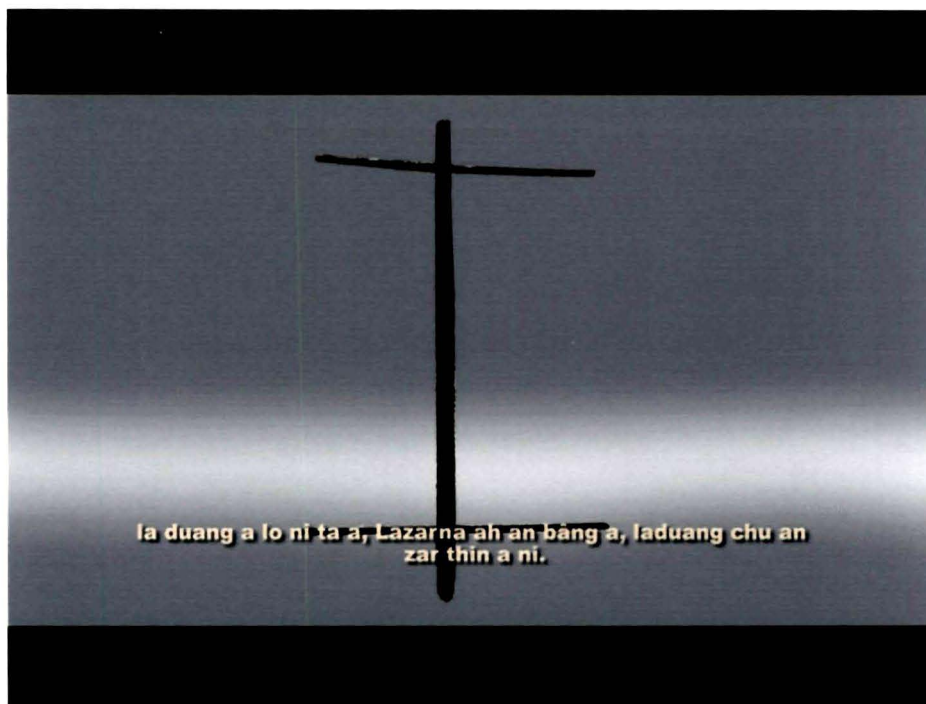


Fig.5.22.



Fig.5.23.

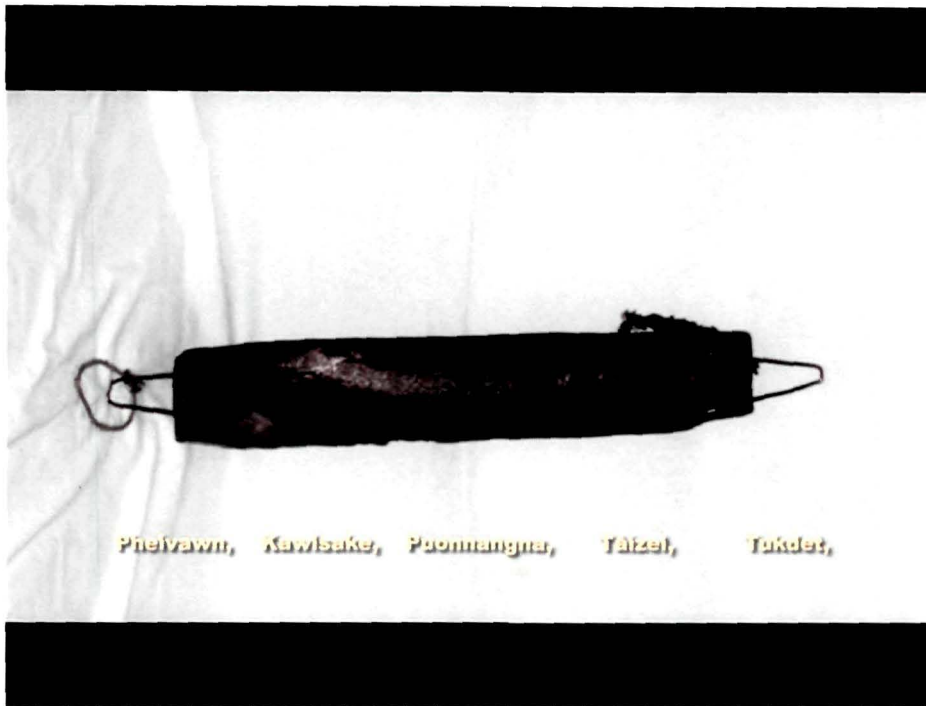


Fig.5.24.



Fig.5.25.



Fig.5.26.

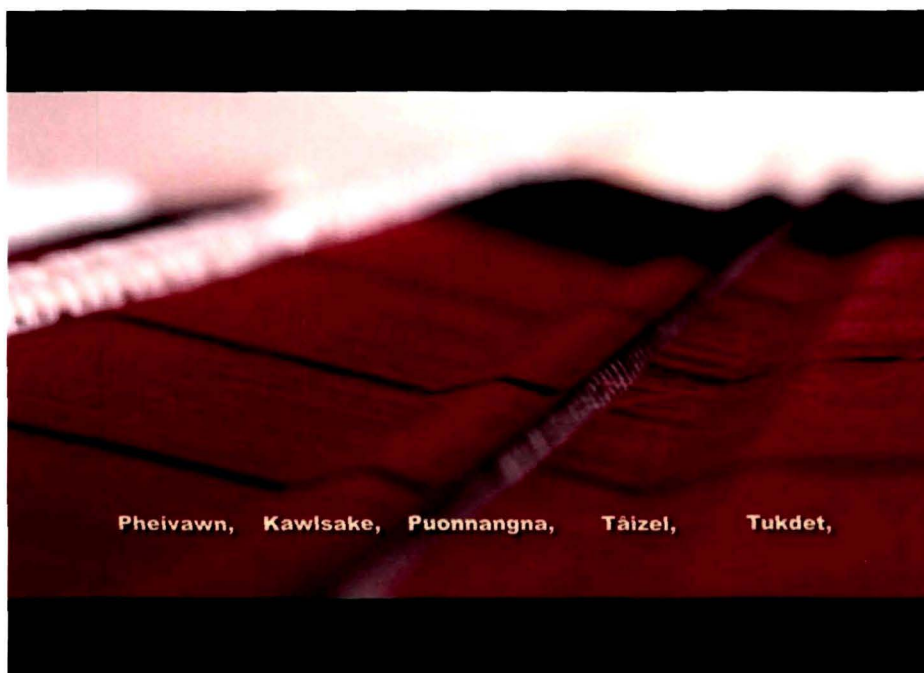


Fig.5.27.



Fig.5.28.

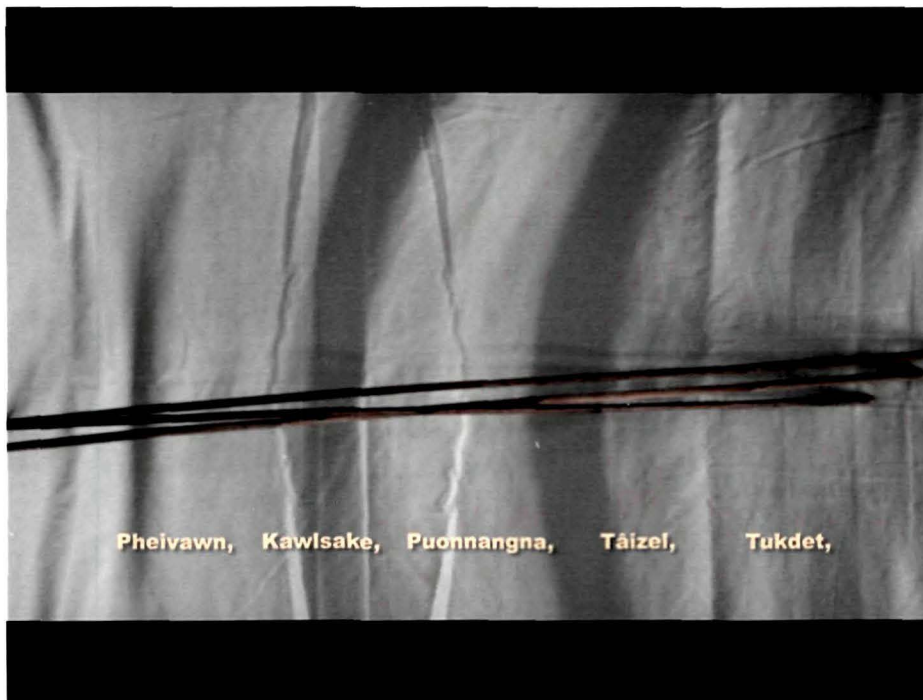


Fig.5.29.

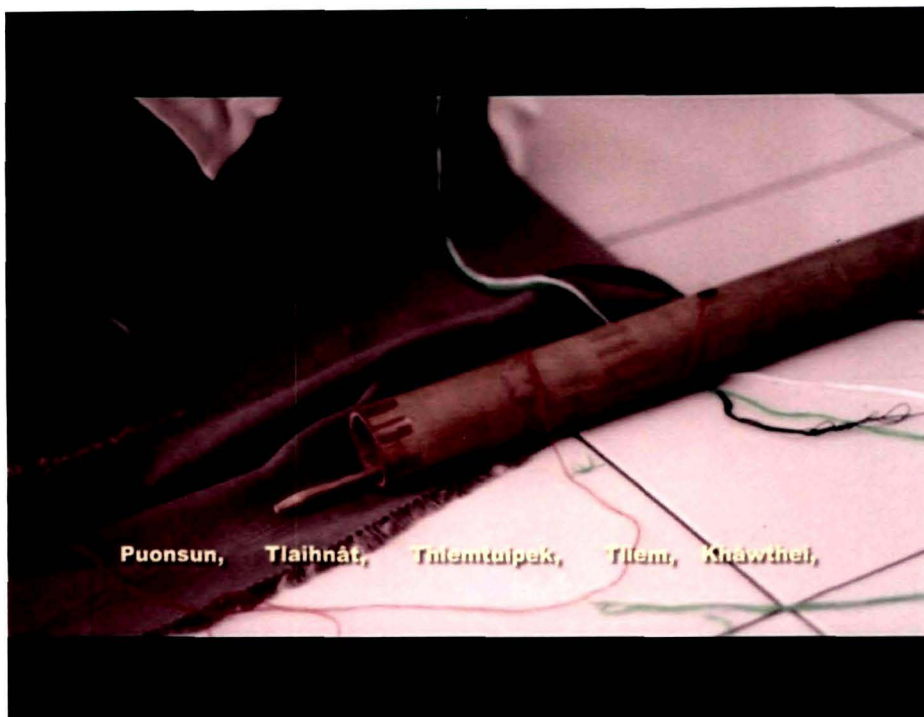


Fig.5.30.



Fig.5.31.

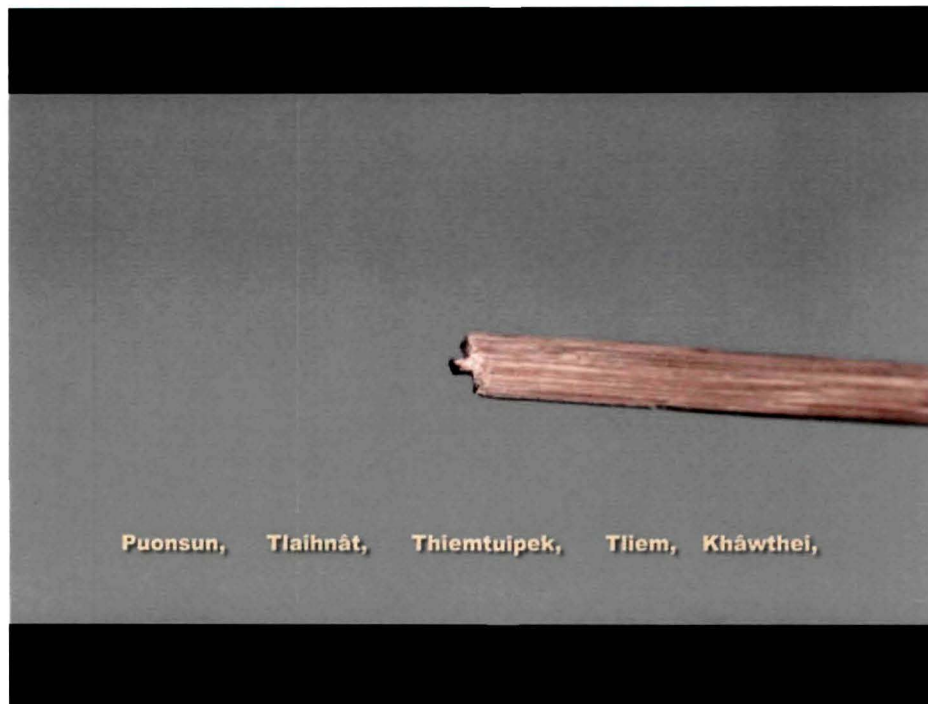


Fig.5.32.

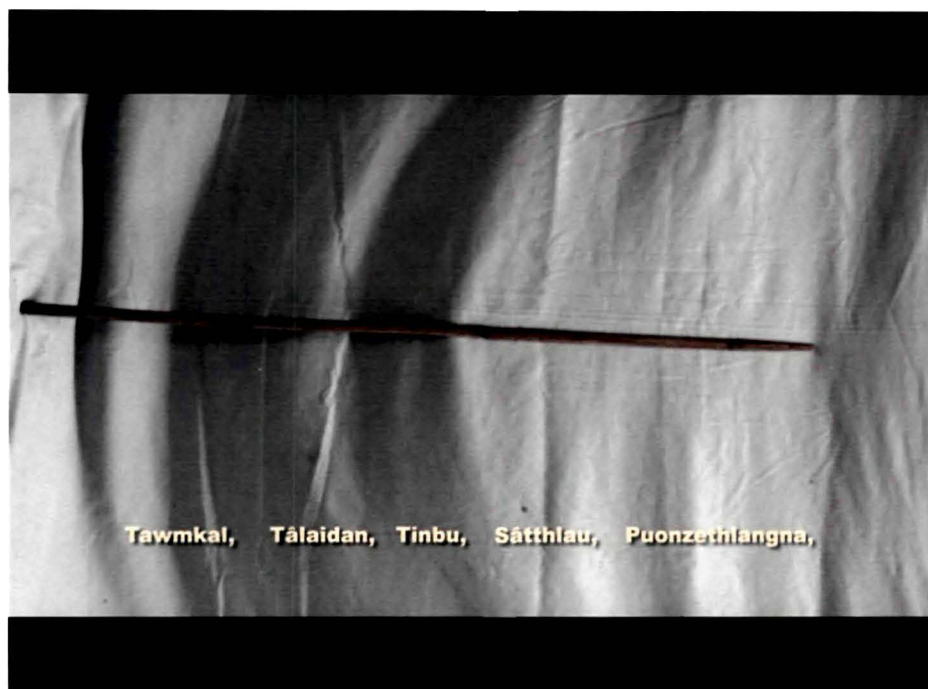


Fig.5.33.



Fig.5.34.

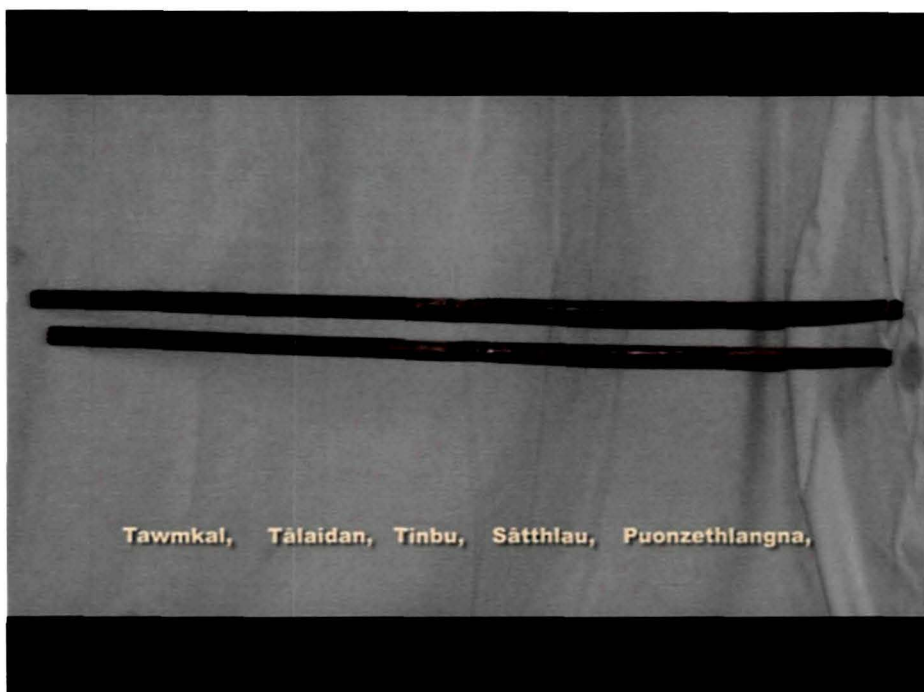


Fig.5.35.



Fig.5.36. (tawmkal on the head)

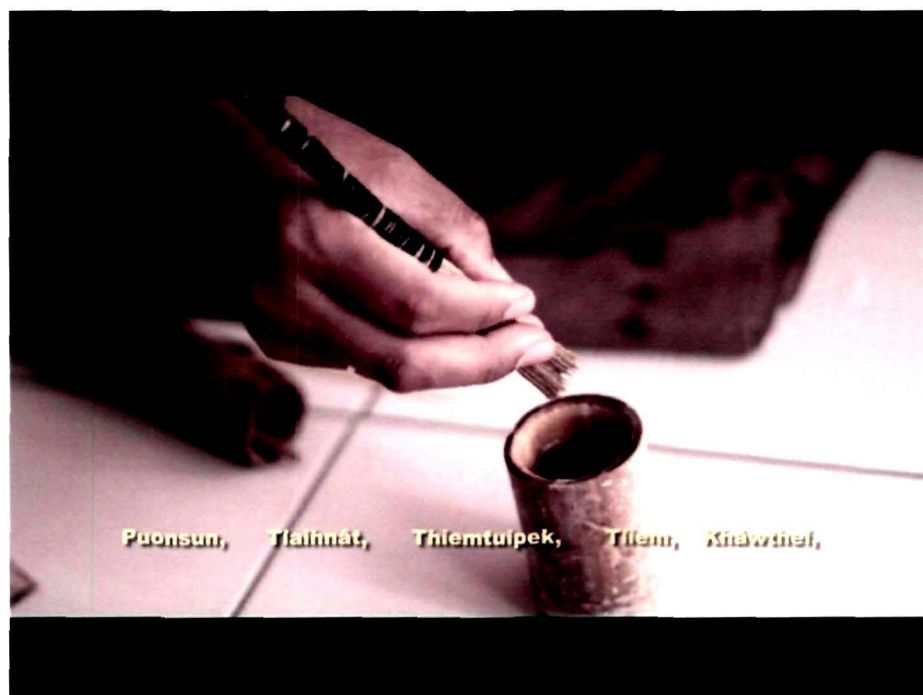


Fig.5.37.

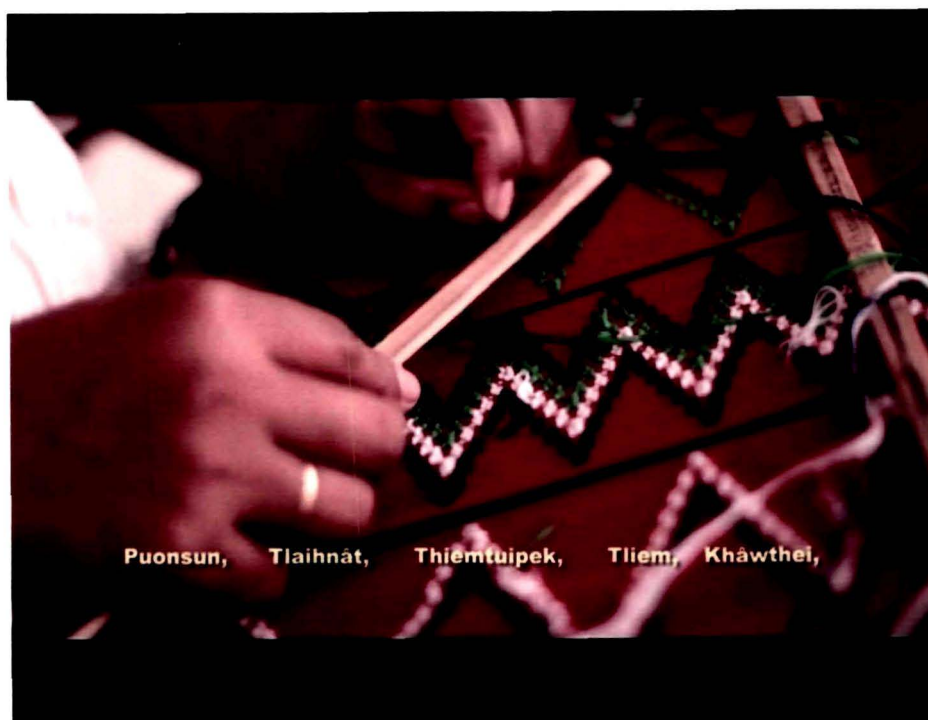


Fig.5.38.



Fig.5.39.

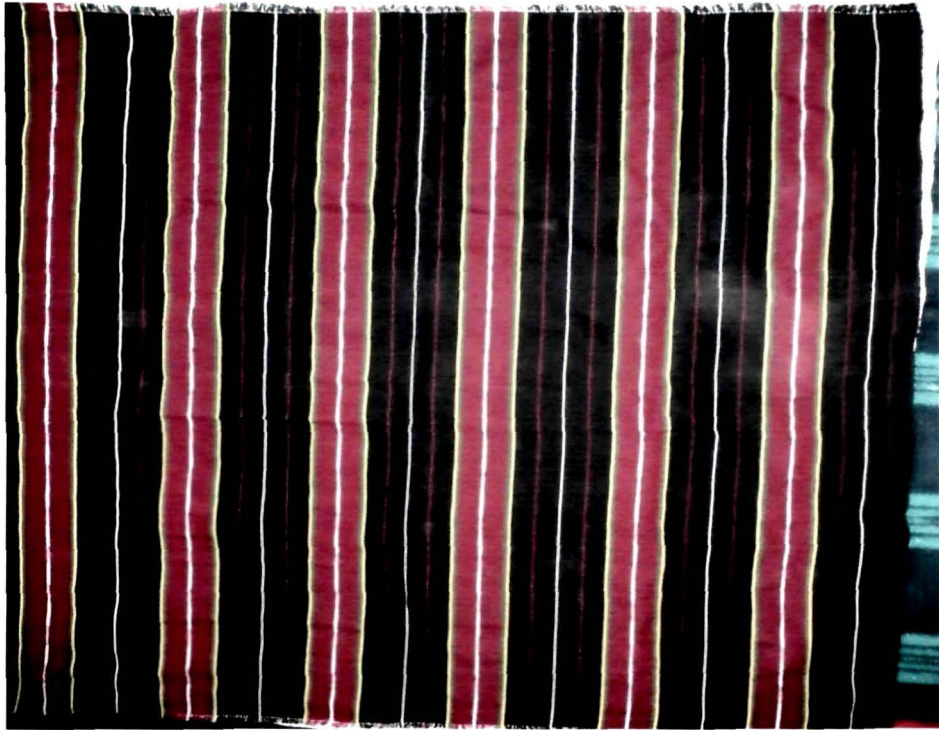


Fig.5.40.



Fig.5.41.

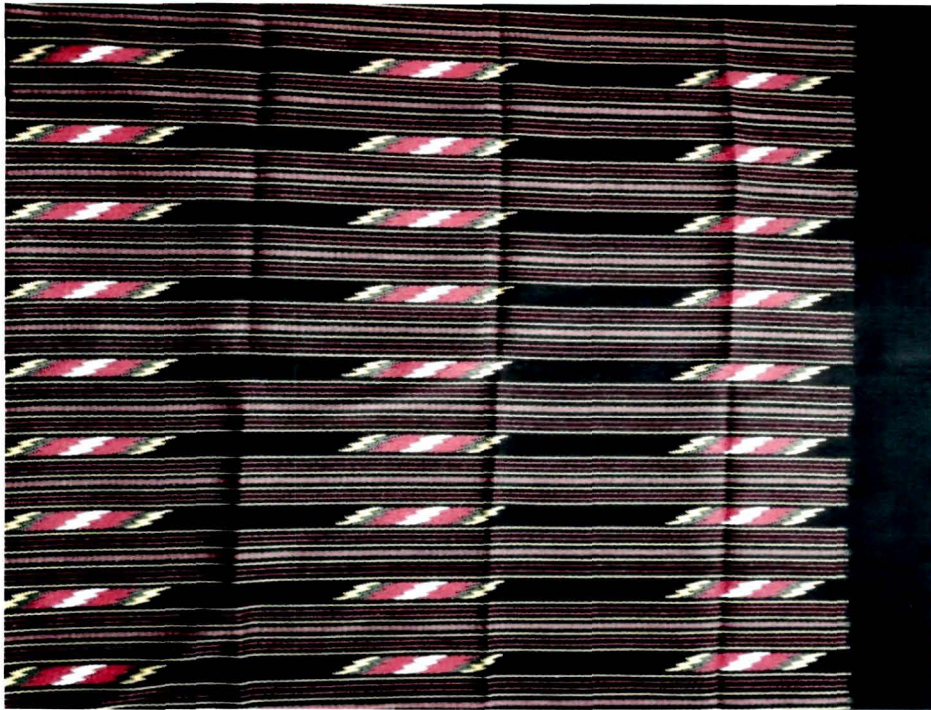


Fig.5.42.

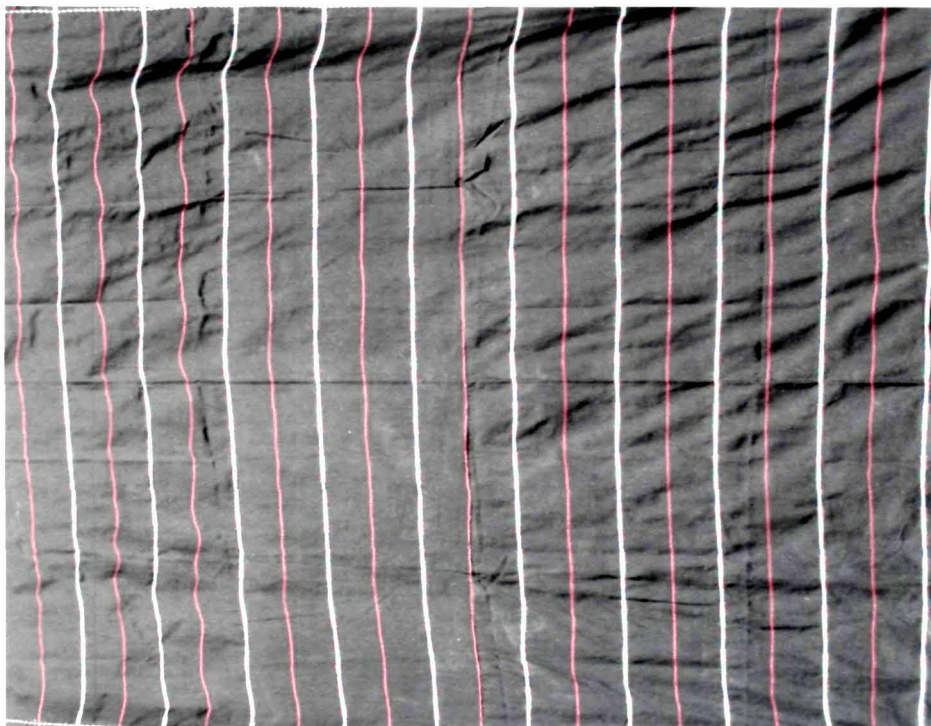


Fig.5.43.



Fig.5.44.

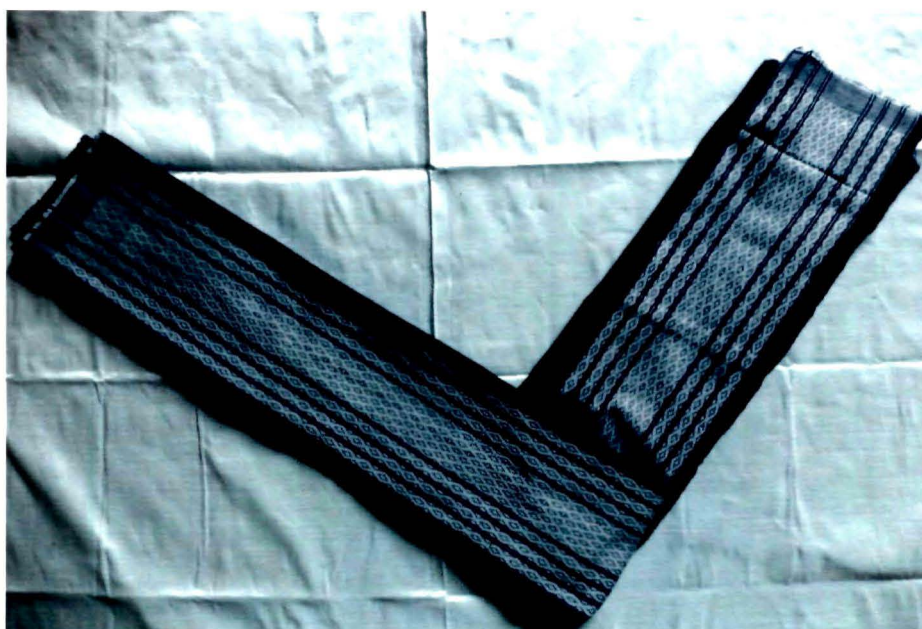


Fig.5.45.



FiFig.5.46.

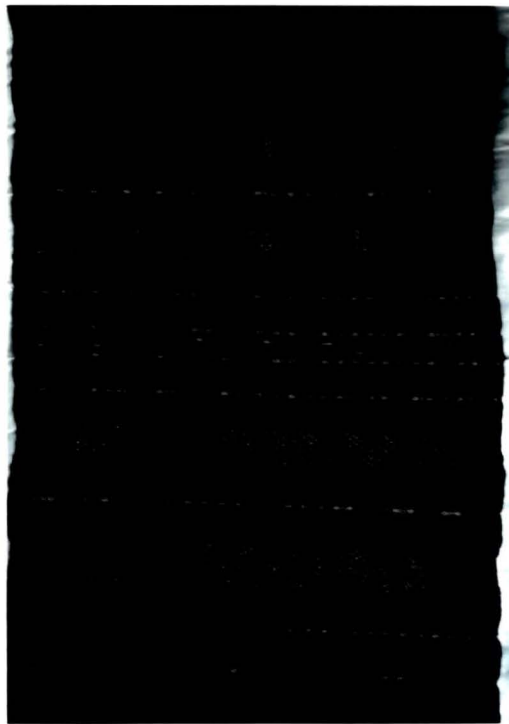


Fig.5.47.

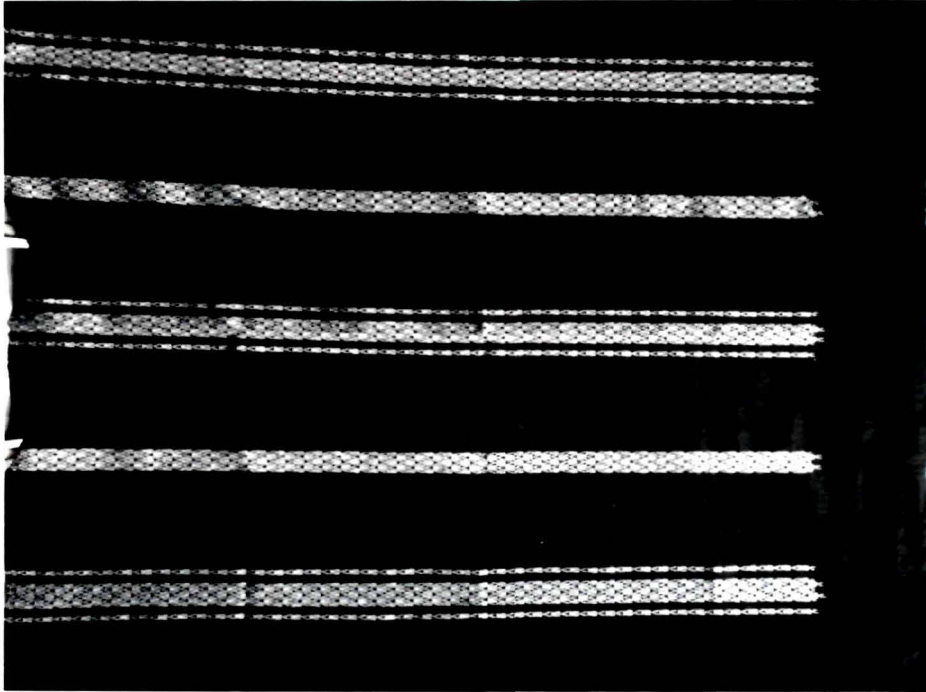


Fig.5.48.



Fig.5.49.

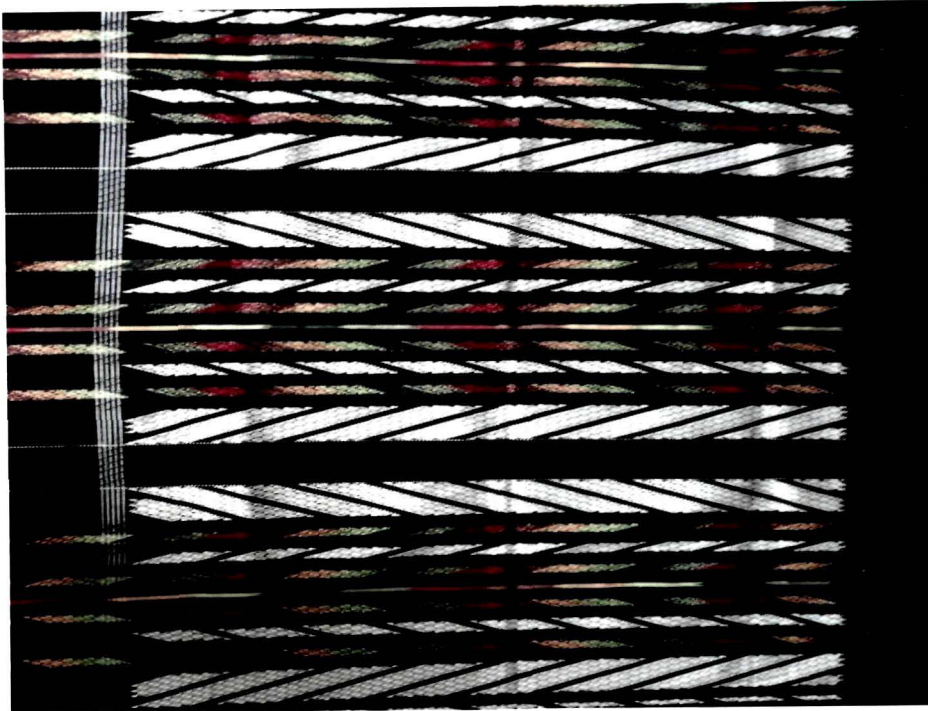


Fig.5.50.

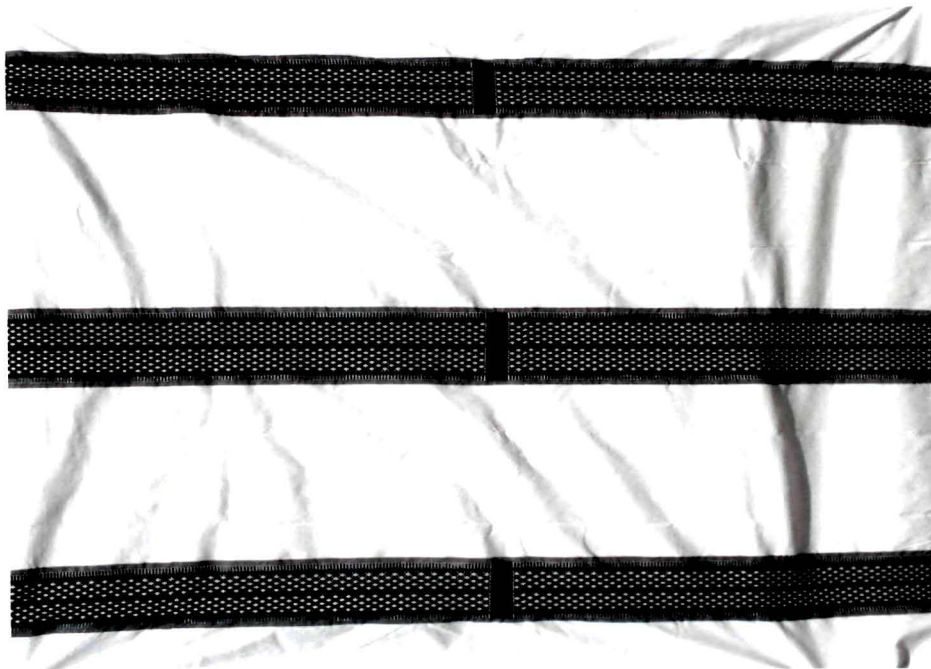


Fig.5.51.

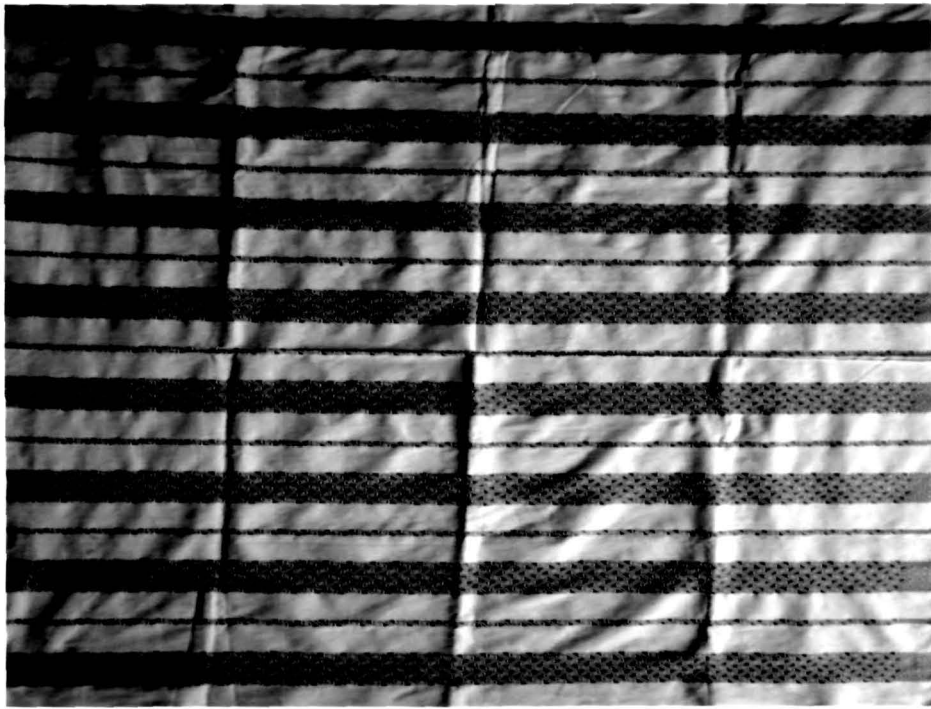


Fig.5.52.

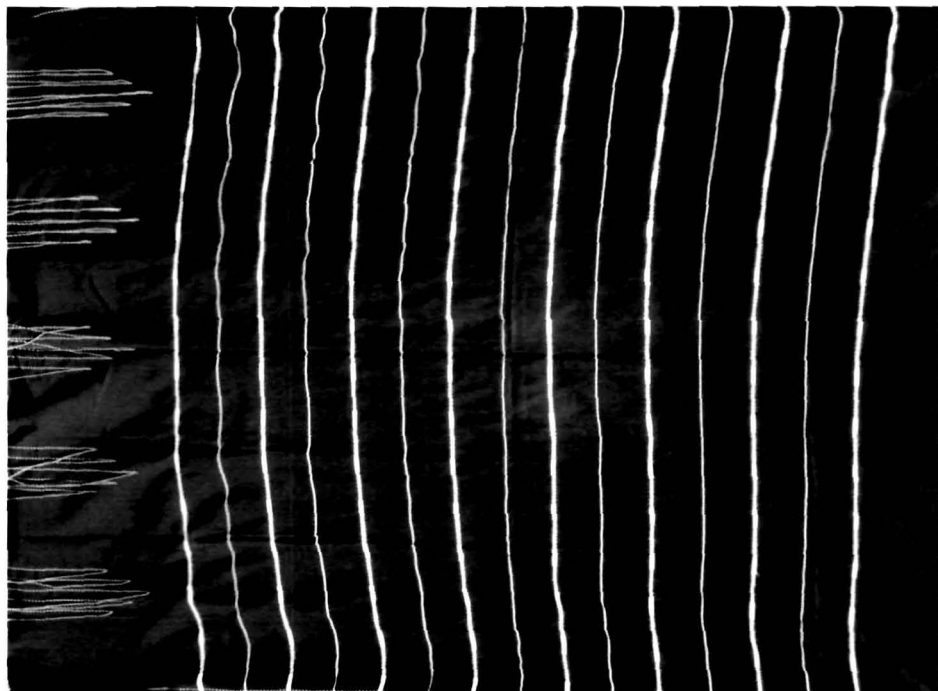


Fig.5. 53.

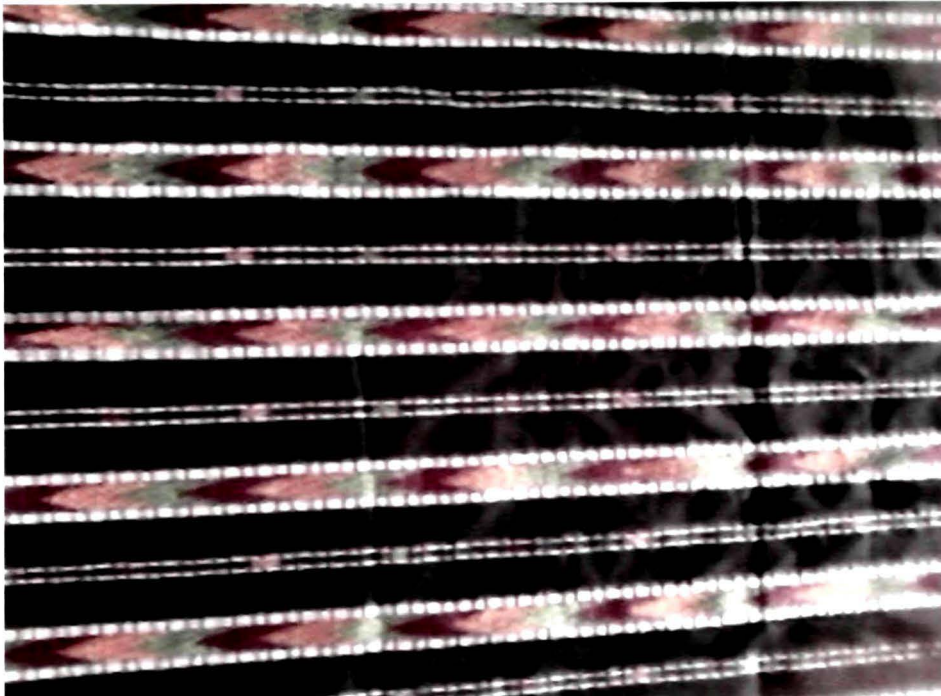


Fig.5.54.

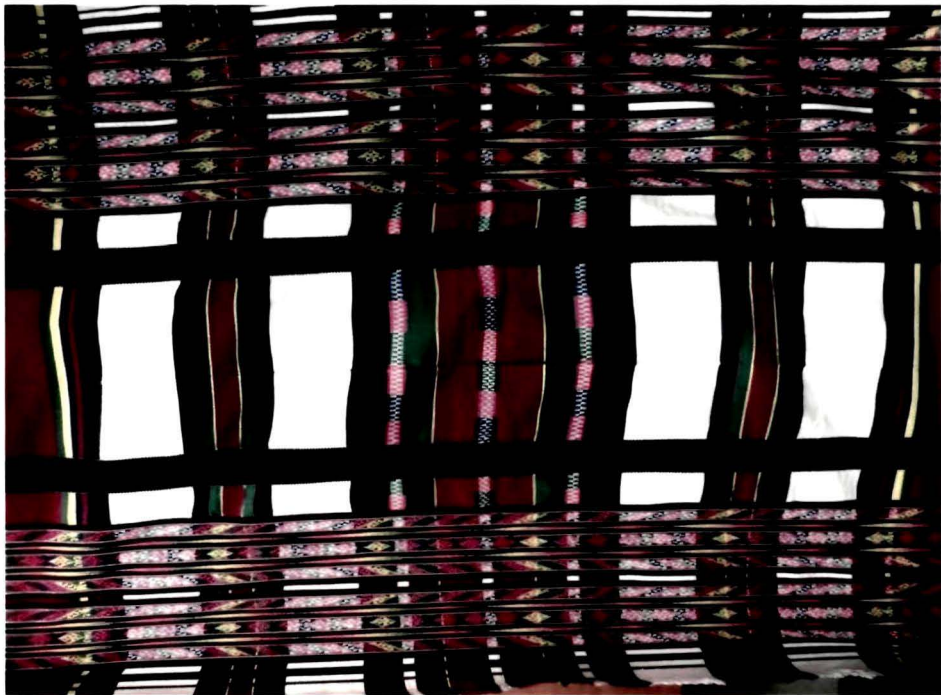


Fig.5.55.



Fig.5.56.

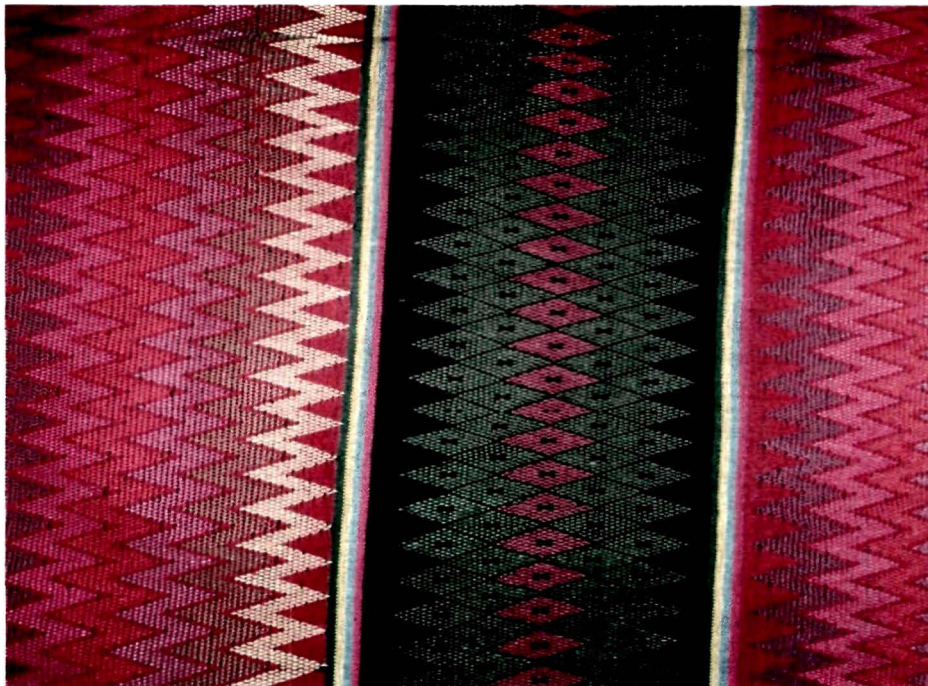


Fig.5.57. (design of old *puonropui*)

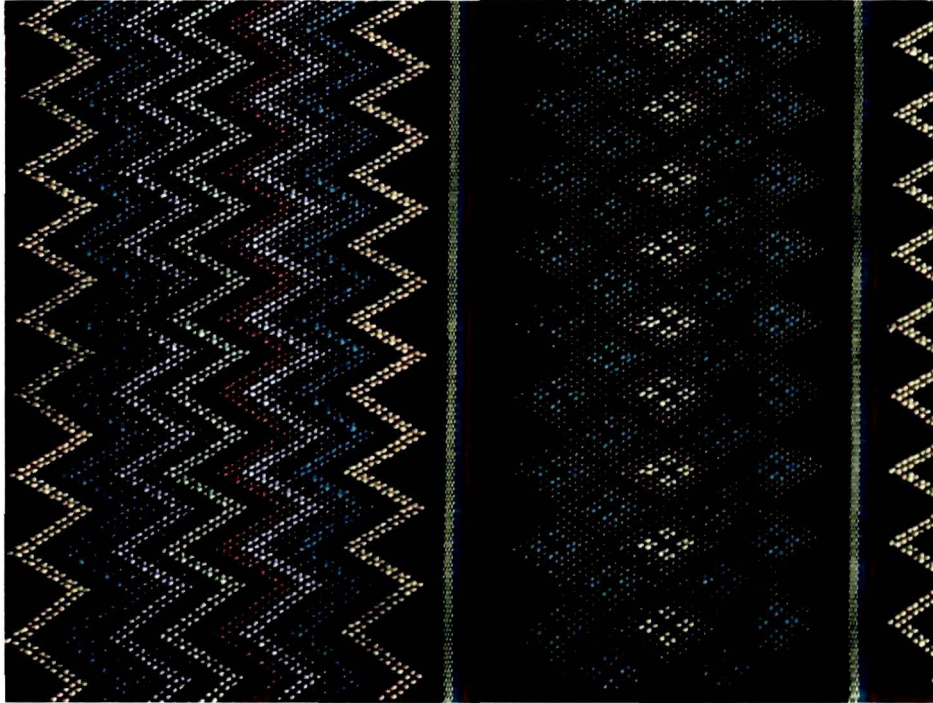


Fig.5.58 (design of modern *puonropui*)



Fig.5.59. (Hmar necktie)



Fig.5.60. (*thangsuopuon* muffer)



Fig.5.61.



Fig.5.62.

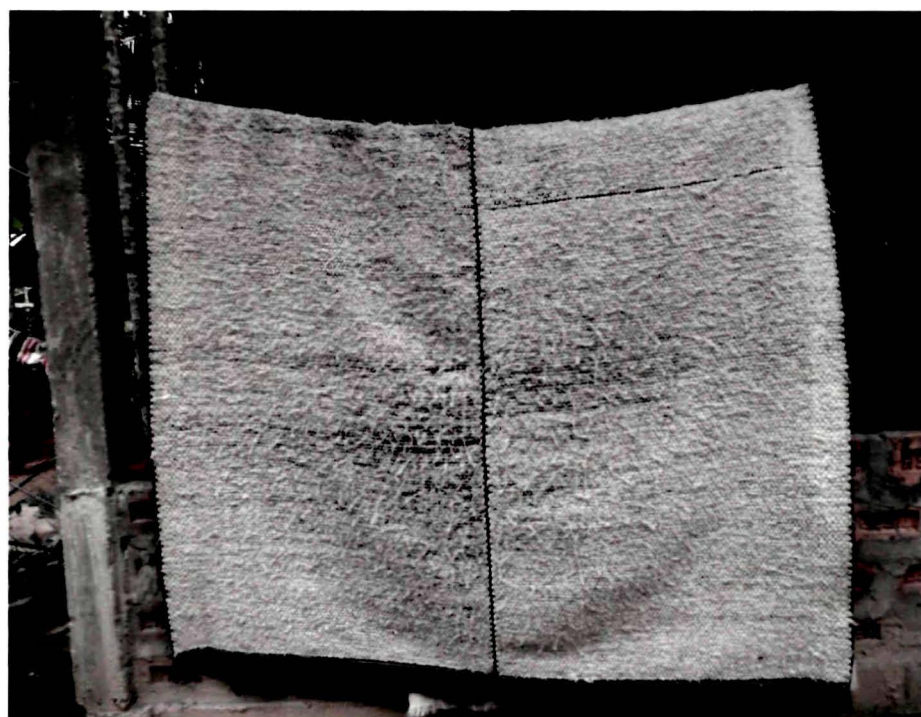
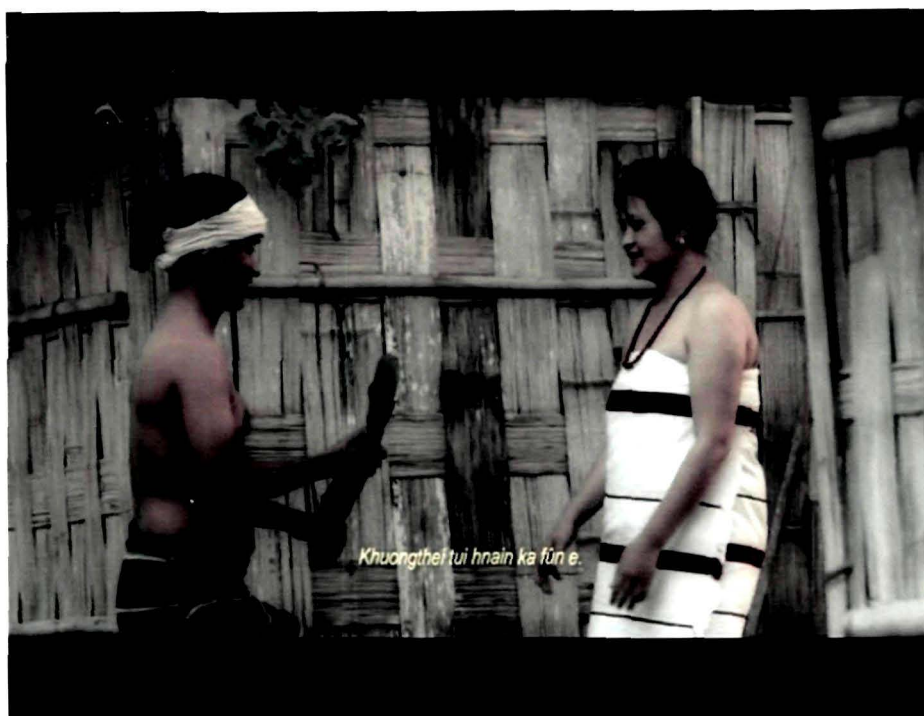


Fig.5.63.



A Hmar woman in *tlângdungvel*.



Traditional hair style of a Hmar woman.

APPENDIX-II: LIST OF INFORMANTS

Sl. No.	Name	Sex	Age	Place	Occupation
A	Sumneizir	F	88	Muolhoi Vill.	Housewife
B	Lienchawngtho aka Chawngtho.	M	76	Muolhoi Vill.	Retired employee & Author .
C	H.V Sunga	M	92	Hmarkhawlien Vill.	Retired missionary
D	Dr. Vanlal Tluonga Bapui	M	70	Haflong	Retired Headmaster & author.
E	H.Thangzo	F	67	Muolhoi Vill.	Employee
F	Lalrinkim Hmar	F	33	Fulertal, Hmarkhawlien	Weaving Trainer
G	Siema Hmar	M	45	Fulertal, Hmarkhawlin	Proprietor, Barak Handloom Textile & Industry.
H	Dr. Hrilrokhum Thiek	M	82	Muolhoi Vill.	Pastor Pensioner & author.
I	Khâwmnu	F	49	Hebron, Mahur Vill.	Cultivator
J	Mawia Pudaite	M	36	Tuolpui Vill.	Sikpui Cultural Secy.
K	Lalramhnm	F	43	Muolhoi Vill.	Teacher
L	Vanlallawmsang	M	42	Muolhoi Vill.	Instructor, Cultural Affairs.
M	Ngulkhumchawng	F	74	Muolhoi Vill.	Housewife
N	Lallawmkung	M	42	Manikbond Vill.	Missions Worker
O	Hlinei	F	55	Leiri Vill.	Cultivator
P	Suohnem	F	48	Retzawl Vill.	Housewife
Q	Isaac Lalmalsawm Songate	M	36	Silchar	Hmar MIL Teacher.
R	Ruolseikhup Puruolte	M	67	Leiri Vill.	Teacher Pensioner
S	Jerome Khawzawl	M	34	Chikhur Vill.	Member of BHTDC.
T	Thilchungro	M	87	Hebron Vill.	Cultivator

APPENDIX- III: TABLES OF HMAR POPULATION

Census on Hmar Population in Barak Valley



BARAK VALLEY HILL TRIBES DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
HMAR TRIBES POPULATION

Sl.No	Name of District	No. of Villages	No. of Houses	No. of Population
1.	Cachar	74	4,865	34,057
2.	Karimganj	24	921	6,446
3.	Hailakandi	25	550	3,850
	Total	123	6,336	44,353

HMAR SUB- TRIBES HRANGKHOL

Sl.No	Name of District	No. of Villages	No. of Houses	No. of Population
1.	Cachar	05	322	2,255
2.	Karimganj	10	539	3,773
3.	Hailakandi	24	621	4,347
	Total	39	1,482	10,375

HMAR SUB- TRIBES CHORAI

Sl.No	Name of District	No. of Villages	No. of Houses	No. of Population
1.	Cachar	Nil	Nil	
2.	Karimganj	20	601	4,807
3.	Hailakandi	02	168	1,080
	Total	22	769	5,887

HMAR SUB- TRIBES CHIRU

Sl.No	Name of District	No. of Villages	No. of Houses	No. of Population
1.	Cachar	01	126	882
2.	Karimganj	02	144	1,012
3.	Hailakandi	01	50	350
	Total	04	320	2,244

(H. BATA RUOLNGUL)
Head Asstt.

Barak Valley Hill Tribes Development Council

Census on Hmar population in North Cachar Hills District:

Sl. No	VILLAGE	No.of HOUSE	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	P.Station
1	Hebron	86	215	196	411	Umrangso
2	Aivaphai	24	90	67	157	Harangajao
3	Doiheng	42	122	120	242	Haflong
4	Arda	18	43	37	80	Do
5	Retzol	154	514	510	1024	Do
6	Boro Muolkoi	81	218	270	488	Harangajao
7	Huonveng	71	175	174	349	Do
8	Mission Veng	17	39	25	64	Do
9	Hmarthlangmawi	98	327	359	686	Do
10	Hmunthazau	59	162	180	342	Do
11	Buolmuol	29	83	77	160	Do
12	Buolmuol Bagan	76	233	183	416	Do
13	Plangsang	37	110	89	199	Do
14	New Zoar	16	46	43	89	Do
15	P.Hnachangzawl	146	414	348	762	Do
16	N.Simtulung	91	303	285	588	Do
17	Bethel	71	205	177	382	Haflong
18	Muolhoi	845	2502	2576	5078	Do
19	Electric Veng	31	78	102	180	Do
20	Huonveng	48	163	156	319	Do
21	Jinam	38	110	116	226	Mahur
22	Tuolpui	116	391	387	778	Do
23	Khuongluong	42	119	120	239	Do
24	Patherkot	10	40	27	67	Do
25	Chielei Jinamghat	86	225	216	441	Do
26	J.Hebron	32	117	103	220	Do
27	N.Zoar	42	142	156	298	Do
28	Saron	296	1164	1022	2186	Do
29	Mahur Garden	82	276	326	602	Do
30	Thingbung	29	126	98	224	Do
31	T.Muolkoi	11	26	23	49	Do
32	ChhotoLeikek	7	25	28	53	Do
33	Vawngzawl	22	100	82	182	Do
34	Tatthephai	45	152	132	284	Do
35	Mauchar	50	151	125	276	Do
36	Innuchangzawl	31	94	89	183	Do
37	Boro Arkup	60	200	200	400	Do
38	P.Hmar Lushet	30	128	118	246	Do
39	Gilgai	10	33	37	70	Do
40	Loiri	96	383	305	688	Do
41	N.Hmarlusi	24	86	82	168	Do
42	Phaipui	38	187	139	326	Do
43	Muollicn	87	339	207	546	Do

In total, there are 43 Hmar villages with 3,324 Houses, 10,656 male and 10,112 female members (Total M&F=20,768) in North Cachar Hills district.

Date: 21.04.2011

L.Hloma Keivom
 21/04/2011
 L.HLIMA KEIVOM
 President, N.C Hills district,
 Indigenous Students' Forum,
 HQ. Haflong, N.C Hills, Assam.
 President,
 N. C. Hills
 Indigenous Students' Forum
 G.Hq.-Haflong.

APPENDIX-IV: GLOSSARY OF HMAR TERMS

Anțam	:	mustard greens.
Anțam hmepawk	:	mustard greens stew.
Anțamthu	:	a smelly seasoning agent made of mustard greens.
Anțamthu deng	:	achutney made of roasted chilly grinded with <i>anțamthu</i> , a smelly seasoning agent made of mustard greens.
Arasi Hnuoia Innei	:	literally meaning marriage under the witness of stars. It is an eloped marriage without the parental approval. It may also be called <i>Inrûka Innei</i> .
Bahra	:	wild yam.
Bâl nate	:	small buds of edible arum.
Bekanthu	:	a smelly seasoning agent made of soybeans.
Bekanthu hme	:	vegetables cooked with hot pepper and <i>bekanthu</i> .
Bêmkhuong	:	a closed flat basket container with a lid. It is mainly used for keeping small household materials like needles and threads.
Bepil khur	:	potter's pit.
Bu	:	cooked rice.
Bu In-Ei Na	:	it's a thanksgiving-related ceremony offered to goddess called <i>Fapite</i> .
Bu sîk	:	paddy harvesting.
Bu suk	:	pounding of grain.
Bu thak	:	transportation of grain for storing purpose.
Bubêl	:	rice cooking-pot.

Buchîl	:	threshing rice paddy.
Bufai	:	uncookedrice.
Bufûn	:	tiffin.
Buhak	:	a flat square closed mat used for husking grain.
Bunsaialso called saiha-banbun	:	bracelet made of elephant bone, about three centimeters long.
Buonzawl or Zawlbuk	:	a traditional village bachelors' dormitory where unmarried young men (above 15 years of age) used to sleep together. This is one of the important traditional institutions of the Hmars. " <i>Buon</i> means literally wrestling and <i>Zawlan</i> open space which was used for recreation such as wrestling matches and dances. There were raised platforms on all sides of the wall inside the dormitory. All the male youths of the village who had attained puberty were to sleep in the <i>Buonzawl</i> at night and each <i>tlanglak</i> (a young teen age boy) in the village was under obligation to supply firewood for the <i>Buonzawl</i> . The <i>Valupas</i> would narrate the heroic exploits of their forefathers and folk tales thereby teaching traditional value systems like <i>tlawmngaina</i> , bravery and the likes. In times of emergency like tribal war or natural calamities, <i>Buonzawl</i> served as a mobilizing centre for joint actions and in pre-colonial Hmar traditional society,

Buonzawl can also be considered as a defense wing of village administration. It was later developed into a kind of institution where youngsters were given rigorous training in the art of tribal war, wrestling and village administration. In other sense, *Buonzawl* was an institution where disciplines and moral codes were imparted to the youths of the village” (Lal Dena 2010).

- Butukhuonglâwm : paddy seeds sowing by community labour.
- Changal : a tenderizing agent; a liquid that is formed out of mixing water and ashes.
- Changal hme : vegetables or meat cooked with hot pepper and *changal*.
- Changlawng : edible banana stem.
- Chapchar Awillên : it is a lay off season which is very crucial for both the village men folks and womenfolks. After cutting down trees, bamboos and bushes in the jungle for jhumming purposes, it is time for the community to relax allowing the fell trees to get dried. During this leisure period, generally the months of February and March, women laboriously toilin their loin-loom trying to weave as many cloths as possible.
- Chartang hme : a mixture of meat, vegetables and hot pepper.

- Chauphêng : a long and heavy bracelet made of brass.
(Thiek)
- Chawngmolak : a marriage that takes place between a small young boy and a small young girl; before the girl reaches maturity. In such case, the girl would not initially sleep with her would-be husband but with her in-laws. When she reaches marriageable age, the boy and the girl are married and the marriage is treated as *Sawngpuia Innei*.
- Chi al hme : vegetables cooked with pepper and *ngathu*.
- Dampa : a beautifully designed armband made of silver, worn only by men (Thiek).
- Daraki : is a dhoti for the menfolks.
- Dumbêl : a smoking pipe, meant especially for men folks.
- Faithlâk : a large cup or mug used for measuring rice.
- Farnu Sa : it's a sister's share of a meat. In every event of successful animal hunting, the hunter gives his sister/s their share of the meat. It is generally the bagged animal's front rib cage.
- Farnu Vawk : it is a nomenclature given to a sister's share of a portion of meat when a brother kills a pig. When a man kills a

		pig, he gives the shoulder or the fleshy thigh of the killed to his sister.
Favang Awillên	:	this is another lay off season between two harvests. The first jhum harvest is made in August/September and the second and the major harvest in November/December.
Haifien	:	a large bamboo spoon.
Hârbân	:	an armlet made of silver, worn by women (Thiek).
Her-âwt	:	a wooden ginning machine; cotton gin.
Hla	:	song.
Hlado	:	a victory song.
Hlamzui	:	is a term used to refer to death at birth or, a baby which dies within a short period after its birth.
Hlo thlo	:	weeding.
Hmang fawm	:	it is clearing with hand of the timbers unconsumed during <i>lo raw</i> .
Hmar- âm	:	it's a finely woven cloth for the aristocratic womenfolk.
Hmar Puon	:	is a common cloth for men and women with red, white, pink and black stripes in vertical shape.
Hmarcha deng	:	chutney; a garnish during a meal.
Hme	:	a common nomenclature for curry, both vegetables and meat.
Hmebel	:	a curry cooking-pot.
Hmepawk	:	stew.
Hmetui	:	the liquid in which a curry is cooked.
Hnâng	:	a traditional cord made of young

		immature bamboo.
Hrenpereng	:	a loin cloth of five by two feet worn around men's waist.
Hrizâwl	:	a threshing ground.
In sung	:	the main room.
Inchawng	:	ceremony of a rich man (can be the chief) feeding his villagers and the villagers showing their gratitude by carrying him on a pall). It was usually connected with family worship. <i>Inchawng</i> festivals were of two types: <i>Siel Sun</i> and <i>Khuongchawi</i> .
Inlêng	:	suitor; wooer.
Inrûka Innei	:	it is an eloped marriage without the parental approval.
Intlun	:	meaning self-offering to the house of man or woman for marriage.
Kâwite	:	sickle.
Kâwnghlaw	:	This is a form of marriage that requires the boy staying in the house of the beloved girl for a number of years: generally two consecutive years. After staying for the mutually-consented number of years, the boy takes the girl to his house. In such form of marriage, payment of bride-price is waived as the boy's hard toil during his stay in the girl's house is believed to have well exceeded the bride-price.
Khuongpu	:	a drummer.

Khuonu/Khuopa	:	<i>Khuonu</i> is a benevolent goddess and <i>Khuopa</i> is a benevolent god.
Lâm	:	dance.
Lâwm/lâwmpui	:	community labour or mutual assistance. It's a form of corporate work which includes the whole village community.
Lâwmnu	:	a female work partner during <i>lâwm</i> .
Lâwmpa	:	a male work partner during <i>lâwm</i> .
Leidâr	:	a winnowing sieve for cleaning rice.
Leikhâwr	:	a short closed basket made with bamboo or cane; a bread-basket.
Leiruongtuom	:	is a grave like hollow earth in the forest.
Lo	:	jhum-field.
Loraw	:	burning of the fell trees and bamboos in the selected spot for jhumming purposes.
Thlaichi thlâk	:	sowing of vegetable seeds.
Lo vât	:	clearing of forest or jungle tracts for cultivation.
Lukâwm	:	it's a soft cloth for man's headgear.
Mâkpa	:	one's son-in-law or a man who has married into one's clan; collectively applied to all sons-in-law of one's clan.
Mansapui	:	haversack.
Namthlâk	:	is the downhill side of the house, raised about one foot above the main floor.
Ngaingâwn	:	a long piece of string made of brass, worn by women as belt (Thiek).
Nganbêl	:	distillation for fermenting rice beer.
Ngathu	:	fermented fish.
Ngotlawng	:	is a white wrapper for women.

Ni	:	one's paternal aunt or any female member of the one's father's clan.
Paihar	:	is a chaddar for men.
Paikâwng	:	a carrying basket.
Paipêr	:	a flat loin basket made of cane works. It is tied on to the loin during sowing seeds and while fishing.
Palai	:	a go-between party; mediator.
Pasalṭha	:	a hero or a knight.
Pher	:	mat.
Puon	:	a cloth.
Puon Kernei	:	a finely woven breast wrapper for the village maidens.
Puondum	:	originally a chaddar for menfolks. In modern days, <i>puondum</i> and <i>thirdam</i> together are used as symbol of marriage settlement. <i>Puondum</i> is available in shawl form as well.
Puonkawl	:	a small handloom; loin-loom.
Puonlaisen	:	it is a very costly and heavily designed cloth used mostly by the women of rich families.
Puonbi	:	a <i>puon</i> worn as a lower garment cloth tucked at the waist (generally by women).
Puonri	:	a rug; a very thick and heavy warm mattress woven with a special kind of loom. The weaving of <i>puonri</i> is energy-consuming, complicated and taxing. Weaving of it is considered fatal by the tribe. Stretching the warp of <i>puonripui</i> is

- often preceded by worship and a divination called *Puonripui Khâwng* where *thiemp* worships and invokes a female weaving goddess called *Kawlpuimu*, also known as *Tapuimu*. A rug is made of unspun cotton.
- Rap** : a raised platform of wood construction hanging just above traditional hearth, about 4 feet height, used for drying firewood, crop seeds, meat, corn or paddy.
- Rawthei** : a dried bamboo with a single node used for storing vegetable seeds.
- Rêl** : a long and spacious basket with a lid.
- Relpuon** : it's a fabric thicker than ordinary cloths that can be used both as mattress and as quilt.
- Rukrak Puon** : is a long wrapper for village aristocrats.
- Ruotuoï** : bamboo shoots.
- Sa In-Ei** : a triumphant festival hosted by an individual marking his successful bagging of a wild animal.
- Sahlâng Dawm** : a festival organized by prominent hunters and warriors where they entertain the whole village community with a big feast.
- Sathu** : a smelly seasoning agent made of pig's fats, mainly the leaf fat.
- Sathu deng** : a chutney made of roasted chilly grinded with *sathu*.

Sathu hme	:	vegetables cooked with hot pepper, <i>changal</i> and <i>sathu</i> .
Sathu ûm	:	a dried hollow gourd used for fermenting and holding <i>sathu</i> , a seasoning agent.
Satlaw	:	a dead body of animals with unidentified killer.
Sâwn	:	head-dress of warriors made of goat's hair dyed red (Thiek).
Sawngka	:	an open porch.
Sawngpuia Innei	:	marriage with the parental approval.
Sêmthei	:	a hollow bamboo about one foot long that is used to increase a fire in a fire hearth.
Siel	:	mithun; gyal. Sielis the main measure of wealth among Hmar forefathers, and is often treated as treasure (Paul B. Chonzik).
Sithu	:	a smelly but tasty seasoning agent made of sesame seeds.
Sithu hme	:	vegetables cooked with hot pepper and <i>sithu</i> .
Sithu ûm	:	a dried hollow gourd used for fermenting and holding <i>sithu</i> , the seasoning agent.
Sizo	:	an edible wild leaf.
Sizo sa hmepawk	:	meat stewed with <i>sizo</i> .
Spinning wheel	:	hmui.
Sum	:	a rice mortar.
Sumphuk	:	an enclosed verandah.
Suorthlâk	:	a raised platform.

Tap	:	a large hearth made of earth, solidly kneaded like brick within a wooden frame.
Tawnlairâng	:	a special male head-gear. It's a head-dress or crownlet worn by distinguished hunters and warriors, made of the tail feathers of bhimraj (vakul chang) and parrot with cotton or woolen threads of different colours. (Thiek 2013, 324) The crownlet is worn during Sikpui dance too.
Tawnlo Puon	:	is a breast cloth, segregated from men: never to be touched by men.
Thangsuo	:	outburst of fame(Rochunga Pudaite).
Thangsuo Puon	:	a cloth meant especially for the great hunters and heroes who have earned the title called <i>Thangsuo</i> .
Tharlaizawm	:	is a body wrapper with coloured stripes on the back for the women.
Tharlâk	:	a harvest rite; thanks-giving ritual performed for the first annual paddy harvest.
Theikhuong	:	bamboo used as water container.
Thiempi	:	a female priest/ a priestess.
Thiempu	:	a male priest.
Thingpui sen dawng	:	sugarless red tea. Serving of or sipping sugarless red tea especially just after meals is common among the Hmars.
Thlengbêl	:	covering and/or eating plates.
Thlengdâr	:	plate.

Ting-khim	:	a ring made of cane, worn by women as hair pin. (Thiek)
Tlaihñat	:	a sharp blade made of bamboo.
Tlam	:	bushel.
Tlângdungvêl	:	a knee-length cloth worn tightly wrapped around the chest and tucked under the armpits. This was the <i>Hmar women's traditional way of clothing.</i>
Tuibûr	:	a smoking pipe that provides nicotine impregnated water known by the same name. It is sipped and kept in the mouth as stimulant as well as traditional mouth wash (Bapui).
Tuivamit	:	a small collection of water in a forest having no noticeable source or course and considered sacred or taboo.
Tuoithûr	:	A seasoning souring agent made of bamboo shoots.
Thihna	:	a bead worn by women bigger in size than <i>thival</i> .
Thival	:	a bead necklace worn by women, the beads smaller in size than <i>thihna</i> .
Tu	:	a multi-purpose hut in a jhum-field constructed for retiring, eating, storing vegetables and paddy.
Umni khâm	:	it is a no-work day observed in two levels- family and community – when concerned members stay back and not leave the village for any purpose.

- Ûmte : a dried hollow gourd used for storing vegetable seeds.
- Vâl Upa : a youth leader of a village; youth commander.
- Vawk-kuong, also called taikuong : a trough made of wood for feeding pigs.
- Vawksa hmepawk : pork stew. This is the most common and the most cherished way of preparing pork among the tribe.
- Zochal : head-dress worn by distinguished persons. It is plaited crownlet made of wool (Thiek).
- Zu : rice country beer.
- Zu SâwrPei also known as TuiPei : is spraying of a small quantity of *zu* with hand or with mouth. Traditionally, this small quantity is interpreted as the share of an evil spirit who, on failure to serve, may get displeased and harm the item or the occasion.
- Zubêl : rice beer pot.
- Zuor : one's cousin sister or woman from one's same clan.
- Zuor man : is a *zuor* price paid to each and every *zuor*. Literally, *zuorman* may be interpreted as items carrying charge. *Zuorman* may be a petty amount starting from Rs 10/- to Rs 20/-, or in some cases, depending on the financial strength of the groom.

APPENDIX- V: AUTHOR'S PUBLICATIONS

1. Hmar , Lalthakim. "Proverbs : Absolute Truth of 'Humanity' ?" *Critical Space: A Peer Reviewed International Refereed Journal in Language , Literature and Culture*. Volume- II Issue. 2 . June 2013. (ISSN. 2319- 3689) Print.

2. Hmar , Lalthakim. "Women's Speech Style and Literary Features". *Wizcraft Journal of Language and Literature: A Peer-Reviewed International Journal of Language and Literature*. Volume - 2: Issue – 3: September , 2013. (ISSN – 2319 – 4952) Print.

WORKS CITED

Aries, Elizabeth. *Men and Women in Interaction*. New York, US: Oxford University P, 1996. Print.

Arthen, Sue Curewitz. *Rites of Passage*. Web. 25 Aug. 2013 <<http://www.earthspirit.com/fireheart/fhpub.html>>.

Ashliman, D.L. *Folk and Fairy Tales*. Post Road West, Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004. Web. 18 November 2009. <<http://books.google.co.in>>.

“Assam: Data Highlights: The Scheduled Tribes”. Census of India 2001. New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General, India, Web. 16 Nov. 2013. <http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_assam.pdf>

Bapui, Vanlal T. *Oral Traditions of the Hmars*. Guwahati: Directorate, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, 2011. Print.

_____ *Hmar-English Dictionary* (A Dictionary of the Hmar Language). Guwahati, 2006. Print.

_____ *Assam Rama Hmarhai* (The Hmars of Assam). Guwahati, Assam, 2007. Print.

Bascom, William. “The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives”. *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*. Ed. Alan Dundes. London, England: University of California P, 1984. Web. 3 Jan 2010. <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=I5Om2ALAFbEC&pg=PA5&lpg=PA5&dq=wiliam+bascom+on+prose+narratives&source=bl&ots=Kqxmoss-Vuh&sig=fS5pv8g7oI22gGQOHwvNm9mNYWw&hl=en&sa=X&ei=jUUcVPXtL4eUuAT10YHYCg&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=william%20bascom%20on%20prose%20narratives&f=false>>.

Basevska, Iilina. "Searching for 'Yesterday's Man'- Connecting Historical Research and Proverbial Wisdom". Web. 25 January 2010.

Batlien J. *Hmar Chronicles*. Churachandpur, Manipur, 2007. Print.

_____ *Hmar Thubarhai*. (Hmar proverbs). Churachandpur, Manipur, 1970. Print.

_____ *Tienami Lakkhawm Book-1* (collection of folktales). Churachandpur, Manipur, 1987. Print.

_____ *Tienami Lakkhawm Book-2* (collection of folktales). Churachandpur, Manipur, 1992. Print.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. New York: Knopf, 1953. Print.

Boro, Anil. *Folk Literature of Bodos*. Guwahati; N.L Publications, 2001. Print.

Borah, Manashi. "Women in Assamese Folktales". *Indian Folklife: A Quarterly Newsletter*. Ed. Parag M Sarma. Serial No. 31. November 2008. Print.

Bullough, Vern L., Brenda Shelton and Sarah Slavin. *The Subordinated Sex: A History of Attitudes towards Women*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia P, 1988. Web. 25 November 2009. <<http://books.google.co.in>>.

Channa, S.M, ed. *Ethnicity and Identity: An Anthropological Viewpoint*. India: Cosmo Publication, 1998. Print.

Chonzik, Paul B. "Significance of Oral Literature in the preservation of Hmar Customary Laws and Folk Songs". Unpublished Seminar Paper presented during UGC, NERO sponsored seminar entitled *Hmar Literature: Renaissance and Its Prospect* at Guwahati on 20th July, 2013.

D'Angelo, Frank J. "Some Uses of Proverbs". In *College Composition and Communication*. Vol. 28 No. 4 (Dec., 1977): 365-369. National Council of Teachers of English. Print.

Datta, Birendranath, Nabin Chandra Sarma and Prabin Chandra Das, eds. *A Handbook of Folklore Material of North-East India*. Guwahati; Director, Anundoram Borooah Institute of Language, Art & Culture, 1994. Print.

Dena, Lal. *Hmar Folk Tales*. New Delhi: Scholar Publishing House, 1995. Print.

_____. *In Search of Identity: Hmars of North-East India*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2008. Print.

_____. *Traditional Institutions of Hmars*. 2010. Web 25 Aug. 2013. <<http://virthlionline.blogspot.in/2010/07/traditional-institutions-of-hmar.html>>.

Deputy Director of Economics and Statistics, *Statistical Hand Book, North Cachar Hills, 2009*. North Cachar Hills, Haflong. 2010. Print. *Dima Hasao District*. Web. 05 Nov. 2013. <<http://www.nchills.gov.in/>>.

Dindia, Kathryn and Daniel J. Canary. *Sex Differences and Similarities in Communication*. 2nd ed. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. 2006. Print.

Dorson, Richard M, ed. *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago P, 1972. Print.

Dundes, Alan. *The Study of Folklore*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice- Hall, 1965. Print.

Dyer, Thomas Firminger Thiselton. *Folklore of Women*. 1906. Web. 05 June 2009. <<http://www.forgottenbooks.com>>

Eagleton, Mary. *A Concise Companion to Feminist Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003. Print.

- Eckert, Penelope and Sally McConnell-Ginet. *Language and Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University P, 2003. Print.
- Evans, Mary. *Gender and Social Theory*. Buckingham: Open University P, 2003. Print.
- Faihriem, Darthangluoi. *Sikpui Ruoi* (Winter Festival of the Hmars). Diphu, Karbi Anglong, 2002. Print.
- Fimate, L.R. *Tienaram* (collection of folk tales). New Lambulane, Manipur, 1996. Print.
- Fransella, Fay and Kay Frost. *On Being a Woman*. Tavistock, London: Routledge, 1977. Print.
- Ghosh, G.K. *Tribals and their Culture in Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram. Vol.1*. New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1992. Print.
- Greene, Gayle and Coppelia Kahn, eds. *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*. 1985. London: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Hall, Stuart, ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. 1977. The Open University, Milton Keynes: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2003. Print.
- Handoo, Jawaharlal. *Folklore: An Introduction*. Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages, 1989. Print.
- Handoo, Jawaharlal. *Theoretical Essays in Indian Folklore*. Mysore, India: Zooni Publications, 2000. Print.
- Handoo, Lalita., and Ruth B. Bottigheimer, eds. *Folklore and Gender*. Mysore: Zooni Publications, 1999. Print.
- Hmar MIL Monitoring Committee. *Ngaibân Reader*. Guwahati: Hmar MIL Monitoring Committee, 2008. Print.

- Hmar Youth Association, ed. *Hmar Hnam Dan* (Hmar Customary Law). 1990. Churachandpur, Manipur, 2001. Print.
- Hmar, L. Chongtho. *Hmar Hai Tobul Hla Bu Pakhat Na* (Hmar Traditional Song Book-I). Guwahati, 1987. Print.
- Hollows, Joanne. *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture*. UK: Manchester University P, 2000. Print.
- Hussein, Jeylan W. "A Cultural Representation of Women in the Oromo Society". *African Study Monographs*. 25(3): 103-147, October 2004: 103-147. Web. 17 November 2013.
- Jordan, Rosan A. and Susan J.Kalcik. *Women's Folklore, Women's Culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1985. Print.
- Keivom, L. *Hmar Hla Suina* (Commentary on Hmar songs). Churachandpur, Manipur, 1980. Print.
- Keivom, Louis L. *Hmar Tolung (A Study of the Hmar History & Geneology)*. Keishamthong, Imphal: Directorate of Tribal Development & Backward Classes, 1990. Print.
- Khawbung, R.Tawna. *Lenruol Hlabu* (book of folksong). 1979. Sielmat, Manipur, 2005. Print.
- Kousaleos, Nicole. "Feminist Theory and Folklore." *Folklore Forum*. 30 (1/2) (1999): 19-34. Print.
- Lakoff, Robin Tolmach and Mary Bucholtz. *Language and Woman's Place*. 1975. US: Oxford University P, 2004. Print.
- Lalremsiem. "Position of Women in Mizo Society". M.Phil Thesis, University of Manipur at Imphal, Manipur, 1988. Print.

- Lavoie, Tanaya. *The World of Lullabies*. Web. 05 Nov. 2013.
<<http://web.wlu.ca/soundeffects/researchlibrary/TanyaLavoie.pdf>>
- Leach, Maria and Jerome Fried, eds. *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1984. Print.
- Leiri Khuo Gospel Golden Jubilee. *Ebenezar Souvenir*. Silchar: Leiri Khuo Gospel Golden Jubilee, 2008. Print.
- Lomax, Alan, "Folk Song Style and Culture". *American Association for the Advancement of Science*. USA: Transaction Publishers, 1978. Print.
- Maddock, Su. *Challenging Women: Gender, Culture and Organization*. London: Sage Publications, 1999. Web. 28 March 2010. <<http://books.google.co.in>>.
- Malmgren, Daniel Andersson. "Gender-related Proverbs: A Cultural and Cognitive Approach." *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*. Ed. Wolfgang Mieder. Volume 24: 2007. Burlington: The University of Vermont, 2007. Print.
- "Material Culture". American Folklife Center. Web. 06 Nov. 2013.
<<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/guide/materialculture.html>>.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. *Proverbs A Handbook*. London: Greenwood P, 2004. Print
- Mulvaney, Becky Michele. "Gender Differences in Communication: An Intercultural Experience". In *Intercultural Communication: A global Reader*. Ed. Fred E. Jandt. Sage Publications, 2004: 221-229. Print.
- Ngurte, S.N. *Manmashi* (collection of folk tales). Churachandpur, Manipur, 2002. Print.
- Nuhmei Magazine Editorial Board. *Hmar Tobul Seminar Hmasa Tak*. (The first seminar on the Hmar) Churachandpur: Nuhmei Magazine Editorial Board, 2005. Print.

Nussbaum, Martha Craven and Jonathan Glover, eds. *Women, Culture and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities*. Oxford: Oxford University P, 1995. Print.

Pandya, Amita and Joymati Thoudam. "Handloom Weaving, the traditional craft of Manipur". *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge*. Vol. 9 (4), Oct 2010. 651-655. Print.

Peach, Lucinda J. *Women in Culture*. USA: Blackwell, 1988. Print.

Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. *The Concept of Representation*. London, England: University of California P, 1967. Print.

Pudaite, Rochunga. *The Education of the Hmar People*. Sielmat, Manipur: Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission, 1963. Print.

Punia, Deep. *Social Values in Folklore*. Jaipur, India: Rawat Publications, 1993. Print.

Radner, Joan Newlon, ed. *Feminist Messages*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois P, 1993. Print.

Radtke, Lorrain and Henderikus J. Stain, eds. *Power/Gender: Social Relations in Theory and Practice*. London: Sage Publications, 1994. Print.

Rosaldo, Michelle Zimbalist and Louise Lamphere, eds. *Woman, Culture and Society*. California: Stanford University P, 1974. Print.

Sangkima, Dr. *Mizos: Society and Social Change*. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1992. Print.

Siekkhohen. *Hmar Tlang Lungdi*. Haflong: R & Bros. Keivom, 2013. Print.

Sielmat Bible College. *Hmar Pipu Sakhuo le Inthawi Dân*. Sielmat, Manipur, 2010. Print.

- Singh, Anil Kumar, ed. *Tribes and Tribal Life*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons P. 1993. Print.
- Songate, Hranglien L. *Hmar Chanchin* (Hmar History). Churachandpur, Manipur, 1977. Print.
- Ssetuba, Isaac. "The Hold of Patriarchy: An Appraisal of the Ganda Proverbs in the Light of Modern Gender Relations". *Paper for the Cairo Gender Symposium*. CODESRIA/ARC Cairo 7th – 10th April 2002: 1-7. Web. 11 January 2012.
- Storm, Hiroko. "Women in Japanese Proverbs". *Asian Folklore Studies*. Vol.51, No.2 (1992): 167-182. Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture. Print.
- Swann, Joan. "Ways of Speaking". In *Imagining Women: Cultural representations and Gender*. Eds. Frances Bonner, Lizbeth Goodman, Richard Allen, Linda Janes and Catherine King. U.K: The Open University, 1992: 56-66. Print.
- Tannen, Deborah. *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. New York, USA: HarperCollins, 1990. Print.
- The Bible Society of India. *The Holy Bible*. Bangalore:, 2005. Print. Hmar Version.
- The Evangelical Free Church Of India. *Chanchin Thra Thilthawtheina* (The Power of The Gospel). Shillong, Meghalaya, 2010. Print.
- Thiek, Hrilrokhum, *History of the Hmars in North East India*. Guwahati, 2013. Print.
- "Tribes of Assam - Assam Online Portal". Web. 05 Nov. 2013.
<http://online.assam.gov.in/tribes_of_assam>.
- Vanlaltlani, T. *Mizo Hmeichhiate Kawngzawh* (Trodden path of the Mizo women). Aizawl, Mizoram: Mizoram Publication Board, 2007. Print.
- Vara, H.V. *Hmar Hla Hlui* (The Hmar Folk Songs, Lyrics and Chants). 1967. Churachandpur, Manipur. 1985. P

Vidyarthi, L.P and Binay Kumar Rai. *The Tribal Culture of India*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company P. 1976. Print.

West, Candace and Don Zimmerman. "Doing Gender". *Gender and Society*. Vol-1, No.2, (1987): 125-151. Print.

Zote, Timothy Z, ed. *Manmasi Year Book*. Vol-II. 2006-2007. Print.
