

# Cultural Revitalization and the Experience of Revival Movement in Mizoram (1906-1937)

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## Abstract

The establishment of colonial rule in Mizoram since 1890 and the advent of Christianity in 1894 marked the beginning of a new era for the Mizos. In a short span of time, the people experienced overwhelming changes which affect all aspects of the Mizo life and turned their 'world upside down'. Yet, the Mizos refused to be passive observer but assert their resistance through the revival movement that led to the so called 'indigenization of Christianity' in Mizoram. Though it was a religious movement, the people's response swerved it from its primary objective and turned it to a movement which soothe the deep mental longing of the people. It was through the revival movement in Christianity that the Mizos laid their claim for their space in the new politico-social and cultural set up.

## Introduction

The hills of Mizoram (earlier known as the Lushai Hills) in Northeast India was the last to be occupied by the colonial government at the end of the nineteenth century. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the relationship between the people living in the Mizo hills and the colonial government was nothing but one of hostility. The expansion of the tea garden in the Cachar plains was considered an intrusion to the territorial claim and hunting ground of the Mizos. As a result, the Mizos conducted repeated raids of the British protectorates in that area and it was usually returned with 'punitive' expeditions from the British government (Lalremsiamia 1997). However, the Mizos could not put up for long against the superior weapons and better organised army of the British. Hence, from 1890 onwards, the colonial

government permanently occupied the land and the Mizo Hills was being placed under colonial rule 'against their will' and these areas 'practically governed by the sword' (Thanzauva 1997: 5).

Following colonial rule, Christian missionaries landed in Mizoram on 11 January 1894. The two pioneering missionaries, Rev. J.H. Lorrain and Rev. F.W. Savidge of the Arthington Aborigine Mission, with their sustained work, gave a script to the non-literate Mizo society and also started a school. Their missionary zeal and efforts marked the beginning of modern education in Mizoram (Llyod 1991). These pioneers left Mizoram, but again returned in 1903 under the patronage of the Baptist Missionary Society of London. The missionaries from Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission, Rev. D.E. Jones and Rev. Edwin Rowlands began their work since 1897 and continued to operate in the northern part of Mizoram while the Baptist missionaries confined themselves in the southern part (Hminga 1987). Thus, the Presbyterian Church and the Baptist church became the largest denominations in Mizoram. During the colonial period, the revival movement was experienced most widely in these denominations, and it was partly responsible for the emergence of other denominations in Mizoram in the subsequent period.<sup>1</sup>

## Understanding the revival movement among the Mizo

The term 'revival' has been loosely applied to a wide range of phenomena, especially in the religious and cultural movements. This paper is concerned with the cultural revival movement among the Mizos in Northeast India. The dictionary definition of the term denotes 'restoration to life' of the vigour and strength which are lost and/or renewal of interest in something (Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary 2005). An investigation into the understanding of revival mostly leads us to the functional aspect of the experience in the given situation.

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However, in Christianity, the term revival implies a renewal or increased spiritual interest as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit that resulted in rejuvenating the church's life and growth of church members (McLoughlin 1978: 3; Hastings 1980: 753). The works on revival within Christianity emphasises on the work of God to revive his people in the 'periods of great drought, great deadness, apathy and lifelessness in the history of the church' (Llyod 1991: 27), and the theological interpretation tends to treat it largely as an isolated phenomenon. The revival movement experienced in the history of America and England was also referred as the 'Great Awakening' or 'the Awakening' (Hastings 1980: 754-55).

Although culture is dynamic, nevertheless, societies seek to perpetuate their culture, and in normal circumstances, the cultural changes are taking place 'as a part of the normal processes of individual training and socialization' and it was usually done unconsciously (Linton 1943: 230). But Linton (1943: 239) argues, when 'a society becomes conscious that there are cultures other than their own and that the existence of its own is threatened', a movement to revive the 'selected' and 'remembered' culture takes place. Anthropologists have used various terms to characterise such revival movements, namely 'nativistic movement', 'reform movement', 'cargo cult', 'religious revival', 'messianic movement', 'social movement', 'revolution', 'charismatic movement', and so on (Wallace 1956: 264). Anthony F.C. Wallace uses the term 'revitalization movement' as a comprehensive term for the cultural movement in a society which are variedly expressed above (Wallace 1956: 264).

In a cultural revitalization movement, the end target is not to bring back the culture for its own sake. It is rather an attempt to find accommodation in the new system/state by wrestling some control in the process of the cultural change that has been taking place. The 'revitalization' model of Anthony F.C. Wallace (1956: 279) proposes that when there is a 'deliberate, conscious, organized efforts by members of a society to create a more satisfying culture' the individual members of the society undergo 'high stress' or feel 'disillusionment with a distorted cultural *gestalt*'. The experience of the ghost dance by the various groups of the American Indians is also studied as a sort of revitalization movement.<sup>2</sup> Anthropologist Ralph Linton (1943: 230) is of the view that, 'any conscious, organized attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture' is called 'nativistic movement'. He sees this phenomenon, which is essentially a revival movement, in a 'situation of inequality' that arises in a society which is in contact with other cultures (Linton 1943: 234). He maintains that revival movement can happen in a society which

is in contact with other cultures for a long time 'when a society becomes conscious that there are cultures other than its own and that the existence of its own culture is threatened.' It is frequently seen in societies that came in contact with European culture where 'each group is conscious of its own culture and consciously seeks to perpetuate its distinctive elements' (Linton 1943: 235, 240). In reading the revival movement, studies from the religious perspective (see Orr 1970; Warren 1954; Phillips 1989) tend to emphasise on divine intervention as a precondition for the outbreak of the revival. The secular scholars, on the other hand, tend to place the occurrence in a larger socio-cultural context instead of treating it as an isolated phenomenon, and it is studied to understand as people's response to the process of change in a society (Robertson 1970).

The Mizo term for revival is '*harhna*' which corresponds to 'awakening'; terms like '*harhtharna*' (reawakening), or '*hlimna*' (joyfulness) are also used. All these words connote a state of liveliness or sprightliness. It also refers to a 'phenomenon marked by a state of excitement accompanied by enthusiastic activities of singing, body movements, preaching and even of social action' (Vanlalchhuanawma 2006: 207). Therefore, to the Mizos, it was not simply a state of being. It represents action and expression which formed the vital part of their revival movement. In fact, when they ask if they are taking part in the revival movement, (in Mizo language expression used - *I hlim ve em?*), it basically means whether they take part in the revival singing and dancing.

The use of the term 'revival' in Christianity may be perplexing to the movement in Mizoram which happened when Christianity was preached only for twelve years. But the evangelical usage was applied to the state of experience in the Mizo church as well. The Mizos soon developed their own understanding of the phenomenon, and to them, it was more of '*hlimna*' (joy). The term '*harhna*' was also commonly used, and it was understood to mean awakening, as if someone suddenly awakened from a long and deep slumber. This notion was quite suitable to the people as they identified themselves as 'coming to the light' when Christianity came after being in the dark for all those times.

Though the term 'revival' was applied to the movement in the premise of the church, the Mizo revival was peculiar in many senses from those experienced in other parts of the world because the Mizos understood and experienced it in their own way and establish for themselves a 'Mizo revival'. However, in order to understand the Mizo experience of revival, it has to be placed in its own context. A brief historical sketch may help in contextualizing the movement under study.

### Colonial modernity, Christianity and crisis in the Mizo culture

At the time of the advent of the British rule, the Mizo hills was occupied by many independent villages who were ruled by chiefs. Due to the practice of shifting cultivation, these villages moved from one site to another every ten years or so after they used up all the land in the area (Shakespeare 1977:22). This sometimes resulted into conflict with other chiefs. The villages were more or less self-sufficient and trade was limited to barter system. Though they lived in separate villages, the cultural practices were largely similar to one another as they belonged to the same ethnic group.

After the establishment of the colonial rule, minimal changes were made in the village administration and the traditional institution of chiefship was retained though much of the power of the chiefs were curtailed.<sup>3</sup> Many new systems were introduced in the political administration which disrupted the traditional socio-political set up. For instance, the centralised administration, unlike the autonomous village administration in earlier times, ushered in the modern bureaucratic system. The new western education introduced by the missionaries catered to these changes and administrative requirements. There emerged a new educated middle class among the Mizo, many of them were from the traditionally unprivileged group, and the new western education facilitated their mobility. It disturbed the traditional social hierarchy where the highest privileges were enjoyed by the chief and his functionaries. The imposition of forced-labour (or *kuli*) under the British rule was hated by the Mizos because they felt it was the ultimate symbol of their subjugation. The demand of house-tax in a relatively cashless society caused much financial burden to the Mizos, and many migrated to the neighbouring areas of contemporary Manipur to evade these payments (Diary of Lt. Col. H.St.P. Maxwell 1900).

As Frederick S. Downs (1992: 215) rightly observed, in highly integrated tribal societies, challenges in one aspect affect the other and caused 'socio-cultural trauma.' For instance, the British government's policy of disarmament, apart from pacifying the people, also challenged the traditional value of gallantry which was required for the entry of *pialral* or heaven when the use of firearm and gaming was restricted.<sup>4</sup> Gallantry was intimately connected with their traditional religious ethos, but rapidly became irrelevant under Christian influences and changes in the political system. In fact, the traditional socio-political system demanded the quality of gallantry to survive in a situation of perpetual warfare among villages and tribes. Thus, with the advent of the British, the Mizos were abruptly exposed into a situation

which was completely alien to them. Frederick S. Downs explains the experience of the tribes as follows:

For the first time they were brought under the authority of an alien political power and the old-village state polity was undermined. The procedures, and the values those procedures presupposed, of the imposed administrative and judicial system were entirely alien. A money-economy was introduced with new material options such as mill cloth and kerosene lanterns and tea which replaced the largely self-sufficient traditional economies. Modern communications and transport systems were introduced, breaking down the barriers of isolation necessary to the maintenance of the traditional way of life. Perhaps most significant of all was the presence in the hills of a number of outsiders – administrators, clerks, soldiers, merchants, technicians, missionaries – who provided new life-style models in the newly created towns. The process of modernization of cultural change had begun, and the old isolated cultures began a slow process of disintegration (Downs 1992: 215).

The pressure felt under the dual contact with the European is clearly described by N.E. Parry (1976: 18-19), one of the superintendents of Lushai Hills when he described the experience of Lakhers (one of the Mizo tribes) and this represents the experience of other tribes as well:

These tribes having been brought under administration in interests other than their own, their activities have been circumscribed, head hunting has been stopped, slaves have been freed, guns have been controlled. And the Hillman has been made to conform to a settled though loose form of administration. It will naturally take a savage time to adapt himself to order and discipline, and meanwhile, he may lose much of his interest in life. This is shown very clearly by the songs of the Zeuhngang: 'Government has taken over all our country, we shall always have to work for government; it were better had we never been born,' etc.

The Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, A.G. McCall (1977: 196-77), who believed in the government's policy of upholding the social customs of the people, also agreed that the British administration had far reaching implications in the life of the people. He observed that the establishment of the British government in the hills alone was enough to make the world of 'Lushai' 'staggered', 'bewildered' and colonial control over their land paralyzed the community. Added to this, the introduction of Christianity posed challenges to many of the cultural traditions. As in other mission operational areas, conversion meant refraining from all the traditional cultural practices which were considered 'heathen' and adopting a new system which often resulted in rupturing relations among families who may not be Christian (Webster 2007: 62-63). The early church prohibited the use of drums in worship, and the traditional Mizo songs and



dances, including its style were all banned for its palpable connection with 'heathen' practices. The first Christians in the South at Pukpui village were accused by their chief of disobeying orders when they observed Sunday as a holiday, and would not do any work (Saiathanga 1993: 15). The burning of charms and amulets by some of the pupils in the mission school caused hostile reactions from parents and the public as a whole (Hminga 1987: 59). The new converts were expected to strictly observe Sundays, and could not participate in any village ceremony, which involved religious functions related to their old religion, like, *katongpui siam*, *fano dawī*<sup>5</sup> and so on. Thus, the newly-converted Christians were seen as anti-social, and were ostracised in many villages.

It was a very common practice for the Mizos to chew and smoke tobacco, and drink rice beer. In nearly every Mizo festivity, rice-beer drinking is an important feature. However, total prohibition was adopted against taking liquor (*zu* or rice beer), and among the few criteria the new Christians were required to meet; abstinence from drinking was one of the foremost requirements. Though the missionaries did not allow smoking a pipe inside the place of worship, they did not prohibit touse among the Mizo Christians. They could be ex-communicated from the Church, if after conversion they were found to be drinking rice beer. In fact, this become one of the biggest obstacles for the Mizos after religious conversion (Zairema 1978: 11). However, as much or even more than the missionaries were confused with Christianity and Western culture, the local people were gravely perplexed, for their culture and religion could not be clearly separated. The missionaries, when we study their work today, may have been relatively considerate to certain components of culture, but the 'distinction may be too subtle for the average convert' (Downs 1994: 191) to understand it.

The teaching of a new religion brought radical change in the lifestyle of the Mizos, wherein the Mizo Christians were expected to adapt themselves to new Christian standards of behaviour. The result was confusion and invalidation of many of the earlier Mizo cultural practices and therefore, a wholesale denunciation of all that was followed prior to conversion into Christianity. The concept of 'new creation' for the converts was emphasised by the people so much so that they condemned the traditional tunes and songs, dances, *khuang* (drum), use of *zu* (rice beer) etc. by the early Mizo Christians themselves (Pachau 1998: 134-36).

Many of the chiefs like Vanphunga of Khandaih, Lalzika of Sihfa were hostile to Christianity because they saw Christianity as a disruptive element in the normal village life (Vanlalchhuanawma 2006). The non-Christians would compose a satire against these people

whom they thought were merely imitating the foreigners. The complexity of the problem lies in the fact that, while the chiefs protested conversion to Christianity, unless they were ready to fight the British government, they could not do anything against the Christians who refused to follow the customary rules.

At the same time, the traditional institutions like *bawi* (bondage, some translated as slavery) system (Hminga 1987: 68; see also McCall 1977: 121-131) and *zawlbuk* (young men's dormitory) which were the backbone of the chiefs also came under attack as they became irrelevant under colonial rule. Thus, in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, the Mizos found themselves powerless and confused. They were in a situation of what Christopher Hill calls 'the world turned upside down' (Hill 1978). In the words of A.G. McCall, who served as one of the superintendents of the Lushai hills:

Against these varying contacts, the Lushais [Mizos] had no equipment on which to fall back for strength, except the traditions and the stories of their grandfathers. But the pillars of their strength had tumbled down with shame and humiliation before these new and irresistible British invaders (cf. McCall 1977: 197).

### Christianity and the Mizo revival movement

The revival in Mizoram was first experienced in 1906, twelve years after the first missionaries landed in Mizoram, six years after the first Mizo converted to Christianity, with only 122 male and 45 female, a total of 167 Christians in north Mizoram (Nunthara 1996: 59) while there were more than 245 Christians in the south<sup>6</sup> (Anonymous 1993: 26). The Mizos experienced repeated revival since then unlike the Khasis from whom the revival 'fire' was received.

Most of the studies on revival movement in Mizoram identified the waves peaking in 1906, 1913, 1919 and around 1930. The mission field of the Welsh Calvinistic Mission (later known as the Welsh Presbyterian Church) in Northeast India experienced the offshoot of the Welsh revival of 1904-05, first in Khasi-Jaintia Hills and later in the Mizo Hills (Kipgen 1997: 215). When the news of the revival in the Khasi hills reached Mizoram, the missionaries sent delegates from Mizoram to attend a revival meeting in Khasi hills. These delegates experienced the revival fervour in the Khasi Hills (Lalsawma 1994: 33; Vanlalchhuanawma 2006: 169). On reaching Aizawl on April 4, they stopped at Chaltlang, two miles from Aizawl and offered prayer where each of them felt some touch, an inspiration within their hearts (Lalhmuaka 1988: 135-36). The real outbreak was felt in the farewell meeting of the southern delegates on April 8, 1906 (Lalsawma 1994: 36). And this was the first revival wave, and it spread to

distant villages in the northern and the southern parts of Mizoram where there were Christians.

There is a tendency to connect the second wave in 1913 with the earlier revival and Lalsawma said it was 'a kind of a flashback current' of the first wave (Lalsawma 1994). It was experienced in the village Hmunhmeltha which was made up of Christians who were affected in the earlier wave (Lalsawma 1994: 59). However, there is no doubt that apart from the first wave, the subsequent waves of cultural revival originated from Mizoram. This revival also spread to various parts of Mizoram, and it covered a wider area than the first wave (Carter and Luaia 1945 : 75; Vanlalchhuanawma 2006 : 198; Lalsawma 1994: 76-7).

The third wave of revival which came in 1919 was considered to be the 'greatest and most powerful' revival in Mizoram (Saiathanga 1993: 83). Though it is said to have begun in 1919, there were reports of such stirring since 1916. Nevertheless, the stirring in 1919 was the most dynamic and it spread all over Mizoram within a matter of two or three months. Its spread was compared with 'a wild fire in a dry land' (Lalsawma 1994: 91). It is reported to have also spread to other places outside Mizoram inhabited by Mizo Christians in Tripura and Manipur, and even affected the Nagas (Kipgen 1997: 238). It is difficult to point the beginning of the fourth stirring as there were sporadic outbreaks here and there since the third wave. In the 1930s, however, a great wave was experienced again for the fourth time (Vanlalchhuanawma 2006: 329).

In the revival meetings, there was a lot of chanting and singing, which continued for days and nights together, followers experienced great excitement, indulged in dancing, and listened to the prayers of the preachers (Lalsawma 1994:153). Such an ecstatic state was a conspicuous feature of the revival movement. From the beginning, emotional manifestations like crying and dancing were the most common manifestations of the revival, and therefore, the general masses considered it to be the way to experience the spirit (Liangkhaia 2006:26; Llyod 1991: 96). Later, the people went to the extreme physical manifestations like symbolic actions, transference of the spirit by touch, state of trance or swooning, comatose rigidity, symbolic actions, speaking in unknown tongues, prophetic utterances, *khurbing* (spiritual attachment between opposite sex that often developed into intimate relationship, and if it continued, it may result into illicit sexual relationships) (Kipgen 1997: 296-298; Pachuau 1998: 129), etc. 'Speaking in tongues' or glossolalia (*tawngghriatloh*), when used in praying and singing constituted an enthusiasm that ran high, and 'very often, excited singing in a group led some to sing in the unknown tempo of the hymn, and occasionally the known would be swallowed up in the unknown altogether' (Lalsawma 1994: 158-59). 'Quaking' (*khurh*

*harhna*) which began in around 1920 and was later called *harhna sang* or *hlimsang* (high revival) also to be found. It was rejected by the leaders of the southern church in the 1920s, but it broke out again in the early 1930s and it was mainly confined to the north (Kipgen 1997: 245; Vanlalchhuanawma 2006: 340-41). The revivalists (*hlimsang* or *mihlim* as they were called) acted like they were completely drunk with *zu*, and were rightly called 'drunk with Spirit'. It is said that they claimed to be able to directly communicate with God verbally at any given time, and often proclaimed what 'Father God says', for which they were often known as *Pa Pawl*, 'the Father's Clique' (Vanlalchhuanawma 2006: 341). Some of these features were condemned as 'excesses' even by the church and it produced division within the church (Pachuau 1998: 128).

The peculiarity of the Mizo revival movement lies in that fact that there was no individual leader or charismatic figure around whom the movement revolved. It was the people who led and directed the movement. There were actions and instances that could be interpreted as being anti-establishment during this revival movement. When it became extreme, the government had to intervene. In 1937, at the stirring of Kelkang village, the revivalists went to the extent of preventing even the pastor and the church leaders from preaching in the church. The revivalists also prophesied that the British rule would soon come to an end, and there would be supply of rice from the sky. This was taken seriously by the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, Major A.G. McCall. He took it as sedition and he marched to the village with his troop and arrested the revivalists. He even claimed that there was a coup to kill him but it failed because he took them by surprise (McCall 1997: 51).

In many places, the revivalists exhibited uncompromising behaviour against the established church, that is the mission church. They began to use drum (*khuang*) which was earlier prohibited by the church in the worship services. Songs in traditional tunes were composed, sang and danced. In the revival meetings, all the Protestant worship service orders were broken as the revivalists took charge of the meeting. The presence of the missionaries did not make a difference. The missionary Rev. E.L. Mendus writes:

One of our chief difficulties is that many of these people will not listen to teaching or respond to guidance from Church leaders for they say they have the Spirit of God himself within them. Who is man therefore that he should be listened to? (Thanzauva 1997 : 62).

The church leaders, both the European missionaries and the local leaders, scorned at the emotionalism and 'excesses' of the movement. In southern part where the Baptist Mission worked, the feature of quaking (*khurh*

*harhna*) and freezing which became popular from the 1920s was openly branded as outside the work of God, and it was related to 'illiteracy and simple mindedness' (Vanlalchhuanawma 2006: 202). In spite of this, the revival movement continued to happen, and it added many new members to the Christian fold. While the number of Christians grew, there were among them that were branded as 'revival Christians'. They were those who came to the Christian fold during the revival movement but they went back to their 'old' ways after the revival was over (Lalsawma 1994:155). Nevertheless, revival movement has been attributed to be one of the most important factors for the growth of the number of Christians (Downs 1994: 122).

### Mizo experience- revival of traditional culture

It would be safe to say that the whole community, though in varying degrees among individuals, was involved in the revival movement which carried cultural revivalism. Though it happened within the ambience of the church, the educated Mizo church leaders did not totally accept the movement while the European missionaries were very suspicious about the trend. Nonetheless despite such disapproval and repeated attempts to control the movement, cultural revivalism increased in influence and extended to further areas (Hminga 1987: 347, 349).

When the first revival stirring was experienced by the Christians, the non-Christians also experienced the revival of 'heathen song' called *Puma Zai*, later known as *Tlanglam Zai* (meaning community dance song because the whole village community often was caught up in singing and dancing) in 1908. Both believers and non-believers alike participated enthusiastically in the performance of the song and the dance. It was a song in the 'old Lushai tune' set with new words, generally in praise of a great chief, and some were to deride the Christian preachers too (Hminga 1987: 87). One *Puma Zai* goes like this:

Lehkhabu keng vai lem chang,  
Chanchin hril reng reng Puma  
(Carrying books, imitating foreigners  
Always proclaiming something Puma)(Carter and Luaia 1945: 57).

This happened after the futile attempt of the chiefs to persecute the Christians for their uncompromising character and their experience of revival. It was considered as a 'counter-attack' to the Evil One to halt the spread of Christianity in the Hills and the 'resurgence of heathenism' (Llyod 1991:55). In the words of J.M. Llyod, a missionary:

It spread like wild fire to all parts of the hills. Amazing manifestations of feeling accompanied the singing- almost as though the revival was parodied. Great feasts were held

during which the young men and girls danced in ecstasy. These demonstrations were made in every village. The cause of Christ seemed doomed in Lushai. The travelling preachers complained that preaching was a burden. The Gospel was losing ground and no one wanted to listen to it (Llyod 1991: 54-55).

The celebrations around *Puma Zai* soon died down due to the bamboo famine in 1911-12, but the resurgence of the 'old tune' for a time challenged the limit dictated to the Mizo cultural practices. Though it failed to get a solid grounding in a fragile socio-economic set up and thus, lost its force soon, this element was later accommodated in the Christian revival movement with more vigour and dynamism.

In the course of revival movement, the Mizo composition of indigenous hymns and tune, which were earlier rejected by the Christian community, made their way into the Christian ambit (Vanlalchhuanawma 2006: 242). The traditional form of singing, called *Zo zai* had already been prohibited for the Christians by the 1910 Presbytery (Remthanga 1996: 203). In 1915, Lorrain reported that out of the 450 hymns in the latest edition of hymn book published jointly by the Welsh Mission and the Baptist Missionary Society, 193 hymns were 'composed or translated by the Lushai's themselves' (Anonymous 1993: 129). New songs were ever increasing, and the Mizo Christians loved these new hymns and sang them with ecstatic fervour (Anonymous 1993: 266). Singing was one major element of the revival movement (Downs 1992: 8). During the revival movement, the people were so fond of singing that they sang all night (Kipgen 1997: 274-75). This was in a way the re-emergence of traditional practice, when young men and young girls sang and danced the whole night, particularly on the occasion of *Chapchar Kut*, the most celebrated festival of the Mizos (Shakespeare 2008: 87). The revival, too, was characterised by round the clock singing and dancing.

The use of drum in church service was another breakthrough. Drum (*khuang*) was closely associated with *zo zai*, and its use in the worship service was inconceivable. However, the revivalists began to use drums in the revival meetings, and then in the church without the sanction from the church or the missionaries, and it became a permanent accompaniment of singing all over Mizoram especially from the third wave except in the two Mission-station churches in Serkawn and Mission Veng where *khuang* was continued to be banned for a long time.<sup>7</sup> The foreign missionaries strongly disliked using the drum. Nevertheless, drum was used extensively in almost all the Christian gatherings. It resulted into the formation of another church functionary, though unofficial for a long time, the drummer, who was as a rule self-appointed. J.M. Llyod specifically remarks the influence of use of



drums, which he considers as a 'very potent instrument' to charge the gathering:

The presence of the drum affected meetings profoundly and had a mesmeric influence on many. It induced and controlled the church service in 1919 more than in any previous revival. The repetitive singing of the same hymn was largely though not altogether due to the use of drum... The drum appeared to dictate to the congregation and even to the Holy Spirit (Lloyd 1991: 192).

The pre-Christian practice of giving feasts was also re-introduced during the revival movement, but in a modified form. Earlier, it was for the performance of *thangchhuah* that animals were killed and community feast was provided for the entire village, or as a sacrificial offering but here, it was for 'the glory of God.' This practice in its new form was noted first at the village of Hnawka (the chief) in connection with the 'fairly grand awakening' that happened in that village in August, 1910. Following the conversion of many people to Christianity, a Christian leader, Chawngbuta organized a large gathering on March 20, 1911 and prepared a feast by offering his mithun(gayal), which was one of the most valued animals of the Mizo, for the Christian delegates (Pachau and Schendel 2015:78). In the latter half of the 1920s, certain Christians in the south began to give their domestic animals like pigs, mithun, etc. and provided feast to the entire village 'to glorify God' or as a form of thanksgiving(Anonymous 1993: 248) and it was continued in many other places as well.

The element of individuality favoured by the new system, for instance, employment by individual's merit, conversion by the individual's decision, appointment of a preacher in the worship service, and so on were new components impacting the highly 'communitarian' Mizo society. On the other hand, the revivalists undermined this system when they emphasized on the communitarian participation in preaching, praying, etc. Apart from the community singing and dancing, there were *Fangrual* or *Zinrual* (the Itinerant Group Campaigners) especially from the third wave, who visited villages and preached the Gospel. One Pastor of that time remarked that there were always too many preachers in villages (Lalsawma 1994: 92). '*Tawngtairual*' or 'mass prayer' or 'community prayer' was a common practice during the revival movement. The practice seems to have no direct cultural root, but the whole congregation praying together simultaneously is much akin to the traditional Mizo custom of communal involvement in various endeavours (Vanlalchhuanawma 2006: 308). Through the revival movement, many of the cultural practices which were condemned and censured by the early Mizo church resurfaced in the Christian community. In fact, the Mizo revival movement resulted

into the 'indigenization of Christianity' (Downs 1994; Kipgen 1997; Vanlalchhuanawma 2006), transforming the western Christianity into their own.

## Conclusion

In the situation of 'cultural conflict', anthropological studies show that the subject can either bear the stress and give themselves into regressive action, or attempt to assert their identity through some means (Linton 1943; Wallace 1956). Revival or revitalization of culture is one of such means to derive and redefine the self, claiming its space against the dominating force in the dynamics of cultural change.

Within a brief period, the Mizos were abruptly exposed to the new system and new culture under the dual contact of colonial rule and Christianity. The independent political control and intact cultural tradition was suddenly disrupted by the encounter with the stronger political and cultural force. The presence of a foreign power and the complete demilitarization subjected the erstwhile warriors with little or no chance to rise against the invasion to their realm of control. Under such circumstances, it was a big challenge for the Mizos to find their place in the cosmos. Since armed uprising was out of question for the disarmed tribe, the form of resistance that took place during the colonial rule in Mizoram was rather subtle. It was in the cultural sphere that the Mizos carved out for themselves a space which was effectively manipulated to accommodate their survival claim. Through the Christian revival movement which was witnessed repeatedly during the colonial rule, the Mizos were able to wrest their claim of distinct entity, forcing their foreign masters to accept their resilience against the challenges that confronted them. The objective of the Mizo revival movement was purely religious but the people's response swerved it from its primary objective and turned it to a movement which soothed the deep mental longing of the people. It was in and through the revival movement in Christianity that the Mizos laid their claim for their space in the new politico-social and cultural set up. The cultural pre-eminence induced by the new colonial power was checked to the level acceptable to the Mizos as they indigenized the movement as well as Christianity.

## Notes

1. Due to the difference of opinion regarding the revival, there were dissenters who started their own sect, like Tlira Pawl, or who joined some established denominations like the Salvation Army whose founder was a former revivalist, etc. For more, see Vanlalchhuanawma 2006.

2. For more, see Wallace 1972; DeMallie, 1995.
3. Before the advent of the British, the Mizo chiefs were independent sovereign rulers in their jurisdiction but most of their judicial powers and their rights over the land were curtailed by the colonial government. For more, see McCall (1977), Malsawmdawngliana and Rohmingmawii (2013).
4. In the Mizo belief of life after death, there are two places of abode for the spirits-*Mithi khua* and *Pialral*. In *Mithi khua*, life would be considered more or less the same as their earthly life with all the struggles while in *Pialral*, the souls would enjoy eternal bliss and luxury. It was reserved for the extraordinary achievers during their lifetime. Since they lived in a situation of perpetual threat from enemies and wild animals, the brave men were the heroes, and *pialral* was reserved for them.
5. These were the annual community sacrificial ceremony and all the villagers were expected to take part in it. It was performed to seek blessings for the village for that year.
6. In 1901 Census, there were 82,434 people in Mizoram. <http://mizoram.nic.in/about/popu-trend.htm> accessed on 24.8.18.
7. At Mission Veng, the mission centre of the Presbyterian Church, drum began to be used permanently in worship services only from 1980 and at Serkawn, which is the centre of the Baptist Mission, it was used from 1982.

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