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**TRIBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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P R E F A C E

The Tribal Research Institute, Mizoram includes the study of the prominent sub-tribes of Mizoram such as Pawi, Mara, Paihte and Riang people in it's projects of studies. It is expected that the work will help administrator and various development Departments in their efforts for the upliftment of these sub-tribes. The information mentioned in this book is what our Research Officer and Research Investigators really found during their surveying period i.e. 1984-1985 A.D

To complete this small book Mr Lianhmingthanga, Research Officer and Research Investigators visited most of the Riang villages in Mizoram twice and the Tribal Research Institute is so grateful to them.

Dated Aizawl,
the 16th April '86

(C. LAITANGA)
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TYPICAL RIANG HOUSES
PHOTO BY - DAVID M. TRIANGLIANA

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN AND THE SUB-TRIBE

The original home of the Riangs is said to be Maian tlang (a hill) near Rangamati of Bangladesh. Although historical veracity about their origin has not yet been fully established, it is held by many that they originally came from Shan State in Burma some centuries ago and moved to Arakan Hills. Therefrom, they moved to Maian tlang a hilly place in the defunct East Pakistan and thence migrated to Tripura during the 14th Century A.D. That the Riangs had settled in Tripura is evidenced by the presence of two Riangs Commanders in the Army of King Dharma Manikya during 1465 to 1515 A.D. Some are of the opinion from the folklores that the Riangs formally settled in some parts of Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh under their King Kachhok but were in course of time driven out by the powerful Maghs and as a result they moved to the north to take shelter in Amarpur and Belonia Sub-Division in Tripura.

It is also a reliable fact that the Riangs belong to one of the sects or sub-tribes, Tippera. The other sub-tribes are Hapang-Jamatya or Achlong Phadong, Naitong, Husoi, Naotiya, Hackler, Kewar, Tombai, Daindak, Garbing. Amongst those, the Riangs form the great majority of the tribes. According to their traditional tale, they formerly settled in the hill ter-

rains to the south of Matamari river under the leadership of two brothers by name Kilay and Manglay, who were the Karbaris or managers on behalf of the Tippera Raja Udaigiri. This family claims a very early origin dating back to 600 B.C. while the then Raja who was ninety third in descent from Biraraj, the founder of the dynasty date from 590 A.D. In the year 512, the Tipperas were in the peak of their power and captured Chittagong from the Mughals but were driven out by the Arakanese with the help of the Portuguese and their capital, Udaipur was plundered in 1587. After a long series of struggles an area consisting of mountainous region now called Tripura State was left to the hand of the then Tripura Raja in 1838. The Riangs who were loyal to the Raja moved to Tripura and settled there.

According to other folklores the Riangs, in olden days, they settled somewhere in the East and moved on migration towards West under the leadership of two brothers Bruha and Braiha by name. Both of them having leadership capability were followed by two groups of the Riang migrants. While moving about, they reached a river and both the parties had to have midday meal for which they caught prawns for curry. Braiha and his followers caught small prawns which when cooked turn red within a short while indicating its readiness for eating. Soon after finishing their meal, Braiha and his party set out leaving behind Bruha and his followers who caught bigger type of prawns which required longer time for cooking. While leaving, Braiha said to his bro-

ther that they would go ahead and made a tract on the path so that Bruha and his followers could come along the same route. Then after taking meal Bruha and his followers also proceeded and on their way they saw a plantain cut by Braiha. But the plantain shoot that grew very quickly showed no new sign, and also a cut made on a tree (a kind of tree, the heart is black in colour) also indicated that Braiha and his followers had left the place long time before. Then having no hope to overtake them, Bruha and his followers settled at a place where they gave up a hope to catch up Braiha and his followers. The Riangs claim to be the descendants of Bruha who lost tract of Braiha and now call themselves as Bru. Braiha and his followers moved further westward and settled in Chittagong Hill Tracts of the then East Pakistan and therefrom migrated to the territory now called Tripura state. The Tripuris, the original inhabitants of Tripura are the descendants of Braiha. The close affinities between the Riangs and the Tripuris in customs, culture and languages have shown that these two tribes came from one and the same ancestral stock.

The Riangs migration to Tripura is also revealed by their folktales according to which amongst the Bruha generations, there were two Chiefs, Sikong Kaiskau and Riang Kaiskau. There was a strain relation between them for claiming possession of bird's nest in a tree that grew in the jhum of the latter but bended over the jhum of Sikong Kaiskau.

Their enmity grew and finally led to a bloody feud in which Sikong Kaiskau killed Rieng Kaiskau. Then Sikong Kaiskau over-powered Rieng Kaiskau and his subjects and ruled for a long period, his descendants also became chief hereditarily. But their administration was felt intolerably cruel by their subjects. The Riengs, therefore, planned to leave their village and migrate to other place. To look out suitable place they selected two persons. The two persons, in their search for a suitable place entered Tripura where the Tripuris intercepted and arrested them on charge of trespassing into their land. The case of the two captives was tried by the Tripuris and were unfortunately convicted to be killed for sacrificial purpose. On hearing this the two helpless captives prayed to their God asking him to save their life. When the Tripuris heard them saying a prayer, they knew from their language that their captives were their fellow tribal men. Then the Tripuris asked the two Riengs the purpose of their coming there. After knowing everything from them the Tripuris felt pity and tried to render all possible help for their migration to their land. Then the Rieng subjects left their village ruled by Sikong Kaiskau and moved to Tripura.

It is accepted by all that the Riengs moved from Bangladesh to Tripura some time in the past and settled there for many years and up till now majority of the Rieng tribes are found to be settling permanently in Tripura. In the beginning, they were not well

treated by the then Tripura Raja and most of them were forced to flee to a deep forest not only in the hill areas of Tripura but also in the adjoining areas of Mizoram. However, their migration from Tripura to Mizoram took place recently and it is held by some that their number in Mizoram appears to have increased very substantially due to their uprising against the then Tripura Raja under the leadership of Ratan Manikya in the year 1942. Even then their population in Mizoram is negligible till 1960 since the census report of 1961 shows no mention of the Riang tribe as only a tribe or community numbering over 1000 are shown there-in. However the 1971 Census report shows the population of the Riangs in Mizoram to be 9823 souls. It appears that there is a process other than biological. Up till now, the census report of 1981 cannot be obtained and however the population of this tribe who have been settling in Mizoram Union Territory and from one of the Tribal Community as collected from Church Organisations and other agency is 23534. Majority of them numbering 19057 settle in Aizawl District. 2923 and 1554 settle in Lunglei District and Chhimtuipui District respectively.

THE SUB-TRIBES

Within the Riang tribes there are two major groups or we may say Sub-tribes namely Mualsui and Meska. These are the names of two brothers

the former, the elder, the latter, the younger. Mualsui has six number of siblings each of them represents a group or clan while Meska has four which are as follows :

MUALSUI

-
- (1) Apetaw (2) Chawrkhi (3) Raikchah (4) Chawsreng
(5) Tamayakchaw (6) Tuimaiafah

MESKA

Wairem	Msa	Yakstan	Nohkham
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In addition to those C. Chawngkunga Deputy Speaker in his tour notes for November & January 1981—82 Page 2 mentioned some more clans as follows : (1) Taumaniakchau (2) Ghaipia (3) Kaisuah (4) Usui (5) Zolai (6) Wakchuh.

The significance of the clans names as noted by Dr. Jagadis Gan Choudhury are as follows :

Apetaw :— ‘A’ means fish. A Rieng lady while crossing Karnaphuli river drank plenty of water her abdomen swelled like that of a fish. She then gave birth to a child whose decendents are known as Apetaw. Members of this clan are expert in Magic and spells.

Chorkhi :— It means spinning wheel. Persons of this Clan are expert in Weaving cloths.

Raikachah :— It is the Clan named after a soldier of the past.

Chawpreng :— It means a guitar. Those belong to the Clan are expert in playing guitar and other musical instruments.

Tamyakchaw :— It literally means injury to leg. An ancestor of this Clan might have suffered from a serious leg injury.

Tuimaiafak :— Tuimai means tortoise. It ordinarily means offerings of tortoise.

Wairem :— One peculiarity of this clan is it has comparatively large number of mads.

Msa :— It means Tiger. The ancestor while still a baby left in the forest by his mother. The baby was found by a tiger which gave him all motherly treatment.

Yakstan :— Yak means hand while stan means ornament. Members belonging to this Clan are fond of ornaments like ring, bracelet etc.

Nohkham :— It means a burnt house. An ancestor while visiting the King of Tripura was careless and his kitchen room was burnt while cooking.

All these clans come under the name of Riang. The word 'Riang' has been used in all Government records and publications. How it has come into use for collecting name of all these Clans is unknown. The Riangs themselves also have no idea of its significance or its origin. Dr. Jagadis Gan Choudhury in his monograph 'The Riangs of Tripura' stated that the word 'Riang' is a corrupt form of Biangma which is the name of a bird 'Gasur'. This bird hatched a stone from which came out a boy and a girl who were the ancestors of the Riangs. As mentioned earlier, the Riang call themselves 'Bru' which means 'Man' while the Mizo call them 'Tuikuk'.

There is story how this word 'Tuikuk' came into use that formerly a Mizo while travelling happened to meet a Riang man who was taking bath in a River. The traveller asked him which community he belongs. Since the Riang man did not understand Mizo language, he thought the question made by the Mizo traveller to be what he was doing and said 'Tuikung ni' which means I am bathing. Since the word 'Tuikung' was not familiar to the Mizo traveller he heard it as Tuikuk while the meaning of 'Mi' in Mizo language is man. Therefore, the Riangs are known and called as Tuikuk by the Mizos.

PHYSICAL FEATURES :—

Riangs are short or medium stature with straight black hair, flat nose and face, prominent cheek bone. Their skin colour although variable but mostly yellowish and their eyes have epicanthic fold. They therefore, ethnically belong to the Mongoloid racial stock. Their dialect has been classified as belonging to the Austro Asiatic group of Tibeto Burman family. The dialect is known as 'Belonge' Their stout physique and body structure closely resemble the tribes in Mizoram and other state in the North Eastern region. Their ethnical affinities with the Kuki tribe is claimed by some :—

Some of the Riang words are listed as follows :—

English	Riang	Mizo
He	Baw (Bung)	Amah (mipa)
They	Brau	Anmahni
We	Chung	Keimahni
She	Baw (Bung)	Amah (Hmeichhia)

You	Nung	Ningmah
Your	Nrau	Nangmahni
His	Brau	Amata
Father	Impha	Pa
Mother	Imma	Nu
Grand Father	Behu	Pu
Grand Mother	Behawi	Pi
Brother	Takhu	Unau mipa (nuṭa)
Sister	Bkhu	Unau hmeichhia (farnu)
Wife	Bihih	Nupui
Boy	Chrai chla	Mipa naupang
Girl	Chrai Brui	Hmeichhe naupang
Son	Bala	Fapa
Daughter	Baauh	Fanu
Man	Chla	Mipa
Women	Brui	Hmeichhia
Eye	Mkawih	Mit
Nose	Kumthai	Hnar
Foot	Japha	Kephah
Hand	Bzauh	Ben
Mouth	Bkhu	Ka
Tooth	Bua	Ha
Ear	Khunju	Beng
Head	Bkhroh	Lu
Neck	Gorna	Nghawng
Tongue	Slai	Lei
Breast	Khakhlah	Awm
Waist	Behang	Kawng
Thigh	Laphung	Malpui
Knee	Jasku	Khup

Hair	Khnai	Sam
Belly	Bohoh	Dul
Back	Bkum	Hnungzang
God	Isor	Pathian
Sun	Sal	Ni
Moon	Tal	Thla
Star	Athuh Khrui	Arsi
Water	Tui	Tui
Sky	Sorgow	Van
Air	Sawinaw	Boruak
Night	Hor	Zan
Wind	Nohba	Thli
Winter	Masing	Thlasik
Summer	Salungbla	Nipui
Today	Tini	Vawiin
Yesterday	Mia	Nimin
Tomorrow	Khnaih	Naktuk
Year	Borsi	Kum
Dog	Sui	Ui
Deer	Gong	Sakhi
Buffalo	Msih	Lawi
Goat	Puiing	Kel
Hen	Tan nia	Arpui
Cow	Msu	Bawngpui
Cat	Bilai	Zawhte
Duck	Taukhawn	Varak
Bird	Tau	Sava
Crow	Taukha	Choak
Fish	Aa	Sangha
Elephant	Maizung	Sai
Horse	Koraj	Sakawr

Go	Hing, thang	Kal
Eat	Cha	Ei
Sit	Achauh	Thu
Come	Phai	Lokal
Bring	Tuibi	Rawnkeng
Beat	Bu	Vua
Sleep	Thu	Muhil
Stand	Bareha	Ding
Die	Thui	Thi
Give	Ri	Pe
House	Noh	In
Door	Dorka	Kawngka
Oven	Thaphathai	Thuk
Roof	Nohkhung	Inchung
Cup	Khaih	No
Pot	Tuh	Bel
Plate	Bason	Thleng
Curry	Mui	Chawhmeh
Soup	Muitui	Chawhmehtui
Meat	Bahai	Sa
Rice	Mai	Chaw (Buh)
Run	Thaih	Tlan
Fear	Kri	Hlau
Cut	Tai	Zai
Make	Kbu	Siam
Built	Tang	Sa
Basket	Nekkhai	Em
Gold	Rangiauh	Rangkachak
Money	Rang	Pawisa
Rich	Jnang	Hausa
Before	Skang	Hma

Behind	Laubgu	Piah
Fire	Hor	Mei
Wood	Mohang	Thing
Hot	Ktung	Sa, Lum
Cold	Kchang	Vawt
Good	Kaham	Tna
Bad	Hamia	Cchia
White	Kphuih	Var
Yellow	Kawrmaw	Eng
Red	Kchauh	Sen
Green	Khrang	Hring
Blue	Srawn	Pawl

TENSES

I go	Ang thang	Ka kal
I shall go	Ang thang nai	Ka kal ang
I went	Ang thang ha	Ka kal tawh
He goes	Baw thang	A kal
He will go	Baw thang nai	A kal ang
He went	Baw thang ha	A kal tawh
They go	Brau thang	An kal
They will go	Brau thang nai	An kal ang
They went	Brau thang ha	An kal tawh



A BUSY HOUSE WIFE COOKING.
PHOTO BY DAVID M. THIANGLIANA

CHAPTER II

VILLAGE AND THE PEOPLE

Location of Villages :—

The Riang villages in Mizoram are generally located in the valley near a river or stream. Seldom a village purely inhabited by Riangs are found up on the hill or top of the hill. Most of the village inhabited originally by the Riangs are located at the low region between hill ranges. As mentioned earlier, Mizoram, the then Lushai Hills remained under the control of large number of Lushai chiefs with their separate jurisdiction having a few villages till their subjugation to the British in the latter part of the nineteenth century. There was vast area of deep forest or jungle which could not be easily accessed by a few inhabitants of the region. Such places were therefore, free from the administrative control of Lushai Chiefs. This had provided a safe settlement for the Riang immigrants in those inaccessible areas of Mizoram. Besides this, the thinly populated bordering areas of Tripura has enabled the Riang immigrants to have a free place to accomodate themselves therein. They are therefore, found to have been settling mostly in the valleys of Longai and Teirei River in Aizawl District. A good number of them are also settling in the valleys of Kanafuly river in the south western part of Mizoram bordering Bangladesh in Lunglei District. Not a single soul of

Riang is found in the eastern side of Mizoram. This has clearly indicated that the Riang entered into Mizoram from **Bangladesh**, erstwhile East Pakistan as well as from **Tripura**.

The reason why the Riang use to select village site in low lying area is obviously due to their fondness of river, stream, and brook from where they can easily procure fish, crabs, snails etc. for curry. Also a settlement in a low place gives them a less tire-some task of carrying jhum products and collection of daily needs like fire-wood, jungle fruits, root, tubers and so forth. So in the matter of selection of village site, the Riangs and the Mizos are quite opposite as the Mizos discarded low land and preferred the peak of a hill range for village site. As said by some of the informants at the time of interview, the Riangs do not have any formal proceedings required to be observed or performed to settle at any place. Their frequent migration caused formation of small and new villages at various places. Sometimes a new village is formed in the jhum which however consisted of a few families in the beginning and later on increased or decreased depending upon the advantages or disadvantages of the site. Normally the Riangs moved to their jhum house immediately after finishing its construction say, during weeding season with all their moveable properties and settle there temporarily. After harvest or sometime afterwards they go back to their house in the village. The idea of a temporary settlement in a jhum house appears to

be to avoid wastage of time and tire-some going and coming from home and jhum. Generally a family stay in their jhum house from weeding season till finishing of harvest or sometime after consumption of the product. The late leaving of a jhum house is also an idea to minimise the load of jhum product which are being consumed, and the more they ate up, the less they have to carry to their home. So during the period of their stay in their jhum house they vacated their house in the village and live in jhum with all their cattle, fowls, pigs etc. This state of living condition made them to live a sort of nomadic life and a condition in which no developmental scheme can be undertaken. It is therefore, required to make them aware of the necessity of having a permanent settlement so that any developmental scheme can be projected by various agencies of the government on their behalf.

CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSE :

The Riangs do not worry much about construction of their house. Like any other interior places in India, availability of house site in a village is not a problem. As there is no formal arrangement or plan of a house site in a village, they built their house at any vacant place in a village if the construction will not harm others' property. So, person willing to settle in a village selects a house site of his choice and constructs a house as he likes. There is also no site specially reserved for the village heads like Chandhury, Kharbari etc.

The Riangs generally, use bamboo for house building material. Long lasting materials like hard core of wood are rarely used by them. This is perhaps due to their tendency to live at a place for a few years only. They mainly used four different species of bamboo for house building purpose. These are (i) Warnal (*Bambusa Tulda*) (ii) Warnlin (*Dendrocalamus*) (iii) Warthui (*Melocanna bambusoides*) (iv) Wartlau (*Teinesta chyum dalova*). First measurement of the length and breadth are taken with bamboo pole. After this a middle post called thungla, that is the supporter of a ridge-pole is erected at one side. And another post for the same purpose is erected at another side. These two posts stand for the length of the house to be constructed. Then another posts called Kawlung thungla are erected at some distance at both sides of the middle posts. The space between the two side posts and a supporter of ridge pole in the middle is the breadth of the house. An ordinary Riang house is 15 to 16 ft in width and 16 to 29 ft in length. For the posts mentioned, which are the main skeleton of the house, big and strong species of bamboo namely, *Bambusa Tulda* and *Dendrocalamus* are selected. Sometimes, two or three bamboo being tied together are used. After erecting the posts two strong bamboos are tied with cane, one against each side posts. These strong bamboos serve as a beam to support the floor. Upon these beams are placed at a regular interval a number of strong bamboos (ohtung) and over these at short distance many

bamboos (taing beng) are placed. Then many split bamboos called stang are placed on taing beng and over all these are placed matted bamboos and thus the floor is completed. In order to withstand heavy load of the house and storm the beams and all the posts are supported by another shorter posts which are always erected slightly slanting. Two or three bamboos (wakding) are tied to the side posts in between the floor and wall-plates and the matted wall (Kawltung) is tied on to them. Three or four thick wooden cross-beams (Hahhlai) run across the breadth of the house that are firmly tied on the wall-plate. The roof consists of a ridge-pole on which a number of bamboo notches (phrai) are tied which are fastened with split bamboo with the help of canes. Both sides of the ridge-pole slope downward. Thatching of the roof is done with bamboo leaves, the stalk being fastened between split bamboos that are tied to the bamboo notch with canes. To prevent the roof from being blown away by hurricane strong bamboos are tied from above the thatch to the wall-plate. This is called riki.

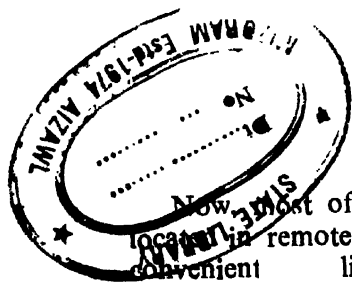
The Riangs are sticking to their traditional method in respect of their house pattern which have undergone no much change. An ordinary house consist of two parts -(1) Shangshi, that is, front house, and (2) Noshing, the main room. Shangshi is without wall and is meant for keeping fire-wood, fowls and chiefly for retiring and lodging guest. It is also used for gossiping place by the male folks. This part of the

House is like a platform facing the street and it is the level of the main room floor which is generally two or three ft. high. A wooden or bamboo ladder is used for going up and down. The main room, nothing is fully walled and no window is made and the room always remains very dark. No partitions are made and the room serves for multipurpose. A hearth is made at one side near the wall. Both sides of the hearth are places for fire-wood, utensils etc. Above the hearth a rack of bamboo matting is made on which paddy to be husked are kept for drying. Some fire wood are also kept to dry. On the hearth only three stones are erected as a trivet. The other side of the floor is a smooth floor for various purpose like taking meal, sleeping etc. The Rieng never used bed for sleeping. In the near house connecting the main room is a platform without roof but fencing is done at all sides. It is used for exposing wet cloths and paddy in the sun and also for toilet purposes.

COMMUNICATION :—

As we all know the existence of good communication net work at a place is a mark of development or civilisation of the people in that area. The Riengs in Mizoram, who are backward and poor also cannot be expected to have a good inter-village communication not to speak of a link with other villages and towns. Regarding their attitude towards making or having communication with other villages, they

appear to be so lethargic. Small narrow foottract that runs straight on the spur of a hill is the main characteristic of the tract made by them. They don't bother to make the tract gentle with better gradation. Instead they make it straight down from the bottom to the top of a hill. Therefore, to go on such tract, especially ascending is terribly tiresome, at the same-time descending is hazardous. Maintenance of such tract is done by each village. If clearing or repairing of the tract is required, a day is appointed, on that day an individual comes out from every family and pays his service for it. Each village has its duty to maintain the tract which normally stretches up to the limit of their jhum land and that is usually a village boundary. From the early time up till now, rivers, streams and brooks are made use of as communication by the Riangs. This sort of communication does not require much work for maintenance. The use of stream as communication is found between Tumpang-lui village and Chhimluang village that locates on the bank of Longai river in Tripura. Jhum road is also always used as communication with other villages in preference to others. In this case, adjoining area of the other village jhum areas, they can connect each other by making even a short tract or, if there is a river or stream between the two village's jhum area, they conveniently used it. But this sort of intervillage communication is usually for temporary use. It is deserted when the jhums turn into a forest. Then they have to clear and use the same old tract.



Now, most of the Riang Villages in Mizoram are located in remote area. Unfortunately, they cannot be conveniently linked by at least a motorable road. They are therefore, compelled to remain aloof from the mainstream of the people in Mizoram Union Territory. A sizeable number of them have now been settling in or nearby Mizo villages as seen in Lokicherra, Borai, Zamuang, Rengdil, Bairabi etc, which are linked by motorable road. In these villages, the Riangs have communications and other facilities in common with the Mizos.

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR MATERIAL CULTURE

The Riangs are laborous and hardworking people. They are purely agriculturists and practising Jhum cultivation, also known as slash and burn method. Their competence and efficiency in various Jhum work is remarkably high. Particularly in sowing rice seed, they have special skill, strength and stamina. An average Riang individual can sow rice seed even more than a full of Kerosine tin in a day. Sowing of seeds is done with dao having a sharp end. They are also swift and strong in other cultivation work like cutting or chopping down trees and bamboos which is the initial stage of jhum cultivation, clearing weeds, harvesting etc.

Their strength in carrying head-load is also noteworthy. An ordinary man can carry a head load weighing more than 70 kgs for a long distant. For

carrying head load they use only a small strap that runs across the forehead and down to one side of bottom of a basket. They never use yoke and strap made of cane which are used by the Mizos. Their strong sturdy physical built facilitate them to carry such heavy load besides they grow up with the habit, their children start to carry head load at young age. The Mizos use to employ them for carrying rice from jhum to granary in their village. They are also employed as labour for jhum works by Mizos. Some grown up boys or girls are employed by Mizos for a year or so to do their jhum works. In this case, it is not that the Riangs alone do the jhum but acted as helper of the family concerned. This system is known as Malda.

The Riangs are simple and kind hearted. They have immense hospitality to their guest. No guest or visitors are given bad treatment in the Riang house. Some time in the past, when they were self-sufficient or say when they had ample jhum product, fowls or any other domestic animals were killed in honour of of their guest. But at present they are unable to show such hospitality and generosity to their guest because of their wretched position.

The Riangs are very good in basketry work. They have their own artistic skill in designing and decorating works. They use and make mainly four kinds of basket for carrying head load and some other variable size and shape for keeping or storing household food stuff like rice, vegetables etc. Two kind

of sieves, one with holes and the other without holes are also made by the Riangs, and these are always sold to the Mizos. The Riangs have a special skill in mat making also. Mats made out of bamboo canes are commonly used by them as well as by the Mizos for drying paddy in the sun. But one of them do these works as profession.

Because the prices of those things cannot be so high as there is no much demand. They only make their articles on their leisure time, say when they are off from their daily jhum work. The work of pottery is unknown to them. But almost every family has at least one or two pots made of clay which are procured from the market. These pots are used either for keeping drinking water or for brewing beer. Almost every women knows the art of making liquor locally called 'Arauh' from a kind of rice called 'Maimi'. Although they themselves make liquor but hardly any of them are addicted to alcohol and most of their liquor are sold to the Mizos. Unlike the Mizos, the Riangs drink liquor only on certain occasion like ceremonies and festivals. Amongst the Riang no drunkard are found. This indicates that they are well disciplined people having a well defined social structure. Every one of them is conscious of his duty in his society. They have a strong desire to eradicate obnoxious social life amongst themselves.

CHAPTER III

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION

IN earlier days, the whole Riang community was under the rule of a chief called 'Rai'. The people looked upon him as their own monarch whose word was supreme in all matters of internal dispute and in disposal of all cases of crime. The position of Rai was quite respectable and dignified. Succession of this Raiship was not hereditary and was purely determined by the qualities of leadership and capability of a person. Under the Rai, amongst the people they engaged one priest, one clerk, and other four personal attendants called Chhatradari, whose duty was to hold Umbrella over Rai; bansi badak, a head flute player, dhak badak, who was a drum beater and bandari, who was a store keeper. The Rai also had some advisers and ministers of whom one was appointed as chief minister called Rai-Kachak whose office was also privileged by the appointment of some personal staff like an adviser, assistant, hewers of wood and drawers of water. This system of administration had been in existence during their earlier settlement in Tripura wherefrom they migrated to the Hills District now called Mizoram Union Territory.

To hold the office of Rai the Riang community selected a person who has an immense personality and leadership quality. Once a person was selected, the whole community accepted him as their benevolent ruler and as a regulator of their daily life. There

was no limit term fixed for the office of Rai and once a suitable person is selected he continued to hold the office as long as there is no complaint against his administration or if there is no move for his removal from the office. The Rai, although ruled as a monarch and exercised the power vested in his office as a dictator, all matters big or small were always settled with his subordinate officials. Some petty cases were however, sometimes settled by the ministers without Rai who formally gave direction. When this system of internal government was practised, the Riangs were settling in Amarpur and Belonia Sub-Division of Tripura. The area of their settlement was more or less compact and was aloof from the princely regime, say the rule of the then Tripura Raja. The Raja had hardly any direct contact with them and, however, his administration over the Riäng community was done through the Rai who enjoyed absolute autonomy in the internal affairs of the community. The Rai had therefore, acted as an agent of the Raja who ruled as an independent chief over the land of 10066 square km of mountainous country now called the state of Tripura. If the chieftains were loyal to the Raja, there had been peace and comfort amongst the Riäng community. Some or few of the Riäng people served in the office of the Raja and as mentioned in the foregoing chapter there were two Riäng commanders in the army of king Dharma Manikya during the year 1465 to 1575. But the relation between the Riäng chieftains and the Raja was no longer cordial and subsequently

there was an uprising against the Raja. Then the Raja launched his powerful force to curb the hostile movement of the Riangs. Since then the Riang people use to live in constant terror of being oppressed by the powerful Raja and getting fed up of such living condition the Riang people had to seek safe location outside the reach of the Raja's regime. As a result they fled to interior places not only in the hilly region of Tripura but also move further eastward up to the western part of the then Lushai hills. As the hill terrain could not provide a suitable and compact area for settlement of hordes of people they were therefore, scattered over a vast area and settled at various places in small villages where there was no proper communication. Therefore, one man's administration, the Rajship could not be continued and then the earlier system of government ceased to function. Sometime after their settlement in villages without proper administrative system, they felt the need of having a village head who would deal with all their internal affairs and to represent the village people whenever required. Then the institution of Choudhury came into existence. In this system of government Choudhury is the head of the village. This system is almost similar with that of the Chieftain system among the Mizo tribes. Unlike the previous system, the Riangs have therefore been under small administrative unit under the rule of a village head 'Choudhury'. In every village there is Choudhury who widens his administrative circle by appointing one person amongst his people as Kharbari and other

limited number of persons as council of elders. The position of Choudhury is highly honoured and respected in spite of the fact that he is not provided with personal staff like that of the Rai and Rai-Kachak. In his domain he is all in all and every one pay him homage and in turn he also tries his best to look after the welfare of his subjects. Although the institution of this Choudhuryship is not in conformity with the usual form of democratic organisation since Choudhury rules more or less like a dictator, almost all cases of internal dispute and crimes are settled by him with the help of his subordinate staff according to their own social and customary institution. The people live in their own tribal way of life under the paternal care of Choudhury and they enjoy peace and tranquility. Unlike the Mizos amongst whom in the earlier days surprise raids and inter-village war were common, the Riangs under their Choudhury lead a peaceful and contented life and no war between villages or clans is known to them.

Succession of Choudhuryship is not hereditary and is principally attained by a person who has leadership quality. Persons having immense personality and one who knows the work of priest are always preferred. The villagers therefore exercise their franchise by electing amongst them one person on whom they have confidence to hold the office of Choudhury. Then Choudhury selects amongst his subjects one person for Kharbari who plays an important role in

the administration of the village. He is said to act as a vice Choudhury. Some petty cases are also sometimes tried by Kharbari with the council of elders who are formally selected by the Choudhury. In some villages Kharbari is placed as the chief of the village and Choudhury is not there. So the over all administration is taken up by Kharbari in these villages and to assist him in the task of administration there are council of elders who are selected by himself from amongst his people. Although these leadership positions are not hereditary, the sons of Choudhury usually possess the prescribed quality and knowledge of customary laws and they therefore always attain the position of Choudhuryship or Kharbariship or any other membership in the administrative set up. The appointment or election for Choudhuryship is made by means of male adult franchise. All adult male members of a village get together in a house and they elect and appoint one person of their choice as a choudhury. Like the institution of Rishihip there is no limit even fixed for holding the office of Choudhury and once a person is elected he continues to hold the office as long as the people are satisfied with his administration or if he can perform his duty as demanded by his position. In case the people are not satisfied and lost confidence in their Choudhury, they remove him from his office and select another person from their village to replace the previous Choudhury. This case is said to be rare but occurred sometimes. The same method is practised in those villages where there are Kharbaris in place of Choudhury. Generally,

Choudhury or Kharbari always tries his level best to maintain the dignity of his office and status which earns loyalty of his subjects to him.

There is no system of payment in the form of salary to Choudhury, Kharbari and their council of elders. However, these unpaid officials have the privilege to share some part of the money being paid as fine or court fee. As for instance, Choudhury and Kharbari have the power to impose a fine for punishment on any accused person amounting up to Rs 120/-. In the case of adultery a fine amounting Rs 40/- to the woman and Rs. 60/- to her male partner respectively are imposed. Out of the total amount one half is shared by the aggrieved husband and the other half is distributed to Choudhury, Kharbari and Council of elders. When there is case or dispute in the village, the matter is reported to Choudhury who with his subordinate officials hold a trial in which the offender and the complainant are summoned. Serious cases like murder are however, reported to the Government. If a person has a complaint and want the case be tried in the house of Choudhury, he, carrying a fowl goes to the house of Choudhury and said he would do all the cooking and preparation of meal. The main consideration here is to humble himself formally to Choudhury and he may not do such work of cooking and preparation of meal. After that he explains all about his grievances and fervently prays to Choudhury to try the case properly in his favour. After hearing all about

the complaint, Choudhury fixes the date for trial and informs all his officials, the complainant and the offender through any of the reliable person in the village to attend his court. In this way, Choudhury tries cases according to their customary laws.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGION

The Riangs in Mizoram have now been affected by the proselytising activities of the Mizo Christians particullary the Synod Presbyterian Church in Aizawl Districts and the Zoram Baptist Church in Lunglei District and now majority of the Riangs in Aizawl and Lunglei District are christian in religion. However, the rest of them are still believers of their traditional religion. The Riangs are principally animists and their ceremonial and ritual practices are more or less the same with that of the Hindu practices. Greatest reverence is given to 'Matai Kawtawr' which they conceive to be the chief of evil spirits. They also worship many gods and goddesses. Buraha is one of the male evil spirit and is believed to have come from Matai Kawtawr whose wife is Kali, the principal deity. Out of this deity, they believed there are a number of goddesses. Of all the gods and goddesses Buraha and Mahadeb are believed to be the most powerful ones. Buraha rules over one hundred and twenty demons and is capable to cause pain and sickness to human beings. They therefore, make small or heavy sacrifices. On being pleased the powerful spirit Buraha cures the patient. They believe Mahadeb is superior to and more powerful than Buraha. To propitiate this spirit they perform rites by offering animals like goat, pig, fowl, sugar banana, betel etc.

The performance of this is held in the street and water side or on white-ant-hills. The Riangs are said to be polythesists as they worship many gods and goddesses among which Durga is also worshipped as one of the gods and is believed to dwell around Buraha. Under the command of Durga, they believe there are as many as one hundred and eight evil spirits. Durga is therefore, worshipped with offerings like meal with banana, betel, nahricol etc. Worshipping of gods and goddesses, performance of rites and ceremonies are as a rule conducted by a priest called 'Ouchai who is paid five rupees in the form of remuneration for one occasion.

The Riangs firmly believe in the existency of human soul during the life time and after the death of a person. During one's life time, they conceive his soul remains within the body and after death his soul leaves the body and ascends to heaven along with the smoke of a burning pyre. If a man does good in his life time, they believe, after death the soul of the man will attain a higher or better status and will live with ease and comfort in the next world. On the other hand, the soul of evil doer will be thrown into hell or among the heap of excrement and then reincarnate into animal like fowl or pig or dog.

The Riangs are very conscious of superstition. Particularly when death occur to a person they are always frightened due to fear of evil spirit which may come in any form or image near and within the body or surrounding the house of the decess.

If a person dies, they believe, Buraho comes and exchanges the corpse with a chunk of plantain. It is because of this they believe every dead body becomes cool.

CEREMONIES AND SACRIFICES

The Riangs have a number of ceremonies and sacrifices with a view to get blessing or to propitiate the spirit concerned for curing their ailments. All these ceremonies and sacrifices have connection with their religious rites. The procedure and manner of those ritual ceremonies are akin to those practised by the Hindus. However, the Riangs have their own way of performances and all proceeding of their ceremonies and sacrifices are conducted by certain priest called 'Auchai'. Of all the ceremonies, Basi Puja is the biggest and is attended by a large number of people. It is usually held on the river bank once in three or six years. This puja cannot be held every year because of its heavy expenses. The main purpose of this ceremony is for the well growth of crops and for the good of the people themselves for which the congregation worship the fourteen goddesses. As the ceremony is attended by members of Riang Society from various places, it is a sort of Community ceremony. During this ceremony, besides worshipping of goddesses, they also perform dances and consume a lot of rice beer. In addition to religious purview, this occasion is also utilised for seeking compromises

to end their internal feuds and forming a strong bond to bind together all members of the community. To afford enough meat for least two buffaloes and two goats are the first and foremost need to be killed. Since the expenses of this ceremony incur a huge amount of money, contribution in kind or in cash is raised through subscription.

As already stated, the Riangs have various kinds of ceremonies which are required to be performed during their life time such as birth, death, sickness etc. Those ceremonies are summarised as follows :--

I Suinai rau : The words literally mean writers. The Riangs believe there are certain spirits who maintain the records of all human beings. As soon as a child is born, these spirits are believed to write down about the child in their record book. The ceremony is performed in the name of the new born child to propitiate the spirits. No matter the child is in good or in bad health the ceremony is performed so that the child grows well with good health. It is usually performed in the street near the performer's house. Two red cocks, two eggs and rice are the essential items required to be offered. A bamboo pole is pitched at the spot and nearby, the priest chants and cuts the cock in the neck. The blood of the cock that oozes out must get upon the bamboo pole. Eggs and rice are put near the bamboo pole. If the intestine of the cock that has been taken out by the priest is accompanied by the accessory tissues or glands it is regarded as a bad omen otherwise

not. While performing, the priest chants like this :

Sisu kunrai, Sibu kunrai,
Aichu taulak suihnai rau,
Sarawibu bawngrai kha birairau,
Mahni tauhnai rau,
Mahni suihnai rau,
Nohkhu stu mairang stu kal phaimaw,
Damdaw phaimaw bukar khui di,
Sikar khui di,
Ain sohchaw mai chu di,
Harung mai thaiga buthai muh nai,
Ksong khungsui lam yah nai.

Meaning : You are the one who makes the cock crow before day break, who hears the humming sound of cicadu and you are the creator of gold. You are also the one who can do away with all kinds of misfortune. Please drive away all kinds of diseases and keep watch over and save the life of men, women and children, and give intelligence in their brain as you are the one who can give rice to those in want, and also increase the length of their house corresponding to the length of the ridge-pole and also increase their wealth.

2. **Abursumaw :** The word 'abursumaw' means purification. This is a small ceremony exclusively for children. Two eggs and two fowls are killed and offered to the spirit, Suinairau, and another two fowl to tuisungrong, one for tui and the other for song. These fowls are butchered in front of the a small toy-like hut specially made for the ceremony. The

blood of the fowls killed is poured on the hut by the priest, and the meat is consumed inside the performer's house. This ceremony is held in the morning before the sun goes high up in the sky.

3. **Bahkahchamaw** : This ceremony is performed after the birth of a child when the wound of the child's umbilical cord is healed. This ceremony is also held in the morning. Nine pieces of bamboo are pached at the spot and to be in the line the same number of splitted bamboos are placed on the ground and husk of rice and ashes are kept on the two side-most splitted bamboo; cooked rice, prawn, and brinjal are also put on a tree leave that has been placed on the splitted bamboos. Fried rice and cooked rice wrapped with a plantain leave is kept hanging at the tip of one of the nine pieces of bamboo, and a cage containing five fowls is also kept nearby. The fowls in the cage must be male ones. Then the priest chants and takes out those fowls one by one and cut them in the neck. The blood of the fowls is kept near the bamboo pieces and the meat is cooked and consumed inside the performer's house.

4. **Khungchuhkamaw** : This is also a small ceremony performed for purification of a child, that is for the good of the child. A fully matured cock and hen are required to be killed for sacrifice. A good quantity of rice beer is also prepared in advance. Near the hut so constructed for the ceremony in the street the animals are killed. By the side of the hut, a

tree specially selected with its branches and leaves is pitched and around it rice flour is scattered. Two bottles made of quord containing water and two bottles of beer should also be made available at the spot which should be kept inside the fence of the hut. And also two pots of beer should be kept ready for consumption inside the performer's house. One dao without handle and spindle of cotton are also made as an offerings together with the meat of fowls. To the accompaniment of his chanting, the priest strikes the dao with a hard stone. No sooner had the ceremony is finished then the flour of rice spreaded around the hut is removed by the attendants with their foot. The meat of fowls is then cooked and consumed inside the performer's house.

5. Nobkhoh Puja : This is a ceremony for player of blessing to all members of a family. It is performed in the street of the performer's house. In this ceremony they worship Suinairau. Animals required to be sacrificed are, a red he-goat, two fowls. Rice and two eggs are also necessary. The blood of fowls and goats is sprinkled at the alter in which two bamboo tubes containing water and rice are kept. The meat of the fowls and goat is eaten by the attendants.

6. Tuitawrmaw : This ceremony is also performed for health and blessings, to all members of a family. It is held in the river in which a small hut is constructed. The priest chants and kills the cock and let the blood ooze out on the hut. Eggs and sacred

meat are placed inside the hut. The meat of cock is consumed by all members of the performer's family and the priest.

7. Nohra Khemaw : This ceremony is performed near the stair of the performer's house. This ceremony is also for the purpose of a family's health. The performer's house is tied round with a local made cotton thread. Animals required to be offered are a male pig and fowls. A bamboo tube is also required. The blood of these animals are offered and the meat are consumed.

8. Khung chahkamaw : Although this ceremony is performed after harvest, it is mainly for the good of crops. Two mature pigs of both sexes are killed in the morning. Butchering of these pigs is done by chopping in the neck by a priest. A small toylike hut is made in the platform of the performer's house. Flowers of amaranthers and marigold are tucked at each four corner of the hut which have been tied to the post of the platform with bamboo cane. At the post projected over the roof of the hut flowers are tied. Several bamboo canes are made bending inside the hut which are plaited with another canes and over there are kept offerings of rice, eggs etc. In this ceremony seven fowls are required to be killed, for worshipping seven goddesses. On the day of this ceremony the priest and the performer must take bath in the morning and wear an outfit of new clothes. And also both of them should keep on fasting from morning till the stars appear at night. Inside

the hut two shoots of different species of plant are put at the three places. Four eggs and four bundles of cooked cakes are also placed therein which are distributed among the performer, his wife and the priest and if the performer has daughters or daughters-in-law, each of them are also given cakes. In this occasion wine is also one of the most essential item. The two ends of a home made cotton thread are tied to the neck of the two wine pots. Any one breaking this thread apart is to pay a fine of Rs 5/- When the stars are visible they can only eat the meat of pigs and fowls. The whole meat of the fowl's thigh are to be shared by the performer and the priest, the rest are consumed by those who attend the ceremony.

9. **Maikhlumaw** : To increase the productivity of their jhum, a family may perform this ceremony which is usually done in front of their jhum house. One pig and as many as 15 fowls are killed at the spot for sacrifice. In this ceremony their main endeavor is to propitiate the following gods by offering fowls and pig.

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| (1) Thuhnairau | 3 fowls. |
| (2) Mainohma | 1 Pig and a small hut. |
| (3) Khunohma | 1 fowl. |
| (4) Maichama | 1 fowl. |
| (5) Motaisa | 5 fowls. |
| (6) Mapomiaha | 1 fowl. |
| (7) Tuisongrong | 1 fowl. |
| (8) Songrong | 1 fowl. |

- (9) Chiahma. 3 fowls.
 (10) Longdrai. 3 fowls.,

This ceremony can be performed any time in a year.

10. **Kehang Bumaw** : This ceremony is performed for seeking recovery from all kinds of ailment. It is performed in the street near the performer's house for which a small hut is constructed. Two fowls, one for Burairau and the other for Bonirau and one pig for Buraha are required which are killed and the blood are poured on to the hut. The meat of these animals are cooked and consumed by the priest, his associates and the performer's family.

11. **Tanchawrawrimaw** : This ceremony is performed in a river or stream on behalf of drowned children. A small hut is constructed on the water side in which one egg is kept. Two fowls are also required which are killed and consumed by the attendants at the spot. A river or stream last visited by the child is usually selected for the place of ceremony.

12. **Longdrai** : It is a ceremony performed for the good of all members of a family. They performed in the outskirt of their village in which sacrifices of animals like two fowls, one pig are done; and the blood is kept in a small hut and the meat are brought to their house and consumed. Three eggs and three bottles of rice beer also are essential items for the ceremony which are consumed by the attendants.

13. **Katchamaw** : This ceremony is performed in the street for propitiation of evil spirit. Suihnairau to

whom two fowls are offered, one young pig to Buraha and two fowls to Tuisungrong. These animals are butchered in the street and they cook and consume the meat inside the performer's house.

14. **Tultaimaw** : This ceremony is performed by a family and it appears to be a sort of ritual augury. It is performed in the street near the performer's house. On a stream of flowing water artificially made for the purpose, one fowl and one goat are killed. The head of the fowl killed is kept on the head of the goat. The appearance of the goat's head then has a significance which augurs good or ill health to the family members. Ill health is indicated if the goat's mouth appears to be chewing betels and if its ear lobe has a jerking movement. If such things are not found they will have a sound health. The meat is cooked and eaten inside the performer's house by those who attend the ceremony.

15. **Phasaktham** : The word 'Phasaktham' means three brothers and therefore, the ceremony is performed mostly for three brothers. It can however be performed for a group consisting of a father and his two sons or a group of three persons. The number of persons cannot be two or four as it should be an odd number. In this ceremony they worship Buraha and two Bonirau. The ceremony is performed in the jungle near a big tree where two bamboo posts are pitched, one for Buraha and the other for Bonirau. An empty bamboo tube is kept up side down there. And also another bamboo post is pitched in the

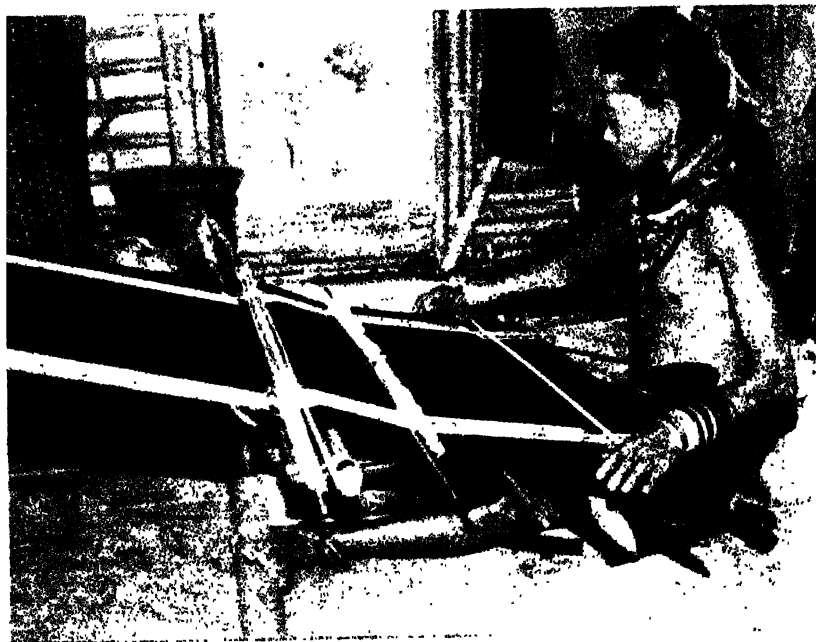
middle point between the two posts. After spraying rice flour around the bamboo post a young pig is butchered for an offering to Buraha. Two red cocks are also killed for an offering to Bonorau. The entire meat of the pig and cock is consumed by the priest and those who attend the ceremony at the spot. The number of person who attend the ceremony is normally five or nine including the priest and under no circumstances more than nine persons are allowed to attend the ceremony. If there is any surplus meat being left uneaten, it should not be brought to their house but be thrown away in the jungle.

16. Buraha ba Khawihmaw : It means persons taken away by Buraha. Like the previous one performance of this ceremony is done in the jungle and at the spot bamboo poles are pitched. An image made of straw is also placed there. In this ceremony the meat of animals killed at the spot is taken to other place for consumption. While leaving the spot no one should look back and for certain period to visit the spot is strickly forbidden.

17. Tandaririmaw : This is a kind of sacrifice performed for the recovery of a person suftering from fever, pespecially for persons attacked with fever immediately after taking bath. In oruer to please the spirits believed to have caused the illness, one young pig and six fowls are killed for offering. Three fowls are offered to the river, two fowls to Bonirau and one to Tuisika. A pig is also killed and

offered to Buraha. The meat of the animals offered is consumed on the river bank. A small house is constructed for a spirit called Tuikikau and also three small baskets are made for use in the ceremony. Tree leaves and cotton tied together with thread which have been kept hanging at the spot are taken and put together with one egg each in the three small baskets. The priest then chants and dance. The meat of animals killed is consumed at the spot. Any surplus meat being left uneaten should not be taken to their village and it should be thrown away in the jungle.

18. **Taulaphuihmaw** : In this sacrifice a white cock must be killed for an offering. This sacrifice resembles for previous one and is meant for curing persons suffering from any kind of fever and especially for patient with high fever.



A RIANG LADY ON HER LOIN LOOM

PHOTO BY · DAVID M. THANOLIAN

CHAPTER V

DRESS AND ORNAMENT

The traditional dresses of the Riangs are simple. Unlike the other tribes in their neighbouring areas, they are not accustomed to wearing shirt, coat and trousers till recently. The men's dresses consist of mainly a long and broad loin cloth and pawndri which is a small piece of cloth. The loin cloth is thick and coarse and is a comfortable garment for cold weather and winter season. It covers the upper part of the body, that is from neck to waist. The cloth is mostly whitish in colour or it may be stripe with cross or parallel line by using dyeing material obtained from the herbal plants. Pawndri is a tender and thin piece of cloth and is worn mainly for wrapping the private part. It is long enough to tie round the waist and fold down wrapping the private part and then the end is fastened to the back of the waist. The cloth is mill product and is procured from the market. These two types of cloth are worn during cold season. But most of the time the Riang men use to remain naked and only their private parts are under the cover of a small piece of cloth. This cloth is smaller than pawndri and it can hardly cover the private part. One end of the cloth is tucked at the string which has been tied round the waist and the other end is taken in between the thighs and then fastened to the string at the back of

the waist. Many Riang men particularly old men are always with this simple dress at home and in the field of work. Their ability to work in the field without any protective garment is noteworthy as they have so much endurance and persiverance to work under the scorching heat of the sun, rain, cold and mosquito bites. A thick cotton shirt of handmade cloth is also 'worné' by their men. This shirt is actually for wear while working. But having no other alternatives, some of them use to wear it even at home when they are off from their jhum work.

The traditional dresses of their women are long pieces of cloth called 'rinai' which covers the waist down to just above the knee and a breast garment called 'risa'. The cloth rinai is woven by them with a black surface and a broad red and yellow borders on the two edges. Besides these, at one end, a vertical red and yellow border are sometimes found. This type of cloth is more or less the same length as those of the Mizo puans but in breadth it is very much shorter and when put on it never go beyond their knee. The breast coverer 'risa' is a long piece of cloth woven by them with beautiful embroiders. This cloth appears to be superior to and more artistic than that of rinai.

In comparision with the male folk, the Riang women are more sticking to their tradition in dresses and most of them are still found to wear their typical traditional dresses. However, these days some of them put on blouses of mill product or even the

latest fabric. And some of them are seen wearing Mizo puans which make them quite similar with Mizo ladies. Many school girls also put on skirt and blouses and no longer desire to wear their simple traditional dresses. Their men are also found to have copied almost entirely the general apparels of the more civilised people although a few of them in the more interior places still wear their simple dresses while now many of them put on dhoti and kurta and sometimes shirt, coat and trousers.

All their traditional dresses except pawndri are woven by their women. The Riang women are expert and have their dresses like rinai and risa woven with beautiful embroidered work on their loom. The loom consists of spai, khandai, Beskesh and na and these implements are made by themselves from bamboo and wood. They rarely weave mill made thread till recently. They knew well the art of spinning cotton into yarn with their spinning machine chawkhaseil. But as the time passed now, they no longer like the coarse and thick thread made out of their chawkhasu which do not give them a thin and fine outfit and many Riang women purchase mill made thread from the market and weave for their garments. Some women also weave cloth exactly similar to Mizo Puans and put on as a special dress.

ORNAMENTS

The Riang women are very fond of ornaments and almost all their limbs and parts of their bodies

bodies are adorned with various kinds of ornaments. The most conspicuous of these are silver necklaces which they wear several number and besides these, they put on many other smaller necklaces some are made of plastic while others are made of plantain seed. Different type of necklaces are :—

- (1) **Chandra** : It is a costly one and is purchased from the market.
- (2) **Rangbanhsana** : It consists of a number of 25 (Twenty five) paise and (fifty) paise coins which are threaded together alternately. At the edge of each coin a loop is made with silver or other metal for threading.
- (3) **Masa duli** : In this necklace a number of only 50 (Fifty) paise coins are threaded together.
- (4) **Sarbu thuh** : This is also chain necklace made of brass or silver.
- (5) **Dana** : This is also chain necklace smaller than Sorbuthuh and is made of brass or silver.
- (6) **Chaima** : This is also a small necklace and is made of several small pieces of hard plastic which are threaded together.
- (7) **Tambui** : Generally, a woman wears 25 number of necklaces. Tambui is also a small necklace which form one item of the necklaces worn by a woman. It is made from plantain seed which after boiling, are cut into pieces and a small hole is drilled at the centre for threading. A set of seven varieties of necklaces constitute a com-

plete set of necklace which the Riang women wear at a time and it cover almost their whole neck and breast.

The ears of the Riang women are also not lacking in ornamental decoration, their ear ornament is not simple and it consists of mainly three pieces of silver. These are :—

- (1) **Nabauh** : It is a flat circular carring made of silver and is put on through a hole in the lower part of the ear. At the lower edge of the ring a number of twisted wires are suspended.
- (2) **Waphawm** : This is a hollow cylinder made of silver and is about $\frac{3}{4}$ inches diameter and about 1 inch in length. One end of the hollow cylinder is slightly heaped up which prevent the silver tube from falling when put on. It is put on in the upper part of the ear through a hole drilled for the purpose. In this hollow tube another piece of silver ornament called Warih is inserted.
- (3) **Warih** : It is a piece of silver about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length. The upper part is slightly bigger than the lower part and is tapering towards both ends and at the pointed head, there is a loop from which a small chain called phawrphawri is suspended and from the middle point also a loop is made for suspending two or three chains made of metal called warihdu. The lower part of it is inserted into the hole of wakhawm that is put on by fixing it firmly into the hole of the upper part of the ear lobe.

The typical Riang bracelet is a long flat piece of silver which is bended and twisted like a spring. The Riang call this silver ornament 'Yohsaw' and when put on it covers from the wrist to half of the bicep. The Riang women rarely wear other kinds of bracelet which is also made of silver. Both men and women are fond of rings which are mostly ordinary ones purchased from the market. Superior quality or costly metallic rings like gold etc. are rarely worn by them. For adornment of lower limb the Riang women wear bangles which the Riangs call 'baing'. This kind of bangle is made of silver rod about the size of a little finger and it is bended round just to fit the ankle. They usually put on one pair each in both the ankles and while walking the contacting metallic ornaments produce a sound which can be heard even from a distance.

The Riang women are very fond of flowers and always put various types of flowers on their heads and ears. They take good care of their hairdo by combing it properly and make a notch which is fastened by clipping it with hairpin called by them 'Sangaidy nang'. Sometimes beautiful flowers are attached to this hairpin for decoration.

CHAPTER VI

CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

(1) **Marriage** : The Riangs are an endogamous tribal community although there is no strong objection to marriage outside their tribe. In the earlier days they were in favour of clan endogamy or marriage within the members of near relatives. And that marriage between the progenies of the male members of a family was considered more desirable than that between the progenies of the male and female members of family. Up till today, most of the parents desire their son or daughter to give in marriage to the member of their near relative. However, marriage between the children of the same father has been considered a taboo. The reason of their desire to marry within near relatives was, as said by some informants, due to the fact that they want to make a strong bond of relation and a better kinship ties among the clan members. Now with the changes of time their population also increase and changes take place in various social life. Marriage is also not limited within the members of near relative or clan members. Many Riang boys or girls got married with members belonging to other tribes like, Chakma, Mizos etc. Parallel cousin or cross-cousin marriage which were prevailing in the past have also gradually declined.

In the task of selecting a life partner, neither the boys nor the girls play an important role in the past.

They were bound to obey their parents or should we say the boys or the girls should under no circumstances object their parent's advice or decision. Disobedience to parents will, regarding marriage with the choosen one, was considered a serious offence to the parents and society. Then those, especially girls, who refuse to marry the boys choosen by their parents always suffer a severe torture. However, now such a rigid norms or traditions no longer exist and their parents are also lenient to their sons and daughters and they are allowing them to have a free-mixing and have a choice for their life partner. In the past parents strongly disliked free-mixing of boys and girls in their absence. Now like the Mizo boys, the Riang boys go to the house of the girls and have courting which give them more chances for having a choice of their own.

The marriage system of the Riangs is more or less similar with that of the Tripuris. In general, the Riangs have two types of marriage. These are. (1) Moiseng—It is a system of marriage by giving a bride price. (2) Chamarui—It is a system of probationary marriage in which the groom stays among the bride's family for a fixed period. When a boy attains a marriageable age, his parents look for a suitable girl and when one is located, a person so engaged for the purpose called 'Andra' goes to the girl's parents and initiates the proposal for marriage. The word 'Andra' means go between and to do this task they select a very trustworthy person. In most

cases the boy's father's or brother do this task. When andra goes to the girl's house he takes with him bottles of rice beer and other things to be offered to the girl's family and tries his best to please them. If the boy's family is well off, he may carry more gift for the girl's family. At the time of negotiation, they settle all details including the date of marriage and number of pigs and other animals required to be killed for the ceremony. In the Chamaraui system of marriage the boy does not pay a bride price, but he has to pay all the expenses incurred for the ceremony and after the marriage ceremony is over he has to stay in the bride's house as one of the family members for a period ranging three to seven years according to agreement reached at the time of negotiation. Generally five year's time is demanded and if the girl is very beautiful a longer period say, seven years stay may be demanded by the bride's parents. During the period of his stay in his inlaw's house, the groom has to work so hard to the satisfaction of the bride's family and the couple live together as a man and wife and may procreate children. When the term of his stay is over, the groom goes out and start to live in a seperate house with his wife and children. In case the boy wants to stay in his parents' house before living in a seperate house, another ceremony must be arranged in which pigs and other animals are required to be killed.

In the case of marriage by a system of moiseng the groom does not have to stay in the bride's house

but he has to pay a bride price as it is practised among the Mizo society. The bride price in the Riang society should be fixed at Rs. 40 or 60 or 80 and so on, it should not be fixed at Rs 30 or 50 or 70. This type of marriage has not been favoured by many parents since a long time before and as such they prefer chamarui system of marriage. Marriage by elopement also sometimes occur. In this case, the couple secretly leave the village and take their abode in the jungle or any place where they will not be disturbed by anybody, and after having a conjugal life for certain period they return to their parents who negotiate and settle their marriage either by a system of moiseng or chamarui.

Among the Riangs monogamy has been considered the only desirable form of marriage, but in the past there were cases of polygamy in which polygamy was more common than that of polyandry. The Riangs are although patriachal in nature but the system of marriage by Chamarui that has been adopted by most of them, is more or less a form of Matriachal. Divorce is very common, however, a divorcee is allowed to remarry. A woman, who has been divorced twice is never given a bride price at the third marriage. In case of the death of husband, his wife cannot marry another man unless and until the disposal of the bones of her deceased husband is completed. A widower is also not allowed to remarry before completion of ritual ceremony on behalf of his deceased wife. Any one violating this Custom

can be punished in terms of monetary fine. Among the Riangs child marriage is unknown.

(2) **Birth** : During pregnancy a ceremony is performed so that normal delivery can be had well in time. In this ceremony the priest performs an angury to determine whether the baby will be male or female. The task of delivering a baby is done by certain persons who are now called kumaiuh. These persons receive Rs 5/- per delivery from the family of the baby. Immediately after the birth of a child no ceremony is performed. But after getting healed of the baby's umbilical cord they perform a ceremony known as Bakahchamaw. At child birth if the placenta got struck off, the mother's belly is tied with a midrib of a plantain leave. Then as a result the placenta comes out. For certain period after child birth, the mother is restricted to take heavy food and only simple food like rice and salt specially cooked should be taken by the mother. On the occassion of a child birth a special oven is made for the mother and the child and this should not be damaged unless and untill the umbilical cord is healed.

DISPOSAL OF THE DEAD :

The dead body is cremated by the Riangs. When death occurs to a person a long process of rite is performed till disposal of the uncalcined bones. When a person dies all relatives are informed and they assemble in the house of the deceased. Immediately after death the wearing apparels of the deceased is stripped off and the body is washed with

water and then covered with cloth. Hair oil is applied to the hair of the deceased and properly combed. In case of male, a new dhoti and in case of female a new cloth called 'risa' to cover the breast and other part are used. The family and near relatives of the deceased sit round the dead body and the mourners offer coins and various kinds of food which are then kept on the corpse that has been placed on a new mat. Like the Khasis, the Riangs also offer different kinds of food to the departed soul. In honour of the dead they kill fowls and the meat with other edible food like tubers, maize etc. are placed on the dead body. These offerings are made out of pity on the dead and in order to console themselves thinking that the one who dies did not eat those food during his or her life time and it will be consumed by his/her soul.

After finishing a lot of ritual ceremony the corpse is taken out from the house. Carrying the corpse they go round five times in the street and then proceed to the place of cremation. The procession is led by the deceased father. ¶All the way from the house to the cremation ground rice, salt and cotton are spreaded. This is done so because of their belief that the soul will not go astray and trace out the path to the place of cremation. On arrival at the place of cremation, two persons both carrying a fire torch move round the pyre two or three times, in opposite direction. Just before this, the priest (bawlpu) examines the dead body and determine the cause

of death. After ascertaining the cause of death, the corpse is laid on the pyre. The number of the layer of the pyre varies for male, female and children. Generally five folds of wood for man and seven folds for a woman respectively. While the priest chant the pyre is lit with the fire torch by close relatives of the deceased. If the corpse is not completely burnt away persons engaged for the task can be fined amounting upto Rs 30/- The day after cremation takes place, the bereaved family and their relatives visit the spot and look out if the fire cease burning and collect the uncalcined bones. Then they make a small house called smungnoh at a distant where the smoke of the burning pyre should have not reached. Inside this house, the uncalcined bones which have been wrapped with fine white cloth are kept hanging. Every morning of the following three days, the bereaved family take fire torch to this small house and also put rice, home made cake and meat there as an offering to the departed soul. On the last and third day fish curry is considered to be one of the item of the curry. If they find any footprint of human being on the road to smungnoh they conceive the soul of the dead has reincarnated into human beings. In case of the dead of female, a basket generally used by the female folks containing rice beer, food materials etc. and in case of male a small basket (Mizo called Paite reng) containing various kinds of food are kept hanging inside the house of the bereaved family. This is done as a token of

grief for the sad demise of their dear one. Like the Mizos to console the grief and sorrow of the deceased's family young bachelors sleep in their house for about a week. Another small house is also constructed beneath the house platform of the bereaved family. During three days starting from the next day of cremation various kinds of food are kept inside this small house on behalf of the departed soul. Any one breaking this house can be punished with monetary fine. The matter is however, to be reported to the head of the village, Chaudhury who will try the case.

The uncalcined bones that have been kept in the small house can be disposed of only after a week and before that it is not allowed to do so. Before the date for disposal of the bones is due, the bereaved family invite all villagers, friends and relatives from other villages also to attend the ceremony. In advance they prepare a lot of rice beer and cakes. On the day of the ceremony, they go to the river bank and select a suitable place there for the purpose of performing rites. A lot of people go there and particularly old women going there are supposed to take with them bottles of rice beer and failure to do so is regarded shameful.

At night before the day for disposal, the bones that have been wrapped are taken to the platform of the bereaved family. No sooner had they opened the wrapped bones than they began to weep and drink rice-beer and then dance. Every one present

there is asked to dance. Towards day break, the priest killed fowl and takes out its intestine. On this intestine the priest performs an omen determining the future of the bereaved family whether it will be good or bad.

In the morning pigs and more fowls are killed. The meat that have been cooked are taken to the spot at the river side. The uncalcined boned are kept at the centre of the spot and round it are the cooked meat. Near relatives and the priest sit around and perform a lot of rites amidst chanting. Meanwhile at one corner some of the attendants consume meat while others eat cakes at the other corner. At the same time drinking of rice beer is going on which is distributed in bamboo cups. Some time after finishing rituals and feasting the bones are taken and kept in a small boat made of bamboo. Various kinds of food like rice, cakes meat etc. are also put near the bones. When they release, the boat is taken by current of water for along distance and than they let the bones and all the food stuff spilt into the water. The bones are now disposed of and the attendant return back to the house of the bereaved family while a group of persons called 'taukha' stay behind. This party after having a thorough search collect bottles of rice-beer which are intentionally left behind or hidden at the spot by some who have returned earlier. The taukha party after consuming rice-beer, proceed dancing towards the house of the bereaved family and on their way they are intercepted

by a group of persons who have gone ahead of them. A bamboo pole is then placed on the ground and this serve as a barrier, that is, one party on one side and the other party on the otherside. Then and there dancing competition is held between the two parties. After this they consume lot of rice-beer which is provided by the bereaved family and this is followed by feasting.

Disposal of uncalcined bones has a significant importance for a widow and widower. In case of a husband's death, his wife should strip off all her ornaments like bangles, rings, earrings etc. and she is not allowed to sing. If she sings a monetary fine can be imposed on her. These restrictions are in force since the death and till disposal of the bones of her deceased husband is completed. Similarly in case a wife dies her husband is restricted to sing or to have courting with a girl or women. A widower who is found courting with a girl during the restricted period is treated to have committed adultery. A widow or widower under no circumstances can remarry unless and untill disposal of the bones of his or her spouse is completed. Any one who break this custom is punished by depriving of all his or her properties and he or she is not allowed to attend the ceremony for the disposal of the bones of his or her decess spouse.

FREE-MIXING OF BOYS AND GIRLS :-

In earlier days Riangs boys and an girls rarely indulged in free mixing. As such courting as practised by the Mizo boys and girls was almost nil amongst them. The parents as well as the society strongly dislike and felt obnoxious to find a boy and a girl to have courting in the absence of any other persons. A girl who was found courted by a boy always suffer a severe scold by her parents. Free-mixing of boys and girls in absence of their parents is treated shameful. Some informants tells while there is practically no courting amongst the Riangs boys and girls of southem Mizoram, the Riangs in the north have a sort of courting. In the later case at night a boy stealthily goes to his prospective lover and sleep beside her. When all the girls family are asleep the boy tries to have sexual intercourse with the girl. If the girl does not consent or dislike, the boy cannot force her to fulfill his desire. Unless under no circumstances should the boy seduce or molest her. A monetary fine can be imposed on him for commission of such act.

Amongst the Riangs, when a boy and a girl fall in love each other, their love and mind are manifested by action and through eyes. As they have no chance of meeting, they have a go-between which the Riangs call 'Andra' who conveys and does the talking about clandestine love affairs to both of them. If a boy really loves and wants to marry his lover,

he would present her 'Nawkhai' (a comb) as a token of genuine love. In some cases when the parents found them really in love and will be matching for a husband and a wife, they allow freemixing of the two who go together to river or any place of their choice. There, they discuss and settle all about their marriage. After this 'Andra' go to the girls parents to initiate arrangement of marriage.

Although their society strongly disfavour free-mixing of boys and girls pre-marital sex-relation is not uncommon. However, cases of illegal pregnancy are very much look down upon by the society. Then if the girl get pregnant, the boy is pressed and deemed to marry her. Therefore, almost all cases of illegal pregnancy ended in marriage. In case the boy does not marry the girl who has got pregnant because of him, he has to pay a fine of Rs 120/- and out of this amount Rs 30/- will be shared by the pregnant girl and the rest will go to Choudhury and his council of elders.

DANCES AND MUSICS

Dances and Musics are an integral part of the Riangs. They are very fond of dance and have various kinds of dances. Jovial and emotional people as they are, the Riangs, particularly the male folks can easily dance any moment either for amusement or for a joke. Some Riangs men use to manifest their joy or happiness by dancing. The female-folks

as well as the male folks are also prompt and good in dancing. They always make themselves a good counterpart to their male members in dancing whenever required. Men and women dance together or separately on all occasions of festivals and ceremonies. Dance makes one of the main feature of the occasion big or small. Even when there is bereavement some of them perform dances, but not for amusement nor for making merriment, it is rather to console the grief and distress of the deceased's family. Dances during this period are therefore, performed solemnly. However, the ceremony for disposal of bones is always spend away with lot of dances. Every one present there, adult and children alike participate in the dance. Like any other tribe, the Riangs are also lovers of music. Without music they can hardly dance as some of the dances require the beat or tune of music. We shall however, first deal with various kinds of dances which the Riangs use to performed. These are enumerated below:—

1 Da'lo (Dal) : In this dance, the dancer moves around imitating the movement of a stick or spoon while in use for stirring dal which has been cooked. Both men and women dance together and sometimes men only perform this dance. Men and women stand in a row and move and dance together to the accompaniment of a drum being beaten by two persons. The dancers move round encircling the drum beaters in the centre. This dance is usually performed on occasions of festivals like Buisu, during sacrificial

ceremonies and at drinking place. The dance is quite enjoyable and is mainly for amusement.

2. Mairang Phawrmaw : (Mairang = plate or dish; phawrmaw = to warp)

It is a dance by holding plate or dish with a hand which is raised or hold up and the dancer moves a round. Although there is no specified time for performance of this dance but it is performed mostly sometime after finishing harvest, when they have a chance to meet each other with friends. They dance together to amuse themselves and both sexes participate in the dance. The same is also sometimes performed at a drinking place. Among the dancers, the best performer is selected to lead the party and only the leader here will carry and warp a dish while dancing, the other dancers need not carry plate or dish.

3. Maiung tui taumaw : The meaning of the words: Maiung is elephant; tui is water; taumaw is to wade. In this dance, the dancer imitates an elephant wading in the water. This dance can be performed any time by both sexes except during sacrificial ceremony.

4. Huhlau bath khlahmaw : In this dance, the performer dances and make a move as if a gibbon is moving in tree. There is no specified time for the dance and it is mainly performed by male folks only. A group of dancers or say, performers of Goroia dance use to perform this dance.

5. Atauh krai mai khuimaw : This is a kind of dance in which the performers move as if a group of parrot hovering over the rice field. The dance is usually performed by both sexes and also by Goroia party. The dance is mainly for amusement and is performed after harvest and also when there is less pressure for jhum work. An individual also may dance while enjoying drink.

6. Kaiskau iauh : The meaning of the words : Kai skau is Village head; iauh is women. This is actually a dance for the women and is normally performed by female folks. Sometimes men also wearing women's dress use to perform this dance.

7. Slam or Dishu Khuimaw : The words 'Slam' is used by the Riang northerners and 'Dishi' by the southerners for the name of an implement for catching prawns fishes in the river or stream. While performing this dance the performer moves and swings his or her hands, head and body as if he or she is catching prawns or fishes with slam or dishi. This dance is performed as and when they feel like. Although it is regarded as a dance to be performed by their women only. But their men also sometimes perform this dance.

8. Bawdawl Sungmaw : The meaning of the words 'Bawdawl' means bottle and 'Sungmaw' means to place on the head. Of all the Riang dances, this dance is the most popular. The dance is performed only by their ladies in a group or individually. As

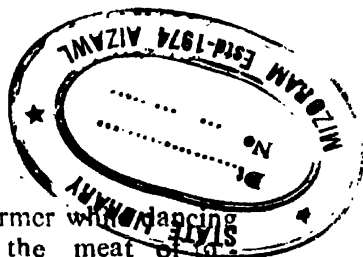
the name implies, in this dance, the performer keeping a bottle on her head stands on a pot of clay that has been kept upside down on the ground, and also a lighted candle is kept on the bottle that has been kept on the head of the performer. Then the dancer, standing on the pot swings her hands and hip. This dance is normally performed during Buisu festival and also ceremonies in connection with disposal of uncalcined bones.

9. Khamsumang : This dance is performed by both men and women together and it is never performed individually. It is one of the dance always performed by a group of dancers, Goroia party. On all occasions and particularly Buisu festivals are an ideal time for the performance of this dance. Although the dance is usually performed for an amusement but it is also performed at the time of bereavement.

10. Remsi Phawrmaw: The words 'remsi' means hankerchief and 'phawrmaw' means to wave. In this dance the performer waves hankerchief and then moves around. This dance is also performed by Goroia party.

11. Churui mai chamaw : The words 'churui' is a kind of small bird and 'mai chamaw' is to eat food. So, the performer, while dancing show the manner how the small bird takes its food. This dance is also performed by Goroia party.

12. Kerang Kauhmar : The words 'kerang' means tortoise and 'Kauhmar' means cutting into pieces.



This is a dance in which the performer ~~with dancing~~ shows an action of a man cutting the meat of toise into pieces

Besides the dances mentioned, the Riangs have a number of dances of which the names, time and place and who perform the dances are mentioned as follows in a tabulated form :

Sl.No	Name of the dances	time/place	partic'pant
1.	Kital rauhbisi khuihmaw	Any time	Women only
2.	Chamrang phawimaw	Any time	Both men and women
3.	Hamcham pringmaw	Any time	do
4.	Atauh mai tumaw	In the street	Men only
5.	Tauphing khlawl bawl sumaw	do	do
6.	Uahsa sa singsaw phumaw	do	do
7.	Muhkhra bawl Phumaw	do	do
8.	Sawila mai ka iahmaw	do	do
9.	Tang ia ma chamaw	do	do
10.	Kawl kaimaw	do	do
11.	Tauching baihmaw	Any place	Both men and women
12.	Misa ribam misa maw	do	do
13.	Maitawiha sihmaw	do	do
14.	Rangdehmaw	During disposal of bones	Men only
15.	Jara ri kawmaw	In the street	Both men & women
16.	Changramaw	do	Men only
17.	Tank tumaw	no	do
18.	Muhkhra mai saihmaw	do	do
19.	Sakcha ma baih maw	Any place	Women on yl

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|----|---------------------|
| 20. Tauching chawng baih
'maw | do | Both men &
Women |
| 21. Msa broiimsa maw | do | Women only |

Above all the dances mentioned, there is Goroia dance. This dance is actually a collection of dances. As stated by some informants the dance is originally performed for propitiation of an evil spirit. Matai'. The dance is, however, as stated by some informant taken from the neighbouring Bengali people. Gorois is one of the greatest and most popular dances of the Riangs. To perform this dance, a group of dancers exclusively male folks, young and old form a party, women never participate. The party has a leader who carries with him a spear. At the pointed end of the spear a cloth called 'Risa' is tucked. The spear is pitched at the centre of the spot and then the dancers dance encircling the spear. While dancing a drum is beaten by one person specially engaged for it. At one place they perform various kind of dances mentioned in the foregoing pages and after that they go to other place and perform again various items of the dances. In this way the party also called 'Goroia party' move about in the street of one village to another, This dancing party is formed during the occasion of their greatest festival called 'Buisu' which is coincided with the Hindu new year's day. On this day when they go to other village, as a rule, they first of all dance in street near the village head or chief. Then only they go to other places in the street of the village. After performing the dances

at every place they collect cash or whatever gift from the owners of the houses nearby and also from the spectators. After that the party headed by the leader proceed to other place in the street of a person who is well off and is expected to be able to give money or any other thing for the show. When the party is about to move from one place to another, the leader of the party recites words telling about their movement and also the dancers chorus whatever uttered by their leader. The words cited are as follows :

Gore Raja chawlte chai
Amini buitaw chai,
Gore Raja buitaw mani le,
Goroia Raja mani le,
Khalar hawla sap kawraw,
Gorea Raja mani le,
Gorea Raja chawlte chai
Jawl bwa gotide,
Dual mo sukti khai,
Theng bang giané chawl

As mentioned earlier, the Riangs are also fond of music too. Music is a part and parcel for all kinds of dances because musical sound dictates the movement of the dancers. Without the accompaniment of music no dance can be performed enthusiastically and lively. Unlike the Mizos and the other sub-tribes they rarely use gongs of any kinds. They use and play musical instruments of their own

indigeneous made like kham, Chawpreng, srenda, sumu etc. Inspite of their fondness of music they don't have many kinds of musical instruments which are to be played or used during their festival, ceremonies and at any leisure time. Among these four, the most popular one is drum. Which the Riang called 'Kham'. It is made of wood, some are barrel shaped while other may be tapering a bit toward both ends and slightly bulging at the centre. The wood about 20" long is made hollowed out and the wall is made thin enough by chopping off its layers with hoe to reduce the weight. For the membrane goats skin is used. The skin to be used is first soaked in water and when it is soft enough it is cut into two pieces and both the pieces of skin are then stretched over both ends of the hollow cylinder. Both the skins are tied from each end with canes or the skin itself specially cut for the purpose. Tightness of these canes or skin determines the tune or key of the drum. Of all the musical instruments drum is the first and foremost requirement for performance of dances. The speed of a dance may vary according to the speed of the drum. Besides playing it during festival and Ceremonies, an individual may play at his leisure time. A drum is also advantageously utilised by the Riangs during weeding season. Chawpreng is a kind of quiter and is one of the most popular musical instrument in Riang society. It is made of wood, one side is hollowed out and the other side is made almost round. The mouth of the hollow side is covered by tin or skin something like drum

face. The handle runs out from one end and about two or three inches of the end is made slightly bending out in which four holes are drilled. In these holes four pegs of wood are fixed. These pegs are the machine heads with which the strings are fastened. Strings are of Jungle creepers strong and thin enough to act as a guitar string. Two pieces of wood or bamboo are placed under the string so that they may not touch the body. While playing the player presses the string against the wooden handle for tuning, something like a guitar. Besides playing during festivals and other important occasions the boys use to play it in their leisure time. However, now, the Riangs boys in Mizoram play not only Chawpreng but also western guitar which are now common to almost all Mizo tribes.

Srenda : It is a sort of one stringed violin. The shape, size and how it is made is almost similar with that of Chawpreng. For the string a kind of creeper obtained from the jungle is used. It is played by rubbing the string with another string tightened like a bow.

Flute : The Riangs call 'Sumu' is one of the popular musical instrument played by them. It is made out of between two nodes of a bamboo. Its length varies from 1ft to 1½ ft. At one end of the bamboo tube a piece of wood is inserted so as to make a small aperture through which the player gives in a blow. Toward the other end holes are drilled. The player blocks these holes with his fingers to produce

different tune. Some flutes are made without cutting off one of the nodes and near this node a hole is made for blowing in. Flutes are played mostly by men at any time. Almost all the male folks are good in playing it. It forms a good component of music especially while dancing.

FESTIVAL

The Riangs do not have festival of their own origin except 'Buisu'. This too is believed to have originated from Bengalee people as the festival comes on the Hindu new years day. The possible reason why the Riangs have less occasions of festival is that they have too many ceremonies and sacrifices which are required for getting recovery from various kinds of ailments as well as for the good of crops and the people themselves. It appears therefore, that festivals have no place in their society. However, performance of some ceremonies and sacrifices are more or less the same with that of observance of festivals. For instance, the ceremony in connection with disposal of uncalcined bones is done with dance, drinking of beer and a grand feast. Every body young and old in the village enjoys the ceremony. The scene of the ceremony appears to be so similar with that of festival. Secondly, Basi puja, although it is a sacrificial occasion in which there is performance of a long ritual processes yet it appears to be a religious fair. Large number of people from

various places attend and enjoy the occasion with drinking, dancing and feasting. Those who have rivalry make reconciliation while some others make friendship and establish good relation with one another. They therefore, use to spend this puja in festive mood. Besides these, the Riangs have a number of ceremonies and sacrifices and all these entail certain expenditure. The institution of these expensive traditional practices laid a great hardship on the poor and economically backward Riang tribe. The Riangs feel necessary to perform those sacrifices or ceremonies several times in a year for curing illness, for good health of a baby, for the good of crops and so on. There is therefore, hardly any chance for observing festival or to institute in their society. So, their only festival called by them 'Buisu' is observed and celebrated in a year.

To observe 'Buisu' rice beer, cake and any other things for the day are prepared well in advance. It normally last for two days, the first day is mainly for preparation for the second day which is the actual day of the festival. The first day is called Hari Buisu on which all required animals are killed and collection of rice beer, cake etc. are also done and are stored in the house of the village Choudhury (headman). In doing all these preparation they may have sufficient time for dancing, drinking etc. on the actual day.

On the second actual day all collected beers, cakes and any other things are distributed to every one in

the village. They therefore, enjoy drinking, dancing and feasting. The day is free for mixing boys and girls, man and woman, and observance of their rigid customary law is lifted to some extent. The popular dance on this day is Goroia dance which is performed by male members only. The dancing party go to their neighbouring village to perform the dance.

CUSTOMARY LAWS

All their internal affairs and disputes are settled according to their own customary laws. The enforcing agencies of their laws are the Choudhuries or Kharbaries with the Council of elders in their administrative unit i.e. in each village. Amongst the Riang the most common cases are adultery and disputes between a husband and a wife. Frequent occurrence of these cases are attributable to their economic backwardness and poor condition of living in which there can be ample chance for meeting of both sexes isolately in the field of work or at home. This offence is severely dealt with and the society look down upon those who commit adultery. In case of adultery committed by a husband with a girl, at the time of trial he is asked to make decision whether he will marry the girl or continue to have his wife. According to his decision, the amount of fine may varies, if he wants to desert his wife he has to pay more fine, generally fine for punishment of this offence is Rs 30/- for woman and Rs 30/- with pig

for man respectively. A widow or widower is also treated as committing adultery if he or she remarry before completion of funeral processes of her deceased's spouse. The same punishment is also instituted on a widow or widower for committing this offence.

Unlike their neighbouring tribes illegal pregnancy which the Riangs called 'Santoh' is rare amongst them. This is apparently due to less chances of free mixing for boys and girls and most cases of illegal pregnancy are settled by making arrangement of marriage of the pregnant girl and her boy lover. In case the boy does not want to marry the girl who bears his child he is inflicted a monetary fine of Rs 60/- and a pig. The fine for illegal pregnancy is therefore more in the Riang society than that of among the Mizos. The amount of Rs 60/- appears to be a small sum for the present time but is a large amount in the earlier days which an individual could hardly clear up. In addition to this amount a pig is also always imposed as a fine. So punishment of illegal pregnancy on a boy is very heavy and is more than a double considering the amount of fine amongst the the Mizo society. Why a pig is always imposed as fine by their ruler is that almost all families of the Riang rear or domesticate pig. When Choudhury or Kharbari and their staff are tired of trying cases, they use to impose pig which is always readily available from the accused's family for their consumption. If a man forcibly takes away the wife of another man and marry her, he is punished by imposing on him a fine of Rs 60/- and a pig.

In this case giving of a pig as fine is a must whereas in other cases payment of Rs 5/- instead of a pig can be accepted. Cases like 'Inusami' the Mizos call Lawithlem, is also not uncommon amongst the Riang. This is, if a man stealthily tries to have sexual intercourse with a girl or woman with whom he has no formal courting, he is said to commit Inausami. Trying to fulfil his sexual desire, a man may act as if he is the girl's lover or women's husband and in the dark the girl or the woman may not be able to recognise him. Fine for punishment of of this offence varies according to the seriousness of the case.

Thuiangkamaw is a case almost equivalent to 'Khumpui tihbawlhhlawh man' amongst the Mizos which means defiling of one's bed. But the Riang generally do not use a bed for sleeping and their main sleeping place is on the floor opposite to the hearth. If a man in his attempt to make love with the girl touches with his feet the beddings of the girl's family he is accused of defiling the beddings. The offender is punished with a fine of Rs 30/- plus one pig.

As stated before, amongst the Riangs there are many cases of strain relation between a husband and a wife. The Riangs although belong to a patriachal society many Riang wives behave out of the control of their families. Sometimes the behaviour of some wives with other men arouse suspicion and jealousy of their husbands. Such state of affairs usually

resulted a dispute between a wife and a husband and subsequently led to the beating of a wife. Petty cases of these sorts are always settled by the elders of both families without referring it to the Choudhury. Only serious cases like when the marriage bond of a couple is broken the matter is reported to Choudhury for trial. When a wife deserts her husband at her own will she divorces him. She has no right to claim and take her belongings, she is accused and she had to pay a fine of Rs 60/-. The same case amongst the Mizos is called 'Sumchhuah' according to which a wife has a liberty to leave her husband but the whole of the bride-price that her husband has paid to her parents and relatives must be returned to him. Whereas the Riang wives has no liberty to leave their husband at will and those leaving their husbands are blamed and accused by the society. As such punishment with a monetary fine is instituted for the doer of this social taboo. The same punishment is inflicted to husband who deserts his wife.

Sikhau, which means 'theft' is also a common crime amongst the Riangs. Because of their poverty, the Riangs have a few valuable properties at home and therefore, theft case within a village is more or less negligible. Most cases of theft are stealing of jhum product like cotton, rice, sesamum, etc. which can be easily sold in the market. Harvested rice stored in the jhum house is also always stolen. All cases of these are tried in the court of 'Choudhury' and an amount of fine for punishment varies subject to the seriousness of the case.

INHERITANCE

Since the Riangs belong to the Patrialchal society, inheritance of properties is also reckoned exclusively though the male line. Amongst the Riang there have been a few cases of dispute over inheritance of properties. The simple reason is that they are economically poor and have a few valuable properties. Moveable properties like utensils, fowls and cattle are distributed by a father to his sons when they establish a nuclear family. And also immoveable properties like land, garden are given by a father to his sons when they attain maturity and live in a separate house, generally the youngest of the brothers shares more properties than the elder brothers. Like the Mizos the youngest son stays in the house of his parents and looks after them. When the parents died the youngest son automatically become the head of the family and all the properties left by the parents go to his share. In case a father has no son and all his issues are daughters his properties are shared equally by all his daughters. If a couple has no issue, after death, their properties are inherited by the husband's brother or father or nearest relative in the line of the father.

When a man dislike his wife and divorce her, he will forfeit all properties and children, which will go to the possession of his wife.



RIANG LADY CARRYING WATER
(Gours in Baslet)
PHOTO BY : DAVID M. THANGLIANA

CHAPTER VII

OCCUPATION

Although the Riangs largely depend on food, gatherings in their economic life their main occupation is jhuming which is their only food producing method. Some Riangs in Tripura are however, found to have been practising plough cultivation. But like the other tribes in their adjoining areas, non-availability of flat land compels the Riangs in Mizoram to do jhum cultivation which is also called shifting cultivation. This process of cultivation is practised mostly in the hill slopes once for a year and another plot of land is selected for another year. All cultivable land around their villages are then used one after another in a cyclic order. The longer the land remain unuse the more the fertile is the land.

The hardest task in jhum operation is cutting the forest which is done exclusively by their male folks with a sharp dao, and axe for cutting big trees. This is the initial stage of the operation before which selection is done with the performance of magical practices. One fine morning they go to a prospective land and clear a small place. A piece of bamboo is splitted into two halves which are then held and dropped on the ground. It is a good sign if one half falls obversely and the other half reversely. The same process is done thrice if the bamboo pieces do not fall in the desired manner. In case anything

contrary happen the site is abandoned and another site is sought. This performance is called Hook Oakha. After selecting the site, all trees, bamboos, herbs, shrubs, climbers and creepers are indiscriminately cut down. This operation is called 'Huh Hao' and is done in the month of January and first part of February. The land is then left to dry and in the month of March before the rain come firing is done. The ashes of plants all over the land help the soil fertile. Immediately after burning, they start sowing seed of vegetables and this work is done usually by women while their men are engaged in construction of jhum hut the Riangs call Kaireng'. By the middle of April, both men and women sow rice seeds which they call 'Maikai'. The 'Riangs particularly the male folks are remarkably expert and swift in sowing rice seeds. The tool used in sowing is a kind of dao having sharp end. In sowing work both men and women stand in line, everybody has a small basket containing seed and a dao in his or her one hand, the other hand puts the seeds into the hole dug on the ground. In this process they moved forward and both of their sides until they cover the entire field.

While sowing is finished, the weeds grow abundantly over the entire field hampering the growth of crops. Then the immediate work after sowing is weeding which is called 'Huh tang' and is done by all male, female, boys and girls, and this tedious work continues till the time of harvest. Weeding

implement used by the Riangs is a kind of dao having a sharp edge which is bended so as to make cutting more convenient. Weeding is sometimes jointly done by several persons; one or two from each family in the village participate, and one person is engaged to beat a drum and while weeding, the drummer moves here and there particularly to the back side of any one who does not catch up with others or is lagging behind. Here the main duty of the drum is to hasten all the workers in weeding work. In this way weeding is done in the jhum of every family one after another one day each. Generally weeding of the entire jhum field is done thrice a year. Meanwhile the crops grow and while the third weeding is over rice becomes ripe and they begin to start the work of harvesting called 'Mai ra'. Like any other tribe, the Riangs use sickle for harvesting and with it they cut the rice plant which are then held and tied with its leaves at the stalk and left elsewhere in the field for drying. After two or three days during fair weather they collect all the bundles of rice and store at a place so selected for threshing. Threshing is done by beating the bundles of rice one by one against the inside wall of a big basket called Kalang. This method of threshing is adopted by the Mizos in the western belt of Mizoram. Paddy, after threshing is brought to the jhum house by a head-load.

The main crops of the Riangs are rice (mai), maize (mawkonda), millet (Maisu), sesamum (sping).

These are the crops grown for their own consumption. Cotton (khul), Chilli (thansawh) and jute (paih) are their cash crop and these are grown abundantly. Cotton and Chilli are grown in the field among the other crops and sometimes the seed of cotton and rice are sown together, whereas a separate plot of land is spared for jute. The Riangs also use to sell sesamum if they have surplus. They grow various kinds of vegetables like, brinjal (Phanthau), pumpkin (Chakumra), Cucumber (Dramai), melon (bathai), bean (Kawhsawi) etc. and these vegetable are grown mainly for their household consumption.

Unfortunately, the practice of jhum cultivation can no longer give them enough yields to last even for a year since the fertility of their jhum land gradually decreases and also owing to increasing population a wider area of jhum land is required to be used every year and therefore, the jhuming cycle becomes shorter and shorter and the land has no time to regain its fertility. So due to the poor productivity of the land surrounding them, the Riangs gradually march towards poverty and now they can be said to be the poorest tribal community in Mizoram. Majority of them and particularly those living in the interior part of the territory live on wild roots and other jungle products for a substantial part of a year. When their stock of jhum product is finished their men go out and work as daily labour while their women go to jungle for collecting roots, fruits, young shoots and leaves.

Fishing and hunting also play a very important role in Riang' economy since these activities not only give them a sport to enjoy but also help them to maintain their livelihood as the fish caught or hunted animals are either sold or consumed. The Riangs are as a whole very fond of fishing and almost all aquatic animals are delicious to them. Crabs, snails, tadpoles, prawns etc, are all liked by them. For catching crabs they use a basket made of bamboo cane. The mouth of the basket is covered with another plaited bamboo cane having an opening for entry but no outlet, and inside the basket is kept a bait. The basket is then kept dipped into the water and some boulders are placed on it so that water current will not take it away. At an interval of a day or two, they go to the spot and take out the basket and collect the trapped crabs, and the basket containing the bait is again dipped into the water. Some fishes are also sometimes trapped in this basket.

The Riang's usual method of fishing are simple catching, poisoning, killing and trapping. Simple catching requires no tool but swift manoeuvring of hands. The Riangs are very expert in fishing and even with their bare hands they can catch a lot. For poisoning, an edible plant 'ankasa' called by the Mizos which is a species of composite is used by the Riang. The flowers and the plants are cut, crush and then thrown into the water. They also use a kind of creeper called Ruo in the same process. Other kind of creeper called entadae, pursathae and

climber called millitia pachycarpa are also used to stupefy fishes. Killing is a simple method but requires skill and swift handling of dao or spear. Trapping is a common method for which they use various kinds of implements such as Dul, Choka, Bangbu, Slam, Phahkhuai, Keda, Bohsui etc. These implements are of indiginous made and in addition to these, they use iron hook and net.

Dul is a kind of big trap made of thin bamboo cane plaited like a basket. It is dipped in shallow water and a bait is kept inside it. The fishes can enter easily but cannot go out. Choka is made of a piece of bamboo, one end of which is splitted and woven with canes and an opening is made at the mouth for entry of the fishes. It is dipped into the flowing water with the opening facing the current. Bangbu is a big trap made of thin bamboo strips woven with canes. It is oblong in shape and both ends taper gradually and closed. At the middle point of the ventral side an opening is made in such away that fishes can enter but cannot go out due to barbs like canes which are protruding inside. Some food for fishes are kept inside it and it is placed in the river bed with the opening against the current of water. Slam is a triangular shaped bamboo trap having wide opening in front and the back side tapers and closed. It is made of bamboo canes which are plaited with pores for outlet of water. It is usep when river or pond water is thrown out to make the fish out of water. This is done only during dry

season. A kind of basket called phahkuai is used for throwing water. Net purchased from the market or made by themselves are also always used for catching fishes.

Hunting of wild animals and birds also does not only occupy an important place in their economic pursuit but it also gives them an interesting sport. In their areas there are various kinds of wild animals such as deer, elephant, pig, buffalo, goat etc. and birds like fowl, dove, hornbill, pheasant, partridge etc. Then meat of all these animal is a good relish to them.

Their method of hunting are tracking, stalking, snaring, trapping and shooting. Their hunting implement includes various kinds of gun, spear and for snaring and trapping they have a well know-how the use of defferent kinds of snare and trap.

Tracking is a method in which several persons armed with guns, spears and dao participate. This method of hunting can therefore be said a joint venture in which however, the hunters are divided into two parties one party consisting of expert shooters armed with guns lie in wait at the other side of the area at different place where the animals likely to flee and the other party armed with spears and some with dao surround the area, move forward, make noise by beating forest and gradually reduce the circle. The service of a dog is also utilised in this method of hunting in which it is set on chase the animal. In their alarm the games run out of their

hide-out and flee to the other side of the jungle and finally fall within the range of the hiding shooters.

Stalking is a method operated individually. A hunter armed with a gun lie in wait by sitting on a platform which has been constructed on the branches of tree. The spot has to be selective and there must be something which should attract the animal. Therefore, it is mostly done in the jhum field where animals like deer, wild pig, elephant always come to devour their crops.

For killing birds the Riang boys always use bow and pellet. Bows are made of splitted bamboo which is bended by tightening a cane, the middle part of which is splitted and then plaited so as to give a strong stand for the pellet. Now, many of them have started using a piece of rubber both ends of it being tied to a forked piece of wood. The Riangs rarely use arrow instead of pellet. Only small birds are killed with bows and pellet.

The use of snare and traps is also an ingenious method for killing birds and animals. In comparison with the Mizos, the Riangs are as a whole less keen in using snares and traps only a few of them have interest, the know-how and art of using snares and traps. Some of the snares and traps used by the Riangs are more or less similar with that of the Mizos.

For sharing wild pig, deer, wild goat, they use a kind of snare for which a square hole is dug in the ground and is covered with pieces of bamboo and

then a noose made of palm fibres is placed on it, and the noose is covered with earth and leaves so that the animal will not recognise the trap. The other end of the noose is jointed with a creeper by making a notch and near about this is tied a peg of bamboo or wood which serve as a trigger as it is hooked to a stick that has been fixed firmly to the ground at one side of the pit. The bamboo peg is held by a small piece of splitted bamboo over which the noose is placed. Two pieces of dry wood are also placed at both edges of the pit so that the animal steps on the pit, the coverings collapse and the noose tighten the leg of the victim due to the pull of the creeper, the other end of which has been tied to a sapling. With the branches of tree and bamboo a low fence which may stretch for a long distance is made in the jungle where animals are believed to have their hide-out and at a regular or at every prospective route of the animal a small gap is left for setting the snare. To cover a vast area of jungle many snares are required to be set.

Different kinds of snares and traps commonly used by the Riangs are enumerated as follows :

(1) **Khuitch** : Khu means 'snare' and 'toh' means neck. So it is a snare with which killing is done by hanging in the neck. The same type of snare as called by the Mizos is Sahdal. The noose part is made of palm fibres which is lengthened by joining it with a rope made of the bark of tree called *Hibiscus macrophyllus*. The snare is set on the ground

with a piece of small tree which has been bended both ends being fixed to the ground. Wild fowls, black pheasants and partridges are killed with this snare.

(2) **Ballua** : The same snare used by the Mizos is Beai. The snare consists of a small rope made of cotton thread, pieces of bamboo and a black seed of bean which is kept as a bait in between a folded cane. It is set in the jungle and no fencing is required. Birds like wild fowls, black pheasant and partridges whichever come to eat the seed of bean are caught by the noose in the neck.

(3) **Kbnikhanthi** : This kind of trap is used for killing small birds and it is set near the fruit of tree. The snare consists of a string made of thread which is tied to a piece of cane or small rod that has been bended in the shape of reverted 'U' shape and the two ends are again bended and twisted making a base. One end of the string is tied to the upper side of the cane and the other end to the sapling. The bended cane is tied to a stick in front of the fruit of tree. The noose is tucked on another smaller stick which is placed for the birds conveniently to have its foot rest and eat the fruits which are tied together with small rope so that the fruits are very conspicuous and attractive. The snare goes off when the bird places its foot on the stick.

(4) **Mangkhawng** : This snare is of Mizos origin but the Riangs also always use it. One end of a big log of wood is suspended by tying it with a rope

from a smaller log over it the other end rest on the ground. The smaller log is supported by a forked post and the other end of the log is tied with rope and down below with the other end of the same rope a peg of wood is tied which is hooked to another stick, and the small peg is held by a long stick which is placed across the path of animals. Many pieces of splitted bamboo are laid over the long stick and when the animal steps on to the pieces of bamboo the trap goes off and the heavy log crushes on to the animal. Animals like squirrel, porcupine, rat and birds like dove, partridge are killed with this trap.

(5) **Jeh** : It is a kind of trap which releases a spear or pointed bamboo and sometimes it fires a gun to kill animals whichever come within the trap. The same type of trap used by the Mizo is called kar. The trap is set in a jungle track where animals are likely to go. According to the animals aimed at the level of the gun or spear is adjusted, for big animal it is fixed higher and for small animals lower. Elephant, deer, tiger, bear, wild pig and porcupine are killed with this trap.

(6) **Khuisora** : Khui means snare and sora means to stuff up. So it is a snare in which killing is done by stuffing up of the victim. Both ends of splitted bamboo are tied with a rope and two other pieces of bamboo one of which being inserted into the hole of the shorter one is made to be able to stuff up by the pressure of the splitted bamboo that has been

tighten with a rope. The lower end of the longer bamboo piece is baited and then tied with a small string to the shorter bamboo in such a way that the animal in its attempt to eat the food will also devour the string and as a result the longer piece of bamboo on being released crushes the victim against the node of the shorter bamboo. Squirrel, rat, and mouse are killed with this trap.

(7) Neel : This trap is set by using sticky or adhesive juice obtained from jack fruit tree or banian or fig tree. The sticky juice is besmeared on the branches of tree or bamboo which is taken to the field and erected near the paddy field. The leg, of the birds which have their feet rest on the tree or bamboo branches get stuck and the more the birds struggle to set themselves free their wing feathers also stuck off more firmly.

(8) Khuivakhal :— It is a simple snare and is set by stretching one end of a splitted bamboo. A small stick is used as a stretcher which can be easily removed even at a slight touch. Some food are kept as a bait in between the stretching bamboo. The snare goes off when the bird places its foot at the stretcher and the stretching splitted bamboo, clipped the victim.

(9) Khuiballeng :— This is also a simple snare. The word Khuib means trap and balleng means sieve. The trap is set by using sieve. One side of the sieve is suspended while the other side rests on the floor and food are kept beneath the sieve. Suspen-

sion of the sieve is made in such away that it is easily released when the victim comes under it for the food and after falling on the floor it leaves no hole for outlet. This trap is set at night inside their house for killing rat and mouse.

(10) **Kuitheh** :- .This trap is also popularly used by the Mizos who call it 'Thangchep'. A piece of bomboos is bended in a triangular shape and is fixed firmly to the ground. The noose is made by tying a rope loosely to the bamboo piece. A small peg of bamboo being tied to the rope is hooked to the head of the triangular shaped bamboo piece and is held by another small peg which has been tied with a fine palm fibre and the other end of this fibre is fastened to the base of the bamboo piece just at the middle point. When the animal touches the fibre, the snare goes off and the noose tighten the neck of the victim against the bamboo piece. This trap is usually set at the road side at all possible path of animals like rat and squirrel.

Cattle rearing also plays a significant role in their economic life. As a matter of fact the Riangs economy is based on the principle of selfsufficiency as such large-scale domestication of animals is not done by them. When they have surplus or in times of serious necessity they only sell their domestic animals. Piggery and poultry are done by almost all families. Pigs are kept in the ground floor under their house with fencing all around the house. The pigs kept like this serve as a scavenger as they cousume all

the waste and faecal matter thrown down through any pore of the floor or platform. Sometimes they allow their pigs to freely wander about to feed themselves. Pigs are reared mainly for its meat which the Riangs are fond of and sometimes they sell to earn money. Fowls are kept in a basket at night but during day time they are set free. The meat and eggs are their main cause of rearing and sometimes they go to the market for selling fowls and its eggs. Cattle like cows, buffaloes and goats are also their common domestic animals. Cows and buffaloes are reared mainly for their milk. Sometimes these animals are also sold to their neighbouring Bengalee cultivators who use the cattle in the work of ploughing and sometimes to the Mizos who are fond of its meat. The Riangs never eat beef but after conversion into Christianity many of them have started consuming beef. Goats are reared for their meat. As these three domestic animals do not require much care they are left to look after and feed themselves. They spend the day grazing in the jungle and come back in the evening to their owner's house. Dogs are also their common domestic animal and they are found almos at every house. The service of dogs is well utilised by the Riangs to guard their houses as well as their domestic animals from the attack of ferocious beasts. Usually, their villages are surrounded by thick forest where different kind of carnivorous animals like tigers, leopards, wild cats etc. live. These animals which come to devour their livestock are always driven away by their barking dogs. The

service of dogs is also employed in hunting. The dogs have a strong sense of smell and they can easily track out the animals hunted for. The Riang hunters are therefore, always successful when they use a well-trained intelligent dog in their game. Cats are also reared by many of them to devour rats and mice which use to destroy and eat paddy. They used to do taming of parrots and other species of bird.

FOOD AND DRINK

The cereal staple food of the Riangs is rice. They have no special way of cooking and like many other people, rice is boiled after a few minutes the water is thrown out and then the rice pot is kept over or by the side of the oven for warming. Some of them do not throw out the water for which less water is required. For cooking purpose, they use an aluminium pot and rice is cooked in one pot while vegetables and meat are cooking in a separate pot. Bamboo tubes are also commonly used for cooking and they prefer the use of bamboo tubes for cooking their special curry called by the Mizos 'Vaipaden'. When they go for work in their jhum or spend their time in the jungle for hunting or for other purposes the use of bamboo tubes for cooking is most common as these are easily obtainable. Unlike the Mizos, they rarely use clay pot for cooking purposes.

The Riangs take three meals in a day breakfast i.e. full meal is taken in the morning at about 7 O'clock; lunch; saza mai at about noon and an

evening meal, 'saru'mai' in the evening at about sunset. They never use plates or dishes for taking meal. Plantain leaves are spread on the floor and on these the cooked rice and curry are placed. After consuming the food, the plantain leaves are thrown away and at every meal new leaves are used. When they go out for jhum work or for hunting or fishing they carry the cooked rice wrapped up in plantain leaves for their midday meal. The Riangs are fond of hot curry and lot of chilli is added to every item of their curry. In the past they never used fat or oil for cooking and water was the only means of cooking. They have however, now started using mustard or rapeseed oil for cooking. A kind of rotten fishes called by them bermai (the Mizos call nghaum) is almost essential in all preparation of vegetables curry. One of their compulsory item of curry, chattani is prepared out of these fishes mixed with chillis and salt which are grinded in the dish of clay or wood. With this preparation alone the Riangs can have their meal deliciously. Jhum products like brinjal, bean, pumpkin, arum are their main curry. Jungle products such as young shoot of bamboo, soft layer of plantain and its fruit buds, the shoots and leaves of various jungle plants are also eaten by them. In times of famine wild yams and bamboo shoots are taken as food.

The Riangs eat different kinds of meat. But unlike the Mizos and the Nagas they never eat the meat of cat and dog. Bear's meat is also never eaten.

The meat of deer, wild pig, elephant and wild buffaloes are all favourite and palatable to them.

Different kinds of reptiles like lizards, snakes are eaten and amongst these python's meat is highly esteemed. Some of them use to take frogs. Locust and some species of cicadae are also consumed after putting them into the fire for a while. A kind of beetle and its larva (the Mizos call 'tuaingawt' and 'tuaingawt lung') are also eaten. Tortoise meat is very much liked by the Riangs and as these animals are always caught by their dogs they have more chance to eat the flesh. Aquatic animals like fish, prawns, crabs, snails, tadpoles are all delicious to their mouth.

The main drink of the Riang is 'aurah' which is a local made liquor distilled by their indigenous method. Almost every family distill liquor from rice and a particular kind of rice called 'Maimi' is preferred as more liquor can be obtained from it. In the past and up till recently no tea or any other kind of drink was known or consumed by them and therefore, arauh (liquor) was commonly drunk by both sexes either individually or in a group. They have no specified time for drinking however, sacrificial occasions and ritual performance are always accompanied by holding of drinking bouts. Drinking plays a very important part in their socio-cultural life as no ceremonial occasions are spent away without drink or should we say drinking is a part and parcel in their socio-cultural life. For all occasions of sacrifices and ceremonies, there is a prescri-

bed quantity of drink to be provided by the performer and failure to afford such requirement no ceremonies or a sacrifice can be performed. There are therefore, several occasions in which the Riang indulge in drinking publicly. Not only their men folk but also their fair sex use to drink a lot. The main cause of their poverty as attributed by some is also due to this customary institution which demand holding of community feast and drinking bouts too often. Even when they have no enough provision for the whole year, they don't bother much and make a lot of liquor and consumed. But inspite of their excessive indulgence in alcoholic drink, regular drinkers or real addicts are rarely found amongst the Riangs. This has clearly indicated that in their society there is an existence of well preserved discipline and code of moral conduct which every one of them is expected to abide by.

To make liquor the selected rice is first cooked and it is taken out and spreaded on the plantain leaves and allow it to remain cool for some time. Then a powder of yeast, to act as fermenting agent, is speaded on the rice which is kept for at least three days and nights. After three days the actual brewing starts and for this purpose, a flask made of gourd called *batitumi* the bottom of which has been drilled for the passage of vapour is placed on the pot that contains the fermented rice. The brim of the pot and the attatchment base of the flask is completely plastered with clay to prevent leakage of

the vapour. On the mouth of the flask is inserted a bamboo pipe called 'kakchaw' which is connected by another bamboo pipe called 'Sabaraw' which is slightly bended down making an angle of 40° and again this bamboo pipe is connected by another smaller bamboo pipe. From the opening end of this bamboo pipe, the vapour that has transformed into liquid comes out drop by drop which are collected by a pot or jug called 'Bangchi'.

Varieties of liquor : In all, the Riangs has six varieties of liquor which are listed down as follows :—

(1) **Chawhkhawmtui :** Before adding water to the fermenting rice there is some liquid extracted by the fermenting rice. This is called 'Chawhkhawmtui'.

(2) **Goba :** This is also a liquid extracted by the fermented rice and it is collected just before processing distillation.

(3) **Arauh :** This is the first product of distillation and it is the most common brand consumed by them. And as such the name is used generally for all other varieties also.

(4) **Barandi :** When Arauh is again distilled the product is called Barandi which is stronger than the previous one.

(5) **Jawr :** Barandi is again distilled into a finer one which is called 'Jawr' and this is stronger than the former.

(6) **Isprit :** This is the strongest and the finest one. It is made or distilled from Jawr. Preparation of

this brand has rarely been done as it requires a long process.

However now, other kinds of drinks are not unknown to the Riangs. They are fond of tea and many of them use to drink it not only at home but also in the tea stall etc. Like any other civilised society, tea is also drunk by them while visiting neighbour or while chitchatting with friends. They also never forget to give tea to their guest or visitors. Drinking of aurah which had played a very important part in their social life has now almost completely replaced by consumption of tea. Other drinks like squash, juice etc. are however not common.



RIANG GENTLEMAN WITH HIS BASKET.
PHOTO BY : DAVID M. THANGLIANA

CHAPTER VIII

HEALTH

The general health of the Riangs is poor. This is evidently due to their poor primitive condition of living. Up till recently the use of modern and sophisticated medical treatment was unknown to them. The simple reasons are that places of their settlement are outside the reach of Doctors, Pharmacists or any other medical practitioners and also the Riangs use to depend on religious rites and sacrifices for healing and curing of all types of ailments. The service of a specialised person called 'Bawidaw' who is expert in medicines prepared from various herbal roots and plants, is always employed by the Riangs. The same treatment has now been taken by some Mizo patients also. The reason of their poor health is therefore, attributable to their dependence on primitive method of treatment which does not give them practical cure.

Amongst the Riangs the most common diseases prevailing are: Cholera, Dysentery, Typhoid etc. Small pox cases are few. These diseases are fatal to them as their indigenous medical care is not effective. There are various kinds of sacrifices which have been mentioned in Religion Chapter. A particular kind of sacrifice is to be practised for a particular disease or ailments. Prescription or selection of these sacrifices for treatment of a patient are done by a Priest called 'Bawlpu' who conducts the whole

procedure. Not only for patient but also for good health and growth sacrifices are performed. Like any other people the Riangs also take much care for health right from the birth of a child for which various sacrifices are prescribed and performed. Only God knows how far these sacrifices help to take good care of their health. Considering condition of their living one would see that there is less chance to live a healthy life. Their backwardness both educationally and economically made them unaware the necessity to live a proper hygienic way. The house they live in are lacking proper sanitary arrangement. All the waste or refused matters are dropped down through any pore of the floor which remain decay under their house if not consumed by their livestock. They also don't bother much about cleanliness of their wearing apparels and bodies. They rarely used soap of any kind for washing their bodies and clothes. It is therefore clear that cleanliness as maintained amongst the more civilised people is unknown to them as it is the first and the foremost thing for keeping good health. It is also due to their ignorance and educational backwardness that the Riangs take less care of their health. For instance, their dwelling places are full of flies and mosquitos but they don't take precautionary measures to prevent from the bite of the mosquito and their edible materials from contact of flies. Because of this living condition various kinds of diseases simple or serious prevail amongst them without proper precautionary measure or remedy to check further out-break.

Regarding the life span of the Riangs, although no definite data is collected, it is said to be short. A very few Riangs are seen to have crossed the age of 60. Infant mortality and premature death are therefore frequent amongst them.

However, now, the Riangs also have come forward to the use of modern medicines. Their faith on their indigenous treatment is gradually fading and many of them started to approach doctor or any other medical Practitioners while some of them go to Hospital for treatment of their ailments. Unfortunately up till now many of them are unaware of the use of modern medicines which must be, as mentioned before, due to lack of contact with more civilised people who have been using modern medicines since many years back for treatment of their ailments.

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CORRIGENDUM

P — 1	Durinn	...	During
P — 4	Ther life	Their lives
P — 8	Enthnically	Ethnically
P — 8	Body structure	..	Body structure
P — 19	Conviniently	..	Conveniently
P — 20	And	....	And
P — 20	Remarhably	....	Remarkably
P — 25	Sett I ment	....	Settlement
P — 25	Under	..	Under
P — 27	Himsel	....	Himself
P — 31	Existencey	....	Existence
P — 41	Pesecially	..	Especially
P — 42	On	..	An
P — 43	Thier	..	Their
P — 51	Fishing	....	Finishing
P — 55	Afther	....	After
P — 55	Relatiues	....	Relatives
P — 56	Attehd	....	Attend
P — 59	Amost	....	Amongst
P — 60	pregn ant	..	Pregnant
P — 62	Exept	..	Except
P — 66	Informanta	....	Informants
P — 66	Pances	....	Dances
P — 66	Go lo	....	Go to
P — 68	Toword	....	Toward
P — 68	Advantgeosly	..	Advantageously
P — 73	Pregnaci	...	Pregnancy
P — 80	Abunantly	...	Abundantly

P — 80	Rigain	...	Regain
P — 81	Usal	....	Usual
P — 83	Defferent	...	Different
P — 90	Almos	...	Almost