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KHAWHAR ZAI:  
VOICES OF HOPE IN THE BEREAVEMENT  
SINGING OF MIZO CHRISTIANS IN  
NORTHEAST INDIA

Joanna Heath

Thesis submitted as a requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Music  
Durham University

2016

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# Khawhar Zai: Voices of Hope in the Bereavement Singing of Mizo Christians in Northeast India

Joanna Heath

## ABSTRACT

The Mizo people of, Mizoram, Northeast India have been predominantly Christian since the 1930's after a series of spiritual revivals that began in 1906. Today, the churches still have a prominent role in society, influencing many aspects of life as well as death. A Mizo death is sonically marked and signalled to the rest of the community by the singing of hymns in the home of the bereaved for at least three days and nights, drawing many members of the community to the home. The repertoire of hymns is called *khawhar zai*, composed by Mizo Christians between 1919 and 1930. This thesis studies the *khawhar zai* repertoire and its significance for grieving communities both at the time of its composition and in the modern Mizo context. It attempts to make an original contribution to ethnomusicological scholarship by exploring anthropological approaches to hope and nostalgia in the light of the theological fields of eschatology and evangelicalism. This is intended to develop an understanding of the expression of hope through funeral singing, particularly in the Mizo context but with wider implications for other Christian communities.

90,805 words.

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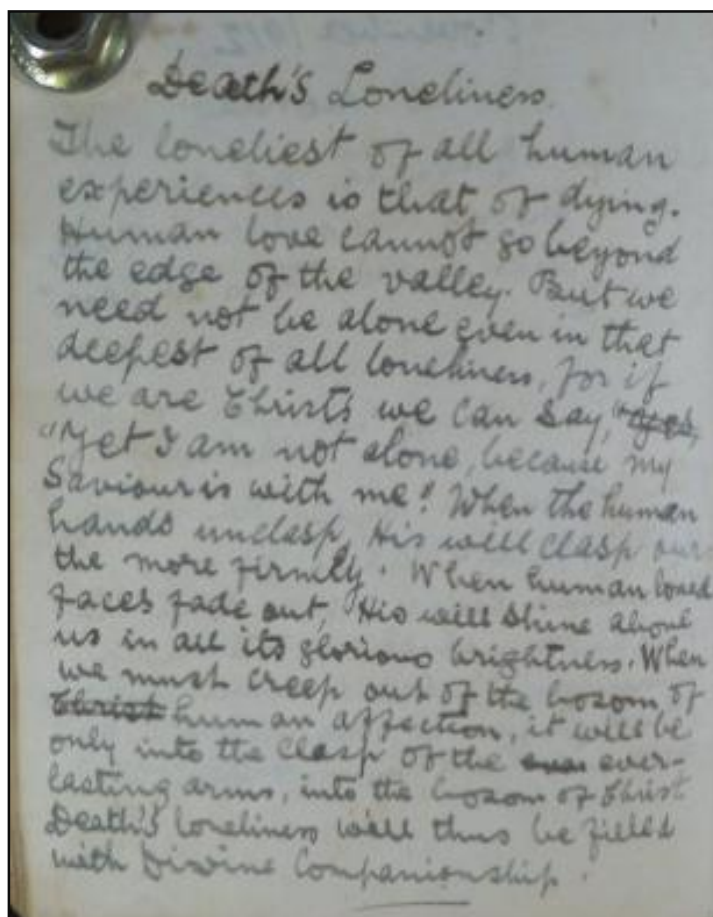
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*Dedicated to the memory of Audrey Jean Heath (1925-2014)*



'Death's Loneliness' from *Christian Character* by J.R. Miller (1840-1912).

*'The loneliest of all human experiences is that of dying. Human love cannot go beyond the edge of the valley. But we need not be alone even in that deepest of all loneliness, for if we are Christ's we can say, "Yet I am not alone, because my Saviour is with me!" When the human hands unclasp, His will clasp ours the more firmly. When human loved faces fade out, His will shine about us in all its glorious brightness. When we must creep out of the bosom of human affection, it will be only into the clasp of the everlasting arms, into the bosom of Christ. Death's loneliness will thus be filled with Divine Companionship.'*

Copied into a personal journal in 1912 by Dara, an early Mizo Christian (EAP454 19: 1).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is a testament to the many wonderful people I have encountered since I first arrived in Mizoram in September 2011. Little did I know then the extent to which Mizoram would become a part of my life. My heartfelt thanks go to all those who have guided me, helped me and given selflessly of their time and resources for the sake of my research. Many will remain unnamed but not forgotten, but most notably I wish to thank the people mentioned here.

In Durham, I could not have managed without the patient supervision of Professors Martin Clayton and Bennett Zon. I also thank the faculty, staff and students of Durham University Music Department for a stimulating and friendly research environment, and the homely postgraduate community at St. John's College. Elsewhere in England, I am thankful to my parents and family for their loving encouragement and the many church communities who have remembered me in their prayers.

I began my research in Champhai where I received the kind hospitality of Pu Hmingtea and his family and was guided by Pu LR-a and his family. I am grateful to Chanteii, Freddy and Sena for accompanying me to my first *khawhar in*. I also thank Lalmami, Mawiteii and Melody for their friendly guidance, Pu Thangvunga and his friends for their enthusiastic contributions and also Pu Rothangpuia, Pu Andrew and all the BCM members who welcomed me, including Zodini's family. My few days in Khawbung were made wonderfully memorable thanks to the hospitality of Pu Matluanga and his family and the guidance of Mapuia who took such a keen interest in the research. Thanks to him and the other members of the Hlakungpui Mual committee, my time there was incredibly interesting and thought-provoking.

In Aizawl, I have grown ever more indebted to some of the most generous people I know, including Pu Zauva and his family, Pu Zochhawna and his family, the community at Divine Intervention School (not forgetting Chhuanga and Ma-Awma), my friend Jenny, and the faculty, staff and students at AICS. Many of the latter came to my rescue when I was overwhelmed with sources for translation. Though many other people supported me wherever I went, a special mention must go to Pu Bonny and Pi Zovi for their entertaining company at the Synod Archives.

In Lunglei, I stayed once more with old friends, Lalthangliana Hnamte and his lovely family. I am grateful to the rest of the community at Zotlang for welcoming me again, and to BCM for enabling me to attend some of the missionary jubilee celebrations. In addition to Lalthangliana Hnamte who accompanied me to many of my interviews, I was also ably assisted by H. Muansangpuia in Theiriat and Pu Raltâwnga who was of enormous help in Chhipphir.

I would also like to acknowledge the encouragement of the following bodies whose support enriched my studies and introduced me to new colleagues: The Arts and Humanities Research Council for funding my research, Emanuel University, Oradea, Romania for their welcome at the *Ars Sacra* conference in 2013, the University of Montreal for sponsoring my travel to the *Transnationalisation of Religion* conference in 2014 and those at the *Christian Congregational Music* conference in Oxford, 2015, who awarded me with a bursary that enabled me to attend. Grants from Durham University's Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Music Department also enabled me to pursue other aspects of my research including the archival visits.

The most important person of all is my fiancé Joseph Lalchhanhima Renthlei, whose one little question in January 2015 provided me with the greatest possible motivation to get this thesis written. Thank you for the patience, the encouragement, the assistance and the love.

To God be the glory, great things he has done!

## NOTES ON THE MIZO LANGUAGE

The Mizo alphabet is similar to the English, with the addition of the letters ‘Aw,’ ‘Ch,’ ‘Ng’ and ‘Ṭ.’ The first three need little explanation but the letter ‘Ṭ’ is entirely distinct from the letter ‘T.’ The sound approximates to the initial consonant sounds of the English words ‘drink’ or ‘try.’ With the exception of the underdot affixed to the letter ‘Ṭ,’ other diacritical marks are dispensable and are only intended to make the meaning clear where there is a danger of ambiguity due to the tonal nature of the language. The tonal system in Mizo is not as rigorous as in other languages and multiple possible meanings for written words are relatively uncommon. However, in order to be as faithful as possible to the Mizo-language sources used for this thesis, every effort has been made to include such diacritical marks where they have been commonly applied in the source material. Due to the unsystematic nature of the tonal language, the present study has not attempted to present a close musical analysis of the word-setting of the linguistic tones. Any affinity between melody and speech is usually limited to their metaphorical description in Mizo discourse, in which the flow of a tune is compared to the flow of speech at the higher level of phrasal flow rather than at the micro level of individual tones and words.

Mizo names are highly varied in their construction. There is no rule regarding whether the clan or family name should be placed before or after the personal name of an individual, and often one or the other is reduced to an abbreviation. Some names are not accompanied by any family name at all. This poses a small problem for referencing and indexing Mizo authors. The present bibliography lists all Mizo authors according to the last part of their names, regardless of whether or not this is a family name; this system is retained in the in-line referencing throughout the thesis. However, when authors are referred to in the main body of the thesis, the decision has been made to always print the names in full, to avoid any ambiguity. There is one rule about Mizo names that remains consistent: All names ending ‘-a’ are masculine; all names ending ‘-i’ are feminine.

This thesis makes use of the term *lêngkhâwm zai*, the wider genre to which *khawhar zai* belongs. Experts in the Mizo language in recent years have expressed discontent with this spelling. It is a passive form of the more correct ‘*lenkhâwm zai*,’ which possesses not just a different spelling but also a different tone in pronunciation.<sup>1</sup> Without wishing to provoke linguistic controversy, the absence of academic literature that refers to the genre consistently as *lenkhâwm zai*, and the widespread printed application of the term *lêngkhâwm zai* justify its continued application in this thesis. A notable exception is C. Chhuanvawra’s comprehensive article entitled ‘*Lenkhâwm Zai Zir Chianna*’<sup>2</sup> written from his perspective as a practitioner-scholar, in which he carefully explains his grammatical reasons for his choice of orthography in the opening paragraph. However, the very need for such an explanation confirms that it does not yet reflect current usage and practice.

---

<sup>1</sup> Interviews with C. Lalsiamthanga, 28 January 2014 and Chuaṭhuama, 8 April 2014.

<sup>2</sup> ‘An Examination of *Lenkhâwm Zai*,’ undated.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

AICS	Academy of Integrated Christian Studies, Aizawl
ATC	Aizawl Theological College
BCM	Baptist Church of Mizoram
EAP	Endangered Archives Project
KHB	Kristian Hla Bu, Christian Song Book
MGCC	Mizoram Gospel Centenary Committee
MHIP	Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl, Mizo Women's Association
MKHTB	Mizo Kristian Hla Thar Bu, Mizo Christian Book of New Songs
MNF	Mizo National Front
MSU	Mizo Students' Union
MUP	Mizo Upa Pawl, Mizo Senior Citizens' Association
MZP	Mizo Zirlai Pawl, Mizo Students' Association
YMA	Young Mizo Association
Bawi	Slave, bondservant
Beiseina	Hope, expectation
Buaina	Troubles
Chapchar Kût	The main annual cultural festival that usually takes place in March
Chawimawina	1) Praise of God 2) A Christian event involving feasting and charismatic worship
Chhandamtu	Saviour
Chuailo	Never-fading
Dam lai	Life
Ensan	1) To turn one's eyes away from 2) To be formally excluded from society
Fakna	Praise of God
Ngaihna	The sentiment of missing, longing and remembering
Hawilo pâr	The 'flower of no turning back' in old Mizo beliefs about life after death
Hla	1) Song 2) Poem or chant
Hla hriltu	Song proclaimer
Hlado	Victory chant
Hlakungpui Mual	Poets' Memorial Square, Khawbung
Hlamzuih	The death of an infant
Hlahna	Fear
Hlimna	Joy
Hnatlang	Voluntary community service
Hnêm	Comfort (of the bereaved)
Hrilh	Ritual rest, following a death or to avoid bad luck
Hringlang Tlâng	A mountain reached on a soul's journey in old Mizo beliefs about life after death
I	You, your
Ka	I, my
Kaihlek	Satirical or romantic songs derived from Christian hymns
Kan	We, our
Khawhar	1) Lonely 2) Bereaved
Khawhar hla	Song of bereavement
Khawhar in	House of bereavement
Khawhar zai	Singing of bereavement and its associated repertoire
Khawih	1) To touch or tug at 2) To tug at the emotions
Khawvêl	The earth, the world
Khua	Village, town
Khuang	Drum
Khuanghlang	Platform used in traditional rituals remembering and honouring the dead

Khuanglai	Medium drum
Khuangpui	Big drum
Khuangte	Small drum
Khuavâng	Spirits of the village, usually benevolent
Kraws	Cross (of Calvary)
La	Imperative termination (Mizo syntax)
Lâwmna	Joy
Lei	Earth
Leihkapui zai	Romantic songs sung traditionally from the balcony or verandah of a house
Lêngkhâwm zai	The wider genre of hymns to which <i>khawhar zai</i> belongs (also <i>lenkhâwm zai</i> )
Lenkhâwm	Gathering together
Lui	River
Lungdawh	Traditional memorial platform
Lunglêna	The sentiment of longing (also <i>lunglên, lunglêng</i> )
Lungloh tui	The ‘water of no more longing’ in old Mizo beliefs about life after death
Lungphûn	Memorial stone
Lusun	Mourning
Mîm Kût	An obsolete annual festival held in memory of the dead
Mín	To me, to us
Mísual	1) Bad person 2) Sinner
Mítthi	Dead person
Mítthi khua	Village of the dead
Mo	1) Bride 2) The Church
Moneitu	1) Bridegroom 2) Jesus
Nula	A young woman
Pan	To press forward
Pasaltha	A traditional hero or warrior
Pathian	God (in old Mizo and Christian terms)
Pi	A term of address for a woman, equivalent to ‘Mrs’ or ‘Ms’
Pialrâl	1) Old Mizo Paradise 2) Christian Heaven
Pu	A term of address for a man, equivalent to ‘Mr’
Puma zai	A popular secular song that caused controversy among Christians c. 1907
Raicheh	The death of a mother in childbirth
Râl	Enemy, evil spirits, fears
Râlna	Gifts of condolence presented to the bereaved family
Ram	1) Land 2) Kingdom 3) The land beyond the village
Ramhuai	Evil spirits, traditionally dwelling in the <i>ram</i>
Rawh	Imperative termination (Mizo syntax)
Rih Dil	A lake associated with the soul’s journey in old Mizo beliefs about life after death
Romei	Hazy mist, low-lying clouds and fog
Ruang	Dead body
Salem thar	New Jerusalem
Sarathi	Unexpected death, often considered unlucky
Sual	1) Evil 2) Sin
Thangchhuah	A person eligible to enter Pialrâl by traditional means
Thianglo	Unlucky, ritually unclean
Thihna	Death
Thingpui tam	A famous famine in early Mizo history
Thlânmuâl	Burial ground
Thlipui	Storm
Thlîr	To gaze
Thlîr lêt	To gaze back upon the way one has travelled

Thlûk	Tune, the flow of the tune
Tlangvâl	A young man
Tlâwmngaihna	Selfless behaviour for the sake of the community
Tleirawl	Adolescents
Ṭawng	Language
Ṭhenna	1) Separation 2) Bereavement
Upa	1) Elderly 2) Church elder
Vânram	Christian heaven
Veng	A locality within a town or village
Zai	1) Singing 2) A Tune
Zaikhâwm	A time of singing together
Zawlbuk	Young men's dormitory (now obsolete)
Zonunmawi	Beautiful Mizo life
Zualko	An announcement about a recent death

# PART 1

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*'Han thlir teh u...'* resounds the refrain of a song emanating from a roadside house: 'Come and gaze...' The words persuade its singers to gaze towards a beautiful paradise. A drum keeps the slow beat, accompanying the singers in their mellow tune. The singing is punctuated by the occasional outburst of mournful agony from a solitary woman deep inside the home, concealed by the crowds of people spilling onto the street, sitting on benches and wrapped in dark shawls. This scene is typical of the public response to death in Mizoram.



**FIGURE 1.1** Inside a house of bereavement at Champhai Vengsang, January 2014. Author's photo.

Mizoram is a hilly state of Northeast India bordering the states of Assam, Tripura and Manipur, with international borders with Bangladesh and Myanmar. It is a place where death is marked and signalled by communities who gather to sing. Predominantly Christian, the society has developed a unique musical response to death that has successfully expressed the cultural and religious hope of the people for almost a century through periods of rapid political and social change. The nocturnal drums and voices tell a theological, anthropological and musicological story of hope amid adversity, loneliness and uncertainty that has yet to be narrated.



After a series of revivals influenced by the Welsh revival of 1904, Christianity and the hymns of the British missionaries became popularised in the region, then with a population of little more than 82,000.<sup>3</sup> From 1919, individual composers began to introduce songs that would soon belong to a large body of hymns known as *lêngkhâwm zai* (songs of gathering together). In modern Christian worship, these form an alternative repertoire to the western-style hymns known as *solfa zai* (named in reference to the widespread tonic solfa notation). A large proportion of them are associated with times of death and are predominantly used at homes in which someone has recently died, the *khawhar in* (house of bereavement). The singing of such songs in this context is called *khawhar zai* (bereavement singing), which also lends its name to the repertoire itself. The songs are sometimes and perhaps more accurately termed *khawhar hla* (songs of bereavement), but for the most part, this thesis will retain the common and simpler designation of *khawhar zai* to encompass both the repertoire and the practice of singing it. The *khawhar in* is one of the few Christian contexts in which the western musical influence is very difficult to discern. The hymns introduced by missionaries are welcomed in most other worship contexts while the songs and dances that were popular before Christianity have long been relegated to the domain of cultural displays.<sup>4</sup> This thesis, therefore, poses the following questions:

*In a culture which more than a century ago saw a rapid transformation into a Christian society, how did the Mizo tradition of 'khawhar zai' funeral singing offer a hope that neither the missionary hymns nor the lamentations of the earlier Mizo society could provide? Why has it remained an important Mizo practice? What can such a study of 'khawhar zai' contribute to future studies of funeral singing in Christian communities?*

In order to approach this problem, the thesis will first examine the retrospective longing of *khawhar zai* before turning to its evangelical future-oriented longing. Finally, it will acknowledge that the repertoire remains part of a tradition that involves the gathering of people to sing in response to death. The significance of its retrospective and prospective aspects will be brought to bear upon its present-day

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of the 1901 Census of India, the population was 82,434. Published in 1902 by the Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India. Relevant papers available at Mizoram State Archives.

<sup>4</sup> See Lalsangkima Pachuau 2002: 103-106 for an account of the complex history of Mizoram's cultural festivals. The current celebrations of the annual festival *Chapchâr Kût* date back to only 1973 and were not approved by the Mizo church leaders until 1985.

role in gathering the community with a common hope. The problem will be approached primarily within the framework of ethnomusicology; however, it can be broadly divided into three disciplinary areas: theology, anthropology and musicology. It is hoped that this attempt to reconcile theories of hope from three different disciplines will be able to inform future studies of Christian community singing, especially at times of bereavement.

It is a theological problem because of the need to understand what 'hope' means to Mizo Christians. The theology of hope is associated with the field of eschatology as well as biblical and historical Christian teaching about life and death. Primarily in part three, the study will examine the theological perspectives of the early missionaries, Mizo Christians and composers, but will also include analysis of the song repertoire. By exploring the performance context and musical content of *khawhar zai*, it will be demonstrated that music, especially in the form of congregational singing, can offer a more nuanced expression of evangelical hope than is often to be found elsewhere in the evangelical tradition.

However, the question of 'hope' becomes anthropological when Mizo theology is considered in its own terms. Douglas Davies, a leading figure in the anthropology of religion and the study of death, writes, 'to speak of "theology" in the singular... only makes sense if we think of theology as the actual process of quest and reflection in the ongoing life of believers rather than as a single set of answers' (2008: 2). The aim of part two (chapters two and three) is to apply anthropological methods to trace the changing theological landscape of the Mizo people and the impact this had on their musical preferences. Davies himself writes extensively on the theme of hope in several of his works. In the *Theology of Death* he describes hope as a 'bridge phenomenon in the classic sociological problem of the relationship between individual and society' (Ibid: 18), thus recognising the anthropological implications of exploring hope beyond the Christian theological domain. Though many studies have successfully located culturally specific ideas about hope and longing in song texts, this thesis will attempt to trace such ideas further in the musical style and practice of *khawhar zai*.

A further anthropological aspect of the problem is that *khawhar zai* belongs to the culture of the Mizo people as much as it belongs to their religion. It crosses denominational and even religious boundaries in offering hope in many circumstances and avoiding addressing theological distinctions within the community. The culture and history of the Mizo people and the context of the development of *khawhar zai* are essential to understanding the way in which the singing of *khawhar zai* may be described as

‘voices of hope.’ Moreover, part four (chapters six and seven) will demonstrate through an innovative handling of these contrasting disciplinary fields that the gathered singing community at times of death can have an eschatological significance in the Christian context.

It is a musicological problem because of the successful survival of *khawhar zai* despite the alternative musical resources available to the Mizo people at the time of its development and subsequently. The manner of singing, involving drums and a specific vocal style and tune, all contribute to the unique character of *khawhar zai*. These may be investigated and compared with the western hymns and some of the songs that were known to have been composed before Christianity, in order to respond to the question of ‘why’ the repertoire has remained significant.

This thesis is structured in five parts, including the present introductory part and a final conclusion. The three central parts each begin with a literature review that provides the necessary theoretical orientation. They then contain two chapters each, a ‘context’ chapter that sets the compositional and historical background, and a ‘practice’ chapter, which analyses the music and how it is performed. Each of the three parts begins with a short vignette that introduces at least one of the songs or issues that will form a common thread throughout the two chapters to which it belongs.

The first of the central parts (part two<sup>5</sup>) discusses the retrospective aspects of *khawhar zai*, including how it looks back to the way of life before Christianity in both the poetry and the music. Part three discusses how *khawhar zai* emerged out of the revival periods after which evangelicalism had been widely established in Mizoram and the sentiment of ‘longing for heaven’ had been appropriated by Mizo Christians. Part four looks at *khawhar zai* as it is currently encountered as a repertoire primarily associated with death and bereavement. The use of the verb ‘gazing’ in the titles of each part refers to the Mizo term *thlîr*, ‘to gaze,’ whose poetic significance in expressing an attitude of hope especially in *khawhar zai* will be elucidated throughout the thesis.

Ultimately, the three disciplinary strands and the three parts to this thesis will together contribute to putting forward the argument that whereas hope as a response to death, especially the hope of evangelicalism, is often presented as a future-oriented attitude, this obscures the significance of nostalgia and longing for the past that can contribute to a deeper understanding of that hope. An

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<sup>5</sup> The present introduction is named ‘part one.’

ethnomusicological study of *khawhar zai*, presented here as the first of its kind, provides a model for the bidirectional analysis of hope in a specific culture and establishes that through the medium of music a more nuanced conception of hope can be articulated.

The remainder of this introductory part contains three sections. The first section will introduce the repertoire of *khawhar zai*, including the sample of songs that has been selected for analysis in this thesis. The second part will outline the methodological and ethical considerations encountered during the course of the research and fieldwork. The final section offers an ethnographic overview that explores the history of Mizoram and its encounter with Christianity as well as its current socio-political situation.

## 1.1 THE REPERTOIRE

This section offers an introduction to the repertoire of *khawhar zai*. It begins by defining the limits of what is meant and referred to by the term *khawhar zai* when applied in this thesis. It will then go on to limit this further to a sample of songs that have been selected as a result of the fieldwork process to be the main focus of the present study.

### 1.1.1 LIMITATIONS

This thesis focuses specifically on the songs that belong to the repertoire of *khawhar zai*. To respond to some aspects of the problem stated above, comparative mention of western hymns, traditional Mizo songs and other similar *lêngkhâwm zai* will be made, but they will not form the main focus of the study. The *Kristian Hla Bu*,<sup>6</sup> the first and main hymn-book, had been published in several editions since 1899, but the new compositions of Mizo composers were not included until 1950. It was the missionary E.L. Mendus, who had arrived in the Mizo Hills during the development of *lêngkhâwm zai*, who first realised the need to collect and publish the new songs into a *Mizo Kristian Hla Thar Bu*<sup>7</sup> in 1930. His primary source was a large collection amassed by Suaka, the chief of Durtlang. The *MKHTB* continues to be published as a distinct collection from the *KHB*; the latest 2007 edition has been used for the present study.

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<sup>6</sup> 'Christian Song Book,' henceforth *KHB*.

<sup>7</sup> 'Mizo Christian Book of New Songs,' henceforth *MKHTB*.

In Mizo hymn-books, the songs under examination usually appear under the heading ‘*Thihna leh nakin hmun*’ (‘Death and the afterlife’). Those with a particularly eschatological theme may also be referred to as ‘*Vânram ngaih hla*’ (‘Songs of longing for heaven’). Others contain less theological language but are still in popular use among Christians; they might not be published in the church hymn-books but are widely known and likely to be featured in books published by community organisations such as the Young Mizo Association (YMA)<sup>8</sup> or in dedicated *lêngkhâwm zai* collections. It is all these songs, which are used in Christian funerals, to which this thesis is limited.



**FIGURE 1.2** The *leihkapui* of a house. Angus Archives.

*Khawhar*, usually translated ‘lonely,’ is derived from the phrase *khua [a] har*, which the missionary James Herbert Lorrain translated as ‘to have time hang heavily,’ understood as either ‘forlorn,’ ‘desolate’ or ‘lonely’ in his posthumously-published dictionary of 1940.<sup>9</sup> Meaning ‘lonely singing,’ or ‘singing of loneliness,’ there are inevitably other applications for the term *khawhar zai* than the

<sup>8</sup> The YMA will be introduced in section 1.3.3.

<sup>9</sup> Lorrain was one of the pioneer missionaries and will be introduced in section 1.3.2.

‘bereavement’ application addressed in this thesis. It can also be used to refer to songs that express the Mizo sentiment of *lunglêna*,<sup>10</sup> a nostalgic and melancholic longing for a past time, place or person. These songs often celebrate the beautiful natural environment of Mizoram, or the former way of life, and can be called *lunglên hla*<sup>11</sup> (songs of longing). *Khawhar zai* can also refer to romantic songs, traditionally sung by young men on their balconies, gazing at the moon. This is the stereotype associated with *leihkapui zai*, songs sung on the *leihkapui* (bamboo platform) outside a traditional Mizo home (Figure 1.2). Unless especially indicated, neither of the applications for *khawhar zai* mentioned here will form a part of this thesis. However, the importance of the emotion of *lunglêna* is certainly not limited to *lunglên hla* and it will be found to be a crucial sentiment at the heart of the *khawhar zai* used at times of death. It also appears as a structural theme in chapter two of this thesis, since it is a term that expresses the retrospective aspect of hope in Mizo poetry and song.

It has been mentioned that the *khawhar zai* to which this thesis refers belongs to a wider genre commonly known as *lêngkhâwm zai*. Firstly, these songs can belong to contexts of joyful praise to God, often accompanied by feasting. This context can also be called *chawimawina*, a term that usually means ‘praise’ or ‘worship,’ but can also describe a specific charismatic event.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, *lêngkhâwm zai* can also belong to the Christmas and Easter seasons, for which specific songs have been composed. The informal gatherings of these common settings for *lêngkhâwm zai* are usually termed *zaikhâwm*, ‘singing together,’ and the Christmas context in particular, has formed the subject of a previous study that made the claim that *lêngkhâwm zai* represents a modern tradition in Mizo hymnody (Heath 2013). In this thesis, the term *zaikhâwm* is introduced in chapters three and five as a concept that can bridge the gap between anthropological studies of community singing and equivalent studies of congregational singing in Christian worship contexts. In addition to the *zaikhâwm* event, *lêngkhâwm zai* can also take place during the course of ordinary church worship. Though the history and many musical characteristics are largely shared with the *khawhar zai* repertoire studied here, the wider *lêngkhâwm zai* genre will, for the most part, be excluded from this thesis except where particularly relevant.

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<sup>10</sup>Alternatively, *lunglêng*. In this thesis, the form *lunglêna* will be used, as the grammatical form most consistent with other abstract nouns.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Pakunga, the secretary of the Mizo Poets Society in Khawbung, 31 January 2014.

<sup>12</sup> I attended one such *chawimawina* in the village of Mualthuam, 17 May 2014. A woman with cancer who had been told by doctors that she did not have long to live threw a large feast for the villagers and other guests, and her home was filled with ecstatic singing and dancing for several days. A video from the occasion can be found on DVD 2, ‘Supplementary Files,’ Track 1.

### 1.1.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Tlânghmingthanga, a scholar at Aizawl Theological College who completed an MTh thesis in 1995 exploring the eschatological themes of Mizo songs, eloquently introduces the emergence of *khawhar zai* (1995: 88):

In that high time, the fire of revival, particularly the third one, flames the heart of the Mizos. It regenerated many talented Mizos who were silent for a long time. They composed many new indigenous Christian songs... As a whole, all these songs gave emphasis on the suffering of Jesus Christ, the suffering and miserable condition of this world and the hope of heavenly life.

Following the consensus among Mizo scholars, this thesis locates the beginnings of *khawhar zai* in 1919 and 1920, at the height of what is usually referred to as the ‘third revival’ season.<sup>13</sup> Tlânghmingthanga captures in his paragraph the bidirectional inspiration for the songs that this thesis explores: the emergence from evangelical revivalism and a return to an ‘indigenous’ music style that had been ‘silent’ while evangelical Christianity grew in dominance in the preceding years. The importance of local agency highlighted by Tlânghmingthanga has been acknowledged by many Mizo scholars. In *Groundworks for Tribal Theology in the Mizo Context*, for example, L.H. Rawsea has stated that ‘the translated hymns were, of course, a great help, yet they did not give full satisfaction to the Mizo hearts. Only the songs that were rendered out of their own experiences could satisfy them’ (Tochhawng et al. 2007: 132).

The majority of sources about the history of *khawhar zai* are found in Mizo texts, and they maintain the narrative put forward by Tlânghmingthanga. In a seminar paper by Bawla on the subject of *lêngkhâwm zai*, the focus is on the *zalêna*, ‘freedom,’ that the new songs offered the Christians at the time (Synod Music Committee 2013: 18-19). It should be recognised that the composers of *khawhar zai* were not all composing out of a grieving context. Some were persecuted, some were commissioned and others had entirely different subjects in mind. Indeed, many songs continue to have multiple applications, since their contexts of composition were not necessarily intended for a particular congregational setting. ‘*Ni tla ngai lo, Zion khawpui*,’<sup>14</sup> the song of a rejected evangelist, has become a favourite at funerals. ‘*Ni*

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<sup>13</sup> See section 1.3.3.

<sup>14</sup> ‘The city of Zion, where the sun never sets.’ This song will form the case study of part three.

*ropui a lo thleng dawn ta*<sup>15</sup> is a millennialist song used both in funerals and at times of church celebrations.<sup>16</sup> Vanlalchhawna Khiangte, a theologian and pastor at the Academy of Integrated Christian Studies, says some songs express the pain of bereavement, while others point the family towards God. Some speak of heaven while others speak of loneliness.<sup>17</sup> According to C. Lalsiamthanga, a professor of Mizo based in Champhai, it is ‘the vision’ of the text that can differ. Some ‘lift up the spirit’ to be comforted by God and others request God to come down to comfort. Some look to heaven and others ask God to come and see what earth’s struggles are like.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, even those not dominated by themes of heaven do invoke a longing for it; Lalsawma has calculated that 70% of the songs in the *MKHTB* have at least a partial focus on heaven (cited by Rawsea in Tochhawng et al. 2007: 132).

It is important to consider the socio-cultural triggers for the birth of this new style of song. Various consequences of the encounter with the British are just part of what contributed to the apparent need for what Tlânghmingthanga calls ‘indigenous Christian songs.’ The British presence from the early nineteenth century did lead to a crisis that shattered the stability and hope for future security that had hitherto been the bedrock of community cohesion.<sup>19</sup> Famines caused by the flowering of the bamboo and other pestilences, as well as numerous epidemics,<sup>20</sup> added to the struggle to survive in the early decades of the twentieth century, and the hope for continued stability in terms of food provision and rest from labour no longer seemed so certain. Whereas young men had previously fought in skirmishes against the British, Mizos later served alongside the British in Europe in World War I between 1915 and 1918,<sup>21</sup> leaving them unable to provide the security and labour-force to those at home. The forbidden killing of some animals, imposed not just by missionaries but also by the British

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<sup>15</sup> ‘The day of glory is near at hand.’

<sup>16</sup> Subtitled, ‘The Day of Glory is Come,’ Lorrain marked this song with a cross in his copy of the *MKHTB* (1930), as he seems to have done to indicate particularly popular songs.

<sup>17</sup> Interview, 26 February 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Interview, 28 January 2014.

<sup>19</sup> For contemporary British accounts, see Shakespear’s memoir in the *Assam Review*, July 1929; Shakespear’s diary, 15 March 1891; Shakespear’s South Lushai report, 1895: 15; Porteous’ diary, 15 October 1895, 1896; letter to McCall from Buchhawna, 4 October 1937; Administration Reports from 1891: 70, 1895, 1896. For modern Mizo accounts, see Rokhûm in Malsawmdawngliana and Rohingmawii, 2013: 32; Laldinpuii in Malsawmdawngliana and Rohingmawii, 2013: 139; Vanlalchhuanawma in Khiangte 2013a: 157.

<sup>20</sup> Diaries and reports of the British often make reference to epidemics of cholera and malaria in the region. See Shakespear’s diary of 1890 and reports of 1897-1898; Porteous’ diary of 1895.

<sup>21</sup> News and correspondence relating to the war effort was regularly reported in the magazines *Kristian Tlangau* and *Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Bu*. See also Rohingmawii in Malsawmdawngliana and Rohingmawii, 2013: 266-279. K. Thanzauva claims a total of 2,200 men were sent (2012: 40).



administration, closed the accepted routes to Pialrâl (paradise).<sup>22</sup> N.E. Parry, a superintendent of the region from 1924 to 1928, recognised the delicate situation this caused in a memorandum of 1928,<sup>23</sup> in which he said,

Having disarmed the hill man and to some extent emasculated him by depriving him of his former opportunities to raid and by educating and Christianising him, we are bound to protect him from being exploited by the more sophisticated plainsman...

Reading beyond the paternalism characteristic of his era, Parry acknowledges an awareness of the depth to which the Mizo way of life had been compromised by British activities. The encounter with the British, whether colonial or missionary, certainly led to what K. Thanzauva, a prominent theologian, calls an ‘identity crisis’ (2012: 125). This was due not only to questions of ethnic identity which are beyond the scope of this thesis, but also because of the differing religious foundations offered on which to base beliefs about life and death. The encounter led to what the historian William Reddy might call an ‘induced goal conflict’ that demands careful emotional navigation (2001: 129) because the goals of life and the means by which to attain them seem to be severed and alternative goals (hopes) and ways of life are offered instead. This can be called a crisis of hope, and it is offered here as a possible stimulus for the emergence of *khawhar zai* that will be dealt with in greater depth in chapters two and four.

As Clifford Geertz warned, discontinuity between social structure and culture does not lead to cultural decay but instead to a tension between the two, resulting in ambiguity in the meaning of rituals and practices (1973: 164-165). More recently, Svetlana Boym recognised that ‘accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals’ tend to lead to the ‘defense mechanism’ of nostalgia (2007: 10). In the Mizo context, it would, therefore, be likely that the time of social upheaval and accelerated exposure to the changes imposed by the British would have resulted in deeper expressions of *lunglênnna* as an attempt to maintain control over the transitions taking place. As already stated, *lunglênnna* was typically expressed in song, and numerous prolific composers at the turn of the century contributed to the Mizo song repertoire including Saikuti, Awithangpa and Mangkhaia with personal compositions including

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<sup>22</sup> See Sangkima 1992: 133. A visiting missionary Herbert Anderson gives an account of an old hunter he met near the village of Belpui, who described the change that had taken place, which meant the way in which he had worked for his entry into ‘the land where the rice is not husked and there is nothing to do’ was to demonstrate great skill in hunting. The man added, ‘times are changing, and what we believed cannot now be told’ (1914: 29-30).

<sup>23</sup> ‘Memorandum on Reforms for Lushai,’ 29 September 1928.

*lunglên hla*. Contrary to what Tlânghmingthanga has elegantly argued, the ‘talented Mizos’ had by no means been ‘silent’; they simply had yet to exercise their talents for Christian purposes.

Chatuan ram ngaihna

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Key E♭, Patea

(:s ,s .l :s :m .d :m .m :m :d )  
(:r ,r .r :d :r .d :d ,r .s :s :d )  
(:s ,s .l :s :m .d :m .m :m :d )  
(:r ,d .l :s :d :m .r :d :d )

Thunawn  
(:s ,s .s :m :s :m .s :m :d )  
(:r ,r .r :d :r .d :d ,r .s :s :d )  
(:s ,s .l :s :m .d :m .m :m :d )  
(:r ,d .l :s :d :m .r :d :d )

1. Ka ropuina tûr leh ka himna hmun,  
Râl hlauhawm leh tîna awm lo chu;  
Thlalêr aţang hianin ka hmu rinin,  
Chu hmun hlun chuan min tuam vêl vângin.  
  
Ka thlîr ni tin ang, ka thlen hma loh chuan,  
A hmangaihna êng leh lăwmawm chu;  
Miten chu hmun chu hluin ring mah se,  
Ka sawi thei dăwn lo, tharin a lang.
2. Chutih hunah chuan hnam tin chi tinten,  
A ropuina êng zâm vêlah chuan,  
Chhandamte hmêl êng mawi leh ropui chu,  
An hmuh hun zet chuan an ring ve ang.
3. Tin, nakinah chuan a fa hmangaihthe,  
Chatuan vârparh arsi êng mawi chu;  
Ka ta an lo ni, awm tawhte nên chuan,  
Chatuan lăwm hla chu kan sa rual ang.
4. Ka thlarau lungngai leh vâk bo hnênah,  
Kristan a hmangaihna thu nung chu,  
A lo hrih phal ve ták avâng chuan aw,  
Haleluia! Ka fak ning lo vang.

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FIGURE 1.3 ‘Ka ropuina tûr leh ka himna hmun.’ Printed in *Mizo Kristian Hla Thar Bu* (2007).

It was in this situation that a man called Patea composed ‘*Ka ropuina tûr leh ka himna hmun*.’<sup>24</sup> It is generally accepted as the first known original example of *khawhar zai*. In its first publication, Patea’s song was subtitled ‘Anticipation of Heaven.’<sup>25</sup> In the chorus, Patea writes, ‘*ka thlîr ni tin ang, ka thlen hma loh chuan, a hmangaihna eng leh lawmawm chu...*’ This may be translated, ‘every day I will gaze (*thlîr*) toward the light and wonder of his/its<sup>26</sup> love, until I reach there...’ The term *thlîr*, found at the opening to this thesis and as a structural theme throughout will be thoroughly explored in chapter two,

<sup>24</sup> ‘The place of my glory and safety.’ The exact date is not known but is usually cited as 1919 or 1920. There are two other contenders for the ‘first’ song of the repertoire: Lalsâwma (1994: 129) cites H.S. Luaia’s claim that Kapliana’s ‘*Ka thla thlâwk la thuro angin*’ (‘Fly, my soul, like a dove’) of 1921 was the first. R. Thangvunga (Lalthangliana 1999: 95) suggests it was Siamliana’s ‘*Ani chu an hnênah a awm ang*’ (‘He will be with them’) also of 1921. No source, however, suggests that Patea’s was composed after 1920.

<sup>25</sup> A first edition of the *MKHTB* is held at the Angus Archives, Oxford.

<sup>26</sup> The pronoun is ambiguous and could refer either to the face of Jesus or the glory of heaven.

but here it is applied in the very earliest example of *khawhar zai*. It is used to illustrate a hopeful longing towards the future wonder of heaven, but with the emphasis remaining on the singers' present experience on earth, recognising the fact that they have not yet arrived and determining to retain the horizon in their imagination 'every day.' This mitigates what could be an exuberant optimism often associated with evangelicalism, to a more moderate hope that acknowledges the fact that the singer remains on earth. The daily act of longing and hoping for heaven can be as much of a comfort as the promise of reaching it in the future. Patea's life and compositions form the primary case study of the following part of this thesis, particularly in reference to his emphasis on the past Mizo life and aspirations while simultaneously expressing his Christian hope for heaven.

### 1.1.3 SAMPLING THE REPERTOIRE

The research for this thesis involved the recording of more than sixty different songs (many on more than one occasion) at funerals and gatherings of bereaved communities. These were taken in a wide variety of locations and contexts predominantly in the towns of Champhai, Aizawl and Lunglei and their surrounding villages. All songs that were sung on three or more occasions during the research project have been selected to be the particular focus of this study, since they are considered to be more representative of the repertoire and also contain a helpful variety of themes and composers. Here this sample is listed alphabetically with the composers indicated in brackets. An index system will be used throughout this thesis, in which the songs will usually be referred to by the corresponding letter and number code given below. It is hoped that this will make references to the songs less cumbersome to readers unfamiliar with the Mizo language and repertoire since two other samples of different repertoires will also be introduced later in the thesis. All songs coded with the letter 'K' are of the following sample of *khawhar zai*:

K1 *A chatuan ro luah tumin i bei zêl ang* (Thangvungi)

'Keep working for his eternal inheritance'

K2 *Aw Lalpa, Davida leh a thlah Arsi* (Patea)

'O Lord, David and his descended Star'

K3 *I hmangaihna zâra lâwma inkhâwm hnute* (Thanherha)

'When we who have gathered with joy because of your love'

K4 *Ka dam lai thlipui a râl hunin* (Patea)

‘When the storm of my life has passed away’

K5 *Ka hmaah lui râl khaw mawi chu a awm* (Zumi)

‘There is a beautiful city before me on the river-bank’

K6 *Ka nghâkhlel Zion khawpui thar* (Hleia)

‘I am impatient for the new city of Zion’

K7 *Ka taksa lungngai mah sela* (Saihnûna)

‘Even though I have fleshly sorrows’

K8 *Khawvêl chhuahsan ila* (Saihnûna)

‘Let’s abandon this world’

K9 *Lung min lén ka thlîr ning dâwn lo* (L. Kamlova)

‘I am longing for it, I won’t tire of gazing’

K10 *Ni ropui a lo thleng dâwn ta* (Patea)

‘The day of glory is near at hand’

K11 *Ni tla ngai lo, Zion khawpui* (Lianrûma)

‘The city of Zion, where the sun never sets’

K12 *Rinna thla zâr ila* (Thanglera)

‘Spread the wings of faith’

K13 *Vân hmun ropui, hmangaih ram khi* (Thanga, translated from Habershon, ‘*Will the Circle be Unbroken?*’)

‘That glorious place up in heaven, the land of love’

This method of selection means some songs are excluded which are often favoured among Mizo scholars and given prominence in their studies. It will be noted for example that the songs considered to be the ‘first’ examples of *khawhar zai* are not included in this list and prominent composers such as R.L. Kamlala and C.Z. Huala are absent. The famous songs of these two composers were all sung once or twice during the fieldwork conducted in 2014. However, since other songs outweighed all of these in current popularity, they will primarily be addressed in the ‘contextual’ chapters rather than in the chapters that analyse musical ‘practice.’

A sample drawn from contemporary performance practice and evidence of popular preferences from recent fieldwork also gives a fresh perspective to a repertoire that has been dominated by received

scholarship. In the same way, in R.L. Thanmawia's paper for a seminar on *Lêngkhâwm Zai*,<sup>27</sup> he takes care to dwell on the composers who composed just one or two songs, or for whom only a few songs have endured in popular memory, since he claims that their contribution is as important. In the present sample, these 'minor' composers are particularly represented by Thangvungi, Hleia and Lianrûma, the latter of whom is given the primary case study in part three of this thesis.

The present exploration of *khawhar zai* has been limited, for the most part, to this selected sample, which is intended to form the common musical thread that binds the diverse disciplinary and theoretical discussions that will take place in the central parts of this thesis. The volatile political and religious climate has also been acknowledged as a 'crisis of hope' that triggered the early composition of the songs that 'gazed' to the past and 'gazed' towards heaven, most vividly expressed in the use of the verb *thlîr*. The various ways in which *khawhar zai* manifest a 'longing gaze' will form the structural arc of this thesis.

## 1.2 METHODOLOGY

This section discusses some of the ethical and methodological considerations that influenced my periods of fieldwork in Mizoram. At this point, as in the vignettes later in this thesis, I express my authorial voice in the first person, since my personal interaction with Mizo musical practice and its practitioners was central to my methodology. Since 2011, I have been participating in a wide variety of Christian worship contexts in Mizoram. In addition to two lengthy visits prior to the current study, forming a total of eighteen months' experience of the culture, language and music, I conducted two periods of fieldwork directly connected to this thesis. From January to May 2014, I visited the towns of Aizawl, Champhai and Lunglei, as well as some surrounding villages, which provided opportunities to document funeral singing in the North, East and South of the state. In August 2015, I returned for one month to complete my archival research and re-visit some of the people who had made significant contributions to this thesis.

Ethical issues are inevitably raised when research enters the intimate domain of a funeral setting. There is some evidence for less than sensitive methods applied in the earliest years of documentation,<sup>28</sup> but

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<sup>27</sup> Undated, held in Aizawl Theological College archives.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, C.S. Myers' unpublished journal of 1898: 11, cited in Clayton 1996: 70.

Phyllis Palgi and Henry Abramovitch, in their early review of 'Death' literature in anthropology (1984: 385-386), observe the common reticence of western researchers to conduct fieldwork in the funeral domain. They attribute this to the fact that death in the West has become an intensely private affair. They cite the pioneering anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker's admission of her initial hesitation when researching funeral practices in Papua New Guinea (1933: 84-85, 167). Anthony Seeger admits in *Why Suyá Sing* that he never recorded such contexts because of the 'tremendously emotional and often volatile' atmosphere (1987: 75).

Aware of the sensitivity of the situation, I conducted myself and handled the video and audio equipment inside the *khawhar in* with the full consent of the bereaved family in each case. With the aim of simultaneously achieving a participant-observation level of acquaintance with the singing, I usually positioned the camera on a tripod at a static point before joining the singers for the duration of the event. I was usually one of only two participants with a hymn-book, the second person being the *hla hriltu*, the woman who proclaims the words, but I attempted to minimise my conspicuousness by dressing and participating appropriately. In the usual time allotted for speeches, a relative would normally make mention of my presence and explain my purpose to the gathered community. My general experience at the majority of homes I visited was of a ready welcome and openness towards documentation.<sup>29</sup> A selection of the recordings is included on DVD 1 in the folder entitled 'Khawhar Zai Sample.'

In Mizoram, the current practice of hiring a local team to make a DVD of the event means video and photography equipment are expected to be present during the gathering. These recordings are often edited into fifteen-minute memorial videos (including images of the open coffin) and broadcast on local cable television channels. As such, it was normally the case that special efforts would be made to ensure that my recordings would not be hindered, by making room for the tripod or suggesting better positions. This is comparable to the experience of Holly Wissler in her account of the making of her ethnographic film of the Quechua community in the Andes, *From Grief and Joy We Sing* (2007). In her article, 'Grief-Singing and the Camera' (2009), she recounts similar instances in which individuals who had experienced tragic loss were still eager to assist her and direct her during the course of an evening's

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<sup>29</sup> On the few occasions when I felt my status as a researcher was not suitable for personal reasons, such as the level of my acquaintance with the deceased or the family, I took the opportunity to attend as a full participant without including the occasion in my research materials.

lamentation. She evaluates this through a comparison between the communal nature of grieving among the Q'eros people and the individualist experience with which she is more familiar (Ibid: 46):

The articulation of such strong emotion for the Q'eros is naturally expressed in communal family ritual, and not on one's own, since they live a communal life where relationship with the collective takes priority over individual utterances.

She follows this observation with the more perceptive remark that in communal grieving contexts, 'remembrance of loss naturally surfaces,' not only for those who have been recently bereaved. They become sites for grieving in which the grief is personal for each participant, as part four of this thesis will highlight in the Mizo context, but it also has implications for the researcher. For example, Wissler mentions that her own recent loss of her parents enabled her to engage more fully with the grief-singing (Ibid.). I, too, lost my grandmother in January 2014, and was able to participate meaningfully at the *khawhar in* that I attended during the immediate days of my own grief, far from home and unable to attend her funeral. Identification with bereavement has been the experience of several other scholars, such as Charles Briggs who was moved to weep at the poignancy of a funeral among the Warao in Venezuela (1993: 929) and Renato Rosaldo who gained a new empathy with 'the rage of the headhunter' when he lost his wife Michelle during fieldwork among the Ilongot in the Philippines (1993 [1989]).

In addition to the documentation of *khawhar zai* in a variety of settings, I also interacted with several different denominations and groups of Christians, interviewing family members and laypeople as well as church leaders, academics and published authors. These are listed at the end of the bibliography. I conducted most interviews with an audio recorder in the person's own home, using both Mizo and English, often with an interpreting guide. Many of the interviewees expressed themselves at length in Mizo, and these contributions were subsequently translated. Briggs' valuable suggestions regarding the metacommunicative concerns that a researcher should consider when conducting interviews remain important (1984: 3-4; 1986), and I was particularly aware of the deferential position I held towards older members of the community, prioritising their freedom to tell longer narratives or revise their statements at a later date. A notable instance of the latter was an elderly man who, dissatisfied with his responses during the interview, later painstakingly produced a document on a typewriter, which

explained in greater detail what he had tried to communicate to me. He then delivered this by hand to my residence.

Aware that community singing sessions (*zaikhâwm*, mentioned above) often involve members spontaneously offering their thoughts and experiences, it was found on two occasions that a pre-arranged singing session was an ideal context in which to conduct a culturally-appropriate ‘group interview,’ or what could be termed a ‘focus group’ in sociological discourse. In Bethel Veng, Champhai, several members of the village gathered on my arrival in order to sing in front of my camera (the position was suggested by them) and to share their thoughts about my list of general questions in the same manner as they might share during a funeral or Christmas gathering. This was not what I had planned but was instinctively organised by the participants.



**FIGURE 1.4** The group-singing session at Khawbung, January 2014. Author’s photo.

A similar event was held for the same purpose at the village of Khawbung, in which my host had taken the initiative to print and distribute personal invitations to more than sixty village members who gathered to sing and discuss their songs in the community hall for the purposes of my research (Figure 1.4). Such an interview technique proved most effective in eliciting pertinent thoughts and experiences from members of the community who might have hesitated to participate in an individual interview. It also enabled me to avoid receiving only the knowledge and views that are considered to be in



accordance with the published literature about Mizo music and history, as was imparted to me by numerous Mizo writers and scholars.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, my quest for someone who would be able to sing some of the songs that were sung before Christianity required flexibility to adapt to local systems of receiving knowledge from elders. This aspect of my research was vital for the comparative analysis made in chapter three of this thesis. It was in an interview with C. Lalsiamthanga that I was referred to P.C. Thangvunga as the one person in Champhai with the most authoritative knowledge of the songs and the ability to sing them. After visiting his home to introduce myself, we arranged an evening of singing, and he was keen to invite some of his friends to join him. The evening was satisfactory from my perspective, having brought my own list of songs that I wanted to hear. However, he called on me the next day requesting that we have a second session for which he would be better prepared. This time, he had a smaller selection of friends to accompany him and he asserted his own authority by preparing a typed list of songs and their texts, and singing through them systematically with a brief introduction for each. The collection of songs recorded that evening, rarely heard today, can be found on DVD 1 in the folder ‘Old Mizo Songs’ (See section 3.1 and Appendix D for a list of songs).

However, the historical nature of several aspects of my research meant that I could not depend on the fieldwork observations and experiences that the accounts above have illustrated. Whereas the recent fieldwork primarily informed the ‘practice’ chapters (three, five and seven), a more historical and literature-based approach was required for the ‘context’ chapters (two, four and six). I therefore conducted archival work in Mizoram at the Mizoram State Archives, Aizawl Theological College, Presbyterian Synod Archives, Baptist Church of Mizoram Archives and the library at the Academy of Integrated Christian Studies. I continued this in the UK with visits to archival collections in Oxford (Angus Archives), Aberystwyth (National Library of Wales) and the British Library in London. This work was necessary to obtain the original historical sources and photographs from missionaries and colonial officers that shed light on the socio-cultural climate that existed at the time of the emergence of *khawhar zai*. On rare instances, I also found direct insights into the musical developments that took place, including a small collection of audio recordings made by the missionary Gwen Rees Roberts and

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<sup>30</sup> This danger was highlighted by Bauman and Briggs in their account of the complicated relationship the early ethnographer Franz Boas maintained with his informants George Hunt and Henry Tate (2003: 274-280).

some fragments of *khawhar zai* in musical notation made by G.M. Mendus. Kyle Jackson of Warwick University has been instrumental in the development of the recent British Library Endangered Archives Programme on the region, which was released online in August 2014 and offers valuable resources for research.<sup>31</sup> Jackson recently published an article about the project in the book *From Dust to Digital* (Kominko 2015: 445-486). The frontispiece of this thesis is from the Endangered Archives collection.

As was perhaps evident in the previous section, numerous texts have been written in Mizo about the history and significance of *lêngkhâwm zai*, all of which are valuable but lack any more than a descriptive account of the musical content. Perhaps the most substantial is the MTh thesis of Tlânghmingthana (1995), which explores the repertoire from a theological standpoint. The ideas presented in his thesis will be useful for bringing the theological strands of the present thesis within the purview of an ethnomusicological account. In 2013, the Synod Music Committee<sup>32</sup> published a collection of three Mizo papers presented at a *Lêngkhâwm Zai* seminar, which includes an overview of the genre by R.L. Thanmawia,<sup>33</sup> a study of its significance for the church by Bawla and a guide to the use of the drum by Lalromawia, the current Music Secretary at the Presbyterian Synod. The archives at Aizawl Theological College hold a collection from another undated seminar about *Lêngkhâwm Zai*, which contains papers by Vanlalchhuanawma and R.L. Thanmawia. Though mention of the funeral context in these materials is scanty, they represent some of the most detailed resources available. Other similar resources include the unpublished documents produced by Lalromawia, C. Thanseia and C. Zaṭhuama for use in their practical workshops about the use of the drum, all of which were presented to me by the respective authors for use in this research.

The combination of the sources and methodologies outlined here demands an acknowledgement of some important issues. The first is the fact that my own identity as a Christian researcher (specifically with a non-conformist background) no doubt impacted my fieldwork in a variety of ways. In a positive sense, it is possible that my identity made it easier for me to receive a warm welcome at churches and events that I attended, and my personal insights have helped me to understand and convey the theological depth of the issues raised in this thesis that have emerged from conversations and interviews

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<sup>31</sup> EAP454: Locating and Surveying Early Religious and Related Records in Mizoram, India.

<sup>32</sup> Part of the Presbyterian Church in Mizoram.

<sup>33</sup> His paper also appears in his book *Chuailo Vol. II* (2010) and has been presented at other seminar events.

with other Mizo Christians. Recognising that this has made me at once an ‘insider’ and an ‘outsider,’ I have sought nuance and neutrality in this approach, as is shown in the efforts I have made to engage with many different Christian denominations as well as in my discussions with Mizo scholars (theological and otherwise) whose discourse is frequently critical and provocative.

On the other hand, when handling materials relating to the nature of religion before Christianity, it is unfortunate that the sources are overwhelmingly British in origin, and may in themselves contain a certain bias in representation. Although it will be acknowledged in this thesis that knowledge about the older Mizo way of life is to some extent speculative, it is also important to note that this has continued to inform Mizo discourse about their own religious history and therefore has direct significance when exploring the nature of hope and retrospection contained within *khawhar zai* as it is practised today. With these caveats in mind, then, it is still meaningful and important to narrate these accounts as they continue to form a part of modern religious understandings among Mizo Christians. Occasionally, these views might seem simplistic. Great care has been taken to ensure that lapses in neutrality do not come from my authorial perspective but are clearly representative of relevant Mizo attitudes. However, the inevitable hazard of writing as a Christian about Christian beliefs is that this distinction for a reader may not always be clear. It is hoped that the thesis will, however, ultimately demonstrate that my admittedly privileged research position as a Christian among Mizo Christians has overwhelmingly brought a meaningful value and depth to the nature of the discussion and analysis.

### 1.3 ETHNOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

This section will outline the pertinent aspects of the history of the Mizo people, the state of Mizoram and the history of the encounter with Christianity and the British colonial administration. Though many of the sources come from early British colonial writings, both published and found in a variety of archives, this ethnography has also drawn as much as possible from Mizo writers. Liangkhaia’s *Mizo History* (published in two parts: 1938 and 1947) was the first book written by a Mizo scholar, and K. Zawla is respected as another pioneer in the documentation of Mizo history (1981 [1964]); both authors are given a place of honour among other poets and writers at the Poets’ Memorial Square (Hlakungpui Mual) in Khawbung. There are numerous Mizo academics today studying or working in institutions in India and abroad, many of whom choose to situate their research in the Mizo context. In the UK, two

doctoral theses about Mizo missionary history were recently completed at Birmingham University by Zaichhawna Hlawndo (2011) and Lawmsânga (2010) and these have proven useful in this thesis.

At present, there are known to be two other non-Indian researchers whose work is based in Mizoram: Kyle Jackson, of Warwick University, is conducting a historical study into the western impact on medicine in the region; Willem van Schendel, at the University of Amsterdam, recently published a photographic history of Mizoram, *The Camera as Witness* (2015) in collaboration with the Mizo scholar, Joy L.K. Pachuau of Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi. Joy Pachuau herself recently published her Oxford University doctoral dissertation, *Being Mizo* (2014), which contains an insightful chapter about Mizo approaches to death. There is, therefore, no dearth of literature on the social and Christian history of Mizoram. However, the absence of contributions to the field of music or ethnomusicology necessitates this ethnographic overview in the present study.

Rather than dwell heavily on the historical details readily available in a wide range of other historic and modern texts in both Mizo and English, the aim here is to draw attention to the implications they have for the ensuing discussion that represents a musical case study of interdisciplinary perspectives on hope. Therefore, this overview will integrate some anthropological contributions to themes of ‘hope,’ ‘longing’ and ‘nostalgia’ pertinent to Mizo history and identity as a preparation for subsequent discussions.

### 1.3.1 THE MIZO PEOPLE

The Mizo people have been included as a ‘scheduled tribe’ in the Indian constitution since 1956 (Schedule VI). However, sensitivity is required in the use of the word ‘tribal,’ since the term is contentious and remains largely undefined (Thanzauva 2004: 11-12; Pachuau 2014: 5). ‘Tribal’ elsewhere in India often refers to minority communities of people in rural areas considered to be the ‘indigenous’ or ‘original’ inhabitants (*adivasis*); falling not just at the bottom of but outside the caste system, they are often treated with contempt. Richard Wolf (2001b) has attempted to address this problem from an ethnomusicological perspective by drawing on the earlier work of other scholars such as Carol Babiracki, Anthony Walker and Regula Qureshi. Through musical analysis, he demonstrates the interrelationship between so-called tribals and non-tribals in South India and the likelihood of a long history of co-existence within a broadly Hindu culture rather than the evolutionary narrative that is often

assumed. However, Wolf's study is limited to the South Indian context and makes no mention of the Northeast tribes, of whom the Mizo are perhaps the most culturally isolated from their non-tribal neighbours given their historical lack of Hindu or Muslim contact.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, far from being a marginal people-group, the Mizo people form the majority population of the state of Mizoram and are free from the constraints of the caste system, so the dynamics of power are vastly different from the situation of the scheduled tribes in South India.

Mizo histories often begin with the ubiquitous legend of origin that claims that the people originally emerged from an orifice called Chhinlung. This legend helps to narrate a popular story of migration from north or central Asia, through Tibet, Myanmar, the Kabaw Valley and the Chin Hills.<sup>35</sup> While there exists an abundance of philological literature from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries attempting to connect the various Tibeto-Burmese and Indo-Chinese languages,<sup>36</sup> Edmund Leach's warning must be heeded that such findings can only serve to indicate likely social and cultural contact, but cannot be assumed to represent lineage or migration (1960: 50-51<sup>37</sup>). Leach suggested that much of the Chinese influence in Burma (which for him was a wider region than today's Myanmar, including Assam and Manipur) can be traced to the twelfth-century aristocratic imperialism of the Mongol and Han dynasties. The succession of periods of Hindu rule especially in the Indian states mentioned above contributed to the contrasting democratic fragility also witnessed in such regions (1960: 50-56). He notes that the Kachin people, a hill tribe, can be demonstrated to have co-existed and even co-operated for centuries with the Hindu valley people with little if any cultural merging, and he observes similar trends amongst the central Chin as well as the Kuki of the western Manipur Hills (Ibid: 60-63). This would suggest that the tribal way of life was a consciously chosen existence as a result of the rejection of lowland imperialism.

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<sup>34</sup> The tribes in Arunachal Pradesh may be the most geographically isolated but have a long history of Buddhist influence. The Garo people in Meghalaya have had extensive contact with Hinduism. The Nagas are similar to the Mizo people in their dominant Christian identity but live in closer proximity to non-tribal people.

<sup>35</sup> The majority of texts about Mizo history begin with Chhinlung. See Sangkima 1992: 12-13, Lalthangliana 2011: 11-23, Chhangte in Malsawmdawngliana and Rohingmawii, 2013: 9-10.

<sup>36</sup> The Old Tibetan and Old Burmese relationships are well and widely documented, and Lushai (Mizo) is invariably called a 'Tibeto-Burmese' language. Paul Benedict suggested correspondences with Old Chinese (1940: 109) and Wolfenden made a further connection with Si-Hia Old Tibetan (1931: 50). Later studies associated it with Kachin, Garo and Mandarin (Benedict 1976: 176), while James Matisoff assigned it to the entire family of Proto-Sino-Tibetan languages (1983: 465).

<sup>37</sup> See also cautions by Benedict (1976: 172).



FIGURE 1.5 Mizoram (designated 'West Chinram') presented as part of the 'original extent of Chinram.'<sup>38</sup>

These findings have paved the way for an alternative theory that has recently emerged, suggesting that all the hill tribes inhabiting mountainous regions of South-East Asia sharing related cultures and languages are neither primitive living ancestors of the lowlanders, nor are they so much the products of migration, but are all peoples who voluntarily retreated to the hills to avoid the civilising and governing movements of the lowlands, especially in modern China, Thailand and Myanmar. James Scott (2009) and Willem van Schendel (2002: 653) have called this broad people group and their vast hilly domain 'Zomia,' referring to the morphemes 'Zo' (highland) and 'Mi' (people) common to all the pertinent languages, not least to Mizo from which their own name becomes immediately clear.<sup>39</sup> This theory has enabled Scott to raise an objection to the use of the term 'tribal' from the Northeast Indian perspective, arguing that the cultures in question were deliberately self-constructed to thwart incorporation into the emerging nation-states of the lowlands (2009: 8-9). He describes cycles of state-making and state-

<sup>38</sup> Sakhong 2003: xxiv. The northern border-line of Mizoram is printed further north than it actually is. It should pass through the words 'West Chinram.'

<sup>39</sup> For an example of an etymological analysis of the name 'Mizo,' see Sangkima 2004: 15-17.

unmaking that produced ‘a periphery that was composed as much of refugees as of peoples who had never been state subjects,’ most notably in Southeast Asia where Zomia represents what he calls a ‘shatter zone’ (Ibid: 7). He includes the Mizo people within his notion of Zomia, and it is a helpful way to re-imagine the history of the tribe and their interactions with other civilisations beyond the often-narrated speculations about the lonely migration of primitive peoples.

This new approach can still be reconciled with the migratory tradition of Chhinlung, especially its modern interpretations. This legend exists throughout Zomia, referring variously to emergence from a rock, a cave or a hole in the ground. A popular suggestion is that the tribes escaped from oppressive Chinese or Mongolian rulers who engaged them in forced labour to build the Great Wall of China.<sup>40</sup> Such a story of escape supports both the traditional nomadic narrative and the radical self-isolation narrative of Scott. Margaret Ch. Zama of Mizoram University acknowledges:<sup>41</sup>

They all have their theories and hypotheses, even many of our historians, but nobody denies this Sinlung [Chhinlung] factor, that ‘coming out.’

As she accepts, much has been speculated about the history of the Mizo people who now inhabit not just the majority of Mizoram but also small regions across the borders in Tripura, Manipur and Myanmar. Initially termed the Lushai by the British, who were ignorant of the tribe’s extent and diversity,<sup>42</sup> the neonym Mizo has come to embrace a broad family of sub-tribes, clans and sub-clans.<sup>43</sup> A. Campbell claimed in 1874 that their region stretched from Chittagong to Cachar and from Hill Tipperah (Tripura) to ‘Burmah/Quasi-Burmah,’ specifying an area slightly larger than today’s state of Mizoram (1874: 59). Aspirations to recover what is sometimes perceived to be lost Mizo land often characterises articulations of Mizo hope that motivate both political and religious campaigns.<sup>44</sup> The map in Figure 1.5 illustrates this point from the opposite perspective, presenting the attitude of those in

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<sup>40</sup> See for example Vanlalchhuanawma 2007; Varghese and Thanzawna 1997. Also expressed by Lalhrualtuanga Ralte in an interview, 2 June 2014.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Margaret Zama, 26 March 2014.

<sup>42</sup> The Lushei are in fact a relatively small sub-tribe of the modern Mizo tribe. Lushei refers to the sub-tribe; Lushai was the British term for the Mizo tribe.

<sup>43</sup> Around the time of the adoption of the new tem ‘Mizo,’ tensions existed regarding which clans and sub-tribes would be included. Documents relating to a related controversy surrounding a school textbook about Mizo History by Vanlalsiama (1959) are held in Mizoram State Archives.

<sup>44</sup> The former was most notably manifest in a two-decade struggle for independence from 1966. The latter, spiritual campaigns, have recently gained prominence through a prophetic organisation called Zoram Khawvar, who promote the notion that God’s future plan for Mizoram is that its geographical domain will be increased. Their website can be found at <http://zoramkhawvar.blogspot.co.uk>.

the Chin Hills ('Chinram') in Myanmar who believe those living in Mizoram to be part of the same ethnic family. Comparable maps are produced in Mizoram and are sometimes found on display in private homes.



**FIGURE 1.6** The River Tiau meanders through Zokhawthar, carving out the border between Myanmar to the left (East) and India to the right (West). Author's photo.

In the nineteenth century, the Mizo tribe contained the Lushei sub-tribe as well as some seventeen others listed by Liangkhaia (2002 [1976]: 24-42).<sup>45</sup> Some early texts associate the Lushai people with the

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<sup>45</sup> Mizo texts are notoriously inconsistent regarding the classification of Mizo tribes, sub-tribes and clans, sometimes influenced by the personal background of the writers. A recent and reliable text is K. Thanzauva's edited volume and collection of data, *Zonunmawi*, which lists thirty-eight clans currently belonging to the Mizo tribe (2012: 33-34).



Kuki-Chin<sup>46</sup> people, which also included several other people groups who still live in parts of modern Myanmar and the state of Manipur. Sing Khaw Khai, a Chin writer, suggests that the Lushai tribe and other Manipuri clans were once under the leadership of the Chawngthu<sup>47</sup> people in the Chin Hills, who are still a significant Mizo clan (1995: 18). By finding possible references to some of these clans in the *Manipur Chronicle* (compiled 1897), J. Shakespear<sup>48</sup> suggested that the Chawngthu have been in existence in the region since at least 1545 (1909: 373).<sup>49</sup> Referring specifically to the Lushai, however, he identifies a Lushai ancestor in Thangura, a man from Myanmar who founded the village of Tlangkua in the seventeenth century (Ibid: 372). The Sailo, Rokhûm and Zadeng Mizo sub-clans are said to be among the earliest descendants of Thangura (Shakespear 1900: 68).<sup>50</sup> Mizoram's musical heritage is popularly said to date back to Thangura's era, and songs that demonstrate in their words or music a heritage or origin from the same eastern border contribute to Mizoram's collective nostalgia. This is especially manifest in references to the River Tiau that marks the border with Myanmar. The fact that *khawhar zai* also originated in Khawbung, a village close to the border, contributes to its ability to express a much older Mizo identity than its recent history would suggest.

Whether the cultural heritage evidently shared between the Mizo people and other Tibeto-Burmese people groups reflects the traditional theories of migration, or Scott's theory of interaction, it is evident that they were far from leading an isolated existence. Since this thesis will highlight the way in which *khawhar zai* can evoke collective memory and imagination of the past, it is important to take serious consideration of these varied narratives and their implications. For example, though Scott's theory is growing in plausibility and acceptance, it cannot be denied that the popular imagination of the past remains one of emergence and migration, with special significance placed upon the moment of the migratory crossing over the River Tiau.

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<sup>46</sup> Alternatively called Tedim people, associated with Tiddim (see Figure 1.5).

<sup>47</sup> Also spelled Chawnthu or Songthu.

<sup>48</sup> Superintendent of the Lushai Hills on several occasions between 1891 and 1905.

<sup>49</sup> Sangkima also mentions earlier written references to the inhabitants of the Lushai Hills, suggesting that they had been encountered by envoys from the Assamese Kingdom in the eighteenth century, as well as by the Tripura Rajas whose stories are immortalised in the fifteenth-century poetic chronicle, *Rajmala* (2004: 10-11).

<sup>50</sup> See 'Notes on Clans in Lushai Hills' from Shakespear's Census Notes No. 1 (1901, held in Mizoram State Archives). He writes that the Sailos had 'managed to get themselves looked on as chiefs' by others. On the subject of Thangura he said that he was 'certain that there were thousands of Lushais in existence before the descendants of Thangura started on their career of conquest.'

### 1.3.2 THE CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Part three will dwell on the most pertinent aspects of the encounter with the British and especially the Christian missionaries in Mizoram. What follows in this section is a brief historical outline that sets Christianity within the context of the ethnographic details provided above. According to a timeline attributed to Shakespear, the British in Northeast India first became aware of the Lushai people in 1777 when they started to attack the Chittagong Hills.<sup>51</sup> However, it was only in 1840 that raids in Arakan and Sylhet became more frequent and in 1871 the most notorious event involved the killing of James Winchester and the kidnapping of his six-year-old daughter Mary at Alexandrapore Tea Garden (Katlicherra, Assam), leading to ‘wars’ with the tribe as reported with great enthusiasm in British gazettes.<sup>52</sup> These were in fact ‘punitive expeditions,’<sup>53</sup> which took place in 1871-1872 (during which Mary Winchester was successfully rescued, see Figure 1.7) and 1888-1889, also serving the purpose of accurately mapping the territory for the first time (Pachua 2014: 97). It was formally annexed in 1890-1891, initially with a northern and southern district that would later form the basis of the missionary administration.

Though many commentators wrote proudly of their military successes against the ‘enemy,’<sup>54</sup> one individual stands out for making a unique effort to live an ordinary life in the hills long before any missionaries arrived. Thomas Herbert Lewin was an official and writer who first encountered the village of Tlabung in 1865 and a year later became the Superintendent of the Lushai and Chittagong Hills. He quickly became popular in Tlabung where he later chose to station himself for nine years, marrying a Mizo woman. From this apparently contented existence, he wrote extensively on the local culture and language<sup>55</sup> (published in 1873, 1874 and 1885). He remains a popular legend, designated by the Mizo name Thangliana or Thanglien,<sup>56</sup> and a memorial to him and his wife continues to stand in the village.

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<sup>51</sup> Held in the British Library, MSS E361/6.

<sup>52</sup> For example, the story was covered by the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Annals of Our Time* in 1872. See C.R. Nag, *Mizo Society in Transition*, 1993: 84-85. Even Lorrain claims in an autobiographical note that his memory of seeing pictures of Mary in newspapers when he was an infant partly inspired his enthusiasm to go to the Lushai Hills. (*Whilom Headhunters*, manuscript: 7; also in Kyles 1944)

<sup>53</sup> ‘Punitive,’ because it was argued that the Lushais had violated a treaty signed in 1862 by the chief Vanhnuailiana (Timeline attributed to Shakespear, held in the British Library: MSS E361/6).

<sup>54</sup> See *Diary of Political Officers, Lushai Hills 1892-96* compiled by R.L. Thanzawna in 1973 for firsthand accounts.

<sup>55</sup> In a letter to his mother dated 21 December 1872, he wrote about his project to write a grammar and dictionary of the Lushai language, ‘hitherto an unknown and unwritten language.’

<sup>56</sup> A name he first announced to his mother in a letter on 9 March 1873.

Though he was not a missionary, his autobiography of 1912 affirms his Anglican faith and his accounts of celebrating Christmas in ‘true English fashion’ suggest that he imparted at least a rudimentary introduction to Christianity to his companions<sup>57</sup> (Lalhluna 2000: 28-30<sup>58</sup>).



**FIGURE 1.7** Mary Winchester after her rescue. Synod Archives.

Scott, in his radical approach to the region of ‘Zomia’ (2009), argues that Christianity was not as tied to colonialism as has often been claimed. Rather, he suggests that nonconformist Christian missionaries (neither Anglican nor Catholic) were attracted to the tribal highlands for the same reasons that the existing people had settled there because they were also attracted to the margins and considered themselves to be peripheral to the state (2009: 167). As such, nonconformist Christianity became more

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<sup>57</sup> His letters, however, reveal less certainty. He confessed to experiencing a crisis of faith due to his remote situation, yet repeatedly quoted the Bible in the course of his writing (5 April 1868). He nevertheless candidly expressed the opinion that Catholic and non-British missionaries would be most appropriate for the hill tribes and actively attempted to recruit them (10 January 1867).

<sup>58</sup> Mizo biographies have been written by R.K. Lalhluna (2000) and Lalhrualtuanga Ralte (2013). An earlier biography in English was written by John Whitehead in 1992. The British Library holds a collection of manuscripts belonging to and connected with Lewin, including notes made in the preparation of the 1992 biography.

associated with hill districts, enabling their populations to mark themselves off with even greater distance from the valley people; it offered a means to establish state legitimacy without embracing the structures of statehood maintained in the lowlands. Scott suggests that this is why Christianity has become one of the defining characteristics of many of the tribes of Zomia, since it enables them to maintain religious difference from the lowland people (2009: 319-320).

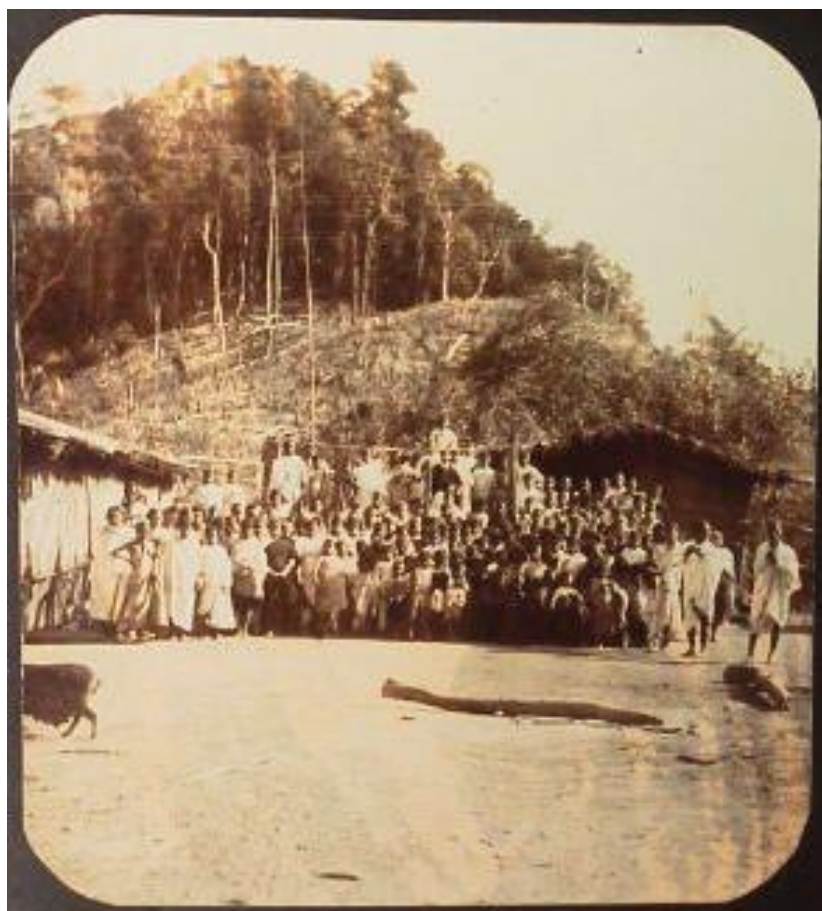
The historian David Bebbington in his *Victorian Nonconformity* (1992: 44) estimates that there were nine thousand British missionaries active by the end of the nineteenth century, many of whom were nonconformist. The Northeast states became the subject of nonconformist missionary activity in the nineteenth century when British trade and military presence made it possible for missionaries to enter the regions. Nagaland was the domain of American Baptist missionaries, Welsh Presbyterians worked in Meghalaya, and Baptist missionaries from Australia and New Zealand worked in Tripura. Despite the failed attempts of Lewin to invite American Baptist missionaries to the region from Rangoon, Mizoram was one of the last areas to be opened up to missionaries, but when the Lushais became better known in British publications, they caught the interest of two individuals at about the same time. In 1891, the Welsh missionary William Williams, based in Meghalaya, took an exploratory excursion to the Lushai Hills and spent one month in the region now known as Aizawl assessing the possibilities for mission. Inspired, he earnestly asked the Presbyterian Church of Wales to send a mission including himself to the region.<sup>59</sup> He died of typhoid in 1892 before anything could be arranged, but the Presbyterians (then known as the Calvinist Methodists) were later able to send missionaries to the region in 1897 and 1898: David Evan Jones (1870-1947) and Edwin Rowlands (1867-1939).

At the same time, an English philanthropist, Robert Arthington, was captivated by stories of the Lushai Hills and decided to include the region within his project to fund missionaries to evangelise the 'aboriginal' people of Northeast India. He appointed two men from London, James Herbert Lorrain (1870-1944) and Frederick William Savidge (1862-1935), for this task and they arrived in India in 1890 and 1891 respectively. They eventually reached the Lushai Hills in 1894. They identified themselves and have since been recognised as the pioneer missionaries to the Mizo people, but in 2013, the Presbyterian Church in Mizoram ruled that they would instead commemorate the contribution of William Williams as their pioneer missionary.

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<sup>59</sup> See Lloyd 1986: 19-27.

Well-served by the writings of Lewin as well as other scholarly British officials such as Shakespear, Lorrain and Savidge had enormous success in terms of language and translation. They consolidated the transliteration attempts of earlier writers and made a systematic alphabet of the local language that remains in use to this day. The system employed the roman script, and a dictionary, primers and associated published literature soon followed. However, they were required to leave in 1897 in accordance with Arthington's plan, at which point Jones and Rowlands took over the work. Lorrain and Savidge returned to the region under the Baptist Missionary Society in 1903.



**FIGURE 1.8** 200 Lushais who attended the Great Gathering at Sethlun in January 1905, the year the Baptist Church was handed over to local leadership. Angus Archives.<sup>60</sup>

Working closely with the British superintendents, the missionaries made a large impact on Mizo society. By 1903, the Presbyterian missionaries had a compound in the northern region of Aizawl, and the Baptists had a compound in Serkawn, in the southern region of Lunglei. Both built schools and hospitals within the first few years of their presence. As early as 1904, the colonial administrators had

<sup>60</sup> Held in Angus Archives, Oxford: IN/PS1/13/2.

chosen to hand over total responsibility for school education to the missionaries.<sup>61</sup> Most of these mission institutions, now under local management, continue to contribute to the high standard of education, literacy<sup>62</sup> and healthcare<sup>63</sup> still enjoyed by the state.

Brian Stanley, a historian of Baptist missions, comments that though it was through Baptist missionaries that many changes took place in Mizoram, they were not typically 'Baptist in character' (1992: 270). Gwen Rees Roberts wrote in 1958 that:<sup>64</sup>

There has been a complete and harmonious merger of Church and Mission and in addition the Presbyterian Church in North Mizo District works in the closest co-operation with the Baptist Church in the South.

The Welsh missionaries particularly influenced the congregationalist pattern of church organisation and worship, while the Baptist ethos emphasised autonomy in church leadership, most specifically demonstrated by handing over authority to Mizo church leaders at an early stage. In doing so, they were building on a tradition started by Frederick Trestrail in his guidance for Baptist missionaries in 1860. In keeping with his advice, the churches in Mizoram soon became thoroughly 'indigenised' and 'self-supporting' (Bebbington et al. 2007: 281). The international ecumenical conferences of the early twentieth century were also groundbreaking in their ability to bring together the missionary experiences of a wide range of churches and to encourage the kind of cooperation that Mizoram witnessed between the Baptist and Calvinist Methodist missionaries. Lorrain is known to have had access to the reports of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 because he cites it in his 1915 report concerning the use of music and the need to encourage indigenous hymn composition (MGCC<sup>65</sup> 1993: 129). It is evident

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<sup>61</sup> Government schools had already been established in Demagiri and Lunglei, but it was Shakespear who recommended that the missionaries take full control of educational facilities. See his letter to McCall, 25 June 1934.

<sup>62</sup> The state has an outstanding record in literacy, 91.6%, which is the third-highest rate in India (2011 census).

<sup>63</sup> The British had already introduced medicine and vaccinations prior to the missionaries' arrival, primarily addressing cases of smallpox, malaria, wounds and digestive problems. However, it had been difficult to cater to the high demand from the Lushais. See for example Administration Reports for South Lushai Hills, 1896. For an account of the present state of healthcare in Mizoram, see P.L. Ramliana (2012).

<sup>64</sup> *From Headhunting to Hallelujah Chorus*, manuscript held at National Library of Wales.

<sup>65</sup> *Report of B.M.S. on Mizoram*, a collection of early Baptist missionary reports published by the Mizoram Gospel Centenary Committee in 1993. Referenced throughout this thesis as MGCC.

that the missionaries in Mizoram directly engaged themselves with the world missionary movement of the time.

Despite the prolific activities of the missionaries, conversions to Christianity remained slow for several years. Two men called Khuma and Khara are considered to be the first Christian converts, baptised by the Presbyterian missionaries in 1899 (Lloyd 1986: 62, see Figure 1.9), but in 1901 only forty-five Christians were recorded in the census.<sup>66</sup>



**FIGURE 1.9** The first men to be baptised in 1899. Synod Archives.

Christians still formed a negligible minority until Welsh missionaries who had returned from experiencing the Welsh revival in 1904 brought an enthusiasm and desire for a similar event in Northeast India. The Welsh mission in the Khasi Hills in Meghalaya was the first to experience dramatic mass conversions to Christianity. A delegation of Mizo Christians visited the Khasi revival and they came back with similar enthusiasm.

Soon, by 1906, Aizawl witnessed a similar revival, and the Baptists in the south followed a year later. It was these revivals, inspired by Wales but stirred up locally that accounted for the fast transformation

<sup>66</sup> Kyles (1944: 16-17) contains an account of Taibunga who Lorrain claimed to be the first Lushai Christian. He died after a two-year struggle with a hip disease, but Lorrain writes that he retained his Christian faith throughout, 'bright by the certain hope of immortality.'

of the region into a Christian society as highlighted in the opening question of this thesis. Subsequent similar outbursts occurred periodically until the census of 1951 recorded that 80.3% of the population were Christian. A previous study gave a detailed account of these revivals (Heath 2013) and the best local sources include the comprehensive eyewitness account by Liangkhaia (1972) as well as more recent publications by Lalsâwma (1994) and H.S. Luaia (1998).



**FIGURE 1.10** Baptism at Nghasi Lui stream, 1 February 1905. Angus Archives.<sup>67</sup>

The revivals led to numerous original forms of Christian worship, including the use of the drum in the church, dancing together in a circle, and eventually the practice of *lêngkhâwm zai* as it survives today. For the Mizo participants, the revivals offered a local means by which to negotiate Christianity in their own terms without submitting to either missionary or imperial authority. Indeed, the relationship

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<sup>67</sup> Held in Angus Archives, Oxford: IN/PS1/13/5.



between the missionaries and the colonialists was not lost on the Mizo people. The missionary J.M. Lloyd<sup>68</sup> tells of early audiences of the preaching who would shrewdly remark (1986: 68):

The British government now intends to kill us without recourse to the knife. Missionaries are sent to put an end to our religion and to our mode of worship, so that we may all die...

This shows that Mizo people did perceive the similar ‘civilising’ ends to which the two parties were working, albeit through different means. After the crisis of earlier decades in which missionaries and colonial officers had been perceived to ‘kill’ the old way of life, the revivals offered an opportunity for Mizos to be agents of change even in the development of Christianity in the region. Chapter four will address further aspects of the revivals in Mizoram.

Of course, the most obvious legacy of the missionaries and the revivals is the possibly unrivalled dominance of Christianity in the region. Joy Pachuau goes as far as to state that all ethnic Mizos are now Christians (2014: 137). The church, under local leadership, is extremely influential in society, with nearly all Mizo people belonging to a congregation in their locality. The Presbyterians form the largest denomination and dominate the heavily populated north, while the Baptist church dominates the south. The Salvation Army entered the region in 1917,<sup>69</sup> the Catholic Church in 1925, the Seventh Day Adventists in 1946 and the United Pentecostal Church in 1949-50 (Thanzauva 2012: 262-263). There are several smaller factions of each of the above, as well as independent congregations. From the 1950’s, the Christian demographics of the state have somewhat stabilised, and all that remains is to highlight in the following section the socio-political developments that followed in the later part of the twentieth century.

### 1.3.3 THE STATE OF MIZORAM

This section briefly narrates the more recent political history of Mizoram before presenting the contemporary situation of the state as encountered at the time of fieldwork. In 1898 the Lushai Hills

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<sup>68</sup> J.M. Lloyd (1913-1998) was a missionary in Mizoram from 1944 to 1964. His subsequent MTh thesis (1986) and book (1991) about the history of the church in Mizoram have been important sources for the present thesis. A Mizo-language commemoration of his life was edited by Lalawmpuia Hauhnar (2002).

<sup>69</sup> Manuscripts relating to the entry of Salvation Army into Mizoram can be found in the National Library of Wales and the British Library. As the first non-pioneer Christian group to enter, the decision of the Superintendent to grant access to the Salvation Army was hotly debated. Contemporaneous with their introduction to Mizoram, articles comparing their doctrines to the pioneer missionary teachings were published and discussed in *Kristian Tlangau*.

became integrated as a district of Assam, and was later renamed the Mizo District in 1954. Meanwhile, the first nationalist political party had been founded in 1946, which became called the Mizo Union.<sup>70</sup> There were numerous factions of the Union, some seeking total independence, and others boldly sending a petition to King George VI requesting to remain within the British Empire (18 May 1947). A.I. Bowman, who mediated this latter claim, explained that the sentiment was inspired by the fact that Mizo men had participated in the war effort based on a promise made in 1942 that they would receive continued British protection after the war.<sup>71</sup> In seeking separation from India, they had some sympathy from the British administrators who had perceived that the estrangement of the North East from the rest of India meant that it could be better governed as a separate ‘North Eastern Frontier Hill Province,’ a concept that had been recommended by Parry as early as 1928.<sup>72</sup>

Ultimately remaining within India, in 1961 the Mizo National Front formed itself out of a group that had worked to provide food to those struggling during the famine of the previous decade.<sup>73</sup> However, the new purpose of the MNF soon became to fight for complete independence in the name of ‘Mizoram’ (land/nation of the Mizos), further propagating a sense of Mizo nationalism. They began by attacking government compounds in 1966, and were eventually forced into an underground movement. After twenty years of violent struggles, involving India’s only airstrikes on its own land, a compromise was reached which made Mizoram a state of India.<sup>74</sup> The region has been largely peaceful since the Peace Accord of 1986.

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<sup>70</sup> In A.I. Bowman’s unpublished memoirs, *Border Patrol*, of his posting to Mizoram in 1942-1943, he recalls encountering Mizo nationalist sentiment among his contacts (31).

<sup>71</sup> Under the Superintendent A.G. McCall, the Lushai Hills were involved in a pre-emptive ‘Total Defence Scheme’ intended to keep the Japanese forces away from British territory. The British Library holds several files relating to this scheme, which also involved Bowman and Mizo political administrators Sainghinga and Buchhawna.

<sup>72</sup> ‘Memorandum on Reforms for Lushai,’ 29 September 1928. See also a later memorandum from J.J.M. Nichols-Roy, ‘Hill Districts of Assam: Their future in the new constitution of India’ (April 1946) and an undated text by A. MacDonald Kongor entitled ‘A case of the hill tribes of the North-East Frontiers of India.’ All held in the British Library.

<sup>73</sup> The MNF began as the Mizo Cultural Society in 1955, and became the Mautam Front and Mizo National Famine Front in 1960 before becoming a political organisation a year later (Joshi 2005: ix).

<sup>74</sup> For a sample of texts about the independence movement in Mizoram, see Nirmal Nibedon (1980), Sanjib Baruah (2009), J.V. Hluna and Rini Tochwawng (2012). Another valuable resource is the collection of papers and letters belonging to Bowman who worked to raise awareness in Britain of Mizoram’s struggle for independence in collaboration with the anthropologist Ursula Betts, applying their experience in Nagaland to the Mizo context. The Bowman collection is held by the British Library (MSS EUR/F229).

Developing the theoretical ground of Geertz (1973), Lalsangkima Pachuau claims that although the nationalist movements of Northeast India were born out of ‘primordial sentiments,’ in which the land was considered the people’s own, they were simultaneously impeded by the same sentiments to which notions of nationhood and statehood had hitherto been alien (1997: 2). Though the term may be unsavoury to modern ethnographers, these ‘primordial sentiments’ relate to the collective traditions, heritage and nostalgia mentioned in section 1.3.1. These, for Mizos, are located in a place of longing, East of the River Tiau that writers tend to agree was crossed around the year 1700,<sup>75</sup> leading them to imagine their rightful borders to be much larger than they currently are. Lalsangkima Pachuau argues that these sentiments may motivate nationalist movements, but are equally difficult to reconcile with the concept of the nation-state for which the nationalists fight. If Scott’s theory is to be accepted, the ‘nation-state’ is exactly what they had initially rejected. Boym also established a similar theoretical relationship between nostalgia and concepts of the nation-state, in which nostalgia serves both as a motivation for conceiving of a nation-state, but also as a ‘rebellion’ against history and time that seeks to rewrite the past by constructing an imagined future (2001: xv, 15). Such tensions again direct this thesis towards themes of nostalgia and longing, which underlie the hope expressed in *khawhar zai*.

With the outbreak of the insurgency in 1966, the missionaries left the region in 1968<sup>76</sup> (Roberts 2001: 4). Tlānghmingthanga claims that the decades that followed, during which curfews disrupted church and community worship, diminished the relevance of the church, leading to moral decline (1995: 59, 95-96). On the other hand, many commentators have attributed the insurgency movement to the greater spread of Christianity. Just as nostalgia may have been both a motivation and impediment to nationalism, it is possible to recognise the way in which Christianity has contributed to but has also been compromised by the insurgency.

For example, the scholar Frederick Downs claimed that the independence and nationalist movements of Northeast India were motivated by a ‘tribal solidarity’ (a term credited to Surajit Sinha in Buddhabebe 1982) which he describes as a new phenomenon brought about by the British and missionary encounter

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<sup>75</sup> The river now lies on the border between Mizoram and Myanmar. For a discussion of the date of crossing, see Lalthangliana 2011: 86-87.

<sup>76</sup> The documents of Gwen Rees Roberts are an important missionary source for this period. Her descriptions of the outbreak, letters to other missionaries such as the Lloyds, and her failed attempt to obtain a ‘No objection to return’ certificate from India are documented in sources held by the National Library of Wales.

(1988: 2-3). K. Thanzauva, who studied under Downs, lists Mizoram's *inpumkhatna* as one of the positive outcomes of the administration, the Mizo term for unity that equates to solidarity (2012: 123). S.K. Chaube took up the theme of 'tribal solidarity' in his later analysis of the insurgency periods of Northeast India (1999: 524-526). Though he acknowledges the many writers who, like Sinha, placed 'blame' upon the missions for generating the solidarity, he offers the more moderate position that Christianity 'had played a progressive and, in fact, integrative role... within the framework of regional autonomy.' In this context, he maintains that it was the inherently disparate nature of the former districts of Assam, geographically and culturally, that was more responsible for the brewing of independence movements (Ibid.). K. Thanzauva presents a valuable overview of each movement in Mizoram's history (2012: 123). Although scholars may be agreed that, at least in Mizoram, the advent of Christianity was instrumental in establishing 'tribal solidarity,' there were wider factors that contributed to the tensions between past and present identity, traditional and modern politics, nostalgia and hope that saw the rise in a conflicted nationalist sentiment.

Following the Peace Accord, Mizoram has been a state within India since 1987 and now has a population of just over one million. At the 2001 census, 87% were Christian, and the remaining inhabitants consisted mainly of migrant Hindu and Muslim workers from elsewhere in India, and some minority tribes close to the Bangladesh border who practice local forms of Buddhism, such as the Chakma and Bru people. The inclusion of non-Mizo Indians in mainstream Mizo society is rare, but does happen as a result of intermarriage or conversion to Christianity. Recent studies by Joy Pachuau (2014) and C. Lalhlira (2010) have drawn attention to the experience of non-Mizos in Mizoram, though this is beyond the scope of the present thesis.

The Legislative Assembly is based in the state capital Aizawl, a city of 239,416 people<sup>77</sup> built precariously on the hills. The other seven districts in Mizoram are each governed from a smaller town connected to numerous peripheral villages. As well as the government and the churches, the state is served by several non-government organisations that unite numerous groups such as students,<sup>78</sup> women<sup>79</sup> and senior citizens,<sup>80</sup> forming powerful voices in local politics. Perhaps the most influential

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<sup>77</sup> 2011 Census of India. See <http://censusindia.gov.in/>.

<sup>78</sup> The MSU and MZP are the two main student organisations.

<sup>79</sup> The MHIP (women) had 233,976 members in 2010.

<sup>80</sup> The MUP (senior citizens) had 50,500 members in 2010.

is the Young Mizo Association (YMA), which had 383,494 members in 2010, more than one third of the population. It was founded in 1935 as the Young Lushai Association to promote the ‘proper utilization of leisure time,’ the ‘reverence for a good Christian life’ and the ‘holistic development of Mizo society.’<sup>81</sup> Most pertinent to the present study, the YMA is also responsible for organising the first few days of mourning when a person dies.

Comments regarding the present state of public health are considered pertinent, since they provide the objective contextual backdrop required to understand the quotidian experience of death in Mizoram more fully. Sources in 2012 stated that the death rate in Mizoram was 4.4 (deaths per 1000), one of the lowest in the country.<sup>82</sup> Maternal mortality, infant mortality and under-five child mortality rates are also consistently lower than the national averages. Life expectancy data is limited for Mizoram, but the Population Reference Bureau lists the projected expectancy for 2016 to be 75 years,<sup>83</sup> much higher than India’s average of 66.<sup>84</sup> The five main causes of death are malaria, cancer, and diseases in the lung (including asthma and bronchitis), heart and stomach, the latter of which probably relate to the heavy use of tobacco-related products in Mizoram.<sup>85</sup>

Despite Mizoram’s troubled past, the state now enjoys a relatively high standard of public health, democratic stability and social peace. The opening question of this thesis asks how *khawhar zai* has remained relevant despite rapid social and political changes and this brief overview has highlighted more precisely the recent changes that have taken place. In a new socio-political climate, it is possible that the terms of hope have also changed, yet *khawhar zai* remains the repertoire of choice for the majority of bereaved families. The final part of this thesis will address this aspect of the question.

This ethnographic and historical overview concludes the introduction to this thesis, bringing to light aspects of Mizo history and identity essential to an understanding of the region, but also raising issues regarding the application of common narratives that promulgate traditional views about tribalism and nomadism. These discussions have provided opportunities to highlight the areas in which the themes of hope, nostalgia and longing that are central to *khawhar zai* can intersect with more general aspects of

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<sup>81</sup> From their website <http://www.centralyma.org.in/>.

<sup>82</sup> Knoema. See <http://knoema.com/INDAT2012/india-development-indicators-2012>. See also Ramliana 2012: 33.

<sup>83</sup> Population Reference Bureau. See <http://www.prb.org/pdf07/futurepopulationofindia.pdf>.

<sup>84</sup> World Bank. See <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN>.

<sup>85</sup> See Thakur et al. 2015: 789-798, a scientific paper that highlights Mizoram’s high use of tobacco.

Mizo self-identification. This introduction began with the call to '*han thlir teh u.*' The following part will explore the implications of this exhortation to 'come and gaze' for the early composers and singers of *khawhar zai*.

## PART 2

### GAZING TO THE PAST: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KHAWHAR ZAI AND OLDER MIZO PRACTICES

*I had arrived in Khawbung that very day, making the long journey down from Champhai, flanked by the hills of Myanmar to the left and passing through villages steeped in the legendary history of characters such as Lianchhiari, who longingly gazed down at her lover from the stony ledge called lunglêng tlâng. Finally, here I was in the village that claimed to be the birthplace of khawhar zai. We sat together on low wooden benches beneath the crude glare of the assortment of battery lights and candles. Sometimes the main lights would flicker back on, exposing our huddled forms that filled the old house. The widower Pu Rolala had died two days ago, leaving no family behind him, yet his house that might have been empty was filled with the sounds of gathered voices singing together.*



**FIGURE 2.1** Inside a *khawhar in* at Khawbung, January 2014. Author's photo.

*We sang 'Aw Lalpa, Davida leh a thlah Arsi.' It was neither the first nor the last time I heard the people of Khawbung sing this song. It was clearly the local favourite, one of the most famous songs composed by the pride of the village, Patea. I first heard it sung there a year earlier, when I made an initial visit to see the Hlakungpui Mual, a memorial square dedicated to Mizoram's literary heroes. At that time, the committee had welcomed me with a lunch, during which they were eager to sing the song as an example of the tradition to which they lay claim. Now, having just arrived hours earlier, I found myself*

*in a khawhar in, the same song being sung with earnest conviction. The next day it would again be one of the chosen examples when we would meet together for a group discussion and singing session about khawhar zai.*

The song that will form the thread of this section is Patea's most famous and one of the most popular at funerals, 'Aw Lalpa, Davida leh a thlah Arsi' (K2), although several of his other songs will also be considered. In the first edition of the *MKHTB* (1930), the published tune name of K2 referred to Patea's village, 'KHAWBUNG,' showing the extent to which it has been associated from the beginning with the village on the eastern border which carries so much poetic and nostalgic capital. This part will explore how *khawhar zai* has enabled communities to sing the hope of generations past from before the introduction of Christianity, by reflecting upon past musical and bereavement traditions latent in the words, music and practice of the songs. This part, comprising two chapters, examines how *khawhar zai* were composed in a way that looks back to a past way of life, and argues that this remains an important aspect of the songs that has ensured their survival amid more modern musical alternatives.

The theoretical aim of this part is to expand upon existing anthropological studies about culturally specific poetics of nostalgia and longing, often limited to song texts and ethnography, by identifying its musical manifestations in *khawhar zai* through musical analysis. The first chapter will be influenced by existing theories by analyzing the early Mizo context and songs in the established ethnographic and poetic manner. The second chapter will seek to make the case for the presence of a complementary retrospective attitude in the musical content and practice that supports the poetic findings.

*Khawhar zai* can give substance to the imagination of the singers. In this way, the singing encourages nostalgia not only for past musical traditions but also for past religious and cultural traditions as they recall the former significance of terms such as Pialrâl (paradise) and *thihna lui* (river of death) for example. When considering nostalgia and its relationship to hope, a key text is that of Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001). Although the work focuses extensively on her personal background and interest in Soviet and European nationalist contexts, her finely-crafted theorising about two forms of nostalgia has remained influential. She contrasts the harnessing of nostalgia for reconstructive purposes, which she claims offers a deceptive and false imagination about the future, with the nostalgia for an imagined past which promotes a realistic if melancholic awareness of future possibilities. She writes that nostalgia in its more positive manifestation is a powerful component of constructing an



imagined future, and thus constitutes an aspect of hope. She writes, ‘nostalgia... is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy’ (2001: xiii). The following chapters will show that the retrospective longing found in *khawhar zai* often directs itself towards an idealised or imagined past way of life, sometimes associated with the mythical tradition or events not part of living memory. It nevertheless can contribute to an imaginative hope and longing that characterises the songs.

Nostalgia in music has been studied widely by ethnomusicologists. Christine Yano has studied Japanese *enka* music as a repertoire that evokes longing and nostalgia. She writes that the songs elicit a public imaginary that ‘holds up to public view a communally broken heart’ (2002: 3). Her focus, however, is on the complexities of the role of mass mediation of this ‘timeless’ music of nostalgia, a subject which is beyond the scope of this thesis though would be relevant to future studies. She also avoids discussion of the significance of the longing and nostalgia evoked through the songs in shaping attitudes and expectations about the future, which the present study seeks to achieve with its focus on hope.

Ethnomusicological studies of nostalgia are rather more common in diasporic contexts. For example, Kay Kaufman Shelemay has studied the mobility between musical nostalgia and newness among Syrian Jews in New York (1998). Exploring the theme of music and memory, her most original proposition is that music can contain an unconscious bank of memories accessed during the performance moment. As she expressed in her keynote address at a conference at the University of Montreal in 2014,<sup>86</sup> music is a ‘mechanism’ of this mobility. More than ritual retrospection, it is a yearning for a different time and place (1998: 48-50, 213). She particularly highlights the way in which *pizmonium* songs of Syrian Jewish communities are a ‘rich source for meaningful reminiscence,’ preserving the past and imparting knowledge about the past to later generations (Ibid: 219). Moreover, the memories the repertoire conveys represent the bifurcated historical experiences of the community, including Jewish and extra-Jewish influences (Ibid: 25). When applying such ideas to *khawhar zai*, it must be remembered that the Mizo context is not a diasporic one, but there are certainly several ways in which a different time and place is alluded to. Firstly, there is the location East of the River T̄iau, often associated with Mizo origins and yearned for in much of the surviving older Mizo poetry. Secondly, the yearning for a heavenly place located in the future, but often referred to as ‘home’ reflects some of the same attitudes

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<sup>86</sup> ‘Transnationalisation of Religion through Music,’ 16-18 October 2014.

found by Shelemay among diasporic people groups. The concept of music as a mechanism of mobility may certainly influence this thesis, while considering it to mobilise mobility in directions other than those to which Shelemay refers: a distant past, and an imagined future.

There is evidence for this in other traditions, as is seen in Elizabeth Wickett's anthropological analysis of funerary laments called *ʿidid* in Upper Egypt. Her linguistic analysis of a body of texts collected not at funerals but in interview conditions, and the difficulties she recounts about eliciting interpretations from the female practitioners, is obviously limited in its ability to illuminate aspects of the music and practice. However, she does engage with issues of authenticity and grief, which will be relevant in part four of this thesis. In the last part of her book she makes a startling comparative finding that the contemporary laments are laden with 'simultaneously ancient and contemporary meaning' which stretches back 'beyond mere referential and literal boundaries of interpretation to a psychopoetic level of significance' that she even claims resonates with Ancient Egyptian cosmologies (2010: 234). In particular, she finds that the language of the laments still relates to beliefs about the condition of the spirit after death and its potential for resurrection. She calls this the cosmology of lament, manifested in the symbols and metaphors of the texts. This is similar to the eschatology of *khawhar zai*, which applies the poetic language and metaphor of former cosmological beliefs about Piarâl and the journey of the soul in order to articulate Christian hope. Her term also implies that there is a difference between the cosmology of lament and the cosmology of the religious beliefs of practitioners outside the ritual context; the repertoire would seem to contain an internally coherent cosmology that deviates from that of other discourse about life and death.

A parallel can also be found in Byron Dueck's *Musical Intimacies and Indigenous Imaginaries* (2013) in which he observes that aboriginal funerary practices in Canada 'also stand in dialogue with ideas that precede the introduction of Christianity' (Ibid: 107). This, admittedly, is not the focus of his work, which instead aims to offer a new perspective on the dichotomy and interaction between mass-mediated imaginaries and face-to-face intimacies at sites of public performance. However, in a chapter about gospel singing, individuation and comforting community he brings to light aspects of public and private dynamics shared by funeral wakes and coffeehouse events where gospel hymns are sung. By highlighting the shared aspiration that the dead go to a better place, he arrives at the conclusion that the gospel hymns offer a suitable continuity in their texts of 'traditional eschatology.' This term is clearly

reminiscent of Wickett's, although it contains the potential for more meaningful application in a Christian context. *Khawhar zai* similarly contains terms and associations that do not form a part of everyday discourse, especially in the Christian context, yet it is no less considered a Christian tradition. The following statement from an interview with Tlânghmingthanga gives a sense of the way in which this phenomenon is analysed by Mizo theologians:<sup>87</sup>

I also want that thing to say among our Mizo people, all the time looking to our old days. Otherwise we will not have our own identity. That hope will be our foundation also. Right from the beginning, we have hope, maybe little hope, that hope is our foundation, out of that foundation, we constructed a building, and then a big home will come, like a tree branching out.

He recognises that Mizo hope is characterised by 'all the time looking to our old days,' which reflects the focus of the present part on 'gazing to the past.' Out of retrospection comes an intellectual and emotional foundation on which to base present and future hope.

For Fiona Magowan, who has studied the funeral traditions of the Yolngu Christians in Arnhem Land, such a use of traditional eschatology or cosmology achieves a collective memory of an imagined past; she uses the term 'ancestral cosmology.' Her three emphases in her book *Melodies of Mourning* (2007a) are those of ecological associations, the role of women and the impact of Christianity. Her sophisticated study of the latter will influence the following parts of this thesis, but it is her focus on the memory of place in her articles (2001, 2007b) that is particularly important to the present part. She evocatively writes about the geographical and religious associations contained within musical performance (Magowan and Attwood 2001: 41-60). She finds that original songs are still being composed, often with a theme describing the relationship to the land that resonates with the particular group of that region. Such songs evoke a 'deeply felt habitus' for the people by reminding them of the past and focusing them on God and nature through the quality of the music (2007b: 476). As in Mizoram, these new Christian hymns have become the basic repertoire at times of death.

'Habitus' is a term famously expounded by Pierre Bourdieu that describes behaviour that is culturally learned. It is given greatest attention in *The Logic of Practice* (1990: 52-65), in which he defines habitus as 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions' that simultaneously determine, regulate and liberate

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<sup>87</sup> Interview, 16 April 2014.

behaviour and practice. Whereas Bourdieu emphasises the way in which people are often unaware of the habitus they have acquired from their socio-cultural situation, Magowan argues for a habitus that is ‘deeply felt,’ acknowledging the possibility that an awareness of habitus can be imparted through certain discourses such as song and poetry. The work of Boym contains an alternative use for the term. She writes of cultural memory, cultural myth and nostalgia as ‘mental habitus’ (2001: 55). The term in this latter form can certainly be brought to bear upon culturally learned ways of remembering and hoping through music. Music can therefore be described as a mechanism not only for mobility but also for learning and evoking the habitus necessary for the associations with the past to be meaningful.

In order to understand the way in which *khawhar zai* evokes the habitus associated with traditional eschatology, the following chapter will pay particular attention to Mizo terms of longing and nostalgia. This method belongs to a long tradition of interpretive anthropology epitomised in the work of Michelle Rosaldo (1980) and Maurice Leenhardt (Clifford 1992), and it was the particular focus of Thomas Maschio in an article of 1992 and his book of 1994. In both texts, he challenges classical cultural anthropology by arguing that mythic time ‘has more to do with emotion than with any measurement of time’ (1994: 168). Instead, he argues that the constructed forms of poetic expression offer a way to form the self imaginatively through the plenitude of emotions of loss and sorrow (Ibid: 190-191). Here, he introduces the ‘melancholy ontology’ of Martin Buber (Smith 1989), in which the self is created and transformed as a person through separation and loss. This is an ontology of the self comprised of cycles of loss, imagination and recovery.

In the Rauto context of Melanesia, the emotions associated with grief are a combination of sorrow (*momso ulong*), nostalgia (*momso makai*) and ‘quietly-borne grief’ (*kipitngen*) (Maschio 1994: 198). Maschio is careful to create distance between these terms and the English term ‘nostalgia’ (Ibid: 215), and cites Michelle Rosaldo’s similar distinction between nostalgia and the Balinese *lek* (Shweder and LeVine 1984: 130, 142). In contrast to what Maschio describes as ‘superficial’ nostalgia, *makai* is described as ‘an essential part of the active construction of the culture forms of Rauto religious discourse and practice,’ also participating in the evocation of the ‘plenitude’ of memory necessary for the recovery of the self (1994: 72, 215). As an anthropological text, its ethnographic scope is somewhat wider than the present thesis, addressing ritual contexts and discourse forms not studied here. However, despite

the heavy emphasis on song repertoires especially at times of death, as evocative models for the experience of these emotions (Ibid: 198), he does not attempt any musical description or analysis.

By contrast, Simon Mills has deliberately applied musical analysis of performance events to explore the practical expression of certain 'local' emotions in the Korean context. Korean participants claim that these emotions are particular to their own culture and cannot be experienced by outsiders, yet Mills' musical study combines the thick description of Geertzian anthropology with innovative analytical methods to come closer to communicating the musical significance of the emotional expressions, whether of *han* (sorrow) and *hǔng* (joy) (2011), or grief (2012). The following two chapters have a similar aim, but deviate from Mills' methodology by separating the contextual description of chapter two from the musical analysis of chapter three. By first identifying the culturally-specific terms of emotion and their roles in constructing forms of religious discourse, the participation of Mizo terms in the musical evocation of habitus appropriate to the Mizo context can similarly be evaluated through particular analysis of the songs' melodic aspects.

This brief review of literature has shown that there are several studies, many of an anthropological nature, which have found relevant processes involved in the evocation of nostalgia for another time and place, whether actual or imagined. The importance of applying local terms at this stage has been established, in order to articulate the nature of the traditional eschatology and to find aspects of it at the heart of funerary discourse in song and lament. The following chapter (chapter two) will apply these approaches to the Mizo context. However, given the relative lack of literature that has ventured into analysis of the musical style, it seems a necessary challenge for the present thesis to explore this domain, since it is probable that not only in the texts and practice but also in the music, participants can learn a habitus that is associated with past musical traditions. This will be the task of the second chapter of this part, chapter three.

## CHAPTER 2

### IN CONTEXT: THE LIVES AND POETRY OF THE EARLY COMPOSERS

This chapter will engage with the issues introduced previously, including the way in which *khawhar zai* contains allusions to Mizo ‘traditional eschatology’ by evoking a habitus that mobilises its practitioners towards an imagined past. This will emphasise the retrospective aspect of hope in the Mizo context as part of the broader narrative of this thesis. This will be achieved by focusing on the life and songs of Patea, especially ‘*Aw Lalpa, Davida leh a thlah arsi*’ (K2).

In addition to the ethnomusicological and anthropological basis set forth in the previous literature review, it is also important to establish the primary theory with which this thesis will refer to and analyse aspects of hope. The theologian John Macquarrie described hope as a ‘universal human phenomenon’ in the first chapter of his *Christian Hope*, in which he argued that Christian hope is just one of many expressions of an ‘attitude’ common to all people (1978: 2-5). In understanding the Mizo expression of hope, Macquarrie’s three aspects of hope are appropriate terms of reference. He regards it as having ‘emotional,’ ‘volitional’ and ‘cognitive/intellectual’ aspects.

The emotional aspect is what leads people to have a positive expectation, the opposite of fear, which results in positive engagement with the environment and community, rather than the self-isolating consequence of fear (Ibid: 7). The volitional aspect produces a character of action regarding the freedom of the will, a nuanced moral dynamic, and moral and social critique. The cognitive/intellectual aspect includes the nature of belief and vocabulary that articulate hope, particular to different cultures and religions (Ibid: 11). For example, whereas Macquarrie identifies the condition without hope to be a condition of ‘fear,’ some theologians writing strictly within the Christian context have instead called this a condition of ‘sin’ (Moltmann 1967). ‘Despair,’ in the absence of the emotional aspect of hope, and ‘presumption’ (or excessive optimism), in the absence of the volitional aspect, are two different manifestations of this attitude of ‘sin’ (Ibid: 23). This difference is a cognitive/intellectual one that depends on the religion and terms that are under discussion. Unlike Moltmann, Macquarrie’s use of the term ‘fear’ is one that resonates with some anthropological studies of religion,<sup>88</sup> thus establishing the

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<sup>88</sup> See, for example, Evans-Pritchard 1956: 312, Turner 1966: 48 (in which approaches to twin birth are similar to historical Mizo approaches, mention in section 6.2.2). Davies devotes a chapter to exploring fear of death from a variety of perspectives (2005: 131-149). His description of Christianity as an

suitability of applying his frameworks to the present study. Nevertheless, it is recognised that the opposition of hope and fear poses the danger of essentialising what are in fact very complex attitudes towards death in every religious society. Assertions made here regarding the pre-Christian Mizo religion are based on secondary sources often of a British origin, but are representative of how Mizo Christians today articulate their own religious history. As such, it is hoped that despite the weakness in original source material, the value of such an approach will be apparent within the context of the wider thesis which ultimately addresses how *khawhar zai* offers a musical mechanism for retrospection for modern Mizo Christians.

This chapter will depend on Macquarrie's three aspects, since they offer an effective tool with which to mediate between the anthropological emphasis of the present chapter and the theological discussion of subsequent chapters. Though they do not form a structural basis, they will be applied throughout the chapter and in subsequent parts of the thesis in order to analyse a variety of cultural attitudes of hope with the same basic terms. Whereas the emotional and volitional aspects serve to highlight the universality of the experience of hope, it is in the cognitive/intellectual aspect that this study can explore the distinctiveness of the way in which hope has been manifested and understood in Mizo terms.

## 2.1 THE COMPOSER AS MI LUNGLÊNG

The section headings of this chapter make use of the Mizo term *lunglêna* or *lunglêng*. These local terms that describe longing and nostalgia were touched upon in the introduction and this chapter will draw further attention to them. *Mi lunglêng* means a 'lunglêng person,' a common way to describe Mizo poets and composers. Patea (1894-1950) and several other pioneers such as Saihnûna<sup>89</sup> and Damhauhva<sup>90</sup> were from the eastern part of Mizoram, bordering Myanmar. This region gained a reputation for producing great poetic talent in this era. It is in keeping with the high regard in which they are held to refer to them each as '*mi lunglêng*.' This is especially the case since, as indicated in the

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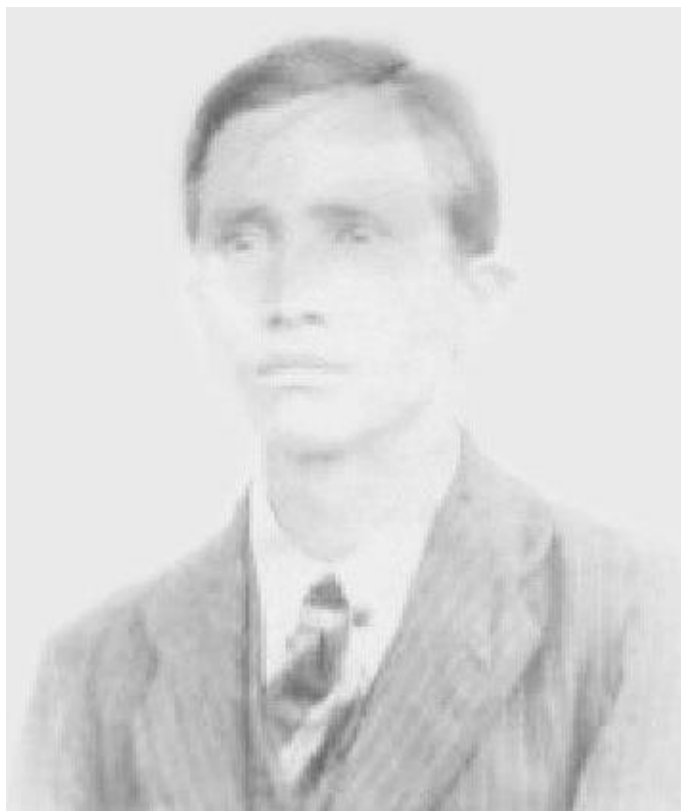
'assault upon the fear of death' (Ibid: 133) reinforces the fact that when approaching a Christian community such as the Mizo people, language about death, hope and fear is likely to be expressed in strong oppositional terms, less as a comment upon older beliefs, of which only little is known, but as a characteristic of Christian belief.

<sup>89</sup> Saihnûna (1896-1949) was a village chief who composed around ninety songs from 1926. See Thanmawia 1998: 139 and Chawngthangpuia 2012: 54 for further analysis of his poetry.

<sup>90</sup> Damhauhva (1909-1972), also from Khawbung, composed fifty-one songs, which are well known, but since they do not so frequently address the bereavement context, they do not find their place in the *khawhar zai* repertoire.

vignette above, the association of *khawhar zai* with this region lends it a great deal of nostalgic significance. This section will examine how the life of Patea and his contemporaries reflected the wider social and religious changes of his time, while seeking to understand how this influenced the nostalgic sentiment with which they composed their songs.

Patea's real name was Zaliana but the nickname Patea (a term of endearment) remained throughout his life. He composed about fifty-five songs, the last in 1937. Patea's early life was marked by tragedy, with the early death of his father and then his uncle who had been caring for his family.<sup>91</sup> He and his siblings migrated to Khawbung where the chief Lalbika took them in as servants of the household. He was therefore personally acquainted with the way in which the traditional ethical and welfare system could offer hope, ensuring that the poor and vulnerable in society were cared for.



**FIGURE 2.2** Patea. Hlakungpui Mual gallery.<sup>92</sup>

### 2.1.1 LOCATING HOPE IN THE PRESENT LIFE

<sup>91</sup> '*Vānduainain min tuam*' ('I am engulfed by reasons for sorrow') is an example of a personal lament for one of his own relatives that has become a popular song of bereavement.

<sup>92</sup> See website listed under 'Online Resources' section of bibliography.



Patea's early experiences not only help to understand him as a composer, but a deeper exploration of them may also highlight some of the ways in which hope was experienced in everyday life before the introduction of Christianity. The attitude of everyday hope is, according to Macquarrie, often characterised by an emotional aspect of positive action, the will to work for social improvement and sustenance with a serene expectation of its eventual fulfilment (1978: 5). Perhaps true of all human existence, it is helpful to refer to Margaret Zama's analysis of the way in which this was a central part of Mizo life, as she expressed during an interview:<sup>93</sup>

So survival was the whole issue and therefore in our old sayings, in our old stories, in our old songs, what is given the most, a high standing, and seen as part of a high value is bravery, bravery in times of danger against the enemy and wild animals and bravery, not only bravery but also the whole issue of *tlâwmngaihna* comes in here because at that time in their lives when you try to save your village, when you try to save your friend from a wild animal or you run out in defence, the whole issue of *tlâwmngaihna* comes because you are putting your whole life at risk but you do not expect anything in return for that.

*Tlâwmngaihna* is an ethic that is an important part of conceptions of Mizo identity. It is a term that expresses a self-sacrificial attitude and a willingness to go to great lengths at personal cost for the sake of another person, one's family or one's community. Margaret Zama positions *tlâwmngaihna* back into what she identifies as the traditional virtue of bravery and survival. Other scholars have since adopted it, often for theological devices,<sup>94</sup> but at its core is the need to survive as a whole community. Modern studies of Mizo society continue to ascribe particular importance to it<sup>95</sup> and Margaret Zama claims that *tlâwmngaihna* and bravery were the roots of the patriarchal and communitarian society,<sup>96</sup> even in the 'absolutely nomadic' times.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> 26 March 2014. See also Lloyd 1986: 4 who affirms the 'self-reliance' of Mizo life.

<sup>94</sup> For example, K. Thanzauva has equated it to the biblical 'love' of 1 Corinthians 13 (2004). All biblical references in this thesis are from the New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>95</sup> S.K. Pillai has written an article about *tlâwmngaihna* (2005) and K. Thanzauva's *Zonunmawi* contains a chapter devoted to it (2012). Even the magazine of the Scouts, introduced in 1932, was called *Tlâwmngaihna* (Thanzauva 2012: 157; the first edition is available in the Angus Archives).

<sup>96</sup> K. Thanzauva (2012: 154-155) claims that Mizo life is essentially communitarian as distinct from capitalist and communist societies.

<sup>97</sup> This point is reinforced in chapter sixteen of *Zonunmawi* (Thanzauva 2012), which is about the bravery epitomised in the Mizo *pasal̄tha* (heroes). A further discussion of the Mizo *pasal̄tha* can be found in Lalthangliana 2011: 47-52.

The positive ethics of *tlâwmngaihna* worked alongside a rich tradition of proverbial wisdom and a code of taboos (unlucky or forbidden objects and actions) called *thianglo*. Interestingly, Zairema claims that obedience to these ethics and taboos ensured longevity, with no mention of their involvement in shaping hope for life after death (2009: 157). The theologian C. Vanlaldika claims that this rich ethical system meant that Mizo society was actually more harmonious than it was after Christianity (2012: 2-3)<sup>98</sup>. Certainly, there is an ‘attitude of hope’ present in the commitment to positive interactions within the community and to the improvement of society. The sociologist Lallungmuana sees a high sense of morality in the commitment to caring for anyone who was less able to work. ‘They don’t allow people to starve,’ he says, ‘so they fatten together or they starve together. That was their philosophy of life.’<sup>99</sup>

In particular, the *bawi* system from which Patea benefitted facilitated the care of individuals who did not have the means to provide for themselves. Wealthier families allowed them to live in the home while they performed the majority of the menial household tasks. This was a system of social welfare that reflected the concern that nobody should be subject to poverty of food or disproportionate labour.<sup>100</sup> It remains a point of debate today that the Welsh missionary Peter Fraser passionately fought against what he perceived to be the *bawi* system as a form of ‘slavery’ until its eventual abolition, whereas many have since argued that its emphasis on welfare had not been sufficiently understood by the British.

The chief’s house could offer sanctuary in Mizo society not only for the most vulnerable, but even for those seeking mercy. A person who disturbed the public life was a *misual*, a ‘bad person,’ a term that Christians later appropriated to mean ‘sinner.’ The chief was at liberty to be merciful, and even a murderer who was able to reach and cling to the post in the heart of the chief’s home was entitled to seek sanctuary and mercy from the chief (Sangkima 1992: 40<sup>101</sup>). Sangkima makes the perceptive analogy that ‘the chief’s house had thus become a “paradise” for vagabonds as well as offenders’ (Ibid: 41). Though made in the context of challenging the British attitude to the *bawi* system, the comment highlights suggests that Mizo hope was located primarily in the present life, the equivalent of the Christian ‘paradise’ available to all being found in the earthly home of the chief rather than in the village of the dead. A slight problem arises here with the application of Dueck’s term ‘traditional eschatology,’

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<sup>98</sup> See also Thanzauva 2004.

<sup>99</sup> Interview, 1 April 2014.

<sup>100</sup> Savidge in 1904 witnessed his schoolboys demonstrate similar *tlâwmngaihna* when they offered to each have less food so that an additional boy could be afforded to join the school (MGCC 1993: 12).

<sup>101</sup> See also Kyles 1944: 22.

since, although the Mizo people believed in an afterlife, this is not understood to have been the main location of their hope. Rather, according to what has survived of legends and poetry from the time, found in Dahrawka (1987) and Saiaithanga (1981), life after death was anticipated with a comparative despair (mediated by necessary rituals) while hope was more greatly manifested in an aspiration for future security in life, the ‘paradise’ of a safe environment in which to live.

At the beginning of K2, Patea is found at ‘the river of death,’ contemplating the future. This is reminiscent of the older beliefs that a soul would pass through the lake Rih Dil and also drink from the water of Lungloh Tui on his passage to the afterlife. Patea’s is a hope that looks forward to the joys of heaven, but he locates himself at a geographical point of transition that was equally meaningful to Mizo people who were not Christians.

*Aw Lalpa, Davida leh a thlah Arsi,  
I felna ram atân nangin min buatsaih;  
Ka lâwmna tuifinriat angin a liam a,  
Thih lui kamah zaiin i hming ka fak ang.*

Oh Lord, David and his descended Star,  
You are preparing me for your land of righteousness;  
My joy is swelling like an ocean,  
By the bank of the river of death I will sing praises to your name.

The negative aspects of the village of the dead, Mitthi Khua, and their recurring negative connotations in songs, poems and legends, most thoroughly documented by Saiaithanga, can be summarised as the shortage of food and drink, the intensity of the labour required under poor physical health, and the uncertainty about the environment (metamorphoses of natural objects) leading to fear and insecurity (Saiaithanga 1981). These point to three basic aspects of life’s aspirations, which form a significant expression of hope in Mizo society: sufficient or abundant food and drink, minimal labour and abundant rest, and material and spiritual certainty. Of course, these are almost universal necessities, but they also represent local values, which were the main things hoped for in life, but perhaps not guaranteed after death without the performance of necessary rituals by the living. Indeed, death was often portrayed as the absence of satisfaction of these needs. Mizo Christians describe their former religion as one in which there was little positive hope associated with life after death, and indeed death more often represented as an existence in which these basic values in life would not be fulfilled: a ‘hopeless’ state, if hope is understood to be a condition in which such basic security could be reliably expected.

Well-known legends of relatives that had followed the dead to Mitthi Khua tell of the misery in which they found their beloved departed spirits, the most famous story of Ngama who followed his wife Tlingi is taught in school textbooks about Mizo history and literature (Dahrawka 1987: 153-158)<sup>102</sup>. This naturally found more romanticised expressions among British commentators, as one early writer of Lushai history puts it, ‘The life beyond the grave held no prospect of escape or relief, but only a new set of troubles and worries...’ (Kyles 1944: 7). However, a small minority were able to earn the right to hope for something better. A soul that approached Pu Pawla, the spirit that guarded the gate to Mitthi Khua, with this positive hope could reach the happier place of Pialrâl, where food was abundant and there was no labour (Shakespear 1912: 277). However, Pialrâl was the hope of those who did not follow the normal way of life, a reward for surviving a different life, often for the sake of the rest of the community by being the ideal embodiment of *tlâwmngaihna*. Such people became *thangchhuah* and had passed a certain number of ritual stages to attain the status<sup>103</sup>. Furthermore, *thangchhuah* individuals could not be assured of Pialrâl even after passing the necessary stages, since poor subsequent conduct could undo the past achievements (Shakespear 1912: 276). This hope therefore carried uncertainty as well as instability in life. Indeed, hope at this time, as far as the available sources suggest, appears to have had little connection to life after death, but was much more apparent in the promotion and enforcement of moral and ethical social values.

As has been suggested, although Dueck’s term ‘traditional eschatology’ is an attractive one that offers the possibility of integrating associations with Christian theology into an anthropological setting, its use in the Mizo context would obscure some of the distinctions that have been highlighted. It would be better, in this case, to retain Wickett’s use of the term ‘cosmology,’ representing the belief system of the Mizo people without specifying the nature of the hope it offered and acknowledging the complexities of its location within life and after death. Patea was composing at a time when many people still held to this ‘traditional cosmology,’ and he himself would have remembered it being an important part of his own life. In particular, he had first-hand experience of that hope in everyday life and to some extent its fulfilment in the safety he could enjoy in the home of the chief, yet as a Christian he also espoused an eschatology that placed his ultimate hope in the paradise reached after death.

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<sup>102</sup> For examples of similar legends, see Saiaithanga 1981: 41, Lloyd 1991: 12-13.

<sup>103</sup> These rituals have been outlined in detail by many writers and need not be repeated here. See for example Kipgen 1997, Lalthangliana 2009, Vanlalchhuanga 1996, Khai 1995, Chawngkunga 1997.

Indeed, even his Christian hope is one that looks back upon his past life of with a sense of destiny and belief that God had planned it, as he composes about what God did for him ‘even before I was born...’

*Mihring ka nih hma pawhin Lalpa Isu,  
Thisena man dang beisei lova min tlan;  
Chhiar sêngin han hrethiam teh rêng ıla aw,  
Khawvêl zaia tikhat tûrin ka bei ang.*

Even before I was born, the Lord Jesus  
Unconditionally redeemed me with the blood price;  
Even if I could read and comprehend it all,  
I would try to fill the world with singing.

This common evangelical process of gazing back to the crucifixion event as the source of a person’s hope, gains a new dimension in this setting as Patea is seen to be gazing back upon his early life before adopting Christianity, and realising that even in those days he had already been ‘redeemed’ by Christ. He finds in this retrospective gaze an affirmation of his hope.

Although Patea enjoyed security and safety in the chief’s house, he was not exempt from labour. In return for his shelter, he was required to serve the household. Contribution to the community was an important indicator of a person’s human worth, but only as far as their means. There was no stigma attached to poverty as long as individuals made the best of their situation. Those who were notoriously lazy or selfish, on the other hand, were not worthy of respect. They were ridiculed as ‘living dead people’<sup>104</sup> since they constituted an already dead member of the community in their lack of contribution. By not helping to reduce the community’s burden of labour, they did not embrace the attitude of hope in life and could thus be described as belonging already to Mitthi Khua. Deadness was, therefore, a shameful condition, whereas the basic values of society were to be fulfilled through the activity and vitality of life and contribution to the community. This reinforces the point made above that traditional hope seems to have been one which emphasised the experience of everyday life as something more important than the aspiration for paradise after death.

Savidge, writing in 1908, noticed that this also made it difficult for children to join school (MGCC 1993: 54). He wrote, ‘There is a strong desire among the lads of learning, but the parents often oppose that desire because they lose their children’s help at weeding and sowing time.’ Avoidance of work in

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<sup>104</sup> See Lorrain 1940; the entry for *mi nung mi thi* (‘living person dead person’) contains the definition of ‘a living person who to all intents and purposes is dead.’ By contrast, in a letter from 1913, a person who received merciful treatment and an allocation of land from a chief expresses his thankfulness with the sentiment that he has ‘been raised to life’ (EAP454 23: 3).

the present life was generally *thianglo*. It was associated with the ‘deadness’ mentioned above. When a group of Christians in 1909 secretly hoped to move to the Christian village of Theiriat instead of the new site of their fellow villagers they were deeply ashamed for fear that they would be accused of ‘running after ease’ (Lorrain in Ibid: 62). This emphasis on not avoiding work may appear to contradict the value of rest and minimised labour through its equal distribution that was also important in Mizo society. Rather, it is advantageous to return to Macquarrie’s volitional aspect of hope, which highlights the moral dynamic of recognising the need to struggle in the present for the sake of future fulfilment. This is the nuanced hope that he posits against irrational optimism, and it generates a tentative humility in the pursuit of the fulfilment of hope (1978: 13). It is clear that Mizo people understood that although rest and minimised labour were ideals, achieved in part through communal work efforts and *tlâwmngaihna*, the wilful decision simply to stop working would be an unrealistic and eventually destructive attitude to take.

Patea, having benefitted from a welfare system that in turn expected him to make a strong positive contribution to his community, would have found himself at the transition point that Savidge described, choosing to receive a school education that would remove him from some of his expected contributions at the *zawlbuk*<sup>105</sup> or in the fields. It is interesting to note in the fact that his name is now among the most venerated in Mizo society, especially in Khawbung, that he did indeed make a lasting contribution to his community through his literary and compositional skill, acquired to some extent through his education.

It seems that hope before the introduction of Christianity was understood to have been strongly associated with the present life, seeking a safe and secure future for the community through positive volitional action framed by a system of ethics. This necessitated a contribution from every member of society towards the security and comforts of life, and the self-sacrificial ethic of *tlâwmngaihna* was held in highest regard. Patea was a composer who had experienced this way of life and indeed received his own security and education from it, yet there are in his compositions deviations from this towards a future-oriented longing for heaven which will be discussed in part three of this thesis.

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<sup>105</sup> The *zawlbuk* was a dormitory for adolescent men that every village had; it was an institution shared by several other neighbouring tribes but now obsolete in Mizoram.

### 2.1.2 DREAMS AND VISIONS AS POETIC INSPIRATION

Patea became a church elder in 1922 and was renowned for his emotional preaching. He also found a solitary place to pray regularly, locally known as 'Prayer Mountain.' B. Lalthangliana says of his songs (1999: 71):

We see grief, but if we look carefully, we see how he felt bad because he was blinded from seeing God because of his problems, so from his songs in general even where we see grief, we also see the day of resurrection and victory.<sup>106</sup>

Many of Patea's songs stem from his dreams and visions experienced during his intense periods of prayer. One example from the present sample selected for this thesis is '*Ni ropui a lo thleng dawn ta*' (K10). Although it is a song of victory, Patea composed it after he experienced a troubling vision of Christians attempting to reach the New Jerusalem while being thwarted by 'the evil one.' In the song, Patea is calling in tears for the 'day of glory to come' when Christians will no longer experience such troubles (Lalrâwna 2011: 6).

In studies of traditional societies, dreams are often regarded as possible sources of revealed knowledge. The study of dreams and consciousness has increasingly been of interest to anthropologists who recognise the non-universality of dreams and the difference between the individualist psychoanalytical focus of western scholarship and the wider cultural potency of dreams in many communities.<sup>107</sup> For example, Tamara Kohn, who has worked among the Yakha people in Nepal, argues for the academic treatment of dreams as as much of a 'conscious' activity as that of waking life, not to be dismissed as a curiosity of the 'unconscious' (Cohen; Rapport 1995: 52). It is possible that Patea's openness to incorporating dreams and visions as the stimulus for his composition reflected such an attitude.

As far as is known from the admittedly limited documentation of Mizo customs by the superintendents Parry (1928: 402) and Shakespear (1909: 399)<sup>108</sup>, dreams in Mizo society were often considered

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<sup>106</sup> Translated from Mizo.

<sup>107</sup> T.C. Hodson, Henry Balfour, John Hutton, Mills and others corresponded between themselves with the aim of conducting a global comparative analysis of dreams including Lushai examples, applying western psychoanalysis and testing its universality. Their attempts indicate the level of lay interest in the subject when Freud and Jung's work was relatively contemporary. See John Henry Hutton papers (on slides) in 1923, held in the British Library.

<sup>108</sup> Parry and Shakespear's attention to customs was conducted with the stated aim of informing future superintendents of the cultural and religious basis for Mizo practices so that the administration of justice

dangerous and prophetic, a result of the nocturnal interaction between one's own wandering spirit and the other local spirits of the village or surrounding area (*khuavâng* or *ramhuai*, respectively). Many authors, such as R.L. Thanmawia (1998) and F. Lalremsiamia (2012), have attempted to describe the complex and varied accounts of earlier Mizo conceptions of the human soul and its relationship to other spirits. As well as the physical body, there seem to have been two spiritual parts to the person: the life-giving soul, and the spirit which was more comparable to the person's conscience or character (Lalpekhluia 2007: 222-223). Lalpekhluia writes that though the life-giving soul wandered during sleep, and was supposed to be responsible for dreams, death would happen when it failed to return. The conception that death was caused when a spirit failed to return to the body also helps to explain some of the fear that is supposed to have been associated with dreams, since they were connected with the vulnerability of sleep which could sometimes lead to death. The poet Darphawngi lamented that spirits had snatched her son away in his sleep, poetically illustrating the belief that lives were taken at the will of 'Death' or the evil spirits (Thanmawia 1998: 50). Similarly, Saikuti lamented that death came 'like a flood', an unwelcome interruption to the otherwise stable existence on earth (Ibid).

As these modern Mizo scholars indicate, some dreams seem to have been thought to bring or prophesy misfortune and death. In this way, dreams may have offered quite different sources of religious ideas from the received wisdom of ethics, because rather than provide the basic vocabulary for hope, they usually substantiated fear. Macquarrie notes that fear results in a paralysis or inactivity quite unlike the positive action produced by hope (1978: 10). whereas the proverbial wisdom and *thianglo* encouraged positive activity in the community, a bad dream could compel a Mizo person to take *hrilh*, ritual rest, by abstaining from all activity for a day or more, apparently resembling the paralysis to which Macquarrie refers. Although it was responded to with the 'volition' of a ritual, the nature of that ritual was one which involved inactivity.

Patea's dreams did indeed seem foreboding. They struck Patea with a fear on behalf of his fellow people as he believed himself to be able to see the fate to which they were destined if they did not become Christian or if they fell away from their Christian faith. In this way, his visionary experiences at the Prayer Mountain do seem to reflect some of the older Mizo associations with dreams as sources of

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could, in theory, be sensitive to the local culture. Their writings would ultimately form some of the sources used in the formulation of the Mizo Customary Law (2006).



knowledge but also of fear, an attitude of course not unique to Mizo people and still encountered today. However, by writing about them in song, he challenged his own dreams with a message of defiance and hope. Rather than take a day's rest or refuse to leave the house, as he might have done according to traditional custom, he harnessed the volitional hope of his Christian faith to actively compose a response to his fear.

The defiant tone of K10 reflects this, since it does not dwell on the fearful nature of his vision, but on the defiant hope with which he countered it:

*Ni ropui a lo thleng dâwn ta,  
Kan nghâk Lal Imanuel;  
Sual leh ramhuai tlâwmna ni chu,  
Chhandam fate kan zalênna tûr chu.*

The day of glory is near at hand,  
We are awaiting the Lord, Immanuel;  
The day sin and evil spirits will be defeated,  
When we the saved children of God will be free.

R.L. Thanmawia offers this translation of another of Patea's songs, '*Ka ropuina tûr leh ka himna hmun*' (1998: 79):

There lies my land safe and glorious,  
Where fear no longer exists,  
With eyes of faith now I see from this desert,  
For that eternal place owns me now.

These lines express the importance of the absence of fear in the future hope of the Christians. The original phrase meaning fear used in this song is *râl hlauhawm*, which poetically alludes to a frightening enemy or attacker, which will have no place in heaven. This may be a Christian euphemism for Satan, but it is likely that the usage is older, since the term *râl* was traditionally used to denote the spiritual force that causes death (Lalremsiama 2011: 225). Thus the term translated 'fear' in English is one which has a depth of meaning that can simultaneously be associated with evil in Christian terms (Satan), fear of attack in everyday life, and fear of death in traditional Mizo terms.

Sometimes, Patea chose to submit himself to genuine fear and vulnerability. Another one of Patea's songs included in the sample is '*Ka dam lai thlipui a râl hunin*' (K4). It is among Patea's most overt in describing the troubles of earth, with repeated allusions to the storms and pain of life. According to R.

Lalrâwna<sup>109</sup> (2011: 59), he had been inspired by C.Z. Huala's similar song, '*Dam lai tuipei fâwn piah lamah chuanin*,'<sup>110</sup> but had struggled to compose another song like it until he sat on a memorial platform at the entrance to Khawbung and saw the birds gather around a tree to seek protection from a violent storm. This experience gave him the poetic inspiration to compose the song, which has remained among his most popular. The first verse and chorus are given below:

*Ka dam lai thlipui a râl hunin,  
Ka Lal, Chhandamtu hmêl chu ka hmu ang a;  
Chutah ka lâwmna a chuai lo vang,  
A hmêlah vân pangpâr a vul rêng a.*

When the storm of my life has passed away,  
I will see the face of my Lord and Saviour;  
There my joy will never fade,  
In his countenance the heavenly flower always blooms.

*Aw nunna thing, i zâr hnuaiah,  
Vân angel rual hlimin an lêng;  
Aw, chutah kan la châwl ve ang,  
Israel tlâng thianghlimah chuan.*

Oh tree of life, beneath your branches,  
The angels of heaven joyfully gather;  
Oh, there even we will take our rest,  
At the holy mount of Israel.

The memorial platform (*lungdawh*), to which R. Lalrâwna refers, was usually erected in memory of chiefs and placed on the path approaching the village rather than by the grave itself. Herbert Anderson,<sup>111</sup> in *Among the Lushais*, describes them thus (1914: 16):

Each of these platforms is a memorial of the dead, and the skulls or bones upon the posts are those of wild animals killed in the chase, or domesticated animals sacrificed to demons. A hunter's prowess is thus recalled as a village tradition, his wealth and religious devotion being indicated by the number of beasts he had been able to offer to propitiate the spirits... their elders sit upon them in the evening to discuss the events of the day.

The *lungdawh* is no longer to be found in Mizo towns and villages, but the photograph in Figure 2.3 from the Angus Archives in Oxford seems to give a true reflection of Anderson's description. The two

<sup>109</sup> An independent scholar whose *Mizo Rohlu* first published in 1999 contains biographical details for a wide range of Mizo songs.

<sup>110</sup> 'Beyond life's choppy waves.'

<sup>111</sup> Herbert Anderson of the Baptist Missionary Society visited the missionaries in Mizoram in 1914 and published the short book *Among the Lushais* about his experiences.

men smoking in the picture show that they were not sites to be feared, but offered a place at the approach to the village to stop, rest and talk. One can imagine Patea accustomed to sitting on such a platform, a place where knowledge and understanding could be acquired from his elders but also a place where the dead would be present in his mind.



**FIGURE 2.3** An adorned memorial platform, c. 1907. Angus Archives.

What is also striking about the photograph is the apparent fragility of the platform. Typical of Mizo architecture, which still projects most buildings against steep hillsides with long foundation posts, the *lungdawh* appears especially exposed; the thick mist of the valley visible between the logs. The memorial posts adorned with skulls could hardly be expected to survive a sudden storm. R. Lalrâwna's story tells of Patea the poet, epitomising the *mi lunglêng*. The photograph can illuminate this image, as he can be pictured sitting on the fragile platform when a storm comes. Rather than leave to seek shelter, he remains battered by the wind and rain (as the song suggests in its first line), watching instead how the birds find shelter in the trees. Rather than join them, he harnesses the *lunglênna* so often attributed to composers to express the longing for shelter and safety that he shares with the birds. Aware of his past life of vulnerability and the shelter he received by living in the chief's house, the image of God as a shelter for the vulnerable can easily be identified not only with this isolated incident, but also with his personal background having grown up in a community that lived according to traditional Mizo hope.

Returning to K2, it is possible to detect a similar defiance against fear, as well as a poetic identification of himself with nature that has just been demonstrated. The chorus calls for the earth to be filled with singing:

*Aw Lalpa, zaiin i hming ka fak ang,  
Khawvêla i siam zawnng zawnng zai se;  
Lalpa chawimawi nân awte chhuah r'u,  
Leilung hi zaiin a lo khat ang.*

Oh Lord, I will sing praises to your name,  
Let all creation sing your praise;  
In praise of the Lord, lift your voices,  
The earth will be filled with singing.

The notion of the *mi lunglêng* persisted in the composition of *khawhar zai*, and this section has demonstrated why that was the case by drawing attention to the life of Patea and how he composed out of experiences shared with those who had composed before Christianity. Specifically, his personal experiences of vulnerability and seeking shelter, his childhood and also his compositional process that engaged with imaginative dreams and visions, provoked a longing in him suited to the poetic sentiment of *lunglêna*. However, his active use of composition to refute the fear that he received through dreams told of a more evangelical attitude of hope that will be explored in the following part.

This section has also provided an opportunity to introduce aspects of Mizo society in which the hope that characterised daily life contrasted with the evangelical hope that will be discussed in the following part, since it did not feature a strong eschatological destination located after death. By contrast, death is widely held to have been considered a hopeless state both after the death event and as a metaphor for a life that did not contribute to the wider society. Hope, therefore, seems to have been primarily built upon strong ethical foundations that determined good and generous conduct in life for the sake of the future well-being of the village community. The following section will turn more closely to the poetic devices that were at the disposal of the *mi lunglêng* as they began to compose *khawhar zai*.

## 2.2 COMPOSING LUNGLÊNA

This section will explore how the poetry of *khawhar zai* resonated with older poetic devices and explain why it was significant that it did so. Poetic language carried great weight in Mizo life. Wisdom and

knowledge were not thought to have been directly revealed by Pathian,<sup>112</sup> the Mizo supreme being, but there was a rich repertoire of narratives that contained legends of origin, explanations of natural phenomena, fables that encouraged ethical living, romances and comedies.<sup>113</sup> Lloyd wrote that, ‘from the past they have inherited a fund of stories, proverbial sayings and poetry expressed in special poetical language called *upa tawng* [language of the elders]’ (1984: 5).

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<sup>112</sup> In addition to Pathian, other names for supreme deities included Pu Vana, Khuanu and Khuazing. These are inconsistently identified sometimes as a pantheon of gods and sometimes as multiple identities of the same god.

<sup>113</sup> There are numerous published collections of such stories and they are regularly included in school textbooks. Among the best English-language versions include those compiled by Lal Dena (2013), Nag (1993: 32-37) and the Tribal Research Institute (2006). Lal Dena’s offers a brief commentary for each story highlighting aspects which are pertinent to Mizoram’s modern globalised context. Zoramdinthara offers a comprehensive review of such literature in *Mizo Fiction: Emergence and Development* (2013).



**FIGURE 2.4** Lianchiari's Mount of Longing: Lunglêng Tlâng. Author's photo.

Orally imparted truths from respected elders often in the form of songs, stories or proverbs were among the important sources for Mizo belief, reinforced in the institution of the *zawlbuk* and directing many aspects of life. Offering not only a system of ethics or wisdom, they also constituted a hermeneutical framework that guided the Mizo understanding of their environment and experiences. All these sources of indigenous knowledge provided the necessary vocabulary in order for the cognitive/intellectual aspect of the attitude of hope to be established. It could be argued that even *khawhar zai* as a repertoire of songs have come to take the place of these older sources in the Christian context, not least in their association with the same eastern geographical region that held so much historic and legendary association. For example, through its origin in Khawbung, *khawhar zai* shares proximity to sites such

as Lunglêng Tlâng (Figure 2.4), mentioned in the opening vignette to this part.<sup>114</sup> The songs have shaped Mizo belief about life and death by offering a similar musical medium through which to convey related terms and vocabulary. These terms and associations found in the song texts will be explored in this section.

R.L. Kamlala (1902-1965) may be introduced at this point. He composed about seventy-one songs between 1922 and 1932 and has received much attention from other Mizo scholars.<sup>115</sup> C. Thangvunga in Chhipphir said appreciatively of him, ‘he knew the meaning of *khawhar*.’<sup>116</sup> This may suggest that he had the greatest personal understanding of grief since his songs are marked by sorrow, weeping and darkness. Alternatively, it can be seen from R.L. Kamlala’s life that it was marked with struggles as a revivalist Christian, once imprisoned for his ecstatic behaviour. This experience saw him fall from grace as the son of a wealthy family and privileged with a missionary education, to a farmer living in poverty. It is this grief in the mundane circumstances of life that inspired the loneliness of his poetry that C. Thangvunga observed. He was indeed particularly articulate on the subject of the culturally specific approach of the poets (Thanmawia in Lalthangliana 1999: 159-160):

Let us also beautify God’s garden with different flowers, without imitating those of other cultures... If every tribe/people could blossom in their own way in God’s garden, how wonderful that would be!

R.L. Kamlala was acutely aware of the wider cultural significance that *khawhar zai* had in offering Mizo Christians a way of singing that was uniquely Mizo but also had an equal place alongside other Christian traditions ‘in God’s garden.’ He is therefore known for boldly applying terms and phrases from old Mizo poetry ‘without hesitation’ and also for advocating the modified tunes of *lêngkhâwm zai* to which Mizo singers could feel free to softly move their heads and bodies in a way that they felt restricted from doing with the missionary hymns (Ibid.).

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<sup>114</sup> Another nearby site is Ngente Tlâng in Myanmar, where the composer Pi Hmuaki is said to have been buried alive for composing too many songs.

<sup>115</sup> See the biography about R.L. Kamlala by Chuauṭhuama (2006). Tlânghmingthanga uses two of his most famous songs as subjects for study in his thesis (1995): ‘*Ka buaina ram thlalêrah hian*’ (‘This wilderness, my land of troubles’) and ‘*Tûnah a thar hmangaihna êng nuamah*’ (‘It is now new in his wonderful loving light’).

<sup>116</sup> Interview, 4 May 2014.

The majority of *khawhar zai* offer a synthesis of Christian and local Mizo terms expressed through a poetic diction particularly meaningful to Mizo singers. Numerous lists and dictionaries of Mizo poetic terms have been written and they need not be repeated here.<sup>117</sup> Figure 2.5 shows the frequency of different thematic language in the present sample of *khawhar zai*, while a sample of the vocabulary from each group is given below:

#### Worship and Joy:

*Fakna* (Praise), *Lâwmna* (Joy), *Hlimna* (Joy), *Zai* (Singing), *Hla* (Song)

#### God and Heaven:

*Pathian* (God), *Isua* (Jesus), *Vânram* (Heaven), *Pialrâl* (Heaven), *Hmun ropui* (many variations of 'glorious place'), *Thlarau Thianghlim* (Holy Spirit), *Chhandamtu* (Saviour)

#### Biblical terms:

*Zion*, *Kanaan*, *Daniela*, *David*, *Kalvari*, *Kraws*, *Jordan*, biblical flowers

#### Life on Earth:

*Khawvêl* (world), *Lei* (earth), *Dam lai* (life), *thihna* (death), *buaina* (troubles), *thlipui* (storm), *tuiptui* (large body of water), *râl* (enemy), *hlauhna* (fear)

#### Grief and Loneliness:

*Thenna* (Bereavement), *thihna* (death), *tahna* (weeping), *khawhar* (loneliness)

#### Pre-Christian Beliefs:

*Pialrâl* (Heaven), *hawilo pâr* (flower of no turning back), *thihna lui* (river of death), *thihna tlâng* (mount of death)

To some extent, these six categories can be considered in groups. Worship and joy may be associated with language about God and heaven, which may, in turn, find much in common with other biblical terms. Language that describes life on earth, grief and loneliness all draw from the poetry of older Mizos to the extent that they may also be associated with pre-Christian beliefs. As an example of how this analysis was conducted, the primary case study of this chapter (K2) is shown annotated below. The colour coding of the thematic categories given above is continued in the annotation of the song below:

Aw Lalpa, *David* leh a thlah Arsi,  
I felna ram atân nangin min buatsaih;  
Ka lâwmna tui-finriat angin a liam a,  
Thih lui kamah zaiin i hming ka fak ang.

Aw Lalpa, zaiin i hming ka fak ang

*Khawvêla i siam* zawnz zawnz zai se;  
Lalpa chawimawi nân awte chhuah r'u,  
Leilung hi zaiin a lo khat ang.

Mihring ka nih hma pawhin Lalpa Isu,  
Thisena man dang beisei lova min tlan;

<sup>117</sup> See P.C. Rochhuma (2012); Thanmawia in *The Mizo Values* (2011) and *Mizo Poetry* (1998); Darchhawna in *Beisei Ram 2* (2014); Liangkhaia's notes about Mizo poetry at EAP454 13: 21.



Chhiar sêngin han hrethiam teh rêng ila aw,  
Khawvêl zaia tikhat tûrin ka bei ang.

Lalpa, khawiah nge ni hmun mi buatsaihna?  
Daniela angin tukverhah ka thlîr ang;  
Rangkachak thianglim leh a hmun ropui chu,  
Hrehawmah pawh thingthi talin ka thlîr ang.

Aw, Imanuel lei leh vân thar siam chu,  
A dung leh vângahate han lêng ve ila;  
Buaina tinrêng tuara ka then tâkte kha,  
Vân ropuina hain an hmêl ka hmu ang.

Oh Lord, David and his descended Star,  
You are preparing me for your land of righteousness;  
My joy is swelling like an ocean,  
By the bank of the river of death I will sing praises to  
your name.

*Oh Lord, I will sing praises to your name,  
Let all creation sing your praise;  
In praise of the Lord, lift your voices,  
The earth will be filled with singing.*

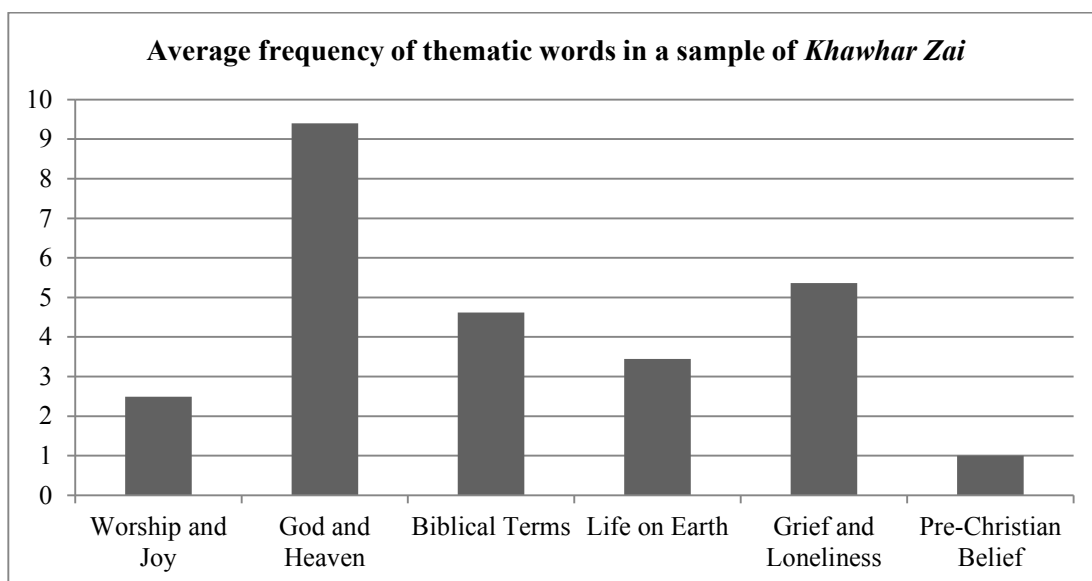
Even before I was born, the Lord Jesus  
Unconditionally redeemed me with the blood price;  
Even if I could read and comprehend it all,  
I would try to fill the world with singing.

Lord, where is the land you have prepared?  
As Daniel looked through his window I will gaze  
towards it;  
To the glorious and holy place of gold,  
Even in times of trouble I will gaze on my knees.

Oh, Immanuel, in the new heaven and earth you are  
creating,  
Let me explore the length and breadth of it;  
All the troubles I endured when others left me,  
I will see their faces in the glorious heaven.

This analysis shows that K2 contains allusions to all the thematic types, with a fairly even balance between references to life on earth (yellow) and heaven (grey). The chorus is dominated with language about singing praise to God (black). Having analysed all the songs in the present sample in this manner, Figure 2.5 was produced, indicating the average frequency of each theme. Although Christian themes of God and heaven have high frequencies, they are by no means over-emphasised when it is considered that the first three categories may be grouped and compared with the last three categories. Although the data suggests that literal allusions to pre-Christian beliefs are very rare, the following section will show that this was achieved through more subtle means such as through the sentiments expressed and the metaphors employed. The greater weight of language about grief and loneliness compared with the language of worship and joy perhaps most effectively illustrates the fact that, despite the high frequency

of language about God and heaven in the songs, the sentiments tend to dwell more on longing to reach heaven as an escape from present troubles than on the anticipation of what heaven might be like.



**FIGURE 2.5** Chart showing the average frequency per song of language belonging to a variety of common themes.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the introduction of Christian terms shifted the dominant expressions of grief in older songs. This development in poetic diction will be discussed with specific case studies in the following sections, paying particular attention to the way in which some of the songs do retrospectively turn to the language of the past tradition. It should be noted that this part of the chapter is not intended to be a comprehensive exposition of Mizo poetic devices, since such projects have been more than adequately addressed by Mizo scholars of literature themselves. Rather, this study focuses specifically on aspects of longing and hope pertinent to the argument of this thesis, and is limited primarily to the sample given in section 1.1.3.

### 2.2.1 POETRY OF GAZING AND LONGING

Though one of the most famous examples of *khawhar zai*, K2 is unusual in that it is usually included in the ‘Praise to God’ section of the hymn-books, rather than in the section addressing life after death. It is a song of praise anticipating the songs that will be sung in heaven when the world passes away. Although it is often cited as a song that, compared to others, bears little poetic association with Patea’s retrospective memory of life before Christianity, it is worth critiquing this perspective. In the following verse, while narrating the biblical story of Daniel, he uses the word *thlîr* to describe his gaze towards

the New Jerusalem in a way that indicates that it is vivid in his imagination and associated as much with his home as it was for Daniel.

*Lalpa, khawiah nge ni hmun mi buatsaihna?  
Daniela angin tukverhah ka thlîr ang;  
Rangkachak thianghlim leh a hmun ropui chu,  
Hrehawmah pawh thingthi talin ka thlîr ang.*

Lord, where is the land you have prepared?  
As Daniel looked through his window I will gaze towards it;  
To the glorious and holy place of gold,  
Even in times of trouble I will gaze on my knees.

The character of Daniel in the Bible was displaced from Jerusalem as a result of the Babylonian exile. Living under a new system of authority and in an unfamiliar culture, Daniel shared with Patea a sense of loss and nostalgia for a place that had once been home. This resonates with the way in which Shelemay's suggestion about music as a mechanism for mobility can apply equally to diasporic contexts such as Daniel's, and non-geographical displacement such as Patea's.

Daniel and Patea not only share an attitude of nostalgia, but also an activity of gazing. Patea himself draws attention to this fact in the song. The gazing activity of *thlîr* has outlined the structure of this thesis, and it is worth exploring it and other terms at this stage to identify the way in which what Maschio and Buber call a 'melancholy ontology' was articulated through the poetry of Patea and his contemporaries.

*Thlîr* is an important term throughout poetic expressions of hope both before Christianity and in *khawhar zai*. It has both mundane and poetic meanings. Literally 'to look at from a distance' (Lorrain 1940), it expresses the way one looks at a distant horizon, as the hilly terrain of Mizoram gives frequent opportunity to do. *Thlîr* means to gaze, but also to engage in the imagination of reaching that place. It encourages the viewer to visit without physically stepping forward. The sense of journeying with which the term is connected is also clarified in the antonym *thlîr lêt*, which is literally to turn around and 'look back on the way which one has travelled,' to review the past (Ibid.). This can be done with the same gaze that can be projected towards a future horizon, but the difference in sentiment is the memory of having been to those distant places. The notion of *thlîr* as an imaginative longing to reach a future state visualised as a hazy horizon is obviously appropriate to the poetic discourse of non-Christian and Christian Mizo literature.

As K2 exemplifies, it has frequently been employed in Mizo songs; it features in almost every song of the sample used in this thesis, describing the imagination with which Christians today sing about heaven. In the opening to this thesis, Saihnûna's song '*Han thlîr teh u*'<sup>118</sup> is referenced. F. Lalrempuia explains that the song exhorts its singers to 'look up, open your eyes, look to the winter mist.'<sup>119</sup> His explanation of the term is that when we *thlîr*, we look with different eyes, spiritual eyes of faith that enable us to see the joy of heaven. Examples of the application of the term in the earlier Mizo songs are given below. These were provided during the singing session with P.C. Thangvunga mentioned in section 1.2. Complete texts are included in Appendix B and a list of DVD recordings in Appendix D. The translations here and in citations later in the thesis may be considered paraphrases rather than exact translations:<sup>120</sup>

*Ka han thlîr a, chhaktiang kan pianna, Chumchi lêng romei a kai chiai e.*<sup>121</sup>

When I gaze to the East where I was born, I see the thick mist (*romei*<sup>122</sup>) covering it all.

*Dara sawngka lerah ka chuan a, kan Champhai khua thlohvang thlîr ing e.*<sup>123</sup>

Stepping out onto Dara's bamboo platform, I gaze to Champhai, like a bird on a branch.

Both of these examples use the verb to express the composer's longing gaze towards their homeland, both located in the East. As in Patea's usage, they speak of a displacement from home and the capacity to visit it in the composer's imagination. The way in which it effects a mobility in the imagination permits the term's identification as a crucial term when understanding the significance of gazing and longing in Mizo poetry.

The mobility of longing is particularly expressed in '*Ka hmaah lui râl khaw mawi chu a awm*' (K5) which was composed by Zumi<sup>124</sup> (1899-1929), subtitled 'We are marching on' in the first edition of the *MKHTB* (1930). Despite her vivacious character as a young Christian woman, Zumi had suffered from weakness and poor health throughout her childhood. As a young woman she faced the loss of her baby

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<sup>118</sup> 'Come and gaze.' Recordings of this song are included on DVD 2, 'Supplementary Files,' Tracks 6 and 7.

<sup>119</sup> Interview, 31 January 2014.

<sup>120</sup> These lines are excerpts from songs provided by P.C. Thangvunga. The language is very difficult to understand even for modern Mizo speakers. It is with grateful thanks for the assistance of R. Zochhawna that non-versified explanations of the texts are given here and in Appendix B.

<sup>121</sup> From the song '*Lumtui – Chawngchen Zai.*'

<sup>122</sup> See Figure 3.2.

<sup>123</sup> From the song of '*Mangkhai Khelte.*'

<sup>124</sup> Her original name was Chalthiangi, but she is always referred to as Zumi.

as well as her parents. The longing to escape her painful life and reach heaven was fulfilled when she died at the age of just thirty years old, but prior to this she had composed two songs around 1925, which have remained enduringly popular. In the present example, as she described the way in which she endures restless work, she especially looks forward to singing praises in heaven with fellow believers. It is one example of a song that speaks of the *lui râl* river that lies before the singer; she impatiently presses forward to that imagined river on the horizon, which clearly represents her hoped-for death, whether interpreted as Jordan or Rih Dil. This act of pressing forward is expressed in another poetic term somewhat equivalent to *thlîr*, which is *pan*:

*Chu khawpui mawi lam chu i pan zêl ang,  
Chau lovin i kal zêl ang u.*

Let's keep pressing forward to this beautiful city,  
Without growing weary, let's keep going.

Not only does she poetically describe her active pressing towards an imagined horizon, but she also makes repeated mention of the fact that the destination will be a place where people will neither tire nor need rest. Thus, she emphasises the fact that the needed rest from tiresome work was highly valued among the Mizo people. Certainly, in her own experience of physical weakness, it is clear that this was one of the most important things that she desired.

However, there are more specific terms associated with hope and longing that are of equal importance. In Mizo Bible translations and in prose, hope is usually translated as *beiseina* (noun) or *beisei* (verb). Literally, it is either the possession of or the reason to have 'hope or expectation' of future satisfaction. Lorrain lists it as synonymous with *duh'nei*, meaning 'having a desire for something' (1940). It is the anticipation of something positive, based on good grounds for expectation. *Beiseina* is not a sentimental hope, but a realistic expectation. It is intrinsically connected to the likelihood of a future event, the adjective *beiseiawm* meaning 'likely' (Ibid.), more literally translated as 'worth placing ones hope in.'

Although Macquarrie defines the emotional aspect of hope to be a positive expectant attitude, he is careful to distinguish it from optimism (1978: 13), which he describes as a brash lack of ambiguity. Hope should be moderated with the caution and awareness of the past and present difficulties of life, as expressed in his moral dynamic. It is possible that *beiseina* possessed too much confident optimism to express the hope of Mizo society accurately. Although it was soon used by missionaries and early Christians to translate 'hope,' it is significant that it is a word very rarely found in poetic literature.

Instead, it has often been appropriated to express political goals and aspirations. There are alternative terms that suggest a more nuanced emotion.

As already introduced in chapter one, *lunglênnna* is perhaps the most well-known term articulating the Mizo ‘sentiment’ of melancholic longing for something which has previously been enjoyed (Heath 2013: 30). In his collection of essays about Mizo culture, R.L. Thanmawia devotes an entire chapter to *lunglênnna* (2010: 23-33) in which he associates it with the different contexts of expressing romantic love, familial love and more general longing. It is a term so poetic that Lorrain cannot define it as anything but ‘the going out of the heart with thoughts or feelings of devotion... sentiment, longing...’ as well as ‘ponderings or musings over the past or future’ (1940). In 1924, the Welsh missionary Kitty Lewis explained it as making one’s heart ‘go for a walk.’<sup>125</sup> ‘Going out’ was also used in an interview with F. Lianchhinga to explain the receptivity to the new Mizo songs including *khawhar zai*: ‘Their tender tunes cause the heart to go out with thoughts and feelings. Besides, it aroused and awakened the Mizo sentiment.’<sup>126</sup> Realising the importance of the sentiment to Mizo spirituality, Lorrain wrote in 1913 (MGCC 1993: 99):

Our experience has taught us that the Lushais are born Methodists... [their] wealth of emotion... *must* find an outlet. To check it by compelling them to conform to our more staid methods would be fatal. Worship to be acceptable to God must surely be natural and spontaneous outgoing of the heart to Him as one’s own temperament, guided by the Holy Spirit, dictates.

It should be noted that both F. Lianchhinga’s comment and Lorrain’s use of the English phrase ‘outgoing of the heart’ correspond almost exactly to the English definition Lorrain offers in his dictionary for *lunglêng*, the ‘going out of the heart.’<sup>127</sup>

Although it yearns for future happiness, the term expresses the present state of longing pensively and with melancholy, rather than the exuberant optimism against which Macquarrie cautions. The sadness that is associated with this type of hope makes it a suitable sentiment to describe funeral hymns, and indeed Lorrain suggests that *lunglên hla* or *lunglên zai* (singing of *lunglênnna*) are ‘mournful... hymns

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<sup>125</sup> Letters from Kitty Lewis in National Library of Wales: 24 November 1924.

<sup>126</sup> 16 May 2014.

<sup>127</sup> See Maschio 1994: 49 for a similar discussion of the use of the heart as an idiom for expressing deep emotion.

which produce yearning longings for heaven' (1940).<sup>128</sup> This offers a much richer moral dynamic of hope, which fulfils Macquarrie's expectation that it must be influenced by a critical attitude towards the present and awareness of the past (1978: 15). As Denis O'Hara has also found in his study of the importance of hope in counselling (2013: 15):

As well as the future, the temporal dimension of hope also involves engagement with the past. Time past exerts an influence on hope for several reasons. The first is that it creates a storehouse of positive memories that help to frame hope. If the individual has had many experiences of hopes fulfilled then the memory of these provides encouragement and belief in the possibility of other hopes being fulfilled. The past becomes a reference point for belief and a reservoir of personal experiences of the possibility of hope.

However, unlike *thlîr*, *lunglênnna* is less frequently found to be a term employed by composers, but is rather a term used to describe composers, the music they produce and the sentiment that motivates them. This has been reflected in the sustained reference to Patea in the previous section as a *mi lunglêng*. However, there are two important examples in the present sample that demonstrate the application of the term as one of the driving emotions of their songs:

*Lung min lên ka thlîr ning dâwn lo,  
Lei lungngaih piah ram saw;  
Dam lai lungngaih chhûmpui zîng hi,  
Ka pêl ang tahna ram.*

I am longing for it, I won't tire of gazing,  
That land beyond the land of sorrow;  
These spreading dark clouds of life's sorrows,  
I will pass from this land of weeping.

This song, K9, by L. Kamlova begins with the very phrase '*lung min lên*,' meaning, 'I am feeling *lunglêng*.' He explicitly identifies himself as one of the *mi lunglêng*, sentimental composers to which his peers have already been shown to belong. He immediately goes on to reinforce this emotion with the assertion that he 'won't tire of gazing.' This opening line illustrates how the verb *thlîr* is intimately connected with the sentiment of *lunglênnna*. Hleia opens with a very similar statement in his song, K6, claiming to 'often gaze longingly (with *lunglênnna*)' at the heaven for which he hopes:

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<sup>128</sup> An example of *lunglên zai* associated with the Sailo clan was performed by P.C. Thangvunga in 2014 for the purposes of this research. A recording is included on DVD 1, 'Old Mizo Songs' folder.

*Ka nghâkhlêl Zion khawpui thar,  
Lal lêna vânram ropui;  
Lunglên changin ka thlîr fo thîn,  
Lei hrehawm hnutiang chhawnin.*

I am impatient for the new city of Zion,  
The glorious heavenly land where the Lord roams;  
I often gaze at it longingly,  
Putting the troubles of this world behind me.

These, however, are isolated examples of the mention of *lunglênna* within the texts of *khawhar zai*. A term more commonly found in the poetry itself, *ngaihna*, similarly expresses a longing for future satisfaction based on such a ‘reservoir of personal experiences’ that O’Hara describes (2013: 15). It is therefore related to nostalgia, memory and loss. Suggestive of its poetic potency, Lorrain offers a variety of definitions for *ngai*. From ‘to miss... to yearn for’ to ‘to wait for,’ from ‘to believe’ to ‘to have need of,’ it is an emotion that expresses ‘earnest desire’ based on past satisfaction (1940). Although the desire for restoring lost happiness in the future is the objective aim of *ngaihna*, it is an emotion that indulges in the memory of past pleasure in the present; it is the sentimental action of remembering that differentiates it from the rational expectation of *beiseina*.

It is apparent that *lunglênna* and *ngaihna* are better suited to expressing hope in Mizo terms, containing the nuance and retrospective attitude characteristic of hope. They are emotions engaged in the ‘pursuit of certainty’ that is central to an understanding of hope. Unlike the term *beiseina*, there is no dearth of early Mizo poetry containing these terms, including these examples which were sung by P.C. Thangvunga:

*Ngaiin min au ve a thang viai e, thinlai nghawr dim e, ngaiin min au ve.*<sup>129</sup>

The singer’s friends are calling longingly for the singer to come and join them in drinking and dancing.

*Neihchawnga zu valan ka rui e, ka ngaih leiah zai tin ka chhiar.*<sup>130</sup>

Pi Hmuaki claims to be as drunk as a young man as she drinks Neihchawnga’s beer and sings of loneliness.

*Runtui thlehriat râl han kai ing e, thenlai har e, Lalvanchhingpuii lung a lêng mang e.*<sup>131</sup>

<sup>129</sup> From the song ‘Zailam hla.’ See Appendix B for full translation.

<sup>130</sup> From ‘Pi Hmuaki zai.’ See Appendix B for full translation.

<sup>131</sup> From the song ‘Kawrnu zai.’



Just as the Runtui river meanders, so it is hard to take leave of each other, Lalvanchhingpuii is so lonely. Whereas these examples tend to use the term in its romantic context, it is found on countless occasions in *khawhar zai*, sometimes referring to the way in which the composer considers whether he will miss what he will leave behind, how he misses those who have gone, and how he longs for heaven. In these two extracts from K7 and K9, Saihnûna and L. Kamlova share a determination that they will not miss the world they will leave behind:

*Ka ÷ahna rêng ka ngai lo vang.*

And I will not miss any of my weeping.

*÷ahna ram ka ngai lo 'ng.*

I will not miss the land of weeping.

In these expressions, the composers make a very meaningful allusion to the past Mizo beliefs about death, in which it was believed that the soul would pause on its journey to Mitthi Khua and look back upon the village it had departed. It would long for and miss its former life, and only by plucking the *hawilo pâr* flower (flower of no turning back) and drinking from the *lungloh tui* (river of water of no longing) would the soul be able to overcome its deep longing (*ngaihna*) and press forward to its destination.<sup>132</sup>

By asserting that they will not long for their past life, the composers of *khawhar zai* are not just expressing their evangelical hope, but they are also alluding to the beliefs of the past, and making reference to the possibility that the soul may be faced with the choice to grieve or to move forward. Conversely, other songs emphasise composers' longing for those who have already died, and use *ngaihna* in one of its simplest forms, to express the act of 'missing' loved ones:

*Aw, ka ngai e, ÷hente zawng*

Oh, how I miss all those who have gone<sup>133</sup>

*Fam ngai min hnêm ang che Lalpa,*

Lord, comfort us when we miss the dead,

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<sup>132</sup> See Maschio 1994: 200 for an analogous example of the nostalgia of the dead among the Melanesian Rauto people.

<sup>133</sup> From K1.

*Fam ngaih lénkâwl a thiang zo ta,*

The time of missing the dead is already passing,<sup>134</sup>

Finally, some of the songs lead into the following section about the poetic references to earth and paradise, by using the term *ngaihna* to express the longing of the composer for heaven. This is perhaps one of the most common uses of the term, and reinforces the way in which *khawhar zai* deviated from customary attitudes to life after death as a condition of fear rather than of hope.

*Ka ngai tâwp thei lo'ng che*

I will not be able to stop longing for you<sup>135</sup>

*Lei ram pêla nun thar ngaiin,*

Longing to leave this earth for the new life,<sup>136</sup>

*Aw ka ngaih ka lâwmna berte,*

Oh, I long for it, my greatest joy,<sup>137</sup>

*Ngaiin ka rûm, ka tap chhûn ni tinin;*

Every day I longingly weep and groan for it;

*Ka va ngai êm! Ka va ngai êm!*

How I long for it! How I long for it!

*Lal lunghnêm ram mawi chu ka ngai mang e.*

How much I long for the comforting Lord's beautiful land.<sup>138</sup>

It is evident that the terms outlined in this section comprise an exceptionally rich melancholy ontology that continues to be valued by Mizo people, who would often refer to it when speaking English in interviews as 'the Mizo sentiment,' a phrase which conceals the depth of meaning that the terms actually contain. The use of such rich terms was a practical way by which composers of *khawhar zai* gazed to the past poetic devices that had been prevalent before the Christian hymns began to dominate. The final

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<sup>134</sup> Both lines from K6.

<sup>135</sup> From K3.

<sup>136</sup> From K6.

<sup>137</sup> From K9.

<sup>138</sup> The last three are from K11.

part of this section and chapter will now examine some more specific ways in which the longing of the composers of *khawhar zai* was articulated.

### 2.2.2 POETRY OF EARTH AND PARADISE

It was stated in section 2.1.1 that Mizo hope was rarely located in a place after death. It was believed that a paradise existed, called Pialrâl, but access to it was very difficult and it did not constitute part of most people's hope in life. As mentioned in section 1.1.1, many sentimental songs expressed a longing for the natural environment and celebrated its beauty. In Christian *khawhar zai*, the poetry associated with such songs and the once-elusive image of Pialrâl are brought together to express a longing for the Christian paradise of heaven in a way that is reminiscent of the past.



FIGURE 2.6 Rih Dil. Author's photo.

Many of the composers repeatedly referred to the Christian heaven as Pialrâl.<sup>139</sup> The prevalence of the term Pialrâl as opposed to the new term Vânrâm ('heavenly land/kingdom'), which had been

<sup>139</sup> See for example '*Pialrâl ka ngai, ka Lal lêna,*' ('I long for Pialrâl, the place of my Lord') by Lianrûma, '*Pialrâl ram nuam ka thlen ve hun chuan,*' ('When I reach the lovely land of Pialrâl') by Chhâwna, '*Pialrâl ram nuam leh ka Lalpa,*' (The lovely land of Pialrâl and my Lord') by Thanherha and even the use of the term by Thanga to translate '*There is a Paradise of Rest,*' by Robert Lindsay and Ira Sankey in '*Pialrâl chawlhna tha tak a awm.*'

disseminated as the name for the Christian heaven, indicates a preference to hope for the perfect afterlife, which Christianity had made attainable.<sup>140</sup> R.L. Thanmawia claims that Rih Dil (Figure 2.6) sometimes symbolised the River of Death (1998: 132) in the same way as the River Jordan did in the western hymns to be explored in the following part. This challenges the view sometimes proffered that earlier *khawhar zai* are ‘not Christian,’ since even the terms associated with beliefs before Christianity were appropriated in a way that was meaningful for Christians. Furthermore, their symbolic meaning changed: Rih Dil represented death rather than part of the journey of the dead; Pialrâl was the aspiration of all people rather than the special few. This was emphasised by the fact that what once had been the common destination, Mitthi Khua, was almost never referred to any more.

In two of his songs belonging to the present sample, K7 and K8, Saihnûna refers to Pialrâl as a place where the sufferings and loneliness of the present life will end and uses strong expressions of bitterness about life. This is particularly expressed in the chorus of ‘*Ka taksa lungngai mah sela*’ (K7):

*Nunna hlim rêng rêng ka nei lo.*

My life has no joy at all.

The expression of sorrows and suffering resonates with earlier Mizo laments whose texts have survived, complaining not only of bereavement but of other struggles in life. The sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann argued in their classic work, *The Social Construction of Reality*, that the knowledge of the finitude of life leads to a ‘coercive anxiety’ about the way people spend their time on earth (1966: 41). This anxiety may be understood to be fear, the desperation arising when hope in the stability of everyday life fails (Ibid: 118-9):

The experience of the death of others and, subsequently, the anticipation of one’s own death posit the marginal situation *par excellence* for the individual... Death also posits the most terrifying threat to the taken-for-granted realities of everyday life. The integration of death within the paramount reality of social existence is, therefore, of the greatest importance for any social order.

In the Mizo context, this was not a mere fear of death, but a fear that death could not fulfil the life of hope that may otherwise be maintained. Davies explains, ‘To grasp a higher view of things than has existed before is amongst the most basic of human activities; it is the foundation and the reward of the

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<sup>140</sup> Interview with Biaktluanga, 27 January 2014.

human need to “understand” (2005: 11). It is this need that is found among the Mizo people in this discussion, a need for secure understanding of the world in which they lived, otherwise expressed as a ‘pursuit of certainty.’ Davies corresponds this to the sense of ‘hope’ as an anticipation of a future time of greater knowledge and vision and adds that ‘there is survival value in hope’ (Ibid.), again reflecting the basic value of survival highlighted by Margaret Zama earlier in this chapter.

Saihnûna was commissioned to compose K7 by Darleta, a man who was passionate about singing continuously for days but suffered from a paralysing rheumatic condition. This is why Saihnûna expressed so much of Darleta’s physical pain and suffering in the song, particularly in the phrase ‘*taksa lungngai*,’ which can be understood in Darleta’s context to mean ‘physical sorrow’ or ‘sorrow of the flesh/body’ (Lalrâwna 2011: 10). The first two verses are given here:

*Ka taksa lungngai mah sela,  
Vânramah thlain ka lêng thîn;  
Tûnah chauvin rûm mah ila,  
Nakinah thlain ka thlâwk ang.*

Even though I have fleshly sorrows,  
I fly around in the heavens;  
Even though I now groan with weariness,  
Later I will fly with wings.

*Sual thiin thim zîngah hian,  
Chatuan êng lam chu ka zawng a;  
Kei rethei, chau leh saruak hi,  
Hlimnain min tifamkim rawh.*

In the midst of this darkness of sin and death,  
I am searching for the way of eternal light;  
I, who am poor, weary and naked,  
Restore me with joy.

Much of Saihnûna’s text demonstrates the latent importance of some of the basic social needs and values highlighted above. The verses contain dichotomised phrases: a complaint, followed by a plea for the hastening of the heavenly life. Whether Darleta is sad (*taksa lungngai*), weary (*chauvin*), totally unhappy (*nunna hlim rêng rêng ka nei lo*), troubled (*buaina*), in spiritual darkness (*thim zîngah*), poor, tired and naked (*rethei, chau leh saruak*), he equally pleads with God to make him happy and complete as he looks forward to eternal life in Zion. These echo the suggestions of this chapter that the basic values longed for in Mizo society were a future where present struggles in work were absent, where certainty and security about spiritual and material things were secured, and where basic provisions were met. The difference offered by Christianity was that these values were to be found in heaven. By the

last verse, it is absolutely clear that Saihnûna locates this hope in life after death, albeit one articulated in the Mizo term Pialrâl; his ultimate aim is to reach the land where he will no longer need to weep:

*Khawpui mawi, rangkachak ram nuam,  
Thleng ila pialrâl khawpui chu;  
Nun hlui ram ka han thlîr ang a,  
Ka tahna rêng ka ngai lo vang.*

The beautiful city of gold, lovely land,  
If only I could reach the city of Pialrâl,  
I will gaze back upon the land of my former life,  
I will not miss any of my old weeping.

This exemplifies the hope expressed in *khawhar zai*, a hope that critiques the present based on Mizo values, that articulates the future hope in Mizo terms, but which is located according to the Christian belief in the glorious heaven promised after death. Furthermore, the term *thlîr* is once again encountered, as Saihnûna resolves to ‘gaze’ towards the ‘land of my former life’ (*nun hlui ram ka han thlîr ang a*) at the same time as he wishes to reach Pialrâl. The act of hoping, again, is one that the person resolves to do in the present context through retrospection, poetry and song.

Similarly, ‘*Ka nghâkhlel Zion khawpui thar*’ (K6) by Hleia<sup>141</sup> looks forward impatiently (*ngâkhlel*) to the new city of Zion in biblical terms, but again with an emphasis on the perils of life on earth. Hleia was paralysed and unable to walk, but was determined to continue memorising Bible verses, preaching and singing. He composed these songs shortly before his death, so R. Lalrâwna concludes that the longing for heaven that he expresses is all the more apparent (2011: 54). He specifically requests that the Lord lead him there without allowing him to fall, aware of the dangers that lie ahead:

*Thlah lovin min hruai zêl ang che.*

Always guide me without letting me fall.

Composed almost upon his deathbed, this line could also be considered an allusion to the beliefs about the journey of the dead soul that prevailed before Christianity. The soul was required not only to pass through Rih Dil but also to climb the mountain of Hringlang Tlâng; it was a perilous journey and it was believed that the spirits of animals sacrificed at a person’s death or killed during their lifetime could guide the soul on its way. Here, Hleia calls upon God to be the one to guide him on his difficult journey

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<sup>141</sup> His full name was Hleithangpuia (1903-1934).

to heaven. The song is also particularly rich with the sentimental language of longing that has been found to be associated with Mizo hope:

*Lunglên changin ka thlîr fo thîn*

I often gaze at it longingly

*Nunna ram i thlîr ang u*

Let's gaze towards the kingdom of life

*Dam lai khawvêl hi thlîr teh u,*

World of the living, gaze,

*Zion ram i thlîr ang u*

Let's gaze toward the land of Zion

He refers to *thihna tlâng*, mount of death, which can be counted as a traditional term analogous to Hringlang Tlâng, from which he may enter the *nunna ram*, the kingdom of life and, unusually, he is sure that he will weep before the Lord. Here is an explicitly Christian song locating heaven in Zion, full of forward-looking hope and impatient expectation. Yet this is combined with language that remembers the former Mizo beliefs, encourages an active engagement with sentimental longing and weeping, and realistically knows that future troubles lie ahead.

In the case of *khawhar zai*, the poetry therefore triggers an imagination, which contributes to the sense of nostalgia better expressed as *lunglênna*. Though imagination rarely recalls the traditional beliefs in detail, some individuals such as the elderly scholar Biaktluanga did claim that when they close their eyes to sing *khawhar zai*, they vividly picture the dead soul making their way to heaven according to the old Mizo route; Biaktluanga's theology is fixed to the geographical landscape of the old Mizo beliefs.<sup>142</sup> Born in 1932, he recalls his childhood poverty during which he experienced some of the 'wretchedness' which inspired the songs of the repertoire. Claiming that songs that evoke such longing epitomise the Mizo 'high seriousness,' he adds that it is 'latent in the hearts of the people,' waiting to be brought out through singing. This supports the argument made earlier that *khawhar zai* can help

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<sup>142</sup> Interview, 27 January 2014.

singers gaze back to a traditional cosmology that would not otherwise be compatible with their Christian context.

As has been mentioned, some of these devices in the songs included referencing the geographical landscape of death of these past beliefs, such as Rih Dil, Hringlang Tlâng and Pialrâl. Just as the dead souls had once been believed to drink water and pluck the flower in order to forget the life that had passed, so Christians longed to be able to put the troubles of earth behind them. The prevalence of flowers and drinking of water in the songs thus refers indirectly and sometimes directly to the *hawilo pâr* and *lungloh tui* of the earlier Mizo beliefs. In the 1930 edition of the *MKHTB*, the tune of ‘*Lungngai hmêl rêng a awm lo ’ng*’<sup>143</sup> by Chhâwna was even printed as HAWILO PÂR because of its prominent appearance in the song.

Composers also made positive reference to the environment experienced on earth as a common device to describe paradise. In K2, Patea expresses his desire to explore the length and breadth of heaven, in an unusual image that demonstrates his very vivid imagination of heaven as an earthly environment.

*Aw, Immanuel lei leh vân thar siam chu,  
A dung leh vângahte han lêng ve ila;  
Buaina tinrêng tuara ka then tâkte kha,  
Vân ropuina hain an hmêl ka hmu ang.*

Oh, Immanuel, in the new heaven and earth you are creating,  
Let me explore the length and breadth of it;  
All the troubles I endured when others left me,  
I will see their faces in the glorious heaven

Patea’s poetry is filled with flowers and delight in creation and anticipation of its perfected state in heaven, already visualising ‘the beautiful sunshine in the Paradise’ (Thanmawia 1998: 80). In so doing, his poetry resembled the already common songs of *ram ngaih hla*, which celebrated the beauty of the present environment, yet longed for Vânam (the heavenly land) instead of the earthly *ram* (land). R.L. Kamlala explained his own use of flowers in songs such as ‘*Rinin thlîr thiam ila*’ (Chuaũthuma 2006: xxxix):

In the year 1922, we planted ‘Chuailo Pâr’ near our farmhouse; one day my children plucked the flower, but the flower did not wither for days; even after being dried in the sun, it retained its original red colour. I found that it was true to its name.... This led me to think

<sup>143</sup> ‘There will be no more sorrowful faces.’



about the greatness of the never ceasing love of Christ, it became clearer than seeing it with one's own eyes. They used to compare Christ with the flowers of 'Sharon' and 'Lily,' but these fade and wither very quickly. But even more appropriate than the flowers that we use in our songs like 'Ainawn' and 'Chhawkhlel,' we have 'Chuailo Pâr,' the very name itself most resembles Christ.

The *chuailo* flower is considered most appropriate because it means 'never fading.'<sup>144</sup> It therefore reflects the eternal light of Christ. In Patea's '*Ka dam lai thlipui a râl hunin*' (K4), flowers are placed in heaven on two occasions:

*Chutah ka lâwmna a chuai lo vang, a hmêlah vân pangpar a vul rêng a.*<sup>145</sup>

There my joy will never fade, in his countenance the heavenly flower always blooms.

*Kan lâwmna pangparah an la vul ngai ang.*

[These sorrows, weeping and troubles], will become the bloom of our flower of joy.

Here, Patea subtly references the *chuailo* flower by a form of double entendre; he uses the verb *chuai lo* to describe how his own joy will never fade, but the proximity of the verb to his descriptions of heavenly flowers can evoke this particular flower in the minds of the singers.<sup>146</sup>

This ideal future, whether on the horizon or imagined, relates to what Robert Hertz termed the 'invisible society' (1960 [1907]: 86), which he claimed is found in different forms in every religion, whether in notions of resurrection, reintegration or utopia. It is the hope that there is a possibility for society to be recreated beyond death, free from the constraints and failures of earth's 'visible society.' However, as has been seen in the Mizo context, the 'invisible society' beyond death did not necessarily offer a better life, and the paradise of Piarâl was an elusive one. Instead, it was the Christian composers who engaged with their new hope in a positive 'invisible society,' but imagined it and presented it by using poetic devices that gazed back to the past. They harnessed the poetic sentiment of *lunglêna*, gazed back to what the older generations had believed about life and death and described their hope in terms of the environment in which those generations had found themselves, celebrating its beauty but ultimately crying out with longing for restoration. Through *khawhar zai*, the already rich poetics of the Mizo

<sup>144</sup> It is the 'immortelle' flower, of the Asteraceae family.

<sup>145</sup> Originally '*tawh*' instead of '*rêng*' but no longer printed as such. The original meaning would be translated 'already blooms' rather than 'always blooms' (Lalrâwna 2011: 59).

<sup>146</sup> The phrase is also used by Thangvungi in K1, without the double entendre.

sentiment were further mobilised into a complex navigation of past and present emotions and hopes. As the following part will show, it achieved what its translated or western-style counterparts in the form of *solfa zai* could not offer to a Mizo people facing the crisis of hope at a religious and social juncture that Patea and his contemporaries faced in the early 1920's.

## CHAPTER 3

### IN PRACTICE: THE INFLUENCE OF OLDER MIZO MUSIC

This chapter moves from the contextual background of the previous chapter towards a study of how *khawhar zai* enabled its early practitioners to ‘gaze to the past’ through the musical style and its practice. This also has implications for current practice, since the study will highlight how those who still gather to sing *khawhar zai* enact allusions to the music of past generations expressing their hope. However, the specific application to present practice will primarily be addressed in part four of this thesis.

#### 3.1 PRELIMINARY REMARKS AND METHODOLOGY

The sample of *khawhar zai* introduced at the beginning of this thesis will be retained and songs will be referred to by their given letter and number. In accordance with Mizo musical convention, the pitch classes of the songs will usually be referred to according to their names in tonic solfa, in order to avoid confusion with terms that can assign a false harmonic function to melodic pitch. Thus, *doh, re, mi, fa, sol, la, and te* are preferred to *tonic, supertonic, mediant, subdominant, dominant, submediant and leading note*.

The transcriptions of *khawhar zai*, included in Appendix A, are made from a wide variety of recordings made during fieldwork in 2014, samples of which are available on DVD 1 in the folder entitled ‘Khawhar Zai Sample.’ Although the most common source of notation for hymns used in church is the *Kristian Hla Bu* (KHB 2005), many of the *khawhar zai* songs are not printed in this book because they are used more often at the *khawhar in* than in the church. Instead, for this study, all of the transcriptions were made with reference to their tonic solfa versions printed in the *Mizo Kristian Hla Thar Bu* (MKHTB 2007) of 440 songs published by the Presbyterian Church, which contains all the songs in the sample.

The tonic solfa notation offered in the *MKHTB* is markedly different from that in the *KHB*; the preface to the former explains that adjustments have deliberately been made to suit the performance practice (2007: iii). Whereas the latter implies complicated compound meters such as 6/8, 9/8 and 12/8, which do not easily correlate with the binary drum-beat in performance, the *MKHTB* chooses not to indicate any meter at all, simply notating each beat separately with a duple rather than triplet rhythm, and without

any bar lines. Figures 2.7 and 2.8 illustrate this difference in the song ‘*Aw Lalpa, Davida leh a thlah Arsi*’ (K2). Figure 2.8 is much more accurate in representing the melody as it is practised. Influenced by this example, the staff notation transcriptions in this thesis also follow the method of notating by beat rather than by bar or meter.

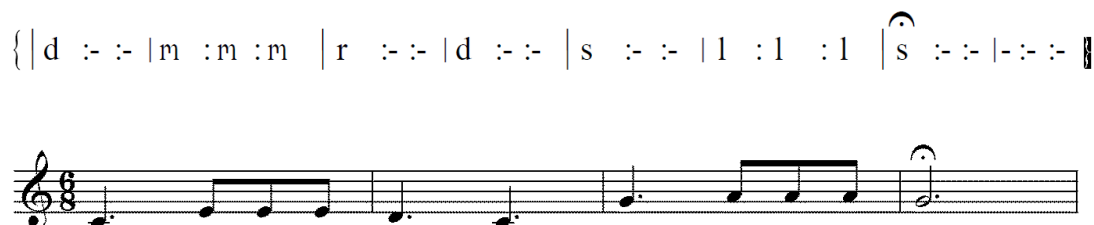


FIGURE 2.7 K2 opening line as notated in *KHB* (2005), with staff notation transcription in C.



FIGURE 2.8 K2 opening line as notated in *MKHTB* (2007), with staff notation transcription in C.

Where there are additional beats between lines and verses, which can appear misleading in transcriptions, the present method avoids such confusion by presenting them as ordinary measures in the music rather than as temporary metrical changes or ambiguous ‘general pause’ marks.

This situation does beg the question of why the songs were initially notated in compound meters. It is possible that the early practice of the songs did possess a more tripletted lilt than the current motif of two semiquavers followed by a quaver (Figure 2.8) might imply. In the recorded performances, the latter is certainly not metronomic, but the drum-beat helps the singers maintain a more duple rhythm. Performances of older Mizo songs<sup>147</sup> also contain some rhythms that have been transcribed as triplets. However, despite the ambiguity regarding how to notate any sets of three short notes, this does not necessitate the imposition of a compound time signature. It would be equally accurate and possible to replace the motif in the second measure of Figure 2.8 with a triplet, and retain the single beat per bar notation. An alternative suggestion could be the popularity of compound meters in the western-style

<sup>147</sup> See ‘Old Mizo Songs’ folder on DVD 1 and Appendix B for transcriptions.

hymns, introduced in chapter five and included in Appendix C. Early notation may have sought to follow the existing notation conventions and this may have led to the imitation of the compound meters found in many evangelical hymns. This is rather more convincing, since the possibility of fundamentally adjusting the notation system for Mizo purposes might well have been a much later development once *khawhar zai* had become an established repertoire with a performance practice that deviated from that of the western hymns. Indeed, this would suit the final more pragmatic suggestion, that the tonic solfa notation itself demands the use of bar lines just as staff notation does, and to abandon these lines, as later editions did, would initially have been considered bad practice or an example of poor musical literacy to those with formal training in the tradition.

In addition to removing any allusion to a compound triple meter, there are some melodic adjustments made in Figure 2.8 that more closely match the performances as found on DVD 1 (Track K2). For example, the pitch *re* given as a strong beat in the second measure of the first version, is softened by instead accenting the pitch *mi* on the beat and falling to *re*. In this particular song, singers also tend to inflect the reiterated *la* pitch at the end of the line rather than maintaining a stable *la*. This has been indicated by notating a shift to *te* in the melody at this point. The *MKHTB* evidently offers a more accurate notation of the sung melodies, so this will become the primary source for the present study. There has been no attempt to notate the exact pitches, such as the unstable flattened *mi* and the common application of vocal elision and slides between pitches. These transcriptions are therefore skeletal outlines of melodies that in practice possess a much smoother and flatter quality.

In addition to the sample already introduced, this chapter will also refer to another sample of older Mizo songs recorded by P.C. Thangvunga as a point of comparison with *khawhar zai*. Some of the texts of these songs were also introduced in chapter two and the context in which the recordings were made was mentioned in the introduction. Included in DVD 1 in the folder ‘Old Mizo Songs’, a sample of ten songs has been used from P.C. Thangvunga’s collection. In contrast to the K-letter coding used for the sample of *khawhar zai*, these songs are coded with the letter ‘O’ for ‘old’ Mizo songs:<sup>148</sup>

O1 *Lumtui – Chawngchen Zai* (Four stanzas of a song from Lumtui village belonging to those used at the Chawngchen feast)

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<sup>148</sup> P.C. Thangvunga’s document containing the song words is also titled ‘Mizo Hla Hluite,’ which means ‘Old Mizo Songs.’

- O2 *Darlenglehi Zai* (Two stanzas in the tune named after a woman called Darlenglehi)
- O3 *Darṭhiangi Chente* (Seven stanzas attributed to a woman called Darṭhiangi Chente)
- O4 *Kawrnu Zai* (Three stanzas in the tune named after the sound of the cicada)
- O5 *Lianchhiari Zai* (Four stanzas in the tune named after a woman called Lianchhiari)
- O6 *Liandova Nupui Hla a and b* (Two songs attributed to the wife of Liandova)
- O7 *Pi Hmuaki (Ngente) Zai* (Three stanzas in the tune named after a woman called Pi Hmuaki of Ngente village)
- O8 *Ṭiau kan hnu Zai – Mangkhai Khelte* (Five stanzas attributed to a man called Mangkhai Khelte and dated to the migratory crossing over the River Ṭiau)
- O9 *Zailam Hla* (Five stanzas intended for dancing, probably at the Chawngchen feast)
- O10 *Lunglên Zai – Sailo Zai* (Four sentimental stanzas in the tune named after the Sailo clan)

It is important to note the difference between *hla* and *zai* in this earlier period, since their usage has changed since the encounter with Christianity. *Hla* was the more poetic form, conforming to intonational chant according to the classic typography offered by George List (1963). Laltluangliana Kiangte states that ‘A *zai* was different from a *hla* in that it was sung to a tune while the latter was chanted’ (2013b: 47). *Hla* may include the chants of victorious hunters and warriors, such as *hlado* and *bawrh hla*. P.C. Thangvunga’s demonstration of the victory chant, *hlado*, can be found in the ‘Old Mizo Songs’ folder of DVD 1 (O11), though it is not included in the sample above since it is considered a chant rather than a song. By contrast, *zai* would generally refer to the social singing that took place amongst a gathered group, and often had a recognisable tune. It was less poetic but the sung tune was easy for others to learn.<sup>149</sup> *Zai* tunes would become rapidly disseminated and formed the basis for other texts improvised on any social occasion.

The sample of older Mizo songs introduced here must be considered a modern rendition of songs that are never performed in their original context today. The accuracy of P.C. Thangvunga’s memory, the possibility that he has developed a personal style, and other environmental factors such as my own research interest all mean these analyses are by no means definitive representations of earlier practice. Apart from such modern renditions, there is very little detailed documented evidence for the sound of the music before Christianity. Scholarly texts of British and Mizo writers have focused almost exclusively on the texts of the songs. One rare example of musical description is found in an account

<sup>149</sup> Interviews with K.L. Biakchungnunga, 10 May 2014 and C. Lalnunsiam, 28 January 2014.

from 1884 (ten years before the arrival of the missionaries) by Brojo Nath Shaha, a Bengali surgeon posted in the region who observed that ‘the Lushai music and songs are, I believe, quite unique. The former is often wild and plaintive, while in the latter the modulations of the voice are extremely varied.’ He continues:<sup>150</sup>

Sometimes low and deep, and almost funereal, while at others rising to a lively pitch, but always musical. At the same time, owing to the numerous rhythmical technicalities and the introduction of foreign words not entirely understood by the singer himself, I have found it quite beyond me to indicate either their music or mode of singing, and so have not attempted the last.

P.C. Thangvunga’s singing session resembled many aspects of this description. The pitches behave in much the same way as observed in *lêngkhâwm zai*, demonstrating a pentatonic range of available pitches, to the exclusion of *fa* and *te*. The transcriptions given will help to highlight the range, melodic contour and repeated motifs and phrases, but do not represent authoritative notated versions of the songs, which have remained a fading part of Mizoram’s oral heritage. Of additional interest is the loose tempo and meter, guided only by the drum-beat, which is of variable durations. The players who accompanied P.C. Thangvunga by beating horns had trouble keeping in time, but the present study has discounted their performance since it was acknowledged at the time that they were not familiar with the musical style. The songs are extremely slow and the performers appear to make no subdivisions in their gestures or voice. As such, the only metrical indicators are the drum-beats which roughly correlate with the transcribed bar lines. Each bar is therefore of a different duration in actual practice, and the transcriptions in Appendix B do not attempt to reflect the durations of the pitches precisely.

It can be argued that in the acknowledged weakness of these modern recordings of older songs, lies the strength that P.C. Thangvunga’s performances do illustrate and reflect present-day imaginations and memories about what singing used to be like before Christianity. Since this part of the thesis is concerned with how *khawhar zai* evokes memory and generates a ‘mental habitus’ about its connection to past traditions, the present analysis can afford to be less concerned with exactly how songs were practised in the past, and more interested in how they continue to be imagined and remembered by present generations. This can greater express the nostalgic capital that *khawhar zai* continues to possess.

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<sup>150</sup> Note on Lushai Grammar, held in British Library.

The weakness of memory here can therefore become a great aid in responding to the primary question of this thesis, in seeking how *khawhar zai* survived as a successor to the older Mizo songs. Indeed, this approach lends credence to Boym's second type of 'imaginative nostalgia' (2001) which uses the collective imagination of the past as a basis for hope and depends less on the accuracy of the recollections.

Having set out some of the basic methodological considerations that have been made when approaching the repertoires of *khawhar zai* and some of the songs from before Christianity, this chapter will in turn address the way in which *khawhar zai* gazes back to a vocal style of the past, a melodic style of the past and to a community singing context of the past.

### 3.2 VOICES OF THE PAST: VOCAL RANGE AND DEXTERITY

This section will show how the range and register of *khawhar zai* retains some similarity with the older sample of songs as sung by P.C. Thangvunga. C. Thanseia, a musician who has led many workshops for Baptist congregations in Mizoram, names 'register' as a mode of classification among *khawhar zai*.<sup>151</sup> Here he refers to the melodic range and dexterity of the song. An analysis of all the songs recorded during fieldwork in 2014 (not only the selected sample of songs) shows that there are indeed three clear types of songs depending on the melodic range involved:

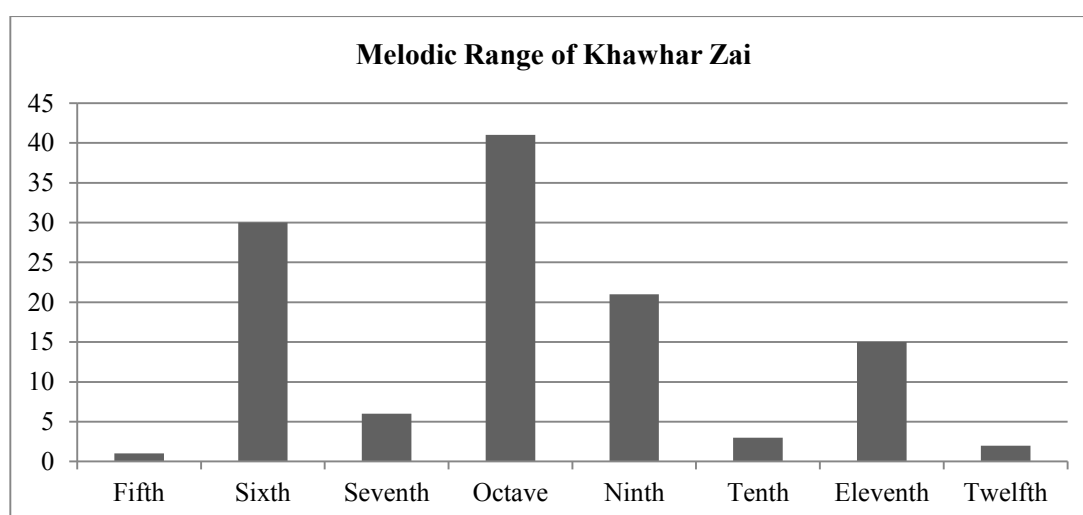


FIGURE 2.9 Chart showing number of songs from the entire recorded sample corresponding to each range.

<sup>151</sup> Interview, 25 April 2014.



This data includes multiple performances of the same song on different occasions, since it is intended to represent the ranges of all the songs sung at all the events documented during fieldwork. With a few anomalous exceptions, there are clear peaks in the number of songs which have a range of a sixth, octave (and ninth) and eleventh. Songs with a range of a sixth usually exhibit a melody that reaches from low *sol* to *mi*. The ambiguous flattened nature of the *mi* can also associate the interval with that of a large fifth. This does not affect the analysis here because the present study has included songs with an interval of a fifth and a sixth within the group of those with an interval of a sixth, since they are of a related range. Those with a range of an octave are overwhelmingly the most common (illustrated in Figure 2.10), and may be grouped with those with a range of a seventh or ninth, the latter most often exemplified by a brief inflection from high *doh* to *re* or from *doh* to low *te*.



FIGURE 2.10 K2, measures 10-22.

Songs with a range of an eleventh usually consist of melodies that contain the octave from *doh* to high *doh* but also include the characteristic low *sol* that leaps up to *doh* as in Figure 2.11:



FIGURE 2.11 K8, opening phrase.

As mentioned, there are anomalous examples falling outside these main types, but these may be grouped with the songs of their nearest peak. The selected sample of songs contains examples of each of these types:

Type 1: Interval of a Sixth (or Fifth)

K1, K3, K4, K5, K6, K9, K11, K12.

Type 2: Interval of an Octave

K2, K7.

Type 3: Interval of an Eleventh

K8, K10. K13 is a somewhat smaller member of this type with a range of a tenth.

This overview is particularly interesting since the distribution is somewhat different from that of the overall sample. Rather than a particularly high peak at the range of an octave, the majority of songs in the sample have a range of only a fifth or a sixth. Considering that the songs from the sample are chosen due to their widespread popularity during recent fieldwork, this suggests that, although the existing repertoire predominantly contains songs with a range of an octave, the songs which are most frequently sung and chosen at times of bereavement are those with a much smaller range and bearing a much closer correspondence to the older Mizo songs. This would suggest that the preferred aesthetic is one that limits the voice to a smaller range reminiscent of the older songs, despite the availability and abundance of suitable songs with bigger ranges.

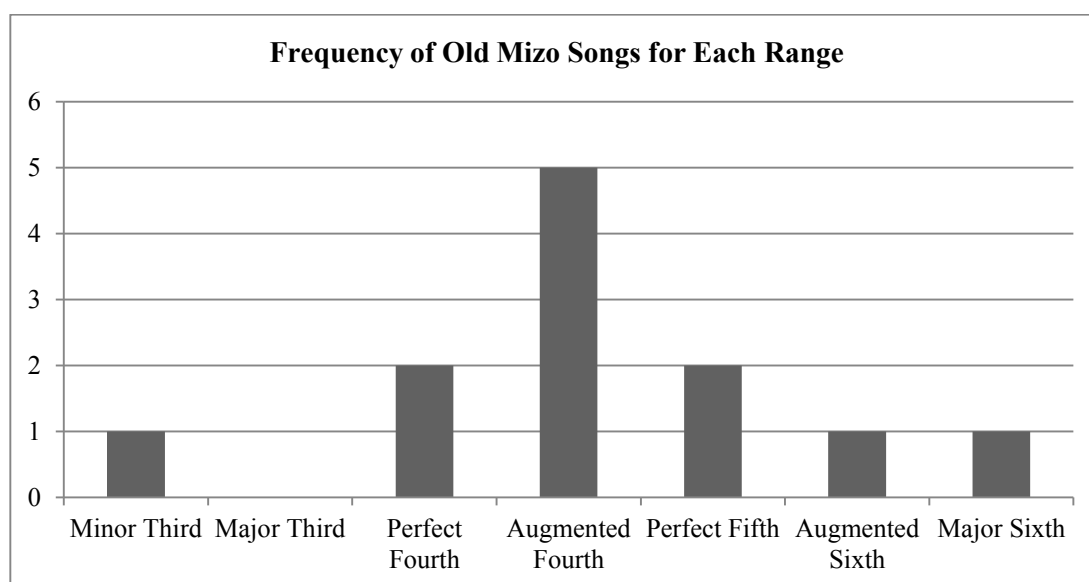
A close analysis of the old Mizo songs shows that the average range is 623 cents. This may be understood as a ‘small fifth’ that matches the peak in Figure 2.9 and certainly reflects the transcriptions in Appendix B which tend to extend up to no more than a fourth above what has been transcribed as *doh*, and occasionally fall just below before returning to *doh* at the end of a phrase. Figure 2.12 offers one example. Of course, it is less possible to define the ranges with named intervals since, unlike *khawhar zai*, the songs do not exist in any notated form apart from the transcriptions offered in this thesis.



FIGURE 2.12 O10, ‘Lunglên Zai – Sailo Zai.’

In very few examples, the range is more than an augmented fifth. In such cases, the melody extends up to a small fifth (notated a fourth) as well as falling briefly below *doh* as a vocal inflection. In all cases, the range is noticeably smaller than any of the types of song ranges of *khawhar zai*. Figure 2.13 summarises the analysis of the old Mizo songs, obtained by calculating the range of the songs in cents

from the recordings made by P.C. Thangvunga, and assigning them to the closest classifiable interval. As can be seen, the songs never came close to reaching a range of an octave. It is clear that this is the most comfortable and familiar range in which to sing in traditional Mizo contexts, and perhaps explains why the most popular *khawhar zai* retain this limited range despite there being many familiar compositions available with a range of an octave or more.



**FIGURE 2.13** Chart showing frequency of older Mizo songs corresponding to each range.

The many examples of *khawhar zai* that do have a larger range will be identified in chapter five to bear a closer musical connection with the western hymn style introduced by the missionaries. However, the distinction need not be so simplistic. In K2, for example, the range reaches an octave, yet the behaviour of the pitches is still reminiscent of the older songs, so that the dexterity demanded of the voices is not as difficult as it may initially appear.

In an expansion of the conventional range found in the earlier Mizo songs, the melody of K2 pushes up to an octave above the tonic note, twice in the verse (measures 10 and 28) and once in the chorus (measure 40). This allows the fifth, *sol*, to pivot between the two functions its pitch conventionally performs. A low *sol* frequently appears at the opening of Mizo musical phrases before reaching up to the main tonic *doh* (Figure 2.15). This is not found in K2. Instead, the higher *sol* performs an equivalent function by reaching up to the *doh* an octave higher (Figure 2.16). At the same time, it is able to perform its normal function as the high point of the rest of the melody, occasionally inflected to *la*, as is often the case in *lêngkhâwm zai* (Figure 2.17).



FIGURE 2.14 K2, 'Aw Lalpa, Davida leh a thlah arsi.'



FIGURE 2.15 Opening of K1 showing normal behaviour of *sol*.



FIGURE 2.16 Excerpt from K2, from measure 25.



FIGURE 2.17 Excerpt from K2, from measure 45.

The pitches in *khawhar zai* are also unstable and have a tendency to fall as part of the vocal style. In addition to this, elision often takes place between words, which leads to the falling and unstable flow of the pitches. Elision can be heard on all the examples on DVD 1, and this manner of pursuing the contours of the melody together was celebrated by the elderly scholar Biaktluanga in an interview who cited it as an example of the 'high seriousness' latent in the Mizo people, that leads to the production of good 'symphony,' or the union of multiple voices.<sup>152</sup> However, for the purposes of analysis, it is more effective to examine recordings of solo voices. The gospel singer Siampuii Sailo demonstrated during an interview the appropriate vocal style used when singing *khawhar zai* (DVD 2, Track K2).

<sup>152</sup> 27 January 2014.

The following graph obtained through Praat software from her singing of K2 depicts this style by tracing the precise pitches of her singing.

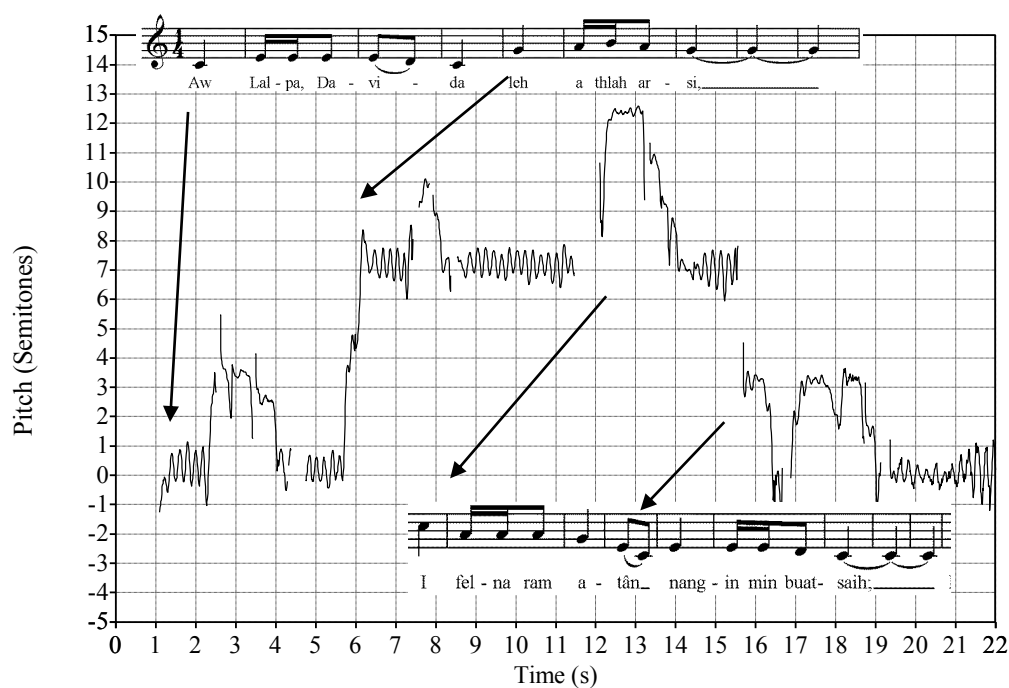


FIGURE 2.18 First line of K2 sung by Siampuii Sailo.<sup>153</sup>

The elision from *mi* to *doh* is particularly evident at the end of this phrase, shown in closer focus in Figure 2.19:



<sup>153</sup> The text may be translated, 'Oh Lord, David and his descended Star, You are preparing me for your land of righteousness.'

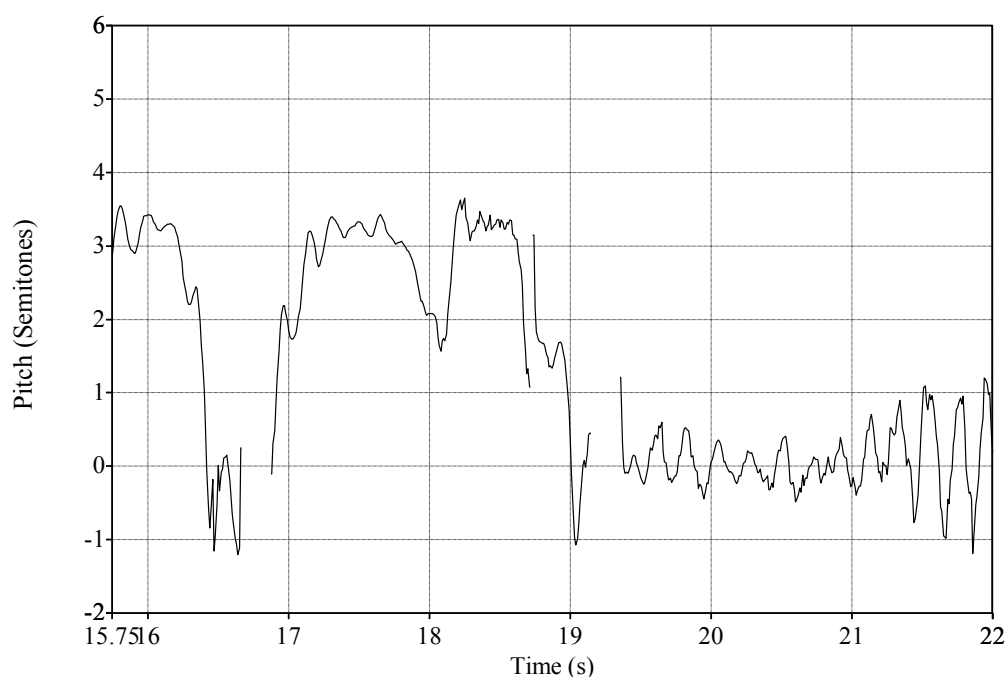


FIGURE 2.19 End of first phrase of K2, sung by Siampuii Sailo.

Other interviewees sang similar examples of songs that do not fall within the present sample. They can be found in the ‘Supplementary Files’ folder of DVD 2, including ‘*Aw hmangaihna, khawvêl Entu*,’<sup>154</sup> sung by C. Chhuanvawra (Track 8), and ‘*Han thlir teh u*’<sup>155</sup> sung by C. Thangvunga<sup>156</sup> in Chhipphir (Track 7). These examples show both the falling nature of the pitches and their elision to each other, which often involves an intensification towards the end of a note towards its following note as the widening vibrato shown at the end of Figure 2.19 depicts. As C. Chhuanvawra and Siampuii Sailo expressed in detail during separate interviews,<sup>157</sup> the voice should ideally include such slurring and a heavy use of vibrato between notes. It seems from Siampuii Sailo’s example that this vibrato is in fact consistently applied, particularly on the pitches *doh* and *sol*, whereas other pitches such as *mi* are very indistinct, supporting the notion that these are ambivalent pitches always heading towards the relatively stable (but vibrato) pitch of *doh*. C. Thangvunga’s singing demonstrates this vibrato in an especially exaggerated manner, perhaps due to his age and the frailty of his voice. Such a sample provides a rare

<sup>154</sup> ‘Oh love, light of the world.’

<sup>155</sup> ‘Come and gaze.’ Recording on DVD 2, ‘Supplementary Files,’ Track 7.

<sup>156</sup> Not to be confused with P.C. Thangvunga of Champhai.

<sup>157</sup> 9 April 2014; 7 April 2014.

insight into the individual quality of the voices that come together to sing *khawhar zai* at the *khawhar in*.

Numerous Mizo scholars note that it is the sound of the singing in this manner that sometimes influences a song's appreciation more than its words.<sup>158</sup> It is said to 'touch' the heart, as many Mizos put it, translating the Mizo term *khawih*.<sup>159</sup> This common verb literally refers to physical tugging or pulling, but also has a metaphorical meaning for the way in which sentimental music can, in the English sense, 'tug at the heart strings.' Similarly, the writer Lalhruaitluanga Ralte says the 'tune is what drives us Mizos. I think sometimes tune is more important than the words, especially in the *khawhar zai* and love songs,' going on to add that he thinks the Mizo songs are the 'most deep and expressive in the world.'<sup>160</sup> Hyperbole aside, this statement emphasises the high priority placed upon the tune and style of singing of *khawhar zai* in order to reinforce what is felt to be a tradition that carries a rich heritage. It also reinforces the high nostalgic potential that the songs possess, regardless of whether the older Mizo songs were really sung exactly as they are imagined to have been.

This section has, however, briefly been able to provide the empirical substance that these local assertions have pre-supposed. By demonstrating the relationship between *khawhar zai* and the older songs in terms of the vocal style, including the limited range and the falling and elided pitches, support can be offered for the claims that the songs 'touch' the heart because of their ability to musically embody the *lunglêнна* and *ngaihna* for the past. Not only do they evoke a memory of past styles of singing, but the connection that the older songs have to themes of longing adds to the potential for *lunglêнна* to be harnessed in *khawhar zai*.

### 3.3 MELODIES OF THE PAST: CONTOUR, RHYTHM AND COHERENCE

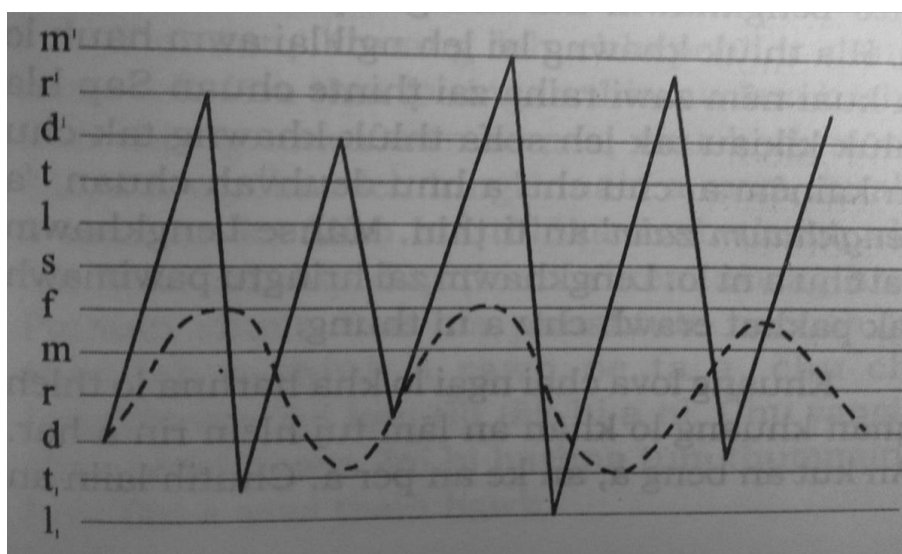
The analysis above indicates that the connection with the older musical style lies not only in the range but also in the behaviour of the pitches, leading to a retrospective quality in the melodies of the songs. It is in the melodic contours of *khawhar zai* that the songs differ most from *solfa zai*. However, Mizo scholars, though aware that the contours of the tunes represent the most striking characteristics of *khawhar zai*, have yet to make specific analytical claims about the musical content. Figure 2.20 shows

<sup>158</sup> Interview with B. Lalthangliana, 9 April 2014.

<sup>159</sup> For example, interview with C. Chhuanvawra, 9 April 2014.

<sup>160</sup> Interview, 2 June 2014.

the attempt of R.L. Thanmawia to illustrate this claim, published in a seminar paper about *lêngkhâwm zai* (2013: 4) as well as in his *Chuailo Vol. 2* (2010).



**FIGURE 2.20** R.L. Thanmawia's comparison between *solfa zai* and *lêngkhâwm zai*.

The graph illustrates the difference in melodic contour between *lêngkhâwm zai* and *solfa zai*, yet the graph format can mislead readers into thinking that the lines are empirically-derived, whereas closer examination reveals that it is a subjective representation. Rather than dismiss this attempt, however, the analysis presented here can lend support to R.L. Thanmawia's thesis, offering real evidence for the point he wishes to illustrate, which could be effectively refined in future publications. This section will examine, in turn, aspects of the melodic contour, the rhythmic characteristics of the melodies, and their structural coherence.

### 3.3.1 CONTOUR

Mizo commentators often describe the contour as the *thlûk* (flow) of the tune. This relates to the basic pitch functions of the wider genre of *lêngkhâwm zai*, which remain true for *khawhar zai*. Figure 2.21 illustrates the relationships between the pitches:



**FIGURE 2.21** *Lêngkhâwm zai* pitch relationships.



The five main pitches should be apparent here, including the ambivalent and unstable *mi*. The slurs indicate common melodic relationships between the pitches. The melodies of *lêngkhâwm zai* primarily contain falling lines from *mi* to *doh*, with heavy use of elision between pitches. It was previously hypothesised that this had been a feature of old Mizo songs but the absence of supporting recordings meant that this could not be proved at the time (Heath 2013: 44). However, the present sample of songs sung by P.C. Thangvunga can now lend support to this hypothesis. C. Chhuanvawra also made direct comparison with some of the older songs that he remembers, highlighting that the importance of *mi* and *doh* was already present in the repertoire before the introduction of Christianity.<sup>161</sup>

For example, the second of Liandova's wife's songs (O6) offers a particularly clear precedent. This song has the smallest range of the collection, composed almost entirely of falling thirds as can be seen in Figure 2.22. In addition to its frequent appearance as a melodic motif, the fall from *mi* to *doh* is by far the most common contour for a song phrase in *khawhar zai*, appearing in K1, K3, K6, K9, K10, K11 and K12. Figure 2.23 gives the chorus from K11 as a representative example.

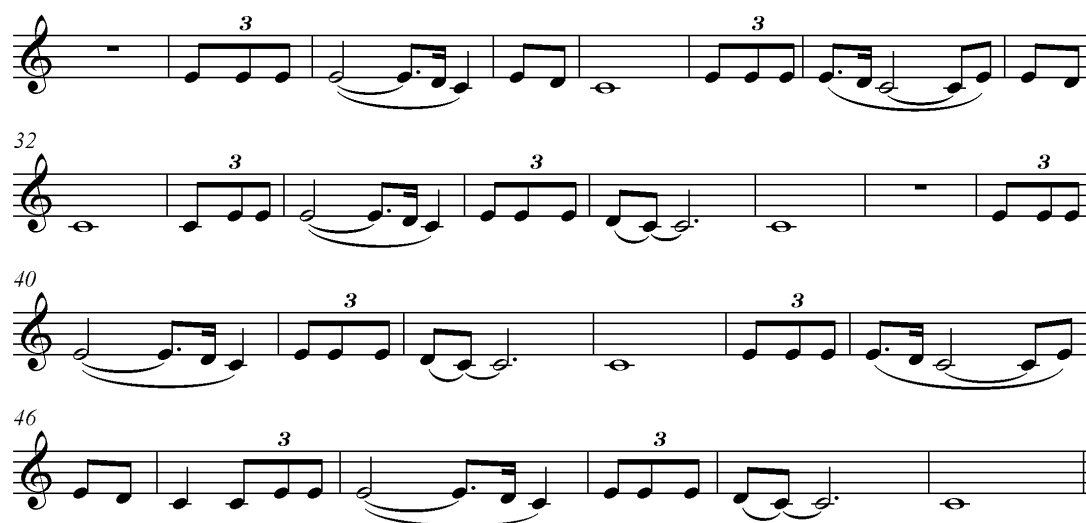


FIGURE 2.22 O6, illustrating Type A contour throughout.

<sup>161</sup> Interview, 9 April 2014.



FIGURE 2.23 K11, 'Ni tla ngai lo, Zion khawpui,' chorus.

Through application of Jeff Todd Titon's models for contour analysis (1977: 160), Heath found that there was little difference between the melodic contours of *lêngkhâwm zai* and western hymns (2013: 54). However, Titon's model categorised contours by their shape and direction, rather than by specifying their scale degrees. This would mean, for example, that a contour that rose from *doh* to *mi* would fall within the same category as a contour that rose from *doh* to *sol*. A new examination presented here of both the *khawhar zai* sample and the selection of older songs has revealed some contour types more specifically associated with the older Mizo musical style. These types are directly associated with the most important scale degrees that give shape to the contour of a musical phrase. In the present study, it has been found that there are seven contour types that each appear in at least three songs of the present sample of *khawhar zai*. Any types occurring less frequently have been excluded. The most common contour is from *mi* to *doh*,  $\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ , as illustrated in Figure 2.22 as type A. Thus, the other most prevalent types are shown below, along with the songs that contain such contours. In keeping with typographical convention, scale degrees are indicated with a circumflex, and a subscript line (<sub>1</sub>) shows that a pitch is given in the lower octave.

Type B:  $\hat{1} - \hat{3} - \hat{1}$

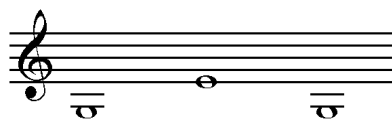


K2, K3, K6, K7, K10, K11

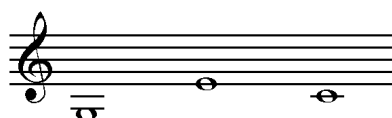
Type C:  $\hat{5}_1$  with prominence of  $\hat{6}$



K1, K2, K6, K9, K10

Type D:  $\hat{5}_1 - \hat{3} - \hat{5}_1$ 

K1, K3, K4, K8

Type E:  $\hat{5}_1 - \hat{3} - \hat{1}$ 

K1, K4, K6, K9

Type F:  $\hat{1} - \hat{5}$ 

K2, K7, K8, K10

Type G:  $\hat{5} - \hat{1}$ 

K7, K8, K10

A certain degree of liberty has of course been taken in assigning some phrases to these types; where a brief melodic inflection is included in a phrase that would otherwise be suited to a particular type, the anomalous pitch has been ignored. Assignments to contour types have therefore been made according to their 'best fit,' allowing for occasional discrepancies within the melodic phrases.

The song that demonstrates the greatest number of these contours is K10, '*Ni ropui a lo thleng dāwn ta.*' This is an unusual song, given its suitability for a wide variety of contexts and moods, performed at the *khawhar in* but also at large and joyful celebrations both inside and outside the church. Perhaps its heavy use of the most normative contours contributes to its popularity. Since it demonstrates the most types, Figure 2.24 presents it with each type highlighted.

Figure 2.24 K10 shows a musical score in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The score is divided into six systems, each starting with a measure number and a contour type label in a box:

- System 1: Measure 15, Type G
- System 2: Measure 26, Type C
- System 3: Measure 34, Type F
- System 4: Measure 42, Type C and Type F
- System 5: Measure 49, Type B

The notation includes various rhythmic values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and slurs. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

FIGURE 2.24 K10, 'Ni ropui a lo thleng dawn ta,' showing contour types.

The types not illustrated by K10 are illustrated by K1 in Figure 2.25 ('A chatuan ro luah tumin i bei zêl ang'):

Figure 2.25 K1 shows a musical score in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The score is divided into four systems, each starting with a measure number and a contour type label in a box:

- System 1: Measure 1, Type D
- System 2: Measure 16, Type A
- System 3: Measure 25, Type E and Type C
- System 4: Measure 34, Type D and Type C

The notation includes various rhythmic values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and slurs. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

FIGURE 2.25 K1, 'A chatuan ro luah tumin i bei zêl ang,' showing contour types.

The older Mizo songs also demonstrate many of these contours. Figure 2.26 shows type B in an excerpt from *Kawrnu Zai* (O4):



FIGURE 2.26 Contour type B in O4.

*Kawrnu Zai* is of particular significance because it is named after the tune of a local cicada. This is reflected in the song's narrow range limited to just a third and the repetition of phrases that contain a sustained *mi* falling to *doh*. To some extent, the fact that the song exhibits many of the core melodic characteristics of the other songs in the simplest possible form is reminiscent of Marina Roseman's influential study of the relationship between some Temiar songs with cicada tunes in Malaysia, as well as their associations with bereavement and longing (1991: 169). This is certainly worthy of further study that is beyond the scope of this thesis, since it would involve obtaining recordings of the local species of cicada. However, the song should not be considered an ancient archetypal form since the very name of the cicada is a satirical one, which suggests that its tune and the song it inspired is of relatively recent origin. 'Kawrnu' literally means 'slender woman,' but it was a term that caricatured a typical Bengali housewife (Lorrain 1940). Lorrain claims that this type of cicada was named the *kawrnu* because its tune resembled the 'shrill trilling' of such a woman. Interestingly, this relates to the Temiar context in which the cicada is also described as an 'old woman' (Roseman 1991: 99). It is therefore possible that the musical tune originated after the nineteenth-century encounter with Bengali people posted in Mizoram, or even when Mizo people began to visit Bengali regions. The song appears more intimately associated with the Mizo relationship with the 'other' than its allusion to local sounds of nature might otherwise suggest.

Returning to the sample at hand, many of the old Mizo songs have been notated with peaks of *fa* rather than *sol*, which would appear to contradict the pitch relationships for *lêngkhâwm zai* given in Figure 2.21. However, the range analysis in section 3.2 indicated that the average range actually sits between a fourth and a fifth, such that the fourth intervals of the old Mizo songs are also equivalent to 'small fifths.' As such, their equivalents to types F and G are easy to identify. The following example is from *Darþiangi Chente* (O3):

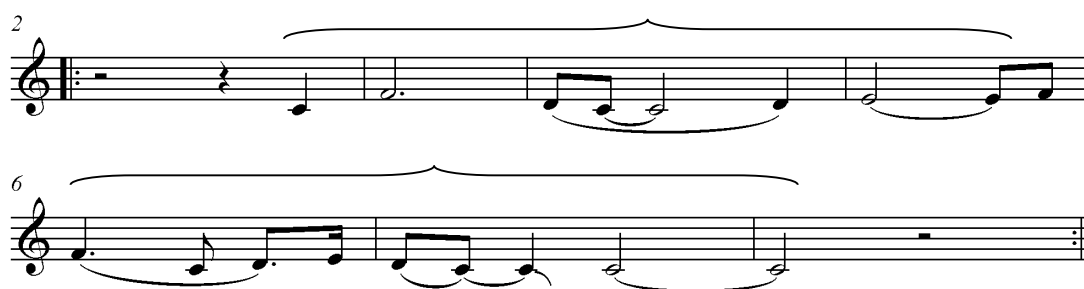


FIGURE 2.27 Contour types F and G combined in O3.

It is interesting to note that it is harder to find examples of types C, D and E. These all depend on a low *sol*, which does not appear as frequently as might be expected in the old Mizo songs. Perhaps this movement expands the range too much to suit the melodic style of the older songs, and these contours may instead be more suggestive of the western hymn influence. Chapter five will therefore give particular attention to types C, D and E. Alternatively, the fact that the older songs were composed without any awareness of western harmonic conventions should raise the issue that the transcriptions in terms of *doh* may be open to different interpretations. For example, a song notated with phrases that reach from *doh* to *fa* or *sol* could equally be interpreted as reaching from low *sol* to *doh*. An alternative transcription would reflect these other contour types. This issue reveals the inherent weaknesses of both tonic solfa and staff notation in accurately representing the melodies of the older songs, since they often demand conformity to particular harmonic or tonal expectations.

Nevertheless, this section has shown that *khawhar zai* melodies predominantly consist of a set of common contour types, many of which are also present in the old Mizo songs. The melodic contour is one aspect through which the songs can gaze to the past, especially if they take the form of types A, B, G and F.

### 3.3.2 RHYTHM

This section turns to an examination of the rhythmic aspects of *khawhar zai*, paying particular attention to the patterns that exist in the number of syllables sung per beat and their correspondences with the older repertoire. Section 3.1 showed that the metrical indications found in the *KHB* (2005) erroneously suggest compound triplet meters and rhythms that do not reflect performance practice. For example, in ‘*Rinna thla zâr ila*’ (K12), the notation in the *KHB* indicates a shift from 9/8 meter in the verse to 12/8 meter in the chorus. Not only does this notation not reflect practice, but it would also pose difficulties

for performance since the one or two drums invariably maintain a duple beat. Figure 2.28 illustrates this.



FIGURE 2.28 K12 transcribed from the tonic solfa notation printed in *KHB* (2005).



FIGURE 2.29 K12 transcribed from the tonic solfa notation printed in *MKHTB* (2007).

By contrast, in the *MKHTB* (2007), the notation is constrained to the simple duple beat of the drum, so that triplets are replaced with two semiquavers and a quaver, as illustrated in Figure 2.29. Indeed, this small rhythmic motif appears throughout the repertoire:



FIGURE 2.30 The 'triplet' rhythm.

It should be noted that the rhythm only appears in this form and never appears in retrograde or alongside a greater number of semiquavers. Figure 2.29 shows some dotted variations and in practice there is indeed some flexibility, especially when a gathered group sings together, but the basic rhythm in Figure 2.30 much better reflects practice than the triplet suggestions of the *KHB* notation. The majority of the present sample contains a high frequency of such motifs. A survey of the transcriptions in Appendix A

will confirm this. The example of K2 will suffice here, in which the motif appears sixteen times (Figure 2.31).



FIGURE 2.31 K2, 'Aw Lalpa, Davida leh a thlah arsi.'

Notable exceptions are K9 ('*Lung min l n ka thl r ning d wn lo*') by Kamlova and K13, Thanga's translation of the hymn '*Will the circle be unbroken?*' which will form an important case study in chapter five. In the latter, Thanga was naturally constrained by the original composition of Charles Gabriel's tune. By contrast, Kamlova's song demonstrates a certain originality in its deviance from the common rhythmic pattern.



FIGURE 2.32 K9, with an unusual lack of the rhythm shown at Figure 2.30.



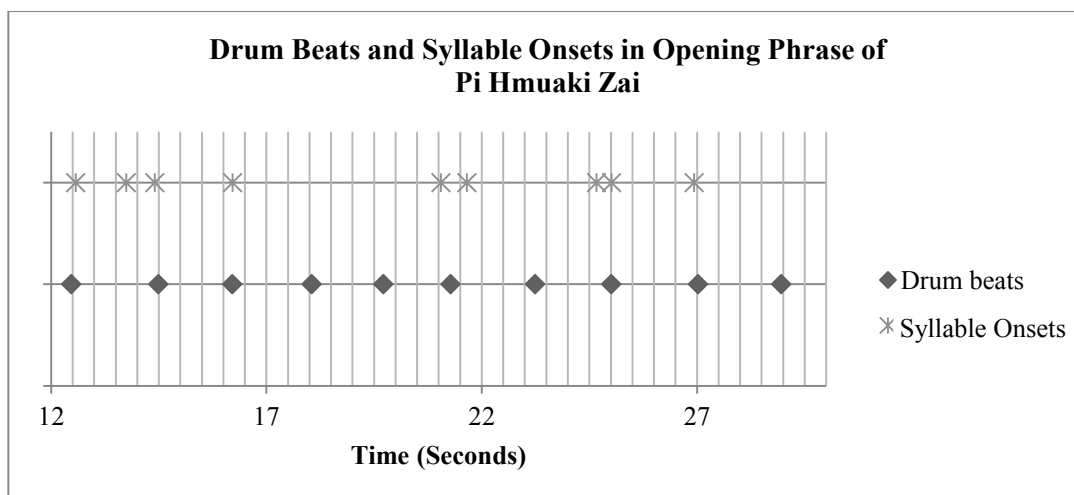
With just one exception, the rhythm is absent from song. In the case where it appears it is a decorative slur, the three pitches providing melismas to a single syllable of the text. The decoration does not appear in the notation (Figure 2.33), only the practice, which suggests that singers have gradually introduced it, perhaps finding the rhythm of the song too pedestrian without some allusion to the semiquaver motif.



FIGURE 2.33 Opening line of K9 as notated in *MKHTB* (2007).

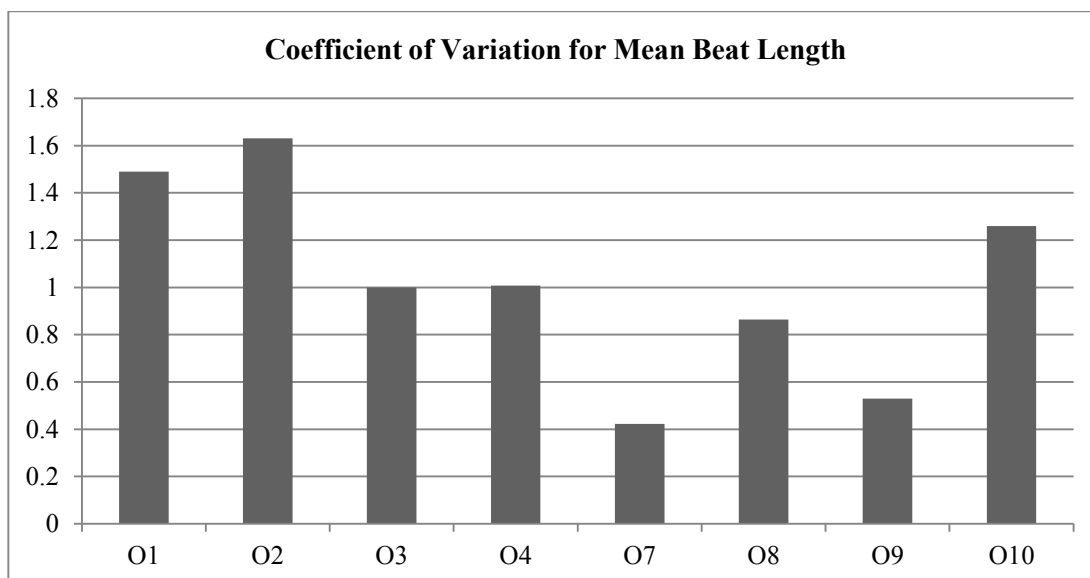
With the exception of these two songs, the frequency of the short rhythmic motif given in Figure 2.30 suggests that the majority of beats (without the subdivided beat of the second drum) contain either three, two or one syllables. Indeed, the average number of syllables per beat in the present sample of *khawhar zai* is calculated to be only 1.30, which supports the conclusion that the songs are dominated by triplet (in the form given in Figure 2.30) and single syllable beats.

A comparison of the recordings in the ‘Khawhar Zai Sample’ folder of DVD 1 with those in the folder of ‘Old Mizo Songs,’ will show that there is a great metrical disparity between the old songs and *khawhar zai*. Whereas *khawhar zai* maintains a steady beat with the pulse of the drum, P.C. Thangvunga’s performances seemed to display a stylistic tendency to let the text guide the drum-beats without any evident regard for a pulse. This demonstrates a very different relationship with the drum. The following examples show the way in which the drum coincides with syllable patterns without exhibiting consistent internal timing in P.C. Thangvunga’s performances:



**FIGURE 2.34** Chart showing alignment of drum-beats and syllable onsets in O7, 'Pi Hmuaki (Ngente) Zai.'

This example shows a pattern replicated in most of the sample, in which the drum-beat has a closer relationship with the text than with the meter. The time between each drum-beat is highly variable, and the fact that there is often only one syllable per beat means standard methods of transcription are particularly inadequate. Calculating the coefficient of variation from the mean beat length in each of the songs can quantify this variability. Figure 2.35 illustrates this, but excludes songs O5 and O6 because they do contain distinct long-short patterns in the beating that would skew the results:



**FIGURE 2.35** Coefficient of variation from mean beat length in old Mizo songs.

With a mean standard deviation of 0.5 seconds, the length of beats, even when assigned to a single syllable, can vary by about half a second. The data shown in Figure 2.35 certainly show a standard deviation that is far greater than is usually expected in metrical hymn singing. In hymns, including

*khawhar zai*, where a measure has a fixed length determined by the meter or pulse, maintained by the drums, there would be almost no deviation at all.

However, in this very difference lies a deeper similarity in the emphasis on maintaining the appropriate number of syllables per beat. It can be seen in the videos that P.C. Thangvunga visibly appears to wait for certain words to be sung before beating the drum, in a way that regulates the number of syllables sung rather than their melodic duration. There may be some suggestions of the dominant metrical patterns of *khawhar zai* found in the sample of older songs. Indeed, an analysis of the number of syllables per beat in these older songs shows that they do correspond to the average (1.30) calculated at Figure 2.35 for *khawhar zai*.

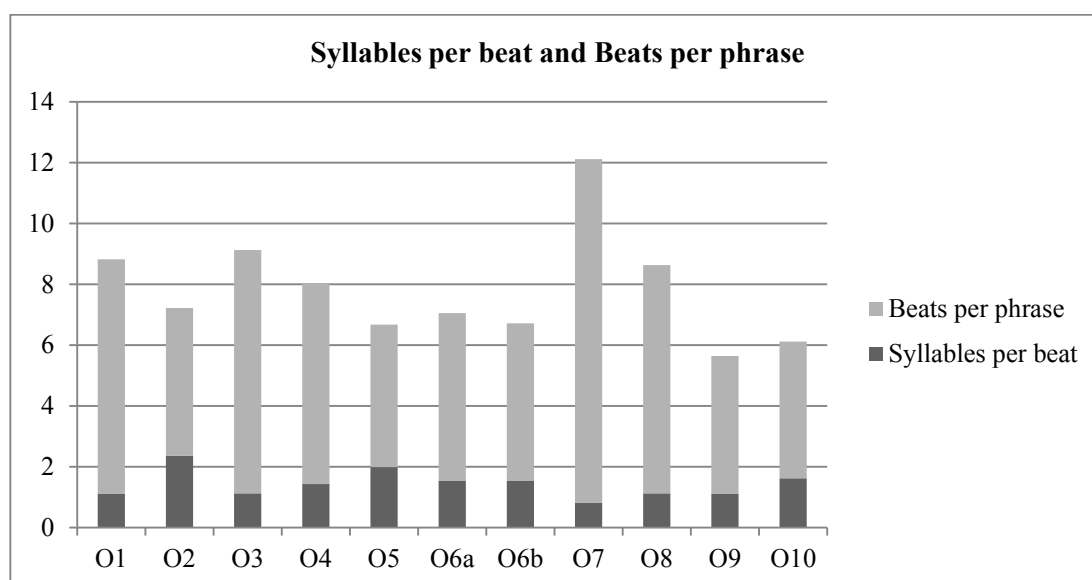


FIGURE 2.36 Syllables per beat and beats per phrase of old Mizo songs.<sup>162</sup>

As found in *khawhar zai*, the number of syllables per beat is very low, and rarely more than two. An examination of the transcriptions suggests that they also share the same preference for the ‘triplet’ rhythm given at Figure 2.30. One pattern found in several songs of the older sample is 3-1-3-1: Three syllables in a bar, followed by one syllable in a bar, as is exemplified in the beginning of *Kawrnru Zai* (O4), in Figure 2.37:

<sup>162</sup> O6a and O6b refer to the two songs that are contained within O6.

32 3 1 3 1

Run-tui thle- hriat râl han kai ing e,

38 3 1 3 1

then lai har e, Lal-van-chhing pui

FIGURE 2.37 O4, exhibiting the 3-1-3-1 pattern.<sup>163</sup>

Although it is not the case across the sample, it is clear that in cases such as O2, O3 and O7, the very low number of syllables per beat prolongs the phrase so that there are more beats per phrase. Conversely, songs with a higher number of syllables per beat have shorter phrases, with fewer beats. This is evident in O1, O5 and O10 and is apparent in the graph given at Figure 2.36.

Ka ngen - te khua, khua nun nuam a kha,

FIGURE 2.38 O7, 'Pi Hmuaki (Ngente) Zai,' opening phrase.<sup>164</sup>

For example, the first line of *Pi Hmuaki (Ngente) Zai* (O7) given in Figure 2.38, shows only one or two syllables per beat and eleven beats for a line of nine syllables. This contrasts with *Lianchhiari Zai* (O5), Figure 2.39, which includes beats for three and six syllables, and a total of six beats for twelve syllables.

7 Ka nu e cher-chhan chhung, ka pa e tluang za chhawn,

FIGURE 2.39 O5, 'Lianchhiari Zai,' opening phrase.<sup>165</sup>

Despite the differences between the metrical pulse given by the drum in *khawhar zai* and the older songs, some common rhythmic features remain latent in *khawhar zai*, which seem to look back to the

<sup>163</sup> The text may be translated, 'Just as the Runtui river meanders, so it is hard to take leave of each other, Lalvanchhingpuii...'

<sup>164</sup> The text may be translated, 'The village of Ngente, where life is so pleasant.'

<sup>165</sup> The text may be translated, 'My mother is reliable and my father is wise.'

older song style. In particular, the preference for only one or three syllables per beat (but rarely two) continues to dominate, and is especially manifested in a rhythmic motif of two semiquavers followed by a quaver. This motif's consistent application across both samples in lieu of other possible rhythms is suggestive of its important role in giving the melodies a character that is recognisably Mizo. The section can conclude by suggesting that these syllable-beat relationships have implications for phrase construction and larger-scale aspects of the melodies, and the following section will explore this under the term 'coherence.'

### 3.3.3 COHERENCE

The rhythmic aspect of the melody discussed in section 3.3.2 is important, since it contributes to the coherent identity of the song. Devoid of the melismatic slurs and primarily following the text, nearly every line of the verse of K2 (*'Aw Lalpa, Davida leh a thlah Arsi'*) follows the rhythms shown in Figure 2.40:

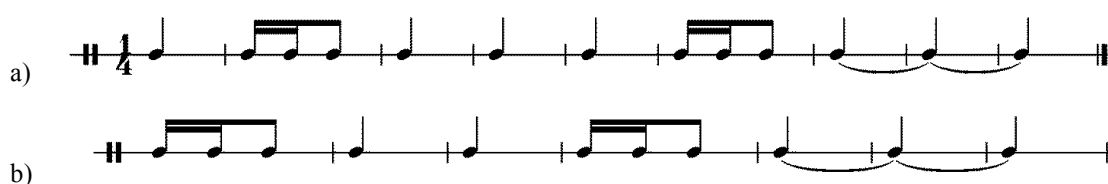


FIGURE 2.40 a) K2 verse rhythm b) K2 chorus rhythm without initial 'Aw.'

There are eleven syllables in each line, sung to eight drum-beats, which another drum usually subdivides with a weaker beat into sixteen beats. In the chorus, the same pattern is replicated but with some diminution due to the reduced number of syllables. The basic pattern for this song seems to be a beat with one syllable and a beat with three syllables at the beginning of a line, and a reflected (or retrograde) pattern of a beat with three syllables and a beat with one syllable at the end. One syllable per beat is the general rule for the beats in the middle of the lines, but the number of beats depends on the length of the line.

The first line of the chorus of this song deviates from the 'b' rhythm given in Figure 2.40 because it begins with the word 'Aw' (Oh). This gives it an additional beat compared with its other lines, but also makes it rhythmically the same as the lines of the verse. Rather than an irregularity, it appears to be a device that unites the verse with the chorus:

ang - in a liam a, Thih lui ka-mah zai - in i hming ka fak ang.

<sup>50</sup> Aw Lal-pa, zai - in i hming ka fak ang, Khaw-vè-la i siam zawnz zawnz zai se;—

FIGURE 2.41 K2, end of verse and beginning of chorus.<sup>166</sup>

Heath suggested that ‘Aw’ has been an important evocative term in Mizo singing (2013: 51), particularly in the priestly chants documented by Shakespear (1912) and Saiaithanga (1981). This case provides further evidence of the notion. It appears prevalently in other examples from the present sample, not only at the beginning of the chorus but interspersed within and at the end of lines. The two choruses here illustrate the popularity of the term:

*Aw, hlimna ram i pan ang u,  
Chawlh hlenna tûr;  
Aw, ka ngai e, thente zawnz  
Kimna tûr ram khi.<sup>167</sup>*

Oh, let’s keep pressing on to the land of joy,  
For the place of eternal rest;  
Oh, how I miss all those who have gone  
The land up there where we will be together.

*Aw, chêng rêng la Lal Isu, kan hnênah,  
Min awmpui la khawhar riangvai fate;  
I hmêlah lâwmna a awm si,  
Ka ngai tâwp thei lo’ng che.<sup>168</sup>*

Oh, always remain, Lord Jesus, beside us,  
Remain with us, the abandoned lonely children;  
In your face there is joy,  
I will not be able to stop longing for you.

Though not a part of the texts of the older Mizo songs, many examples from DVD 1 (‘Old Mizo Songs’) show P.C. Thangvunga inserting either ‘Aw’ or ‘Ah’ at the beginning of several phrases. This is most apparent at the beginning of O1, *Lumtui – Chawngchen Zai*. It is also a word often used in conversational speech that exhorts people to common action or agreement, reflecting its use in

<sup>166</sup> The text given here may be translated, ‘By the bank of the river of death I will sing praises to your name. Oh Lord, I will sing praises to your name, Let all creation sing your praise.’

<sup>167</sup> From K1.

<sup>168</sup> From K3.

congregational singing. It does seem to be a common exclamation later integrated into the composed texts of *khawhar zai*.

Returning to the rhythmic aspect of coherence introduced through K2, it appears that the same rhythmic patterns recur throughout a song, which contribute to its melodic cohesion. Figure 2.42 shows a particularly common pattern:

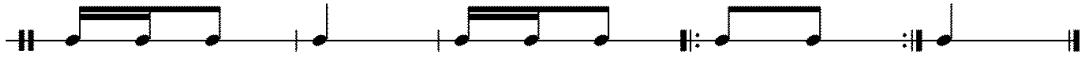


FIGURE 2.42 The basic model of 3-1-3-2-1 rhythm.

The bar marked by repeat signs is occasionally repeated if augmentation is required to fit the text, although in K4 (Figure 2.44) it is the second bar that repeats. Figures 2.43-2.45 shows three examples of the application of this rhythm. The numbers in boxes correspond to the syllables per beat, a shorthand expression introduced in section 3.3.2.



FIGURE 2.43 K3, ‘I hmangaihna zâra lâwma inkhâwm hnute.’

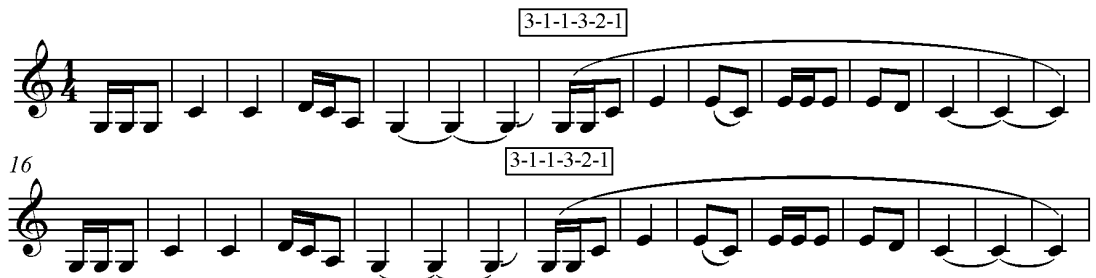


FIGURE 2.44 K4, ‘Ka dam lai thlpuai a râl hunin,’ verse.



FIGURE 2.45 K11, 'Ni tla ngai lo, Zion khawpui,' first three lines.

These three examples show that even the phrases that do not fit the highlighted model are close variants. The melodic and rhythmic unity between phrases in a song is characteristic of *khawhar zai*, and the majority of songs in the present sample also demonstrate a close relationship between the melody of the verse and the chorus, the latter of which often appear to be a variant of the former.

The song demonstrating the closest relationship between the verse and the chorus is 'Ni tla ngai lo, Zion khawpui,' K11. Here, the notation is identical for the verse and chorus. However, variation does exist in performance practice, as also noted by some experts such as Lalromawia during a drum workshop held in Tanhril.<sup>169</sup> Due to the natural spoken contour of the opening words of the second verse, there are adjustments to the melody that lead it to be somewhat different from the unchanging chorus. Figure 2.46 demonstrates this by comparing the opening to each of the three verses:



FIGURE 2.46 K11, opening to each of the three verses.<sup>170</sup>

The most notable change, however, is the augmentation in the final verse to allow for extra syllables in the text, as shown in Figure 2.47:

<sup>169</sup> 28 March 2014.

<sup>170</sup> The opening words to each verse may be translated 'The sun never sets...', 'Its beauty...' and 'Saved loved ones...'



24

1.Puan ro - pui sin - in an leng tlan sa - te,  
2.Ka thla - rau, chu ram mawlh chu zawng ve la,

16

3.Thi - se - nin min sil la, Thla - rau - vin min hruai se,

FIGURE 2.47 Variations within K9, 'Lung min lèn ka thlîr ning dâwn lo.'<sup>171</sup>

Another example is K1 in which the fourth verse contains a longer line of text, which requires an augmentation of the melody:

Lung-ngaih - na a lo len lai hian;

Then tawh loh - na ram min siam - sak vang in,

FIGURE 2.48 The first stanza of K1, 'A chatuan ro luah tumin i bei zêl ang,' compared with the fourth stanza.<sup>172</sup>

These augmentations are not included in any notations or transcriptions, but are a received pattern of performance demonstrated in numerous recordings from recent fieldwork as well as popular gospel recordings.<sup>173</sup> It is probably a remnant of the early process of composition described by Lalsangkima Pachuau who explains the emergence of the tune of *lêngkhâwm zai* as a more collaborative effort than is often acknowledged. Though the individual composers have certainly left their deserved legacy, he recognises that it was a movement of the people that led to their acceptance and development (2002: 133):

<sup>171</sup> The top line gives text from the third lines of the first two verses. Their translations are 'Those who wear the robes of glory gather there,' and 'By the blood it has opened, the land of freedom.' The third line of the third and final stanza is translated 'Saviour, I fear I will not be able to reach it.'

<sup>172</sup> The top line gives text from the second line of the first verse, which may be translated, 'When sorrows come.' The second line of the fourth stanza is translated, 'He is preparing a land where there will be no more separation.'

<sup>173</sup> See the song performed by several gospel artists including Michael V.L. Rema, Pensy B. and Ruotmawi. See the 'Online Resources' section of the bibliography for video links.

As an easeful means of expressing spiritual joy or ecstasy, the songs were repeated over and over again... the tune emerged from the community's heart and expressed its deepest feelings... it was not the writers alone who were involved in devising the new tune, but also the people who sang the songs.

However, most songs feature melodic augmentation as a fixed part of the composition as found notated in the books. Examples from the present sample include K3, K4 and K7. In K7 (Figure 2.49), phrases A, C and D are all augmented in the chorus (indicated by +), and phrase B is also the subject of melodic variation (indicated by 'a').

Figure 2.49 shows a musical score in 4/4 time, consisting of five staves. The first staff (measures 1-12) contains phrases A and B. The second staff (measures 13-24) contains phrases C and D. The third staff (measures 25-35) contains phrases A+ and Ba. The fourth staff (measures 36-43) contains phrase C+. The fifth staff (measures 44-51) contains phrase D+. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

FIGURE 2.49 Variations within K7, 'Ka taksa lungngai mah sela.'

Figure 2.50 shows a musical score in 4/4 time, consisting of four staves. The first staff (measures 1-12) is the same as in Figure 2.49. The second staff (measures 13-24) is the same as in Figure 2.49. The third staff (measures 25-33) is the same as in Figure 2.49. The fourth staff (measures 34-41) is the same as in Figure 2.49. Arrows indicate melodic variations: one arrow points from measure 13 of the second staff to measure 25 of the third staff; another arrow points from measure 13 of the second staff to measure 34 of the fourth staff; a third arrow points from measure 25 of the third staff to measure 34 of the fourth staff; and a fourth arrow points from measure 34 of the fourth staff to measure 41 of the fourth staff. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

FIGURE 2.50 Variations within K8, 'Khawvêl chhuahsan ila.'

Other songs display less recognisable augmentation, but demonstrate the close relationship between the verse and chorus through other forms of variation and repetition. These include K1, K2, K8 and K12. The arrows in K8, Figure 2.50, indicate the corresponding phrases in the verse that appear in the chorus with some modification and taken outside of the context of their original phrases.

Not all songs contain this melodic unity between the verse and chorus; chapter five will discuss those that display greater variation. However, those mentioned here bear a close melodic relationship with the old Mizo songs, which contain little, if any, distinction between verses and chorus, the emphasis instead being on two or three lines with some phrases that are repeated in performance. This latter form lends itself to the close variation and augmentation found in the majority of the *khawhar zai* introduced here.

For example, the single stanza of *Lianchhiari Zai* (O5) (Figure 2.51), consisting of the text of a questioning phrase followed by a responding phrase, is shown to contain unsystematic repetition of clauses in the last three lines of the transcription, including the (possibly errant) introduction of words from another stanza (*'Cherbela ningzu dawn'*). The musical phrase for *'ka pa e'* is repeated for its parallel phrase at *'sairual e,'* with a minor change in duration, and this coherence is maintained throughout the series of repetitions. *'Kan si lo'* in the third line of transcription can also be considered an abbreviation of the music for *'Ka kungpuiah min zawt,'* highlighting just the pivotal pitches but retaining the melodic reference.

While the initial melody for the first phrase seems anomalous, the B flat pitch could be part of P.C. Thangvunga's ambiguous vocal style in beginning the song; instead, the melody seems to be the basis on which the consequent phrase is built. Rhythmically it is the same as *'Ka kungpuiah'* and similar to *'ka pa e,'* and melodically it is a retrograde of the *'ka pa e'* consequent phrase. Therefore, there is a musical relationship between all the song's phrases. This lends it coherence, negating any musical perception of distinct verses, stanzas, phrases and repetitions.

7 Ka nu e cher-chhan chhung, ka pa e tluang za chhawn, Ka

12 kung-pui-ah min zawt, sai-rual e kan si lo.

17 Kan si lo, sai-rual e kan si lo. Cher-be - la ning-zu

dawn, sai-rual e kan si lo.

FIGURE 2.51 O5, 'Lianchhiari Zai.'<sup>174</sup>

It is clear that by maintaining melodic and rhythmic coherence in this way, the strophic appearance of the published texts of *khawhar zai*, resembling western hymns, is rendered musically in a manner more reminiscent of the older Mizo songs. In many aspects of the melody, *khawhar zai* is able to encourage its singers to gaze towards the past. The section has illustrated this by paying particular attention to the contour, rhythm and coherence of the melodies.

### 3.4 ZAIKHÂWM AS A MIZO TRADITION OF SINGING TOGETHER

Singing together as is practised in the *khawhar in* seems to have been a practice before Christianity, such that the musical setting of the repertoire is also an aspect in which it retrospectively gazes to the past. Singing together is termed *zaikhâwm* in Mizo, and this section will explore the way in which *khawhar zai* reinforces the localised significance of the practice, whereas chapter five will show how *khawhar zai* also represents *zaikhâwm* as a practice reminiscent of some Victorian practices with which the missionaries will have been familiar.

The introduction in section 1.1 made the point that composers such as Patea were not composing out of a period of 'silence' but were responding to traditions of the past that had been revived and indeed maintained by some groups, especially those who were not Christians. Songs in the style that P.C. Thangvunga remembers continued to be composed into the early twentieth century, such as those by

<sup>174</sup> An approximate translation of the text in this extract is as follows: 'My mother is reliable and my father is wise; people consult him and we are very wealthy.'

Awithangpa and Saikuti for example, as well as the popular love songs of *leihkapui zai*.<sup>175</sup> It is therefore clear that the early Christian composers were regularly exposed to the musical style that had prevailed before Christianity. In particular, one factor that led to the liberty that composers felt in being able to return retrospectively to past musical idioms, was the emergence of a song called *puma zai*. Soon after the first revival, which celebrated Christian eschatological themes of redemption and heaven, *puma zai* sought to return to Mizo hope in Mizo terms by popularising a new song, which spread as fast as the revival hymns but belonged to the old tradition. The origins of *puma zai* are quite disputed; R.L. Thanmawia mentions some theories that backdate it to the mid nineteenth century (Synod Music Committee 2013: 4), but Lal Luangliana Khiangte, in his biography of his grandfather Liangkhaia, claims that Liangkhaia discovered the tune as a young man when collecting taxes in Khawruhlian before he was a Christian. He is said to have brought the tune home and composed lyrics to the tune, each line ending in the memorable '*puma*'<sup>176</sup> (2013a: 3). As others also composed new words, it became popular at drinking times. It is still preserved in the form known as *tlanglam zai* at cultural displays along with the dance *chheih lam*. Some chiefs such as Lalzika of Liangkhaia's village threw the *Aih* ceremony in its honour. One of the surviving verses records this event:

For our dance was killed a large mithun,<sup>177</sup> *puma*,  
Fame spread wide, father of Lalbawrhsap, the handsome chief.

Lalbawrhsap was the daughter of Lalzika, which serves as evidence at least of the popularity of the song in Liangkhaia's village (Hluna and Tochwawng in Ibid: 53). This story corresponds to the known mode of song dissemination, which was predominantly by tune with new words composed in different villages. The two-line stanza also conformed to Mizo song forms, although the *tlanglam zai* form later expanded into three or four lines. Lalsangkima Pachuau writes of the song that (2002: 119):

*Puma zai* became a subtle way of venting the socio-psychological pain and tension the society was suffering under the new foreign rule. The British's conquest severely wounded the people's pride. The loss of their independence was an assault to their cultural identity and sense of selfhood.

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<sup>175</sup> Interviews with Rochungnunga, 7 February 2014 and C. Chhuanvawra, 9 April 2014.

<sup>176</sup> *Puma* does not have a specific meaning.

<sup>177</sup> A type of gayal.

Paying less attention to the colonial factors influencing the song, Lloyd understood *puma zai* almost as a parody of the revivals, with all the additional physical manifestations that the enthusiastic singing brought (1991: 135). It certainly led to a revival of the older *zaikhâwm* tradition of singing together with drink in the former style that *khawhar zai* came to emulate, regardless of whether it is considered to be a revival or a continuity of tradition. In particular, many regard it as the trigger for the eventual introduction of the drum and dancing into Christian singing by 1919. The drum was a controversial introduction, Lloyd describing it as ‘felt as much as it was heard’ (1986: 211) and discouraged on the mission compounds,<sup>178</sup> but the previous section showed that drums had also played an important role in older songs, albeit with a less metrical style.

*Zaikhâwm* with drum accompaniment may have been new to the church, but it was not new to Mizo society, as the phenomenon of *puma zai* and the analysis of older songs above have indicated. Moreover, it was not new to times of death. *Khawhar zai* therefore offered a repertoire that enabled Christians to resume the important practice of singing together with a drum on the occasion of death and remembrance of the dead. An elderly scholar from Ramzotlang in Lunglei, F. Liangchhinga, claims that the first generation of Christians in his village would tell him that they had been deprived of any appropriate songs with which to mourn the dead until they began to receive the new repertoire in 1922.<sup>179</sup> They considered *khawhar zai* to represent a restoration of a valuable musical tradition to the new communities of Christians. It is therefore important to consider what kind of singing had previously been practised.

Songs had formed a part of the feasts and festivals for the dead. R.L. Thanmawia indicates that music was a part of the memorial ceremonies, when the *talhkhuang* (a large version of the leisurely instrument for girls, the *bengbung*) would be played. It would not be played anywhere except at the *lungdawh* memorial platform or stone, usually on the occasion of its erection. The instrument, which is now obsolete, was made of hollow reed pieces ‘played by string with a wooden hammer,’ and may thus be identified as a percussion idiophone resembling a xylophone (1998: 26). At the annual *Mîm Kût* festival, the older generation would sing songs of death accompanied by the requisite rice beer, and women

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<sup>178</sup> See Roberts (2001: 109) and Chapman (18 December 1931). Both missionaries note the absence of drums in the mission churches.

<sup>179</sup> Interview, 16 May 2014.

would weep loudly about their bereavements (Sangkima 1992: 105<sup>180</sup>). They would mourn together for all the people who had died since the last *Mîm Kût*. R.L. Thanmawia suggests that the relative absence of hope associated with death (compared to that associated with life, as discussed in chapter two), may be one reason for the many lamentations composed for the dead whose texts survive in collections of Mizo literature (1998: 49). The existence of a repertoire of songs for lamenting the dead at *Mîm Kût* makes it highly probable that these songs also played a role at times of death.

Today, however, there is divided opinion, and there may well have been regional differences, as to the extent to which singing took place on the occasion of death. Most interviewees agreed that individual lamentations in the form of *ṭah hla* were composed and sung. They were spontaneous poems, remembered and documented at a later date. Margaret Zama narrated in an interview incidents of *ṭah hla* among her own relatives:<sup>181</sup>

And my grandfather, he's a *pasaltha*, he shot so many tigers and he was, you know, his ancestors also were, but when they came to that dead body he wept in a loud voice, calling out their names, their full names, even my sisters, over my sisters, calling out their full names, saying, 'You are now going out, you are now proceeding to Mitthi, to Pialrâl and all that, to the abode of the dead, don't forget, don't forget us.'

In contrast to *ṭah hla*, *Laltheri zai*, *Darpawngi zai* and *thuthmun zai* are examples of composed *khawhar zai* existing before Christianity. Laltheri composed a lament for her lover who had been murdered by her disapproving male relatives and F. Lianchhinga recalls the singing of her song at other funerals.<sup>182</sup>

R. Thangvunga of Mizoram University has provided the following examples with translations:

*Ka chun leh zua suihlung in mawl lua e,  
Kan sumtualah Thangdang thlunglu hawihte'n in tar le!*

How unfeeling can you be, parents mine,  
To dress our courtyard with the head of my Thangdang!

*Rauthla lengin kan run khuai ang a vèl,  
Chhunrawl ring lo, ka nu, sawmfang a belin hlui rawh.*

A spirit like a bee circles our house,

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<sup>180</sup> See also Zairema 2009.

<sup>181</sup> Interview, 26 March 2014.

<sup>182</sup> Interview, 16 May 2014.

A starved soul, mother, give it the pot of rice.<sup>183</sup>

Similarly, Darpawngi composed several songs as she mourned the death of her son, which became popular among other grieving parents (Lalthangliana 2004: 54-55):

A bereaved mother pines for her dead:  
 Death comes along every hill,  
 Stopp'd by our ill-fated home,  
 Dragged my sweet one by the arm.<sup>184</sup>

*Thuthmun zai* were composed in response to the many deaths that came as a result of the *thingpui tam* famine, supposedly in the sixteenth century before the Mizo people reached their present location in the Lushai Hills (Ibid: 20-21<sup>185</sup>). *Chawngchen zai* (of which O1 and O9 are examples) were associated with the *thangchhuah* feasts that mourned and honoured the dead. These formed part of the necessary ritual stages by which a person could attain *thangchhuah* status and hope to access Pialrâl. Since *zai* originally referred to the tune that became disseminated and popularised, these *zai* became communal activities, even if they had originally been composed as individual laments.

An elderly interviewee, C. Thangvunga, is quite clear about his own memory of non-Christians in the village of Chhipphir singing with alcohol, not necessarily while the body was in the home or at the burial, but certainly during the bereavement period.<sup>186</sup> He remembers people lamenting rather than singing at moments immediately following a death. In 1952 in the nearby Zote village, he remembers the death of a young man, where drunken people had gathered at the home after the burial. They would sing very slowly, thinking of Mitthi Khua:

In the old times when they used to sing, when they used to go to *khawhar in*, they would not go back early. Even when they used to drink, they would not go back before it got dark.

He claims that the commitment to staying late was even stronger in the past than it is today, when older people are more inclined to go home while it is the younger generation who stay late.<sup>187</sup> C.L. Hminga also remembers a time when there were still non-Christians in his village. There would be a burial without any additional rites, and back at the house, the condolence gathering would involve singing and

<sup>183</sup> Texts and translations from R. Thangvunga 2001, unpaginated.

<sup>184</sup> Texts and translations from Thanmawia 2001, unpaginated.

<sup>185</sup> See also Hluna and Tochwawng in Kiangte 2013b: 52.

<sup>186</sup> This was affirmed in interviews with Saidâwla, of the same village, 5 May 2014, R. Lawmzuala of Sethlun, 8 May 2014 and also C.L. Bika, 9 May 2014.

<sup>187</sup> Interview, 4 May 2014.



drinking beer, which later became replaced with tea. Older songs were sung with one drum, and like C. Thangvunga he feels that the singing was even slower than it is today.<sup>188</sup>

Perhaps the best evidence for the practice of singing songs of bereavement on the occasion of death is the story behind one of the earliest songs from the present sample of *khawhar zai*. Saihnûna's output is often associated with greater misery than Patea's. His eagerness to reach the 'happy land' to which he gazed was expressed in many of his songs, perhaps most explicitly in '*Khawvêl chhuahsan ila*' (K8), whose opening line urges its singers to abandon the present earth. Saihnûna composed this song based on a lamenting prayer composed by a younger relative intended to comfort Sailianthangi of Chhialang who lost her husband Daikunga. Her relatives were concerned by the depth of her grief, which compelled her to weep at his grave every day. They wrote down the prayer, which calls upon God to see the sadness of bereavement on the present earth, and gave it to Saihnûna so that he could form it into a song (Lalrâwna 2011: 10).

Among the troubles described on earth is the pain of bereavement, and in addition to the mention of weeping elsewhere in the song, the last two verses make specific mention of the hope that heaven will be a place where there will be no more bereavement. It is important to note that whereas the western hymns promote heaven as a place where there will be no more death, Saihnûna aspires more specifically for a place where there will be no more death of others. By raising the significance of bereavement, the song becomes eminently suitable for use in the context of the *khawhar in*, able to comfort the mourners with the promise that they will no longer need to mourn in heaven:

*Thihna hian thian min then fo thîn, i ram thlen hma hi zawng.*

Death often separates us from our friends, until we reach your land.

*Lal Imanuela khawpui Zion-ah chuan, thenna rêng a awm lo.*

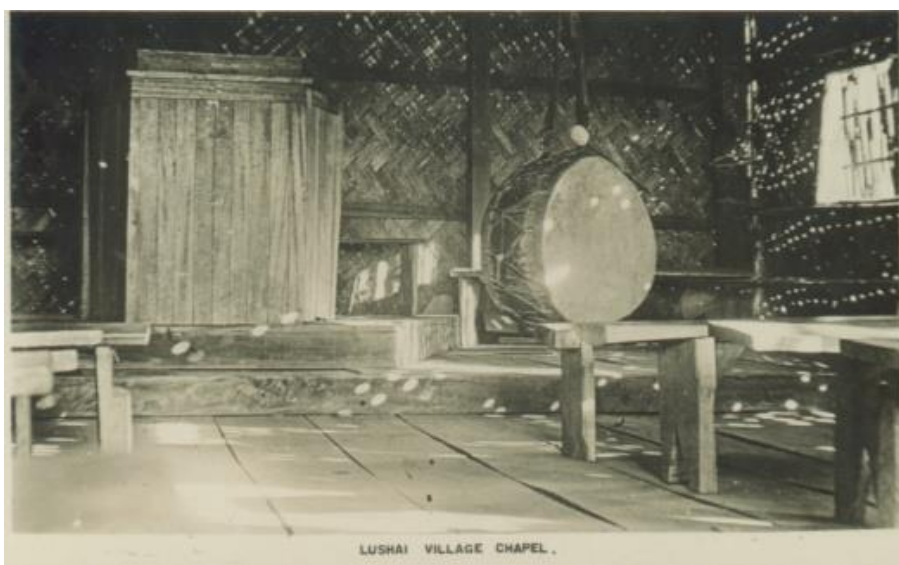
In Zion, the city of Lord Immanuel, there is never any separation.

That this song was commissioned by a bereaved family and clearly composed with the bereavement context in mind shows that it certainly was not unheard of for songs to be composed on such occasions.

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<sup>188</sup> Interview, 22 April 2014.

However, the varying accounts from interviewees suggest that the particular style of singing together at times of death, or in wider *zaikhâwm* contexts, depended on each village or locality.



LUSHAI VILLAGE CHAPEL.



**FIGURE 2.52** Two early pictures of drums in churches, c. 1924<sup>189</sup> and c. 1929<sup>190</sup> respectively.

One way in which this local variation remains evident today is in the use of the drum. Both Saikhûma (2005) and C. Thanseia<sup>191</sup> point out the fact that there can be local differences in the way in which the drum is used. The number of drums used (one or two) can vary as well as their volume and tempo. Where two drums are used, they are usually of the same style, but one is about twice the size of the other. They will be any combination of the three sizes of drum available: the *khuangpui* (largest), *khuanglai* (medium) or *khuangte* (smallest). They are cylindrical drums, played on one side with a beater, while the free hand occasionally dampens the other side. The *khuangpui* or *khuanglai* rests on a simple stand, whereas the *khuangte* might sometimes be held and balanced on the thigh of the seated drummer (*khuangpu*). The practice of suspending the drums as illustrated in Figure 2.52 is now obsolete. A few villages, such as Khawbung, maintain the tradition of using one drum and numerous interviewees from other localities agreed that the use of one drum was more authentic.<sup>192</sup> Although C. Thanseia has spent much of his life training church musicians, especially those who play the drum, and has personal views regarding how many drums should be used and how they should be played, he accepts that ‘it depends on the area.’ He particularly notes that in some regions where two drums are used, the larger drum leads while the smaller drum plays the subdivisions, whereas in other regions the roles are reversed.

It is clear that there are many and conflicting traditions associated with *khawhar zai* practice confined to different localities and regions. Rather than attempt to reconcile these, it is important to recognise, firstly, that established traditions do exist for different areas, and thus the way in which drums are played and used carries a great deal of capital in the sustenance of collective memory and nostalgia for the past. The fact that it matters how many drums are played and how fast and loudly they are beaten indicates that it is considered important by community members to maintain the style of their own locality. Secondly, the fact that these traditions are not consistent throughout Mizoram supports Joy Pachuau’s theory that Mizo traditions relating to death are usually confined to and contribute to the

<sup>189</sup> From Lewis, *Llythyrâu O Lushai*, published following his 1924 visit.

<sup>190</sup> Photo from the visit of Mr. Angus in 1929, collection held in the Angus Archives, Oxford: IN/5/36/40.

<sup>191</sup> Interview, 25 April 2014.

<sup>192</sup> Interviews, for example with C. Thanseia, 25 April 2014. The addition of the second drum is probably due to the fact that the prevalent use of two drums in church worship for *lêngkhâwm zai* gave rise to an expectation that the similar repertoire of *khawhar zai* also needed two drums.

establishment of the identity of the *veng*, the locality in which the death takes place (2014). Communities attempt to use the drum to sustain their collective memory of past traditions not of the Mizo people as a whole, but of the past practices of their own *veng* or village. This reinforces the point that *khawhar zai* is a highly localised practice that assists in the retrospective memory of past traditions.

In addition to the drum, the other important feature of the singing of *khawhar zai* is the inclusion of a woman who chants the next line of each song in advance. Referred to as the *hla hriltu* (song proclaimer), she is often equipped with a microphone and can have a significant impact on the mood of the event. Her role is certainly one that connects contemporary *khawhar zai* to past traditions. In the recordings made with P.C. Thangvunga, his companion also read out the words in advance of P.C. Thangvunga singing them. Sometimes, P.C. Thangvunga chanted the line himself before singing, particularly when dissatisfied with his companion's attempts.

The *hla hriltu* principle is evidently not new to Mizo singing, although there are significant differences today. There can be no certainty about whether the person chanting the words was always of a particular gender or age, but it can be inferred from P.C. Thangvunga's context that older men may have been more suited to the role in the past, whereas in modern Mizo contexts the *hla hriltu* is invariably a younger woman. The man reading the words in the videos does so in a remarkably reticent and discreet manner, often in deference to P.C. Thangvunga. Although his function is the same, the style is quite unlike what happens in homes of bereavement today, in which the chanting with a microphone can often dominate the sound of the singing. As such, some interviewees object to her presence since she can be considered a distraction if her voice is too loud; perhaps this is another feature that depends on local attitudes and practices.<sup>193</sup> Of course, before the introduction of microphones, there would have been no amplification and there are some villages such as Khawbung where the voice of the *hla hriltu* remains unamplified.

The role of the *hla hriltu* is not only to remind singers of the words but also to indicate repetitions of verses. The songs are rarely more than four stanzas in length and always contain either a fixed chorus or a refrain at the end of each verse, which functions as a chorus. Though the type of repetition is variable, whether the entire song is repeated or just a selection of verses, the song is rarely more than

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<sup>193</sup> See Lalromawia (Synod Music Committee 2013: 36-37) and interview with C.L. Bika (9 May 2014) for more discussion of the *hla hriltu* role.

doubled in length. Again, the videos of P.C. Thangvunga indicate that repetition was also an integral aspect of older Mizo songs. Since western hymn singing has not generally involved repetition, certainly not to the extent found in Mizoram, it is highly likely that the tendency to repeat was informed by local tradition. O1, O4, O5 and O10 all show a pattern of repetition that is similar to the way in which *khawhar zai* are subject to repetition today, however the repetition takes place on the scale of a single stanza rather than an entire song. The example below is an example from the first stanza of *Lunglên Zai* – *Sailo Zai* (O10):

Line 1: *A thlum mang e hmana mi dâwn hnu,*

Line 2: *Sialki varin chhingpuii u nen,*

Line 3: *Dâwn ruai ruai ka nuam mang e.*

(3) *Dâwn ruai ruai ka nuam mang e.*

(2) *Sialki varin chhingpuii u nen,*

(3) *Dâwn ruai ruai ka nuam mang e.*

Line 1: How sweet it was to drink beer,

Line 2: From the sial's horn with Chhingpuii's elder sibling,

Line 3: It was so enjoyable.

(3) It was so enjoyable.

(2) From the sial's horn with Chhingpuii's elder sibling,

(3) It was so enjoyable.

Although the way in which a *hla hriltu* proclaims depends on the locality, the repetition of songs and verses is widespread. This section has therefore indicated some of the practical aspects of the *zaikhâwm* tradition that *khawhar zai* has retained. These seem to be some of the musical ways in which current practice has evoked and continues to evoke a nostalgic longing for the past.

It may also be noted that *khawhar zai*, including the drums, the singing and the song proclaiming, is iconic of the fact that a death has taken place. It is comparable to the iconicity of the *sarangi* whose music has been played continuously for days on All India Radio on the occasion of major deaths such as those of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi (Qureshi 2000: 815), but to an even greater extent, since the sound of the public singing cannot be silenced as in the switching off of a radio. Sound travels great distances in the hills, especially the beat of the drum, and the majority of people in the locality will be able to know that someone has recently died when they hear the music. This function is likely to be a retention of past *zaikhâwm* practices, which, combined with drums, would also have announced periods of mourning, celebrating and feasting to the surrounding villages.

### 3.5 SUMMARY TO PART TWO

The sense of the maintenance of the musical traditions of the past grants a secure feeling of continuity to those who gather at the *khawhar in*. In responding to the question of this thesis, it can be argued that *khawhar zai* has remained the repertoire of choice at times of death in part because of its ability to evoke a habitus that mobilises its participants towards an imagined past. The musical reference points discussed in this chapter that are part of this culturally-learned collective imagination resemble what has often been found in spontaneous laments (Wickett) and even songs of longing among diasporic communities (Shelema). For example, Shelema has referred to the ability of music to access an unconscious shared ‘bank of memories’ about the past (2014). In Mizoram, this bank of memories includes not only the ‘traditional cosmology’ highlighted in chapter two, but also the practice of domestic community singing of familiar tunes with a drum and song-leader on a variety of occasions. The Mizo case certainly affirms the possibility of applying studies of nostalgia in diasporic communities to non-diasporic communities who have been ‘displaced’ in other ways, such as through the introduction of a new religion or knowledge system. Future studies of cases of non-geographical displacement would benefit from approaching such literature. Of the Mizo context, Margaret Zama says:<sup>194</sup>

So *lêngkhâwm zai* fulfils an urge, a nostalgia or whatever, a fusion of the past and the present. It’s a continuation, and yet of the present because your worldview, your belief system has changed, you have now stepped and accepted a new kind of belief system, not too different from the past.

Part three of this thesis will examine how *khawhar zai* embraced this ‘new kind of belief system,’ but these two chapters belonging to part two have established its historical and musical associations with the past. Through its vocal style, melodic and rhythmic composition and *zaikhâwm* setting, it is highly suited to bringing about a shared nostalgia and retrospective longing for the past. This is further enhanced by the poetic language of the texts as discussed in chapter two and the association of the songs with poets and places that have a shared heritage with the older Mizo songs. This was particularly apparent in the study of the life of Patea, who was personally acquainted with the traditional attitudes and values that formed the basis for hope before Christianity, and who belonged to the geographical region most often associated with the Mizo imagination of the past.

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<sup>194</sup> 26 March 2014.

The poetry gazes back to an imagined utopia and the musical style is compared not with authentic examples of older singing, which have not survived in any documented form, but with their modern renditions by respected ‘curators’ of the culture such as P.C Thangvunga. It is, in fact, worthwhile to acknowledge the limitations of these renditions since they provide an accurate record of the way in which modern practitioners of *khawhar zai* imagine and recall the older songs. These factors contribute to the efficacy of *khawhar zai* in promoting an imaginative nostalgia according to Boym’s theory (2001) that can inspire hope for the future well-suited to the evangelical hope for heaven that will be the focus of part three. Furthermore, while the exploration of poetic terms of loss and nostalgia in chapter two was reminiscent of the earlier anthropological attempt of Maschio (1994), specific musical features have been identified that are associated with past musical traditions, particularly songs associated with loss and lamentation. Therefore, by analysing both the musical features and the text, the two chapters have contributed to existing anthropological studies about poetics of nostalgia by highlighting possible musical manifestations.

## PART 3

### GAZING TOWARDS HEAVEN: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KHAWHAR ZAI AND EVANGELICALISM

*Chanteii and her friends had accompanied me to the khawhar in their locality, Champhai Vengsang. They were students at the college where my host was a lecturer. This was the first time I had attended a khawhar in, so I was keenly absorbed in listening, watching and softly singing along. Suddenly, I was surprised to hear someone request the song 'Ni Tla Ngai Lo, Zion Khawpui.' The drummer proceeded to lead this song, bellowing out the first words and giving the initial beats before everyone else joined in.*

*Now this was a song I knew! Two years earlier my friend, the gospel singer Michael V.L. Rema, had invited me to play piano in a recording and music video of this song. My mind flashed back to memories of the experience, which had been entirely new to me. I remembered Michael telling me that it was normally a funeral song and that he would dedicate our performance to his sister who had recently passed away. I remembered another gospel singer complimenting me on my piano style, which had offered a refreshing contrast from the song's usual funereal setting. At the time, I had no idea that I had offered any such innovation! However, I also remembered finding out more about the origins of the song and discovering that it had been composed by a Hmar evangelist Lianrûma, who had been excluded from preaching in a village.*

*With all these memories filling my mind, I was finally able to sing confidently as part of the gathered community. Chanteii stopped, and asked me with surprise whether I already knew this song? I mumbled that I did, and explained why. As we sang on, I gained a better understanding of this song that I thought I already knew. The yearning melody, consisting of repeated falling thirds that had once seemed repetitive, now expressed our deepest longing for heaven. The awkwardness of some of the lines, which had additional beats, did not seem to faze the gathered singers, who navigated the melody in unison where I had once become frustrated at the piano. The piano style for which I had been praised now seemed all the more incongruous, and I began to learn where this song of evangelical hope really belonged: in the house of bereavement, sung to the accompaniment of the drum.*



'*Ni tla ngai lo, Zion khawpui*' (K11) is a song that is well-suited to a discussion of the evangelical origins of *khawhar zai* and the influence that the missionaries had upon the repertoire by bringing Christianity and a new understanding of hope to the Mizo people. It will therefore form the primary case study of this section, although it will also draw from other songs in which the hope of evangelicalism is perhaps more prominent than the nostalgic hope of past Mizo generations that was examined in the previous section.

This part, comprising two chapters, will examine how *khawhar zai* looks forward to heaven, expressing an evangelical hope suited to its emergence from the encounter with missionaries and a series of revivals. Through this musical study, it will be shown that *khawhar zai* can enrich an understanding of evangelicalism as a whole, particularly the evangelicalism that characterised British non-conformist Christianity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It will especially highlight how the use of music by evangelical Christians of this time could effectively express doubts and uncertainty that other studies of evangelicalism rarely acknowledge. As such, this part aims to offer a re-evaluation of evangelical hope, often associated with exuberant optimism as manifested in millennialism, by finding greater nuance in the hope expressed through song.

It is first important to consider what is meant by evangelicalism when referring to British missions of the early twentieth century. The extensive work of David Bebbington on the subject of Victorian evangelical religion offers an unparalleled scope, represented primarily in *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (2003 [1989]) but also in smaller introductory works such as *The Nonconformist Conscience* (1982), *Victorian Nonconformity* (1992) and *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England* (2000). Despite the many variations in theology and biblical interpretation that have been aligned to evangelicalism, he provides four areas of common ground for all evangelicals. Briefly, these are conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism (1993: 3). This four-part definition of evangelicalism has continued to inform subsequent studies on the subject and will form some of the structural basis of the following chapter. These are the terms and vocabularies of evangelical Christianity that will also be useful in expressing the intellectual aspect of its hope, as understood within Macquarrie's frameworks introduced in chapter two.

Conversionism is defined as justification by faith received by God and not achieved through human effort. Whereas followers of Wesley (now generally known as Methodists) believed that assurance of

this spiritual condition was attainable in one's lifetime only through some effort, Baptists tended to expect conversion to involve a moment of crisis rather than a gradual process. Whatever its specific interpretation, they shared a positive confidence in the emotional reality of their hope for justification. Activism is the compulsion to see others converted, resulting in prioritising zealous work over private devotion (Ibid: 1). The 'missionary zeal' of the era drew Baptists such as Lorrain and Savidge away from the routes of theological study and ordained ministry, and directly into the foreign mission field. This epitomises the volitional aspect of an attitude of hope that the world could be converted. Biblicism emphasises the 'Word,' specifically the Bible, as the only true source of God's revelation to humanity, as opposed to other forms of institutional or sacramental revelation (Ibid: 13). It provided the only trusted source of intellectual and cognitive wisdom on which to base their hope. The belief in the infallibility of God's word remained open to different interpretations; the Baptist church in particular emphasised the importance of individuals drawing their own conclusions from personal study of the Bible, rather than teaching doctrinal catechisms of approved belief. Finally, crucicentrism, related to the soteriological doctrine of atonement, based all Christian belief on the fact of Jesus' crucifixion. Wesley wrote that it was 'the distinguishing point between deism and Christianity,'<sup>195</sup> since it could not be found to be the intellectual basis of any other religion.

These four aspects provide a strong foundation on which to base any study of an evangelical tradition, yet when applied to a musical context it is important to inquire whether there are aspects of the evangelical experience that are not adequately contained within these frameworks. They are valuable in describing and analyzing the doctrine as imparted through the body of evangelical sermons and scholarly literature that has survived and is still encountered today, but they can also seem remote from the experiences of evangelical Christians. On one hand, there is the inevitable doubt and uncertainty that accompanies faith that has led many to describe religion as part of the 'pursuit of certainty' characteristic of all human life. On the other hand, the absolutist certainty or exuberant optimism most clearly manifest in millennialist movements represents the other extreme of evangelical experience. Neither of these are well accounted for in Bebbington's frameworks, and his work also lacks detailed attention to the importance of evangelical worship practices, including music, in either reinforcing or interrogating the four-point evangelical structure which he has delineated.

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<sup>195</sup> From a letter to Miss Bishop of 1778, cited in Bebbington 1993: 14.

The following two chapters will therefore seek to address these apparent gaps in Bebbington's structure, by offering the emergence of *khawhar zai* in Mizoram as a suitable case study. In turn, it will also be able to illuminate the way in which *khawhar zai* has been able to encourage its participants to gaze towards the heaven of Christianity in conjunction with the retrospective gaze highlighted in the previous part. Indeed, although the title of this part suggests an evangelical 'gaze towards heaven,' the chapters also emphasise that evangelical hope contains an important retrospective aspect that complements the findings of the previous part.

One of the key contributors to the study of evangelical music is Stephen Marini. Perhaps his best-known book is *Sacred Song in America* (2003), which has a vast scope in accounting for the vocal music of multiple religious and ethnic groups throughout the history of North America. He offers a definition of sacred song that fuses Augustinian theology with anthropological terms, as songs that contain 'sacred intentionality' regarding religious belief, and participate in 'ritual action' (2003: 7). In the one chapter that the book contains about evangelical hymnody, he makes the case that will be made here that the inquiring nature of hymns 'account for their controversial nature as well as their perennial popularity' since they represent the living belief of the church members (Ibid: 184). He gives greater attention to this subject in the article, 'Early Evangelical Hymns and the Recovery of American Popular Religion' (2002). Here he is among the first to challenge the assumption that evangelical music represents a direct reflection of evangelical belief or doctrine in song.

Music and theology (a field increasingly referred to as music theology) have begun to form a powerful voice in the context of western Christian music, with a focus on classical and liturgical styles, but have rarely ventured into either evangelical or non-western Christian contexts. However, one leader in the field, Don Saliers, offers in *Music and Theology* (2007) arguments that have wider applications. Writing in general terms, he says, 'the musical idiom conveys a great deal about the way the community conceives of God. Acoustic images reflect theological imagination at work' (Ibid: 28). His position highlights the role music can have in voicing the theological imagination and discourse of the 'community' rather than the tradition to which they belong. He has even put his theoretical perspective into practice through his book *A Song to Sing, A Life to Live* (2005) in which he collaborates with his daughter in exploring the way in which their musical experiences have shaped their faith over the course

of their life. To him, music has the potential for articulating a 'lay' theology that can often bring to light some of the difficulties that exist in the institutionalised doctrinal frameworks.

Jeremy Begbie has also highlighted the use of the arts by 'lay' Christians as an effective medium for articulating their theology. In his introduction to the volume *Sounding the Depths* (2002), he defines theology as 'Christian faith seeking deeper wisdom' (Ibid: 2). He recognises that for 'lay' people (though he hesitates to use the term), the arts offer 'vehicles of discovery' in the pursuit of that deeper wisdom which in this thesis is associated with the wider concept of the pursuit of knowledge. To Begbie, it is the creativity involved in the arts that can represent a theological activity. Such activity is often referred to as 'praxis,' the act of 'doing' theology. However, this involves more than just a Lutheran communication of theology through music that could be equally achieved verbally. Music not only proclaims but also offers humans an opportunity to explore theological possibilities and uncertainties creatively.

This is true not only of music but of other creative forms of discourse such as poetry. The influential Baptist theologian Paul Fiddes has approached this subject in the book *The Promised End*, exploring the theological implications of a sample of popular literary works. Writing in a non-musical setting, Fiddes highlights the 'closure' of doctrinal metaphor, which aims at clarity and certainty (2000: 7). He goes on to contrast this with the poetic and literary metaphor, which contains an inherent openness. Even when expressing Christian hope, it aims not at certainty but at a multiplicity of meaning, an acknowledgement of doubt and the reality of personal experience (Ibid.). In the light of his study, the following chapter will draw attention to the 'openness' of poetic metaphor found even in the evangelical aspects of *khawhar zai*.

Among ethnomusicologists, Gregory Barz offers a rare and exemplary book-length study (2003) of how Tanzanian choirs (*kwaya*) are engaged in the 'negotiation' of past and present in their musical performances. He touches upon familiar themes of the interaction between different musical traditions during the colonial and missionary period, but recognises that this also has deeper religious implications. He deliberately distances his study from a syncretic model and instead turns to the necessary agency of the Tanzanian practitioners in experimenting, 'mixing and twisting,' to make the music their own (Ibid: 32). However, he ultimately introduces the theme of 'consciousness' as the fundamental driving force in such processes. Through the musical changes that have taken and continue

to take place, Barz views the musicians as engaging in the activity of continually searching for and articulating their consciousness as Christian Tanzanians both as individuals and as a community. The early experiences of the western encounter that Barz narrates resonate strongly with the Mizo context, although the contemporary situation is rather different. His theoretical models of agency and consciousness will therefore be appropriate in the ensuing exploration of how Mizo composers and singers responded to the evangelical musical tradition that they encountered. Despite the book's publication within a series entitled 'Church and Theology in Context,' Barz does not explore the theological aspects of the encounter in any great depth, and it is in this one weakness that the present study will seek to contribute a framework that can influence future studies of similar missionary contexts.

Michael McNally's extensive research among the native American Ojibwe people offers a comparable situation. In one of his articles, he describes the similar practice of singing Christian hymns in their funeral context (2000a: 842):

The hymn repertory became associated with certain occasions, especially funeral wakes and evening prayer meetings, held nearly every night in reservation villages. Hymns were sung slowly, like laments, more the chanting of syllables really than the conveying of the discursive meanings of the texts themselves... Ojibwe hymn-singing took on new significance, while becoming increasingly 'traditional' as a mourning practice, even for those who did not identify as Christian.

The resonances with the Mizo context are striking, yet like Barz, the study lacks consideration of the theological perspective of the missionaries and early Christians, while its historical focus obscures the specific musical characteristics.

Zoe Sherinian has studied similar musical processes among Tamil Christians, though her work targets the caste context in South India which is not present in Mizoram. Taking up the theoretical model of inculturation, she emphasises that such studies must focus on the 'liberation struggles of the marginalized' (2007: 249). Although it has been mentioned in the introduction (section 1.3.1) that the Mizo people are not to be confused with marginalised tribes and castes elsewhere in India, due to their majority status in Mizoram, it should be remembered that Christians did form a small minority at the beginning of the twentieth century, such that Sherinian's analysis of the Dalit Christians in Tamil Nadu

may also inform the present study. Like Barz, she considers that the local agency or inculturation of Christianity is an ongoing creative process of cultural interrogation by local culture bearers. Again, this has important theological implications that have yet to be thoroughly expounded.

The following chapter (chapter four) will therefore emulate the models offered by Barz and Sherinian but will deviate in directly formulating the analysis as a response to the commonly held frameworks about evangelicalism. In a similar manner to the previous part, chapter five will expand the study beyond what comparable works have done, by examining the way in which the musical modifications of the western hymns played a crucial part in complementing and driving the processes highlighted in chapter four.

## CHAPTER 4

### IN CONTEXT: EVANGELICAL VALUES IN MIZO SONGS

This chapter will examine *khawhar zai* from the perspective of their evangelical context, emerging from a series of revivals as well as the encounter with the hymns of the missionaries. The first part of the chapter will establish the relationship of *khawhar zai* to Bebbington's four structures of evangelicalism: activism, conversionism, biblicism and crucicentrism. The chapter will conclude with a section about uncertainty and millennial optimism, areas less frequently acknowledged in evangelical discourse, yet found to be more prominent in evangelical hymnody.

Before proceeding, it is important to review the series of spiritual revivals that preceded the development of *khawhar zai*, since in these revivals can be traced the emergence of a local evangelical identity or consciousness. One of the leading American revivalist preachers of the nineteenth century, Charles Finney, made several lectures on 'Revivals of Religion' in 1835, later published as a volume in 1960. In them, he describes western revivals of his era as somewhat humanly catalysed, negating the mystery of the process. For him, it was also the necessary way to bring about [Christian] religion in 'heathen nations': 'excitement is God's method' (1835: 12). Certainly, the revivals in Mizoram were no accident; they were catalysed first by Welsh missionaries in the Khasi Hills inspired by what they had seen in Wales in 1904. The second catalyst was the small Mizo delegation who had witnessed the Khasi revival and came back full of prayer, desire and 'excitement' for revival of the same sort in the Lushai Hills. As a result, the first revival in Mizoram began in 1906.

For Finney, revival is characterised by five features. The first and second, conviction and repentance of sin, may be apparent in the song of the first Mizo revival composed by Thanga which stated '*misual ka ni*,' 'I am a sinner.' This reinforced the importance of crucicentrism and conversionism, which had hitherto been alien concepts to the Mizo people. The third and fifth of Finney's features, activism and transformed lives, are clear in the sense of urgency among Mizo Christians to live a rigorous Christian life and to spread the message to others. They also represent the activist and conversionist aspects of evangelicalism. The fourth feature suggests that revivalists experience a 'foretaste of heaven' (1835: 15-16). The rise in eschatological songs and language during the revivals may reflect this, and it certainly became the new term of Christian hope that would dominate the discourse in the years to

follow. This sometimes led to the extreme level of exuberant optimism in the form of millennialism,<sup>196</sup> but otherwise offered a positive hope in the life after death that had not been experienced before. Chapter six will address the way in which *khawhar zai* offer a foretaste of heaven in more detail.

By the time the 1919 revival had waned, in 1921 the Christian population was 27,720 (Downs 1988: 2-3).<sup>197</sup> Lalsâwma writes, ‘from now [the revivals], a Lushai’s deepest religious longings have always to do with heaven, expressed in so many indigenous hymns and songs’ (1994: 38). Despite the revival, a communal attitude of mourning dominated the years approaching 1920 as a result of famine, epidemics and World War I. Mizo revivalists acknowledged this at the time, claiming that the Holy Spirit had been sent upon them to ‘comfort them in their mourning’ (Vanlalchhuanawma 2006: 286). For Christians, their difficulties in living a marginal existence gave them a sad isolation in the present life only endured because of their future hope of heaven. Tlângmingthanga expresses this apparent difficulty in the life of early Christians:<sup>198</sup>

But during that time when they suffer economically, politically and they are neglected they are in need of everything at that time. They cannot see as beautiful as God has created.

This would seem to represent one of the crisis moments which would demand an active musical negotiation of a Mizo Christian ‘consciousness,’ reflecting Barz’s theorising in the Tanzanian context (2003: 3). *Khawhar zai* cannot simply be aligned to British evangelical values without recognising the process by which they have been explored at the hands of Mizo Christian agents, including composers. This study must acknowledge the nuances of the context of a vulnerable and young Christian community seeking to carve out an identity for themselves through music. This is why this chapter will close with the issue of spiritual uncertainty after discussing more conventional evangelical themes.

#### 4.1 FOUR ASPECTS OF EVANGELICALISM AND THEIR MUSICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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<sup>196</sup> Files relating to the Kelkang revivals of 1938-1939 give similar insights, documenting, for example, the belief that there was no need to cultivate rice since it would rain down from heaven. Held in Mizoram State Archives.

<sup>197</sup> Numerous accounts of the revivals exist, from Liangkhaia’s eyewitness account to Lalsâwma’s historical study. See also many accounts in *Kristian Tlangau* (especially 1919), an unpublished manuscript by Pasena and letters of Lewis who wrote in 6 August 1923, ‘There is always a revival going on somewhere in Lushai.’ All held in Aizawl Theological College Archives.

<sup>198</sup> Interview, 16 April 2014.



This section takes Bebbington's four aspects of evangelicalism and applies them to the context of Mizoram and *khawhar zai* by taking them in pairs. The first pair is that of activism and conversionism, which express the nature of the behaviour of evangelical Christians. The second pair is biblicism and crucicentrism, which contain the foundations of evangelical belief and hope. Both sections will draw from a variety of songs but particular attention will be paid to 'Ni tla ngai lo Zion khawpui' (K11) by Lianrûma<sup>199</sup>. Lianrûma (1898-1980) was an evangelist and later a pastor in the Hmar region of Manipur, close to the northern border with Mizoram. The Hmar people, closely related to the Mizo in language, culture and ethnicity, had predominantly been evangelised by Watkin Roberts who was associated with and had previously worked with the Welsh missionaries in Mizoram. Indeed, most of the evangelists to the Hmar people were Mizo converts who accompanied Roberts. Lianrûma's story is often narrated in Mizoram, since it carries with it much of the pathos with which pioneer evangelism is associated. Although he was composing a few years later than the birth of *khawhar zai*,<sup>200</sup> K11 is nevertheless a popular and commonly cited example of the repertoire, conforming to the characteristics that are found in this thesis. This justifies its use as central to this part, despite the fact that it is not strictly of Mizo (Lushai) origin.

#### 4.1.1 ACTIVISM AND CONVERSIONISM

The first two of Bebbington's four aspects of evangelicalism are activism and conversionism, which both contribute to the identity of an evangelist. As an evangelist, the composer Lianrûma epitomised the activism of a newly converted Christian. Some of this is evident in the way he described those in heaven in the final verse of K11:

*Lungduh chhandamte lénna hmun,  
Thlen theih loh ka hlau mang e, Chhandamtu;  
Thisenin min sil la, Thlarauvin min hruai se,  
Lal lunghnêm ram mawi chu ka ngai mang e.*

The place where our saved loved ones wander,  
Saviour, I fear I will not be able to reach it;  
Wash me in the blood, lead me by the Spirit,  
How much I long for the comforting Lord's beautiful land.

<sup>199</sup> Written 'Lienrum' in the original Hmar.

<sup>200</sup> Tlânghmingthanga suggests the song was composed in 1940 (1995: 89).

They are not just his loved ones or his relatives and friends, but the ‘saved ones.’ It is clear that he believed, in accordance with evangelicalism, that only those who have been ‘saved’ would be reunited in heaven. Salvation, a result of conversion, was of crucial importance in his conception and hope of heaven. The hope of seeing ‘saved’ (converted) people in heaven was what motivated his activism as an evangelist.

Lianrûma first intended his song as an intimate communication between himself and God. He composed it when he was in his loneliest condition, rejected by a village chief and spending the night outside the village. However, it has come to be a well-known song sung by congregations, encouraging gathered Christians to share in his penetrating questions of the soul that will be discussed in section 4.2. In this way, it seems that it was disseminated like older Mizo songs as described in chapter three, when gathered people at the *zai khâwm* or in the *khawhar in* regularly sang the individual laments of famous composers. This mode of dissemination also affected the transmission of the hymns first introduced by the missionaries.

Although the missionaries preached, initially from the *zawl buk* (young men’s dormitory), it is arguably through hymns that the Mizo population ultimately tended towards the new hope offered in their music and texts. Lloyd wrote, ‘the verses of Scripture which they knew by heart, and the hymns which they knew even better, fashioned their theology’ (1986: 95). The story is often told of the way in which ‘hymns preceded missionaries and other evangelists to many places’ (Ibid: 47).<sup>201</sup> Not only were the hymns of an entirely different musical style, but the concept of singing congregationally in spiritual worship and in praise of God was also one that had not featured prominently before. Nevertheless, there is considerable evidence that the hymns were welcomed in Mizoram as attractive and exotic new compositions. Lorrain wrote in 1904 that Christian songs were being sung equally by Christians and non-Christians (MGCC 1993: 12). As such, they found a place in the Mizo enjoyment of feasting and rest that the preaching could not achieve.

Evangelical hymns have therefore not just promoted activism in their words, but have played an important part in evangelical activities themselves. It is important to note that the missionaries to Mizoram had in part been inspired to activism through music. Most would have encountered the visits

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<sup>201</sup> The specific anecdote given by Lloyd is of Rowlands’ surprise at hearing his own song, ‘*Aw Pathian, nangman chanchin tha min pe*’ (‘Oh God, you gave us the gospel’), when arriving at a village for the first time.

to Britain of the American preacher D.L. Moody and his musician Ira Sankey in the second half of the nineteenth century. Sankey famously published collections of hymns that combined older British hymns of Watts and Wesley with more modern products inspired by revivals on both sides of the Atlantic. Sankey's style and music profoundly impressed many of the British, especially existing evangelical Christians and those with an interest in missionary activities. Many missionaries from this era chose to take the Sankey hymn-books with them as they embarked on their voyages. Cecil Alexander, one of the prominent songwriters and singers at the latter end of the era, once told Sankey (Sankey 1907: 82):

As we have gone around the world, we have found that the best workers, as a general rule, are either workers (*sic*) or converts of the Moody and Sankey meetings. We have found them in India, in Tasmania, and everywhere we have gone.

The popularity of Sankey hymns for use by missionaries has been addressed in chapters by Charles McGuire and Mel Wilhoit in *Music and Theology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Clarke 2012: 79-116).<sup>202</sup> Mizoram was no exception to the early enthusiasm for Sankey hymns introduced by both the Baptist and Calvinist Methodist missionaries and they continue to dominate current editions of the *KHB*.

Edwin Rowlands has been widely celebrated as the most talented translator of hymns into Mizo despite spending less than a decade in the region between 1898 and 1907.<sup>203</sup> In addition to the Sankey hymns, he translated a large number of Welsh hymns, which had not even been translated into English. Lalthuanguiana Kiangte says he 'best grasped the genius of the Mizo character from within.' His hymns show that he used words, idioms and phrases with unequalled skill and precision (1993: 9). It is clear that Rowlands' unique achievement, as is still recognised by Mizo singers and writers, was his ability to identify with and express the poetic sentiment that previous chapters have referred to as *lunglènna*. Other missionaries busied themselves with musical activities in more conventional ways by teaching tonic solfa and training choirs<sup>204</sup> and the Welsh missionaries in particular possessed an enthusiasm for music that became a significant aspect of their missionary activism.

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<sup>202</sup> Other studies include Wilkins (2010), Guilbault (1987), Wood and Wild-Wood (2004).

<sup>203</sup> 'When he cometh' and 'All hail the power of Jesus' name' were certainly taught in 1901 to a village by Rowlands (Lloyd 1986: 82). See C. Vanlallawma for a comprehensive account of his musical legacy which included both Christian and secular songs (Lalthuanguiana 1999: 1-20). He was admired by Lorrain, C.Z. Huala and J.F. Dailova, among others (Ibid: 11-12).

<sup>204</sup> In 1907, Robert Evans took the place of the Welsh missionaries during their absence and he worked with the Khasi missionary (from Meghalaya) Sahon Roy to translate more songs and compile the first guide to tonic solfa (Lloyd 1986: 120). When the Frasers arrived soon afterwards, Mrs Fraser as a



**FIGURE 3.1** Katie Hughes leading a singing class. Synod Archives.

In the earliest years, the translated hymns remained part of an oral tradition in Mizoram, but in 1899, a small book of just eighteen songs was published (See Thanmawia 1998: 66).<sup>205</sup> The majority have endured as popular hymns even today. Most songs were evangelistic, focused on Jesus and often directed themselves at children. These are the songs that were used during the spiritual revivals that began in 1906.<sup>206</sup> With the exception of Rowlands, the engagement with local Mizo music and poetry seems to have been limited, but the employment of music as an important tool in evangelical activism and conversionism does seem to have been a more effective mode of establishing authority and influence than the Baptist preoccupation with literary translation and education. Indeed, just as these hymns were subject to the same processes of dissemination as traditional Mizo songs, the later repertoire of *khawhar zai* followed in their wake.

One of the weaknesses of the missionary approach was that, apart from the emphasis on song transmission, it did not belong within the credible systems of imparting knowledge and truth. It did not

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member of the Royal Academy of Music was qualified to award the Curwen certificate in tonic solfa and was also equipped with a harmonium (Ibid: 139). This work was continued by Katie Hughes in the 1930's who gave further training in tonic solfa and established a very successful choir tradition that still endures today (Ibid: 262-3). Most of the female missionaries were able to play the harmonium, and Hughes even introduced a piano to the church at Mission Veng.

<sup>205</sup> Numerous Mizo texts have described this hymn-book, which is available in the British Library. Its contents need not be repeated here.

<sup>206</sup> Several articles in *Kristian Tlangau* emphasised the importance of learning to sing well, often drawing from Sankey, Alexander and the Welsh missionaries for inspiration (May 1914, October 1914).

come from the respected elders but from strange foreigners. This soon gave rise to an emphasis on local evangelism. Lorrain mentioned in 1907 that Mizo Christians possessed a superior skill in preaching because they used ‘parables and illustrations drawn from domestic life and from nature’ (MGCC 1993: 37). As well as speaking from a more conventional position of authority, they knew better how to impart wisdom through acceptable channels, within local knowledge systems.



**FIGURE 3.2** Congregation leaving their converted *zawlbuk* church in Lunglei, 21 April 1905. Angus Archives.<sup>207</sup>

K. Thanzauva points out that the evangelist Liangkhaia,<sup>208</sup> for example, remained faithful to the importance of meeting the needs of society as a Mizo elder, and describes this as tribal theology in practice: ‘In solidarity with the people, he stayed with them, ate with them, suffered with them and sang and danced with them and that is how he learnt about their needs’ (Khangte 2013a: 197). This seems to epitomise the Mizo approach to evangelical activism. Recognising their significant role, the Baptist

<sup>207</sup> Held in Angus Archives, Oxford: IN/PS1/13/6.

<sup>208</sup> Liangkhaia was one of the first converts to receive a theological education outside Mizoram. He went to the Welsh Mission School in Cherrapunji near Shillong where he received a thorough Calvinist education (Lalchungnunga in Khangte 2013a: 101).

and Presbyterian Churches were both quick to appoint Mizo evangelists and pastors such as Lianrûma from among their new Christians.



**FIGURE 3.3** Five Lushai evangelists, c.1907. Angus Archives.<sup>209</sup>

Liangkhaia maintained a traditional position of village eldership in his commitment to preaching the Christian message, and thus asserted his authority of knowledge through traditional means. In his book about the revivals, he offers a summary of what is hoped for after death using the terms in which he communicated it to the Mizo people (1972: 85):<sup>210</sup>

The Love and Sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus Christ gives us, unworthy people, the hope and the assurance that we will be in heaven (*Vân Ram Jerusalem*) one day. When we reach that place, there will be no need for us to work or do the kind of labour, eat, drink or clothe ourselves like we do in this world. However, one thing that is definitely going to continue is, 'Praising God the Father...'

<sup>209</sup> Held in Angus Archives, Oxford: IN/5/18/34.

<sup>210</sup> Translated from Mizo.

At this point, he cites one of his own hymns. Unlike his missionary patrons, he fully integrated music in his communication of Christianity, often singing from the pulpit as part of his sermons.<sup>211</sup> However, it is his statement as a whole that reinforces the claims of this thesis so far, that the hope of heaven could best be understood in terms of the fundamental aspirations that already existed in Mizo society.



**FIGURE 3.4** Liangkhaia. Hlakungpui Mual gallery.

However, the music of early evangelists such as Liangkhaia tends to predate the emergence of *khawhar zai*, and was usually in the style of the western hymns. Although Liangkhaia initially expressed a disliking for the new songs which did not conform to the missionary style (Pachau 2002: 104), Lianrûma's example shows that this perception changed among evangelists, who realised the importance of harnessing the new style as part of their evangelism and also as their preferred response to their own struggles in life and faith. Another example from the present sample is K1 by Thangvungi

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<sup>211</sup> EAP454 13 also contains music certificates and sermon notes from Liangkhaia.

(1904-1978), and it demonstrates two ways in which *khawhar zai* played a role in Mizo evangelism.

The first verse and chorus are given below:

*A chatuan ro luah tumin i bei zêl ang,  
Lungngaihna a lo lên lai hian;  
Ka kiangah awm zêl ang che aw,  
Ka Chhandamtu duh tak.*

Keep working for his eternal inheritance,  
When sorrows come;  
Remain forever by my side,  
My dear and precious Saviour.

*Aw, hlimna ram i pan ang u,  
Chawlh hlenna tûr;  
Aw, ka ngai e, thente zawng  
Kimna tûr ram khi.*

Oh, let's keep pressing on to the land of joy,  
For the place of eternal rest;  
Oh, how I miss all those who have gone  
The land up there where we will be together.

Thangvungi was one of the earliest women to gain prominence in church leadership, accompanying Liangkhaia in his ministry. As a product of her industrious study of the Bible and the hymn-book, she composed three songs between 1924 and 1928 (Lalrâwna 2011: 77). Her unusual emphasis on the importance of hard work on earth, reflecting her own work ethic, rather than the focus on future rest is evident in the first line, which uses 'bei,' 'to work hard towards'. It is the root of the term *beiseina*, for expectant hope. She also repeatedly uses the verb *pan* to express the act of pressing on towards that goal by living through life's struggles.<sup>212</sup> The determination expressed reflects a more realistic hope, drawing from the volitional aspect of Macquarrie's frameworks of hope (1978). Rather than dwell on 'rest,' she conforms to modern theological understandings of hope as demanding activity and social action. Her song therefore promotes the activism that she herself espoused as an evangelist, and was used to inspire others to follow the same example.

*Khawhar zai* was therefore both a tool for activism among composers and other Christians, but also a medium through which activism could be inspired towards a volitional hope as found in the words of Thangvungi. This expressly contradicts arguments that the songs distracted Mizo Christians from social

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<sup>212</sup> These terms may have been drawn from Paul's repeated exhortations to 'press forward' to the goal that lay before the early Christians (See Philippians 3), especially given her intimate knowledge of the Bible.



activity and service, since they actually encouraged singers to ‘press forward’ toward the goal of heaven.

Later in this chapter, conversionism in the Mizo context will be seen to have carried serious consequences since early Christians were required to live in a way that was ‘called out’ from the ordinary village life. They sacrificed their former security and role within the community in order to live according to their new faith. This led to incidents that have been described as persecution. However, this did not deter many new Christians from embracing the activism of evangelicalism and volunteering as evangelists to encourage others to convert to Christianity. Their use of music and local systems of knowledge and authority was often more effective than the missionary efforts. Indeed, music played a crucial role in the activism of these evangelists, employed by them but also promoting activism and hope amid persecution through their own texts.

#### 4.1.2 BIBLICISM AND CRUCICENTRISM

The last two of Bebbington’s four aspects are biblicism and crucicentrism, taken together because the narrative of the cross and of soteriology is derived from biblical authority, at least in the evangelical tradition. The previous part showed in section 2.2 that the poetry of *khawhar zai* became more localised, but they still bore the strong influence of the missionary hymns and their biblical language. *Salem thar* (New Jerusalem), *Zion*, *Eden thar* (New Eden), and *Kanaan* (Canaan) were retained as common symbols for heaven. The Church and Christ were sometimes referred to as *Mo* and *Moneitu*, the bride and bridegroom. Jesus was referred to as a star, the morning star and the lamb. *Kalvari* (Calvary) became one of the most prominent symbols, such that an informal description of the entire repertoire became and has remained *Kalvari hla*, ‘Calvary songs.’ Even at the *khawhar in*, songs better associated with Good Friday became popular and welcome. Though appropriated into the *khawhar zai* repertoire, they actually had little connection to bereavement.<sup>213</sup> These songs reflect the increasing acceptance and

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<sup>213</sup> Patea’s portrayal of Christ on the cross in songs such as ‘*Ngai teh, Kalvari tlâng kraws chungah*’ (‘See, on the cross at Mount Calvary’) and ‘*Ka thla va kal ta la*’ (‘May you go, my soul’) is especially notable for its observance not only of the great moment of salvation prominent in western hymns, but also of the mournful agony of God the Father. He expresses a narrative of grief where western hymns had focussed on the glory and bliss. R.L. Kamlala achieved the same thing in many of his songs, such as ‘*Aw ka Lalpa, i hmangaihna hi*’ (Oh my Lord, your love’).

understanding of a biblical basis for knowledge, wisdom and hope in the new evangelical context of the Christian community in Mizoram.

*A mawizia sawi sên loh ram chu,  
Thisenin a hawng ta, zalênna ram;  
Ka thlarau, chu ram mawlh chu zawng ve la,  
Khawvêl ram zawng a la chuai dâwn a ni.*

The land whose beauty cannot be expressed,  
By the blood it has opened, the land of freedom;  
My soul, seek this beautiful land,  
All of this world will fade away.

As seen in the second verse of K11 above, and also in the final verse, Lianrûma acknowledged the event of the cross to be what enabled him to long for heaven, the land whose gates were ‘opened’ by the blood of Christ on the cross. Rather than dwell only on heaven, many songs direct the singer towards an imagination of the suffering Christ, with reference to ‘*Kalvari*’ and ‘*Chhandamtu*’ (Saviour). Lianrûma’s allusion to Christ’s blood is no exception, if a rather muted example.

In ‘*Rinna thla zâr ila*’ (K12), biblical language narrating Calvary is extremely prominent. Thanherha (1886-1986) composed it in 1922 while he was working as an evangelist and soon after he heard news of the death of his sister in childbirth. Carrying his sister’s new-born baby, R. Lalrâwna (2011: 80) claims that he went to a hill-top and ‘with eyes of faith’ gazed over the hills to Calvary and the new Jerusalem where he realised tearfully that that was the only place where he would find the peace he was looking for. The poet calls the singers to dwell at Calvary where they may weep over Jesus and visualise the new Jerusalem that will be established there.

In mourning the death of Jesus, he calls his own spirit to look forward to the certainty of being with him in the future. Though deeply biblical, the song is also replete with traditional expressions and references to death and weeping. Unlike several other songs in the sample, it was a song composed out of the personal experience of bereavement. The two lines from the song given below also demonstrate the continued prominence of the gazing verb *thlîr*, which the previous part introduced in chapter two:

*Lâwmna pâr mawi vulna ka thlîr chuan, i thlîr ang Kalvari tlangah*

When I gaze at the place where the beautiful flower of joy blooms.

*I thlîr ang Kalvari tlangah*

Let’s gaze at it from the mount of Calvary.

These ‘Calvary songs’ can also be interpreted within the much wider framework offered by Begbie. Writing in 1989, explicitly with no consideration of the possibilities for his work being applied outside western liturgical music, he said, ‘the test of an inspired church musician is not [charismatic signs]... but whether he or she shows the marks of the crucified Saviour’ (1989: 19). In reference to the biblical concept of singing in the spirit,<sup>214</sup> he defines this as a musicianship through which a person is transformed (by the Holy Spirit) into the likeness of Christ.<sup>215</sup> Despite urging moderation against the charismatic manifestations of the Spirit, which would have prevailed at Mizo revival contexts, Begbie would certainly acknowledge that in bearing the likeness of Christ in their suffering life and placing the suffering Christ at the heart of their funeral singing, a singing Mizo community exemplifies this model. What follows in this section is a contextualisation of these issues in the Mizo context, ultimately highlighting that even in evangelical hope, an important factor is the retrospective gaze towards the Calvary event. This challenges the common notion that songs such as *khawhar zai* that express longing for heaven are exclusively prospective in attitude.

Many western theologians have also acknowledged that by looking back upon this event, as most explicitly happens during Easter celebrations, Christians can gain assurance of their future hope for the resurrection of the dead and the promise of eternal life with God shared with the resurrection life of Christ. One of the most famous exponents of this approach to Christian hope is Jürgen Moltmann. Though not without his critics, his *Theology of Hope* (1967) remains one of the most influential Protestant texts on the subject and the close attention paid to his work by non-conformist theologians such as Fiddes (1988) establishes its suitability to the context in Mizoram. Indeed, Moltmann’s theology is little more than a re-articulation of Paul’s teaching to the early Christians, especially as found in 1 Corinthians 15 (NRSV):

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures... If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile... If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

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<sup>214</sup> 1 Corinthians 14: 15; Ephesians 5:19 (NRSV).

<sup>215</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NRSV).

Paul teaches that without the assurance of the fact of Christ's resurrection, Christian hope in the life beyond the present life is worthless. Therefore, Christian theology about death and bereavement (for Paul also refers to the Christian hope for the eternal life of those who have already died) is intimately connected with the central Christian theology of soteriology, the work of salvation achieved at the death and resurrection of Christ. This is true of theology in Mizoram, and as far as the present research could ascertain, varies little among denominations. For example, the Catholic Bishop of Aizawl, Stephen Rotluanga, emphatically echoes Moltmann in saying that the 'only' form of consolation the Christian faith can offer is the faith and hope that 'because Christ rose from the dead we are going to be raised again.'<sup>216</sup>

Davies highlights the fact that in Christian approaches to death, Judeo-Christian blood motifs play a prominent part in articulating hope for the future regarding life and the return of Jesus (2011: 47). This is particularly demonstrable in the liturgy of the requiem mass, in which Davies claims that the liturgy and music sustain the emotion of the Passion narrative. It is consistent with this that Mizo Christians also include much of their most popular songs of the blood and Calvary at funeral occasions. Among the songs recorded during fieldwork at times of death but omitted from the present sample were the following, all of which belong to the *Chhandamna* (Salvation) category in the hymn-book:

*'Hming dang zawng zawng aiin a mawi ber'* (Suakliana)

'More beautiful than any other name'

*'Krista thisen hlu tak chhuak chu'* (P.D. Sêna, a translation of McLeod Wylie's *The Precious Blood*)

'The precious blood that came from Christ'

*'Aw Chhandamtu, sual leh buaina karah hianin'* (Suakliana)

'O Saviour, who takes away sin and troubles'

Similarly, songs narrating the death of Jesus (*Lal Isua Tuarna* category) were also recorded on some funeral occasions, such as Thanga's *'Ka thla, lo kal la, Lal fak teh'*<sup>217</sup> ('My soul, come, praise the Lord') and *'Rinna thla zâr ila'* (K12), mentioned above.

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<sup>216</sup> Interview, 17 April 2014.

<sup>217</sup> A translation of E.L. Nathan's *'Come Sing, my soul.'*

Perhaps the song that most specifically affirms Christian hope in the resurrection is R.L. Kamlala's '*Ka tho vang a, ka Pa hnênah*,' a bold assertion of the singer's confidence in his or her personal resurrection after death. The first line may be translated, 'I will arise and go to be with my father.' The popularity of these examples at times of death lends weight to the relevance of a theology of hope based on the past fact of Jesus' death. Recognising the centrality of Calvary to Mizo Christian poetry, Chuaüthuama agreed in an interview that it is hard to distinguish between the different thematic types of *khawhar zai* because they all follow a narrative that points from Calvary to heaven.<sup>218</sup> Indeed, the retrospective aspect of *khawhar zai* need not be limited to the gaze to past religious and musical traditions, but involves an evangelical gaze back to Calvary as a basis for the prospective gaze towards heaven.

Stephen Rotluanga realises that *khawhar zai* offers Mizos a chance to explore the Christian hope not just because of their funeral context, but also because of the wider Christian implications already suggested. The association of death with resurrection, and therefore baptism as a symbol of new life, is significant because it is in the latter rite that Christians 'share the divine life of God.'<sup>219</sup> Here, he is stating that the experience of new life is shared during baptism as a reminder of the hope of the future resurrection of the dead. He echoes Wolfhart Pannenberg's explanation that 'only the future life of the resurrected state will be so united to the divine spirit as source of all life that it will be immortal' (1999: 522).

Following Moltmann, Stephen Rotluanga thus connects these themes directly to Easter, which is at 'the core of the faith because it is there that the resurrection is demonstrated, the foundation of our hope.' There are distinct parallels between Easter events and *khawhar in* customs in Mizoram. Good Friday, in particular, involves community *zaikhâwm* singing reminiscent of a *khawhar in*, with some churches even ringing the bell to mark the death of Jesus as they would mark other deaths. Whereas baptism is a rite historically fraught with denominational differences, not least in Mizoram, it is the singing of *khawhar zai* by all Mizo Christians that connects the future hope of resurrection expressed at someone's death, with the past event of resurrection celebrated at Easter. To 'share the divine life of God' can, perhaps, be theologically achieved not only through baptism but also through participation in *khawhar zai*, at least symbolically. This would again support Begbie's suggestion made above that Christian

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<sup>218</sup> 8 April 2014.

<sup>219</sup> Interview, 17 April 2014.

music practice must ‘show the marks’ of the crucified Saviour (1989: 19), or testify to the crucicentric aspect of the evangelical faith.

The historical support for this notion lies in the origin of the songs, already outlined in this thesis. The coincidence of *khawhar zai* with the 1919 revival and its eschatological elements similarly offered a musical connection between the everyday experience of death and the revivalist experience of exuberant hope. Far from taking Mizo Christians away into an other-worldly orientation, the songs seemed to offer a futuristic perspective on the present experiences of grief and death. Present-day accounts can testify to this on an individual level. For Sangkhumi, a participant in a group interview, the singing emphasises to her the value of being a Christian believer and it affirms her faith.<sup>220</sup> One of the senior pastors of the Baptist church agrees, Lalthangliana Hnamte<sup>221</sup> says that ‘more than any other church context it [*khawhar zai*] teaches us to rely on God and hope for a new home,’ so, for this reason, he considers it the most comforting element of Mizo Christian worship.

In addition to the affirmation of resurrection hope, the connection between *khawhar zai* in the funeral context and its Good Friday associations enables a further imaginative step to be taken, towards identification with the suffering of God. This is the value that S. Lalpianga, another group interview participant, attributes to *khawhar zai*, claiming that by singing of the pain of bereavement the Mizo community can identify with the pain of God, both as the Father who witnessed the death of his Son, and as the Son who died on the cross.<sup>222</sup> This identification further reinforces the association between death and the Easter events, using the past of the Christian religious tradition to inform the future hopes of the bereaved community. This crucicentric hope is a rather different orientation from those that are often described as millenarian or other-worldly. Consider how Lorrain described the first Mizo revival, which reached the Baptists in the south in 1907 (1913 in MGCC 1993: 100):

The Holy Spirit has come upon the people and revealed to them the love of God as displayed on Calvary so vividly that they have been completely overcome by grief at the thought of their own past ingratitude, or else filled with a joy so great that it could only find expression in rapturous hymns of praise, accompanied often by clapping of hands and other signs of excessive happiness.

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<sup>220</sup> 27 January 2014.

<sup>221</sup> President-elect, Baptist Church of Mizoram (Taking office in March 2016). Interview, 8 May 2014.

<sup>222</sup> 31 January 2014.

He clearly places both the extreme joy and grief of the revival experience in terms of the recognition of the past event of Calvary. It is clear that the past-looking orientation of *khawhar zai* as described in the previous part also looks to the past event of Calvary, establishing the degree to which it may appropriately conform to Moltmann's theology of hope grounded in the memory of the soteriological event (1967). As such, the bifurcated gaze, which is articulated throughout this thesis, is one that has greater depth than one that looks to past Mizo traditions and forward to the Christian heaven. Instead, the gaze to the past is one that is equally crucial in the evangelical context, and serves not only to mitigate exuberant optimism but also to strengthen the theological resonances of the Mizo experience of bereavement through the singing of *khawhar zai*. Having shown how Bebbington's four aspects of evangelicalism influenced and can be detected in the songs and context of *khawhar zai*, this chapter will now examine how *khawhar zai* has been able to express other aspects of the evangelical experience that Bebbington's four terms are less able to address.

#### 4.2 THE ROLE OF UNCERTAINTY AND OPTIMISM IN EVANGELICAL SONG

Having embraced the activist values of his new Christian faith, Lianrûma set forth as an evangelist to share the gospel with other villages. On visiting one village, he was met with hostility, and the chief expelled him. This meant that he was forced to spend the night in the most vulnerable marginal place, just outside the village boundary. Filled with sorrow, he watched the sunset and longed for the one place where the sun never sets: heaven, or the 'city of Zion.' From this inspiration, he composed the following song (K11):

*Ni tla ngai lo, Zion khawpui,  
 Ngaiin ka rûm, ka tap chhûn ni tinin;  
 Puan ropui sinin an lêng tlan sate,  
 Ka tân hmun a awm ve'm chu ramah chuan?*

The city of Zion, where the sun never sets,  
 Every day I longingly weep and groan for it;  
 Those who wear the robes of glory gather there,  
 In that land is there a place even for me?

This section begins by examining the way in which doubt and uncertainty were expressed in some examples of *khawhar zai*, as can be seen in the last line of Lianrûma's verse above.

##### 4.2.1 RESPONDING TO DOUBT AND UNCERTAINTY

Sceptics were evidently testing new Christians, and in expelling Lianrûma, it is possible that the chief was testing his Christian hope. What Lianrûma had offered challenged the fundamental systems of hope and fear that chapter two established. Lianrûma, no doubt, preached that Christianity offered freedom from the *ramhuai*, the spirits of the jungle. By placing him at the site where he would traditionally have been at most risk from such spirits, the chief would be able to judge whether Lianrûma was truly free from fear. This tension between the different systems of hope and fear was an aspect of ‘uncertainty’ that characterised early approaches to Christianity, and is worthy of closer examination. Whereas Christianity offered community and security in death, Mizo beliefs offered community and security in life. It is clear that the intellectual terms had fundamentally changed. In the years leading up to 1919, Christianity had been brought from the margins into the centre of many villages, but it still lacked assurance as it negotiated the boundaries between its new vocabulary of hope and that of the traditional religious beliefs.

This simultaneous longing for the past and the future has been established as an approach to hope suited to Mizo terms and poetic language. By looking to the past, it is possible to gain certainty about the future, as part of humanity’s pursuit of certainty that characterises all forms of hope. Pannenberg has also explored the nature of the ‘knowledge that human beings have about their own end’ which ‘finds expression in hope that reaches beyond death’ (1999: 73). Whatever the exact nature of the hope, he argues that the pursuit of such knowledge demonstrates that questions of humanity are inherently connected to questions about God:

This is why the religious thematic in human life has been connected since early times with burial rites and belief in the continued existence of the dead.

In the Mizo context, for example, becoming *thangchhuah* (to gain access to Pialrâl) involved expensive and demanding requirements that only few could attain (Lalrinmawia in Tochwawng et al. 2007: 147). There was an expectation that a *thangchhuah* man would share all he had liberally, to the extent of lending a gun if it was needed, ‘the greatest possession they had.’<sup>223</sup> Early Mizo Christians following Jesus’ teaching were expected to share their property and life with others, and their lives were often compared to the life of the *thangchhuah*. Certainty about what would happen after death, enjoyed by *thangchhuah* families and in a later era by Christians, by no means ensured an easy life before death.

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<sup>223</sup> Interview with Tlânghmingthanga, 16 April 2014.



They often needed to sacrifice present-day comforts, including what chapter two demonstrated to be the important needs of food, rest and security. This is what Lianrûma did, and he found himself deprived of every basic security when he slept alone outside the village that had rejected him.

It is notable in the first verse of *Ni tla ngai lo, Zion khawpui* (K11), given at the opening to this section, that the closing question expresses the inner doubts of the composer regarding his own salvation. In the last verse, he repeats this sentiment by saying, ‘Saviour, I am afraid I will not reach that place.’ As an evangelist, he would have been accustomed to preaching a gospel of certain truth, offering an assurance of salvation to all who confessed their sins. Through the medium of song, however, he could express what he could not preach, the otherwise silent uncertainty about whether he would really be welcome in heaven.

Wood and Wild-Wood have investigated the claim of Congolese Christians that songs preach better than sermons: ‘What Christians sing is also what they believe/experience’ (2004: 145). This is an issue raised by the Catholic theologian Richard Viladesau when he recognises that Christianity, as a ‘prophetic religion’ is based on the word, in which faith responds to the preached message (2000: 30-31), and, as a result, he realises that there is a ‘Christian suspicion’ of other forms of worship which detract from the word. He sees the Christian tradition as confining music to being a vehicle for the word, wary of the danger that the medium of music might convey a different message to that of the word (Ibid: 31). However, the argument made here is that rather than offer a detraction or alternative truth to the preached or printed word, music can convey the uncertainties and ambivalence of the Christian life, enabling worshippers to negotiate their pursuit of certainty through singing. There is a personal integrity in such hymns that can contribute to the spiritual life of the people.

Indeed, whereas both evangelical hymns of the nineteenth century and some examples of *khawhar zai* have been described as expressing an excessive confidence in the future, other writers have suggested alternative interpretations. Though the composers often vividly portrayed heaven, there remains the argument that they were composed and sung from a position of distance, on the other side of the shore or from a distant peak. This vantage point directly relates to the term *thlir* that was to become so important in Mizo Christian songs about death. The repertoires shared a spiritual ‘gaze’ towards the afterlife that was articulated in geographical terms of distance and mountainous terrain. Congregations

joined the collective aspiration, though the distance from this earthly life seemed far. Marini claims here that this distance mitigated the quality of their hope in the American context (2002: 305):

This spirituality of distance saturated early American evangelical hymnody, infusing its apostolic narrative with a more tragic sensibility and its everyday metaphors with a more chastened confidence than its leading doctrines might suggest. Judging from the most popular hymns, there was plenty of Puritan left in the early American evangelical. Watts, Wesley, and their poetic imitators retained substantial elements of Miltonic paradox and Bunyanesque realism that lent their poems a substantial uncertainty about spiritual things.

Marini attributes ‘distance’ and ‘uncertainty’ to the hymns to the extent that their suitability to the Mizo sentiment becomes immediately apparent. The sense of distance at death for the dead and the bereaved was experienced through the verb *thlîr*, and the ‘chastened confidence’ of the emotion that involved looking back upon the past connects with terms such as *ngaihna* or *lunglêna*. Indeed, it is the realistic admission of spiritual uncertainty in the hymns, which other evangelistic contexts would not have entertained, that resonated with needs in terms understood by Mizo Christians. This may be understood as the ‘humanity’ that characterised the late nineteenth-century gospel movement according to Mary de Jong (1986: 462):

Hymns about Christ therefore expressed the evangelical culture's views not only of deity, but equally of humanity. Victorian hymnody is distinguished by its preoccupation with the humanness of Christ and the human capacity to emulate and be informed by him.

By asking whether he will have a space in heaven, Lianrûma reflects upon his own human condition and his hope to be worthy of Christ-like humanity, but expresses this from the perspective of the chastened confidence encountered as a result of his rejection and expulsion. Marini recognises that while evangelicalism was characterised by a bold optimism, this was often ‘muted’ in the corresponding musical expressions. However, far from applying this to critique evangelical hope as a whole, Marini’s statement suggests the truth to be found in Fiddes’ distinction between the closure of doctrinal prose and the openness of Christian poetry. In this way, hymns can give particular voice to the exploration of possibilities that Saliers claims theology should be in practice (2007: 29). He himself acknowledges the ‘lyrical theology’ that distinguishes poems and hymns, many of which are created at times of heightened controversy, uncertainty and debate (Ibid: 35). The following part of this section will show that

*khawhar zai* did indeed mitigate the alienating possibilities of controversial beliefs and doctrines such as millennial optimism.

#### 4.2.2 RESPONDING TO MILLENNIAL OPTIMISM

The previous part of this section noted how Lianrûma poses a question in his song that signifies his use of music as a means by which to engage in the pursuit of certainty about his hope. There are several other examples in the sample selected for this thesis. Kamlova poses a question in the final verse of his song, K9:

*Aw, eng tik nge ka thlen ve ang,  
Ka chung khua nuamah khian?  
Luikawr thim ka dai kai hunah,  
Tahna ram ka ngai lo 'ng.*

Oh, when will I reach,  
My wonderful city above?  
After I have crossed the dark river,  
I will not miss the land of weeping.

At the end of K3, Thanherha (1894-1978)<sup>224</sup> asks a similar question:

*Eng tikah nge kan hmuh ang then lohna ram chu,  
He khawvêl lungngaih buaina kalsanin;  
I hmangaihna zâra ka thlen hun chuan  
Ka hmu ang khawvêla ka thian then te.*

When will we see the land where there will be no more separation,  
Leaving behind this world of sorrows and troubles;  
Because of your love, when I reach there  
I will see my friends of this earth who have gone.

The questions posed here do not only articulate the pursuit of certainty but they also express the impatience of the composers to depart from the present life on earth. It is such language which has led to many claims made by Mizos scholars that the composers of *khawhar zai* were ‘other-worldly,’ either in their millennial optimism or in their determination to reach heaven.

Though not a prominent theme in K11, the chorus given below expresses a comparable tone of desperation to depart from the present troubles and meet with Jesus. Indeed, it is important to note that Lianrûma specifically states that he is more eager to meet Jesus than to actually reach heaven, thus

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<sup>224</sup> Subtitled ‘Abide with us,’ in the first edition (1930).

implying that the immanent encounter with Jesus promised by millennialism was a hope that he did, in fact, share with millennialist believers.

*Ka va ngai êm! Ka va ngai êm!  
A hmun ropui, a mawina zawng aain,  
Hmangaihtu, Lal Krista hmêl duhawm chu,  
Hmuh ka nuam ka lungkham bâna tûrin.*

How I long for it! How I long for it!  
More than the glorious place and all its beauty,  
I long to see the loving Lord Jesus Christ's lovely face,  
And there my anxieties would cease.

As seen in the subtext of Lianrûma's example, millennialism shifted the terms of hope from a longing to be in heaven, to a longing for intimacy with Jesus. Literal millennialism was the belief that the world was entering a thousand years of peace, which would be founded on a universal acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as Lord. Premillennialists believed that the millennium would come once Jesus had come to earth (the Second Coming or *Parousia*). Rather than expressing a hope in a better afterlife, it was the pinnacle of revivalist hope in the present life. In Macquarrie's terms, it would be a social revolution in the present world (1978: 86), characterised by the 'exuberant expectation' identified by Henri Desroche in his study of millenarian movements (1979: 19).

It had been popular among some early Methodists during the first Great Awakening, and gained new support among British revivalists from the 1820's onwards (Bebbington et al. 2007: 80-81; Bebbington 1993: 82). Millennialist hymns continued to express a determined expectation in imminent satisfaction that reflected the sentiment of *beiseina*. For example, in Fanny Crosby's '*When my life work is ended,*' the singer longs to see the countenance of Jesus, his smile and his eyes, when life's work is over. Like Lianrûma's song, the first and fourth stanzas below prioritise the personal encounter with Jesus over other attractions of heaven.

When my life work is ended, and I cross the swelling tide,  
When the bright and glorious morning I shall see;  
I shall know my Redeemer when I reach the other side,  
And His smile will be the first to welcome me.

Through the gates to the city in a robe of spotless white,  
He will lead me where no tears will ever fall;  
In the glad song of ages I shall mingle with delight;  
But I long to meet my Savior first of all.

Although she locates her hope after death rather than at the Second Coming, it is her dwelling on the meeting with Jesus which articulates the millennialist aspect of the song. Wesley and Cennick's '*Lo! He comes with clouds descending*,' the first stanza of which is given below, was also one of the most popular hymns in North America even prior to the late nineteenth-century revivals. It vividly depicts the Second Coming, and makes liberal use of '*Alleluia*,' the proclamation meaning 'praise the Lord' that pervades spontaneous expressions amongst many revivalists, including those in Mizoram.

Lo! He comes, with clouds descending,  
Once for our salvation slain;  
Thousand, thousand saints attending  
Swell the triumph of his train:  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Christ the Lord returns to reign.

Translations of similar hymns popular in Mizoram included '*Ho my comrades, see the signal*' by Philip Bliss and '*Be ready when he comes*' by Daniel O. Teasely. Their theology was characterised by what John Kent calls 'residual Calvinism' which emerged in 'siege mentality' images of holding the fort, defensiveness and the possibility of not making it to heaven also discussed above with reference to Lianrûma (1978: 218-219).

Indeed, on closer examination, millennialist hymns may not be as different from the attitude to uncertainty discussed above. There seems to have been a common anxiety, whether about readiness, assurance of salvation or access to heaven that permeates much of the poetry. In a comparable study, Ruth Bloch in *Visionary Republic* (1988: 134) specifically addresses the Methodist hymns of the first Great Awakening that referred to the Second Coming and 'millennial bliss.' She argues that despite their vivid descriptions, the hymns left many of the contentious theological arguments open-ended, lacking closure in a way that was indeed fitting with Fiddes' categories for poetic metaphor (2000: 7). She claims that, far from forming an isolated body of millennial hymns, 'the distinction between a millennial and a non-millennial eschatology was not always clear,' reflecting the ongoing uncertainty of the times rather than the certainty of the few. This is further support of the notion presented here that although evangelicalism could be manifested in a variety of highly divergent ways, the hymns mediated between these differences with the ability to reconcile opposing articulations of evangelical hope.

This is not to negate the significance of millennialism as a doctrine that did influence the early stages of Christianity in Mizoram. One of the key features of millennialism was that it did not emphasise

worship or life after death, but rather the imminent experience of heaven on earth, so perhaps this was closer to what the Mizo aspiration had been before Christianity, and the doctrine became a particularly prominent theme in the second Mizo revival (1913-1915).<sup>225</sup> The *Kristian Tlangau* had also promoted it from 1912 with published articles and poems entitled, for example, ‘*Harh Rawh! A lo kal dawn!!*’ (‘Revive! He is coming!’) (August 1912). Tlânghmingthanga is of the view that Mizo millennialism constituted a hope for heaven with ‘little attention to the importance of this world’ (1995: 92). This is a common accusation levelled at millennialists. However, the manifestation of the doctrine in song indicates a similar nuanced hope to what has been suggested above. Hleia’s song ‘*Ka va ngai êm, Lal ram ropui*’ is commonly regarded as epitomising millennialist hope in Mizoram:

*Ka va ngai êm, Lal ram ropui,  
Din thar leia lo thleng tûr chu;  
Kum sang rorel tûr ni ropui,  
Tunah hian lo eng tawh rawh.*

How I long for it, the glorious Kingdom,  
Which you are coming to establish;  
The glorious day that will bring the reign of a thousand years,  
Let it shine even today.

The song makes direct references to millennial doctrine, including the thousand-year reign and the establishment of a new Kingdom on earth. However, the opening line is very reminiscent of Lianrûma’s chorus. ‘*Ka va ngai êm*’ (‘how I long for it’) is a common expression of heartfelt longing and *ngaihna* used in a variety of circumstances. Darchhawna, a notable writer with a deep interest in millennialism, explains that the song complains that Jesus has been absent from earth for so long, but ‘when he comes again, then he’ll bring a kingdom for us, so they are waiting for his coming.’<sup>226</sup> The singer ‘is not happy now because mourning, because pining for Jesus Christ coming.’ Here Darchhawna’s use, in English, of terms about mourning and pining about a future hope support the assertion that Mizo hope may employ terms that look back with sentiments of sadness and loss, such as *ngaihna*. K. Thanzauva argues that reference to the place of Kanaan in songs had particular meaning for Mizos who felt that they had finally settled after their history of migration (2012: 5). It paid less attention to the Canaan of the Old

<sup>225</sup> For a contemporary account of the 1913 revival, see Vanchhunga’s series of articles, ‘Harhna Chanchin,’ in *Kristian Tlangau* which begins in January 1914.

<sup>226</sup> Interview, 14 April 2014.

Testament or to the Canaan of millennial poetry, but was a personal and localised metaphor. Daikawrzana further commented on the use of Jordan as a similar metaphor:<sup>227</sup>

When we talk of Jordan we don't talk about the Jordan on earth, we don't care or talk about Palestinian Jordan river, we are talking about heaven.

The hope expressed in the songs is therefore not an explicitly millennialist one, nor a naively Zionist one, but a localised hope metaphorically alluded to through biblical terms (Tlânghmingthanga 1995: 98). It is often argued that composers sought to escape their pain through song, and to imagine themselves in a better place. To some extent, this is certainly the case, but such an assertion obscures the fact that the poetic expressions of hope involved an engagement with the present and even the past through harnessing traditional sentiments and mechanisms of nostalgia. Vanlalchhuanawma further articulates this with reference to the previous song, '*Ka va ngai êm, Lal ram ropui*':<sup>228</sup>

Even if it is strong in certain pockets of people, the understanding may be not what the millennialists in the West understand. It does not sound to be a millennial rule on the earth itself. Even this millennial theory as the Mizos understand it seems to be the ending of the present age and the ushering in of the new age that will be for eternity. A complete changeover from the earthly existence to the heavenly existence. It does not seem to be a defeating of the enemy on the earth and the establishing of the Kingdom of Christ with Christ as the Head. That does not seem to be what the Mizos understand by this millennium.

It would seem then, that in contrast to popular assertions of non-Christian sentiment in early *khawhar zai* and excessive other-worldliness in the more Christian texts, the understanding of both contributes to an appreciation of the whole. When it is remembered that the main theme of the complaints, as found in Saihnûna's songs, resonated with the basic values of society not being met: rest, food and security, it is understandable that millennial themes introduced through some western hymns became appropriated in a way that hoped for something different from the western composers. Songs adopted millennialist discourse and metaphors of western hymns not in order to espouse the same millennialism, but in order to express a hope for the fulfilment of needs on earth as well as in heaven.

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<sup>227</sup> Interview, 27 January 2014.

<sup>228</sup> Interview, 19 March 2014.



**FIGURE 3.5** The haze of *romei* viewed from the road between Aizawl and Lunglei. Author's photo.

It appears that the heavy emphasis on gazing towards heaven with a hope for certainty found in *khawhar zai* does not represent a deviation from the evangelical hymn tradition, as is often claimed, but perhaps an intensification of it. This prospective gaze was in fact given greater depth of meaning by the very retrospective aspect discussed previously, since the repertoire was able to harness the local sentiment of *lunglêna* and the activity of *thlîr* towards the past to reinforce the hope for the future. This was finely expressed by C. Thangvunga who remembers the imagination of heaven as a heavenly mist and longed for that instead of Mitthi Khua:<sup>229</sup>

The kind of songs we compose are about the God who will receive us, about the people who have gone, about the heaven that we will be in one day. We think of heaven as somewhere between *romei*, just signifying the loneliness that we feel [*lunglên*].

Here he articulates the association of longing, loneliness and memories of the past when describing the Christian hope of the Mizo people, and he describes the action of imagination in terms associated with *thlîr*, the gazing towards an unclear foggy horizon, which he calls *romei* (Figure 3.5).

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<sup>229</sup> Interview, 4 May 2014.



Kamlova's K9 introduced above is a sorrowful song that is desperate for the place where sufferings will be finished. In its first edition, it was subtitled 'Weary of Earth.' The very first line articulates this by employing both the terms *lunglenna* and *thlir*. The first verse and chorus are given below:

*Lung min lèn ka thlir ning dawn lo,  
Lei lungngaih piah ram saw;  
Dam lai lungngaih chhumpui zing hi,  
Ka pèl ang tahna ram.*

I am longing for it, I won't tire of gazing,  
That land beyond the land of sorrow;  
These spreading dark clouds of life's sorrows,  
I will pass from this land of weeping.

*Lei lungngaih mittui a hul ang,  
Ka tahlai ni a râl ang;  
Aw Lalpa hmél hmuh ka nghâkhlel,  
Aw, râl mai rawh lei ninawm.*

The tears of the land of sorrows will dry up,  
My days of weeping will pass away;  
Oh, I am impatient to see the Lord's face,  
Oh, pass away, this troublesome land.

This perfectly captures the Janus-like hope of the composer who longs for the past while he gazes to the future. He is rather more explicit in his contempt for not just earthly life but earth itself, with the chorus bidding it to disappear: 'Oh, pass away, this troublesome land,' so that he may see the face of Jesus. This reflects Vanlalchhuanawma's understanding of Mizo millennialism; discourse about the passing away of the present earth is often assumed to be conventionally millennialist, yet in the Mizo context it is a mode of expression, bidding the present life to disappear rather than calling upon God to bring judgement upon it.

This chapter has shown that although *khawhar zai* represented the way in which the four aspects of evangelicalism were manifested musically among Mizo Christians, the songs also offered in their poetry a pursuit and exploration of themes of certainty and hope. Perhaps this was achieved because of, rather than in spite of, their relationship to the core evangelical values. Though some espoused the exuberant anticipation of millennialism, they expressed themselves in terms that resonated with the needs and suffering of the composers' own context. This should moderate the common judgement ascribed to *khawhar zai* by Mizo scholars that they are exclusively focused on heaven, or skewed towards an attitude that ignores the present life. In fact, they present a dialogue not always possible in other worship contexts that emphasise the closure of doctrinal metaphor rather than the openness of poetic metaphor.

Having established the evangelical context in which *khawhar zai* evoke a 'gaze towards heaven,' that contains within itself a retrospective gaze to Calvary, the following chapter will involve a musical analysis that will connect the repertoire to the western hymns and *solfa zai* to which the early composers were responding.

## CHAPTER 5

### IN PRACTICE: THE MUSICAL INFLUENCE OF SOLFA ZAI

This chapter will highlight the relationship between *khawhar zai* and the western-style hymns known as *solfa zai*, offering the more prospective aspect of the music having established the retrospective aspect in chapter three. The word ‘prospective’ refers to the gaze towards heaven that has been the theme of this part when engaging with evangelical values and hope. However, it is recognised that even evangelical hope finds its foundation and assurance by gazing to the past events of Calvary as well as a person’s own salvation and conversion narrative. The chapter begins from the position that, although *khawhar zai* is musically and poetically connected with the music of the Mizo past, it is equally the product of evangelical revivalism and the encounter with *solfa zai*.

In order to affirm the relationship between *khawhar zai* and western evangelical hymns, it is worthwhile to test *khawhar zai* against criteria offered by western music theologians, notably Brian Wren (2000) and Paul Schilling (1983). Both these authors have attempted to analyse and describe the broad scope of Christian congregational music but rarely venture beyond western contexts. However, this weakness also has the advantage that the degree to which *khawhar zai* do fulfil some of the criteria given about western hymns establishes the fact that they may share a musical heritage.

Though Schilling in particular takes a condescending attitude towards most evangelical gospel hymns of the nineteenth century, particularly due to their musical characteristics, he does recognise that they ‘bring hope and faith to multitudes who felt buffeted and short-changed by an indifferent or hostile world’ (Ibid: 182). The origins of western revival hymns in voicing the faith and hope of the suffering or the marginalised resonates clearly with the *khawhar zai* repertoire, arguably Mizoram’s ‘own’ revival hymns. Indeed, they fulfil all of Schilling’s characteristics not only of gospel hymns but also of folk hymns (Ibid: 197): They are about everyday life and engage in protest against it, their tunes and harmonies are simple, they are composed by a single composer but transformed through oral tradition and repetition, and finally they are most certainly ‘innovative.’ The first three of these points were primarily highlighted in chapter three, and the present chapter will demonstrate their harmonic and innovative characteristics.

Similarly, this may be extended beyond revival or folk hymns to Christian music as a whole as defined by Wren (2000: 71, 84-97): *khawhar zai* is formative and educational about the Christian faith, it transforms the emotional state of a person and provokes their imagination, and it inspires hope. The previous chapter elucidated the formative and educational aspects of the repertoire in its correspondence to evangelical values and openness to addressing doubt and uncertainty. The previous part alluded to the imaginative and transformative quality of the songs and this will be developed in chapter seven. Hope has of course been the sustaining theme of this thesis, articulated by the frameworks proposed by Macquarrie.

Though Wren and Schilling are not authoritative and do not attempt to apply their own theories to non-western Christian music, it is enlightening to note the ease with which *khawhar zai* fits all the normative western categories for Christian congregational music, yet is manifested in a form that is uniquely appropriate to the specific Mizo context. This chapter will highlight the way in which this is achieved musically. The chapter begins with a section that explains the processes by which composers and singers modified *solfa zai* into the *khawhar zai* style. It will then offer some deeper musical analyses of the melodic and harmonic aspects of the songs, comparing them with a sample of *solfa zai*. It will close with a discussion of the way in which the practice of gathering together to sing is not only a survival of an older Mizo tradition but resonates to some extent with nineteenth-century evangelical practices.

## 5.1 VOICES OF EVANGELICALISM: THE RECEPTION OF SOLFA ZAI IN MIZORAM

This section will examine what musical developments took place in responding to *solfa zai* and the evangelical hymn-singing that contributed to the sound and style of *khawhar zai*. Until around 1915, by the close of the second revival, it was the gospel hymns presented by the missionaries that formed the only choice of hymns available to the ecstatic new converts, who sang whole nights without ceasing. Ever since the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches joined forces in publishing their hymn-books in 1903, these gospel songs have continued to form the core of the hymn repertoire.

Chapter three mentioned *puma zai* as an influence on the retrospective direction which *khawhar zai* took. However, a converse phenomenon also took place that integrated the western hymns and new hymns by Mizo composers into the older *zaikhâwm* tradition in a non-Christian setting. For example, some hymns were borrowed and satirised with secular texts. These variants were known as *kaihlek*,

considered subversive by the missionaries but not unlike the parodies that Sankey's hymns also underwent in the comedy theatres of London in 1874 (Sankey 1907). B. Lalthangliana dates their emergence from around 1917, just prior to the development of *khawhar zai* (1998: 238). R.L. Thanmawia gives one early example of *kaihlek* in which the hymn 'Aw Khawiahnge Chhandamtu chuan'<sup>230</sup> replaces the word for 'saviour' with the name of a young woman Thadangi for whom the composer longs and searches (1998: 102). The multiplicity of meanings for *lunglêna*, both spiritual and romantic, lent themselves to these humorous and often romantic variations, since the distinction between the repertoires could easily be blurred.<sup>231</sup> B. Lalthangliana offers numerous examples including two different modifications of the Mizo translation of the hymn, 'Fade, fade, each earthly joy' by the Scottish composer Catherine J. Bonar (Lalthangliana 1998: 251). The first verse and chorus of one *kaihlek* version of this hymn is given below, in which the reference to the 'comforting little flower' finally confirms that this song is not addressed to God:

*Khawvêl ka len lai hian lungduh ka then thin,  
Min hnemtu an awm lo nang chauh lo chu;  
Tinkim ka dawn changin tahlai ka bang thei lo,  
Thinlai hnemtu pârte ka ngai êm che.*

While I am here on earth my loved ones part from me,  
There is no one to comfort me but you;  
When I think of it all I can't stop crying,  
I miss you so much, my comforting little flower.

The fashion for *kaihlek* shows that the music of *solfa zai* was being adopted, albeit in humorous or satirical ways, into ordinary Mizo music making such that it became highly susceptible to the modification that was ultimately manifested in *khawhar zai*. The shift to original compositions was not immediate and responded to the trend of integration and modification already highlighted. One song stands out as bridging the gap between *solfa* and *lêngkhâwm zai* in funeral hymns. In the sample of *khawhar zai* presented in this thesis, one apparent anomaly is a translation of a missionary hymn by

<sup>230</sup> 'Oh where is my Saviour' by Zasiama.

<sup>231</sup> Some of these later became integrated into the repertoires of some of the sects, such as Tlira Pawl and Kawlkhuma Pawl. Tlira is given a comprehensive treatment by Zaikima (2011). The leading figure of the original 1904 Welsh revival, Evan Roberts, personally addressed an enquiry by Dala about Tlira's teachings, and his rejection of it was published in *Kristian Tlangau*. They were formally expelled from the Presbyterian Church in 1914 (Minutes, 1 October 1914).

Thanga.<sup>232</sup> *Vân hmun ropui, hmangaih ram khi* (K13). The process by which this hymn became integrated into the *khawhar zai* repertoire will form the primary case study of the following section.

### 5.1.1 MODIFYING SOLFA ZAI: A CASE STUDY

Tlânghmingthanga names Thanga (1883-1957) alongside Awithangpa (1885-1949) and Liangkhaia (1884-1979) as the three poets who laid the foundations for modern Mizo literature (Khangte 2013a: 168). Orphaned as a child, Thanga did well in his studies under the guidance of the missionaries in Aizawl and was the first to pass matriculation under Calcutta University in 1911.<sup>233</sup> He was the first of the prolific Mizo composers to translate many hymns that remain in the *KHB*, and his translation of *'Will the circle be unbroken?'* was one that became subject to melodic modification and remains one of the most popular at funerals. Lorrain wrote it by hand in the back of his edition of the *MKHTB* (1930),<sup>234</sup> which could indicate that its tune had been modified by that point, or that it was under consideration for future publication. The original composer, Ada R. Habershon (1861-1918), was an Englishwoman well-connected with late nineteenth-century evangelical figures such as the Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon and the influential American evangelists Moody and Sankey. This hymn, with a tune by the prolific composer Charles H. Gabriel, was popularised in early twentieth-century evangelical contexts.

In its original English text, it is a song that boldly harnesses nostalgia for childhood and the sadness of bereavement in order to challenge singers that unless they also abandon 'songs of earth' then the circle of their families will remain broken, with only some of the relatives being reunited in heaven. They are made to feel guilty about the possibility of being the ones who might prevent the circle from being unbroken. In its original form, it exemplifies the evangelical values discussed in the previous chapter. Biblical references to the 'dying Saviour' are present but rather overshadowed by calls to conversion and the song itself adopts the persona of the activist evangelist. However, the dominant sentiment of the song is, in fact, a chastened confidence about the future. In asking 'will the circle be unbroken?' the

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<sup>232</sup> His full name was Lalhmingthanga.

<sup>233</sup> He was influential in the political and economic development of Mizoram, composing nationalist songs in addition to his Christian songs and translations (Lalrâwna 2011: 163).

<sup>234</sup> Lorrain's copy is held at the Angus Archives, Oxford.

composer engages in an evangelical pursuit of certainty in an increasingly secularised environment in which her own family members turn towards worldly attractions.

57 **Will the Circle Be Unbroken?**

ADA R. HABERSHON. CHAS. H. GAMMEL.

1. There are loved ones in the glo-ry Whose dear forms you oft-en miss,  
 2. In the joy-ous days of child-hood, Oft they told of won-drous love  
 3. You re-mem-ber songs of heav-en, Which you sang with childish voice,  
 4. You can pic-ture hap-py gath-'rings Round the fire-side long a-go,  
 5. One by one their seats were emp-tied, One by one they went a-way,

When you close your earth-ly sto-ry Will you join them in their bliss?  
 Point-ed to the dy-ing Sav-iour, Now they dwell with Him a-bove.  
 Do you love the hymns they taught you, Or are songs of earth your choice?  
 And you think of tear-ful part-ings, When they left you here be-low.  
 Now the fam-i-ly is part-ed, Will it be complete one day?

CHORUS.  
 Will the cir-cle be un-brok-en By and by, by and by?

Is a bet-ter home a-wait-ing In the sky, in the sky?

Words and Music copyrighted 1907, by Charles M. Alexander,  
 International copyright secured.

FIGURE 3.6 'Will the circle be unbroken?'<sup>235</sup>

Habershon also expresses nostalgia and longing for a mythical and idyllic past in which only Christian songs were sung around the fire (verses three and four, Figure 3.6). Words such as 'miss' and 'memory' in the original text would lend themselves to translations in Mizo with terms such as *ngaihna* and *thlîr*. However, Thanga chooses not to offer a literal translation of this hymn, whose emphasis on guilt and the metaphor of the circle are notably absent from the Mizo version. Heaven is looked forward to as the

<sup>235</sup> From Alexander's Hymns No. 3 (1915), the same source cited in Mizo hymn-books.

end of time when the preparation is finished, and the world will proclaim the love of Jesus. However, the final verse is a more direct translation of the original:

Vân hmun ropui hmangaih ram khi,  
Mi thianghlimte in a ni;  
Anni hnêna chêng ve tûrin,  
Khawvêl thilte chu paih la.

*Khawvêl ni hi a râl hunin,  
Nakinah in nuamah,  
Mi thianghlimte lènna ramah,  
Vân inah kan chêng ang.*

Chatuan in nuam ropui taka,  
Lêngte zawg chhûngkhat an ni;  
Chu in nuama chêng ve tûrin,  
Chi tin, hnam tin an sâwm a.

Chhandamtu thihna hmun ropui,  
Hmangaihna hi an hril vêt;  
Inbuatsaih hun a kim chhûngin,  
A hmangaihna chu ring la.

Pakhat zêla an kal bovin,  
An kiam thîn chhûngkaw tinrêng;  
Lungduh zawng zawng chatuan hmunah,  
Kim leh ni a awm ang em?

That glorious place up in heaven, the land of love,  
Is the home of the saints;  
In order to dwell with them,  
Get rid of worldly things.

*When this time on earth comes to an end,  
In the pleasant future home,  
In the land where the saints wander,  
We will dwell in that heavenly home.*

In the glorious and comfortable eternal home,  
All who go there are as one family;  
To join them in dwelling in that lovely place,  
They invite every nation and race.

The glorious place where the Saviour died,  
They speak and tell of his love;  
When the time of preparation is over,  
Believe in his love.

One by one they leave and disappear,  
Every family eventually departs;  
All the loved ones, in the eternal place,  
Will there be a day of reunion?

An exuberant rendition in *solfa zai* style can be found on DVD 2 ('Supplementary Files' folder, Track K13), sung by the gathered mourners at Theiriat in 2014. However, the song is also popularly sung in the modified *lêngkhâwm zai* style, situating it within the *khawhar zai* repertoire; a recording in the modified style is included in the 'Khawhar Zai Sample' folder of DVD 1 (K13). In this version, the tune recalls other songs of *khawhar zai*, and the more static nature of the tune with repeated notes replaces the forward-moving energy of the original, giving it a musical quality of *lunglènna* and focus on the present context, which the words and original tune do not overtly suggest. The process by which this song was modified follows the outline given by Heath (2013: 68-70) with reference to different examples. The basic pitch substitutions can, however, be reiterated here with reference to the present song shown in Figure 3.7:

Prolongation of *mi* at measures 53 and 61.

Omission of *fa* at measures 1, 17 and 57.



*Re* as a passing note between *mi* and *doh* usually in an ‘appoggiatura’ function at measures 10 and 38.

Low *sol* often at the opening of phrases at measures 1 and 17.

Vân hmun ro - pui hmag - aih ram khi, Mi thiang - hlim - te in a  
 Cha - tuan in nuam ro - pui ta - ka Lêng - te zawngh chhùng - khat an  
 Chhan - dam tu thi - hna hmun ro - pui, Hmangaih - na hi an hril  
 Pa - khat zê - la an kal bo - vin, An kiam thìn chhùng - kaw tin -

14  
 ni; An - ni hnê - na chêng ve tû - rin, Khaw - vèl thil - te chu  
 ni; Chu in nuam - a chêng ve tû - rin, Chi tin, hnam tin an  
 vèl; In - buat - sai hun a kim chhùng - in, A hmag - aih - na chu  
 rêng; Lung - ùh zawngh zawngh cha - tuan hmun - ah, Kim leh ni a awm

29  
 pah la. Khaw - vèl ni hi a rat hu - nin, Na - ki - nah in nuam  
 sâwm a.  
 ring la.  
 ang em?

46  
 ah. Mi thiang - hlim - te lèn - na ram - ah,

56  
 Vân in - ah kan chêng ang.

FIGURE 3.7 K13, combining transcription from singing at Champhai Bethel (upper line) with transcription from original notation (lower line).

However, there are other ways in which even the modified version deviates from some of the characteristics shown in chapter three which bore closer relation to the older Mizo songs. For example, the retention of *te* in measure 41 is somewhat anomalous and most modified songs would omit this pitch. There is also no instance of *la* used as an inflection from *sol* in this example and *re* often appears rising from *doh* in a way that is not typical of *khawhar zai*. The modified version of this song also retains the wide range of an octave from the original notation. Ranges of an octave and an eleventh were shown in chapter three to be very common among *khawhar zai*, yet did not feature in the older songs. The present example suggests that it was from the western hymns that the possibility of singing within a wider range was introduced and adopted in subsequent compositions. In the following section a sample of western hymns will be introduced for comparative purposes and these have an average range of an octave, with over half having a range of exactly an octave.

### 5.1.2 EARLY ACCOUNTS OF CHRISTIAN SINGING

Early accounts of Christian singing in Mizoram confirm that these modifications observed in present practice were also taking place in the early years of the songs' reception. The descriptions give a sense of the 'voices' that characterised early Christian singing that has been retained in the *khawhar zai* practice. Though antagonistic towards the Christian influence in Mizoram, J.D. Willis' descriptions of Christian worship during his visit to the Lushai villages on the border with Myanmar give some of the best accounts of the practice of singing in the rural areas in the early decades, far from the direct influence of the missionaries.<sup>236</sup> In Ruantlang village, the sound of the drum beginning the singing would announce the fact that the worship was about to start, calling the villagers to the church (1948: 169, 174, 180):

Soon the sound of sweet voices filled the air. The Lushais have lovely voices, and the women are particularly tuneful and crystal clear. Whilst the Lusei (*sic*) music itself is slow and sad they can sing English tunes in good key and pitch... The service lasted for about two hours and consisted mainly of hymn singing and drums.

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<sup>236</sup> J.D. Willis was an officer posted in the Chin Hills of Myanmar close to the border with Mizoram. His notes from an unofficial 'walking trip' he made into the Lushai Hills in 1948 are held in the British Library.

The villagers were proud of the tonic solfa copy of Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus* they possessed in an exercise book, as well as their copies of the *KHB*, expecting that Willis would be able to sing all of the hymns (Ibid: 176). This shows that Mizo Christians were not unable to sing according to the notated tonic solfa, but were not always inclined to do so, especially outside the church context. Willis also experienced domestic congregational singing, during which a large crowd gathered in the home and the drums were brought in to aid the singing, much as happens at the *khawhar in*. Travelling in December and January, it is no surprise that Christmas songs such as '*Adeste Fideles*' were among the songs sung, though Willis noted that in this case the tune was altered in the *lêngkhâwm zai* style which remains the tune by which the hymn is still sung today. He elaborates (Ibid: 191):

We sat and sang thus for some five hours at least and it seemed but little longer than five minutes. At times one of the women would lead the singing and being carried away by the zeal of her own emotion would dance as well. The Christian dance that is done to a hymn is very modified and is little more than the singer standing up, clapping her hands and bending the knees. Later in Hnarlung I was told that this was a very common dance done at Christian gatherings.

Willis' descriptions deviate little from the modern experiences of the *zaikhâwm* at Christmas, except that growth in population has meant that such gatherings usually take place in a church hall rather than in a home. Noting that *lêngkhâwm* singing was primarily a domestic event, it is all the more significant to note the connection that the present *khawhar in* has with past traditions not only of times of death but also times of celebration at Christmas and Easter. It is now one of the only occasions for singing such songs in the home, and a rare chance to enact the type of community singing that would once have been much more frequent. The increasing acceptance of songs less strictly associated with mourning at the *khawhar in* is perhaps a result of this fact, since it is increasingly becoming one of the few sites in which to enact the collective memory of such domestic singing that used to happen more frequently at other events and seasons.

The letters of Kitty Lewis after her 1924 tour of remote villages in North Lushai offer an even earlier record than that of Willis.<sup>237</sup> In Neidawn village near Champhai, the sound of a drum or gong was audible in advance of her arrival, which told of the fact that the village had gathered to sing a hymn of

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<sup>237</sup> Held in National Library of Wales.

welcome. Willis' and Lewis' observations of the use of the drum to announce special occasions and singing sessions to the rest of the village corresponds to the way in which the unmistakeable solemn beat of the drum today can announce the gathering of the community at the *khawhar in*. Jackson has also noted the way in which the Mizo churches introduced a new sonic dimension to the landscape, creating new forms of locality as Christians settled within earshot of the church bells (Kominko 2015: 452). In Hmawngzawl, a modified version of John Henry Newman's '*Lead kindly light*' was sung as a solo, which Lewis describes as being sung 'entirely of quarter notes!' suggesting that it had been presented in the *lêngkhâwm zai* style. Her accounts are corroborated by her parents' accounts and letters following their visit, in which Ruth Lewis recalled the singing of a song 'to a purely Lushai tune' and Herbert Lewis described the call of the drum to church. He narrates the singing of familiar songs including the British national anthem sung to the pentatonic scale:<sup>238</sup>

The Lushais cannot, unless very carefully taught, sing the notes *fâ* and *te*, and have to be content with the other notes in the scale... [another] hymn was sung to a familiar Welsh tune, converted as a matter of course into the pentatonic scale.

At about the same time as Lewis, G.M. Mendus also turned her hand to notating some songs, in an apparent attempt to understand their musical syntax having initially expressed her distaste for *lêngkhâwm zai* when she arrived in Mizoram. Scraps of notation survive among her papers at the National Library of Wales that correlate with the melodic modifications and pitch functions illustrated in Figure 3.7 and which also correspond to contemporary versions of the songs she attempted to notate.

In a British radio interview given in 1984, the missionary Roberts produced recordings probably from a 1978 tour of a Mizo choir to North America.<sup>239</sup> A recording of *khawhar zai* is included in the interview, R. Thanghuta's '*Ka râłthumna ka dam ngam lo*,'<sup>240</sup> which is a rare example of such singing in past decades that offers a point of comparison. As is practiced today, the *hla hriltu* is present, a woman, and the singing style is indistinguishable from the present style. The only slight difference is the tempo, which is faster, not slower than contemporary practice. However, it is possible that the nature of the recording context, probably in a studio or for a North American audience, made the tempo

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<sup>238</sup> Letter to Mr Williams, 8 January 1924. Lewis was a Member of Parliament at the time of his visit to the Lushai Hills.

<sup>239</sup> Recording from interview held in National Library of Wales.

<sup>240</sup> 'I dare not remove my armour.'

quicker. The fact that Roberts herself claims in the interview to enjoy singing along to such songs suggests that by this point the missionaries had thoroughly accepted the repertoire as part of the Christian musical tradition of Mizoram. These few accounts and sources spanning the twentieth century cannot conclusively prove but can go some way towards supporting the notion that the modern experience and practice of *khawhar zai* has not changed significantly.

This section has used the one translated example from the sample to illustrate the way in which *solfa zai* were modified but also contributed changes to the older musical style such as the wider range of the melodies. It has also drawn from a range of accounts that suggest that the ‘voices’ of *khawhar zai* heard today bear a close relationship to those of the early development of the repertoire. The study will now turn to some of the melodic aspects of the music that indicate some retention of the musical style of the missionary hymns.

## 5.2 MELODIES OF EVANGELICALISM: THE MELODIC INFLUENCE OF SOLFA ZAI

Chapter three found that many examples of *khawhar zai* demonstrate a close relationship with the older Mizo songs through their melodic unity between the verse and chorus and the behaviour of the pitches. However, there are aspects that demonstrate greater deviation, offering greater association with the disjunct melodies of *solfa zai* than is sometimes acknowledged. If the pitch behaviour outlined in chapter three and the pattern of melodic modification highlighted in Figure 3.7 are taken as normative melodic features that gaze back to past musical traditions, it is also important to examine any anomalous moments in which these ‘rules’ are broken, suggesting that these are equally significant remnants of the encounter with *solfa zai*. Where comparison with *solfa zai* needs to be made, a selection has been made of the examples that were recorded at funeral settings, each on just one occasion during fieldwork in 2014 (as well as ‘*Will the Circle be Unbroken?*’), and the handful of songs mentioned in archival documents that are definitely known to have been sung at times of death as will be highlighted in section 5.3. All were introduced to Mizoram prior to or contemporaneously with the emergence of *khawhar zai*. The sample of *solfa zai* to be used in the present section is therefore listed below, coded with the letter ‘S’ for *solfa zai*. The composers of the texts and the tunes, respectively, are given in brackets. Appendix C contains a more detailed list with transcriptions, texts, Mizo titles and details of composition and publication.

- S1 *Abide with me* (Henry Francis Lyte; William Henry Monk)
- S2 *How Sweet my Saviour to Repose* (César Malan tr. J.E Arnold; James McGranahan)
- S3 *How Sweet the Hour of Praise and Prayer* (Fanny Crosby; Traditional Scottish)
- S4 *I have heard of a land far away* (William Cushing; Ira Sankey)
- S5 *I stand amazed in the presence* (C.H. Gabriel)
- S6 *No Longer we'll wander in Darkness and Night* (J.H. Alleman)
- S7 *O God, our help in ages past* (Isaac Watts; William Croft)
- S8 *Precious Thought, My Father Knoweth* (L.W.; J.H. Burke)
- S9 *Take the name of Jesus with you* (Lydia Baxter; W.H. Doane)
- S10 *The Blood has always Precious Been* (McLeod Wylie; George Stebbins)
- S11 *There's a City that looks o'er the Valley of Death* (Fanny Crosby; W.H. Doane)
- S12 Tune from *There's a Land that is fairer than day* (J.P. Webster)
- S13 *There are loved ones in the glory (Will the Circle be Unbroken?)* (Ada R. Habershon; C.H. Gabriel)

Sankey published the vast majority of this sample in his *Sacred Songs and Solos*. Most are hymns of the era and are certainly representative of the wider sample (ultimately, of the 1200 hymns eventually published in Sankey's final collection). Perhaps the most anomalous song listed here is Isaac Watts' '*O God, our help in ages past*' (S7). Though a famous eighteenth-century hymn that has remained a standard in the Anglican Church, it was among several of Watts', Newton's and their contemporaries which were brought to North America and flourished there before being adopted by Sankey in the nineteenth century and reintegrated to the evangelical revivalist repertoire on his visit to Britain.

### 5.2.1 MELODY AND PITCH BEHAVIOUR

Having established the sample to be used for comparative purposes, this section now returns to the *khawhar zai* sample and takes note of the melodic features that appear to deviate from the models expounded in chapter three. For example, in several songs, *doh* ascends melodically within a phrase, usually either to *re* or *mi*.



FIGURE 3.8 Chorus from K4, ‘Ka dam lai thlipui a râl hunin.’

The ascension to *mi* in particular is suggestive of a triadic arpeggiation more typical of western harmonically-informed melody. The effect is even more striking when found in conjunction with other anomalous melodic movements, such as the ascent from *mi* to *sol* and the disjunct leap from *doh* to *sol*.



FIGURE 3.9 Opening to K8, ‘Khawvêl chhuahsan ila.’



FIGURE 3.10 Chorus from K10, ‘Ni ropui a lo thleng dâwn ta.’

Though these examples are scarce in *khawhar zai*, a survey of the sample of *solfa zai* shows that this is certainly a prevalent feature of the western melodies. The melodic movements highlighted are present in all but one of the sample of western hymns, the most prevalent being the ascent from *doh* to *mi*, often via *re*. One of the best examples is S13 (K13 in modified form) shown in Figure 3.7, as well as S3 and S12, shown in Figures 3.11 and 3.12:



FIGURE 3.11 Opening to S3, ‘How sweet the hour of praise and prayer.’



FIGURE 3.12 Opening to S12, ‘There’s a land that is fairer than day.’

The outlining of triadic pitches in this way was not a common feature in the older Mizo songs, especially in an ascending form. The falling style of singing, particularly on the pitch *mi* and the prevalence of falling contours also do not lend themselves to rising arpeggiation. In a tradition where a melodic range of no more than a fifth prevails, as was seen in chapter three, it is also far less common to encounter disjunct melodic steps. The disjunct melodies illustrated at Figures 3.9 and 3.10 therefore reflect the finding of the previous section that the encounter with *solfa zai* broadened the possible range of the melodies. With ranges reaching up to an octave and sometimes an eleventh, disjunct steps and triadic arpeggiation become not just probable but almost inevitable. K7 represents another example of a song from *khawhar zai* making disjunct ascents to span an octave range (Figure 3.13):



FIGURE 3.13 Opening to K7, 'Ka taksa lungngai mah sela.'

Another way in which some *khawhar zai* deviate from the model given in chapter three is in the greater attention given to *la* and *re*. Within the repertoire, both these pitches are peripheral; *la* behaves as an inflection from *sol* and *re* is situated between *mi* and *doh*. However, on a few occasions, they exhibit greater prominence. In K8, *re* lasts an entire beat at measure 16 and *la* lasts an entire beat at measure 11.



FIGURE 3.14 From K8, 'Khawvêl chhuahsan ila.'

While these legitimately indicate creative marks of originality on the part of the composer, it is interesting that the consequence of the 'liberation' of these peripheral pitches is the sublimation of the traditional roles of *mi* and *sol*. In Figure 3.14, *re* could be substituted with *mi* and *la* could be substituted with *sol* without any detriment to the integrity of the song as a typical example of Mizo *khawhar zai*. Pitches behaving in such a function are much more common in the western hymns, occurring on average twice each in any song, as calculated from the present sample of *solfa zai*. S9 illustrates such examples,



since *la* plays a prominent melodic role in measures 3, 9 and 14 (Figure 3.15). *Re* behaves more autonomously in measures 5 and 12.



FIGURE 3.15 S9, 'Take the name of Jesus with you.'

However, it is important to note that despite these inconsistencies, all of the sample of *khawhar zai* remain largely faithful to the pentatonic range of available pitches, rigorously avoiding *fa* and *te*. By contrast, *fa* and *te* occur an average of 3.54 and 3.15 times respectively in a western hymn, according to the present sample. On a rare occasion that *te* is encountered in *khawhar zai*, in the example of K10 in Figure 3.16, it is a flattened pitch, which makes it not incongruous with the modal nature of the melody.



FIGURE 3.16 End of K10, 'Ni ropui a lo thleng dawn ta.'

K10 is also another example of a melody that employs a wider range and therefore more disjunct melodic intervals. The graph at Figure 3.17 charts the frequency of melodic intervals in each of the songs examined in this thesis. These have been calculated proportionally, so the data for each sample shows what proportion of a song, on average, is composed of each melodic interval. As has been discussed in chapter three, the singing style, which involves slurring between pitches, often makes the precise identification of a pitch difficult and inconsistent. For clarity, in the following graphs, major

and minor seconds and thirds, and all the possible pitches that lie in between have been grouped simply as seconds and thirds. These two categories encompass a variety of pitches and slurs that would be difficult to categorise discretely:

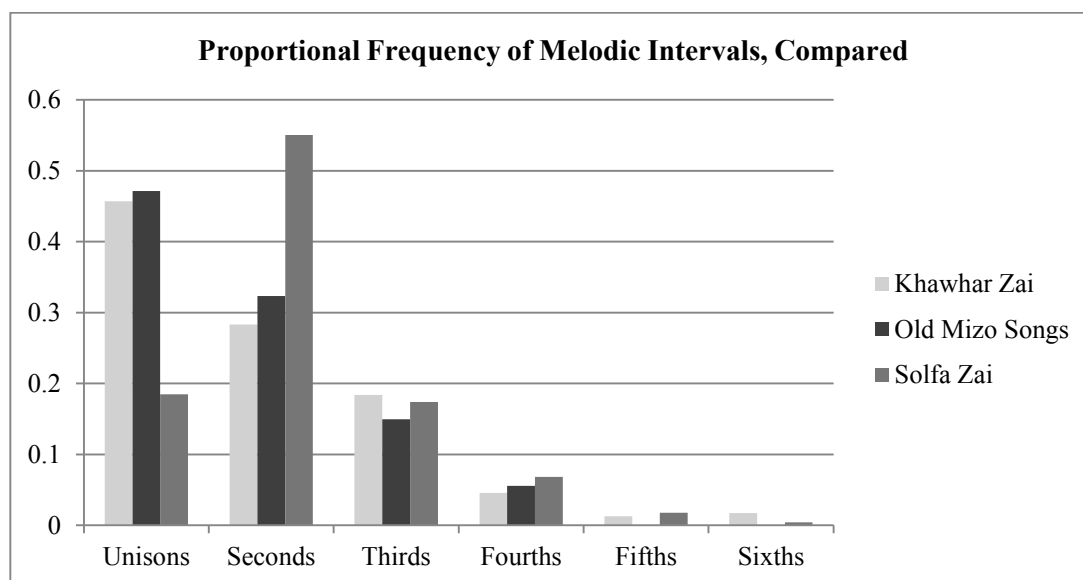


FIGURE 3.17 Proportional frequency of melodic intervals across different samples.

The comparison suggests that *khawhar zai* do indeed contain greater melodic dexterity, with leaps of fifths and sixths occasionally encountered. Though they are very rare, it is interesting that their proportional use is comparable to their use in *solfa zai*, whereas the sample of older Mizo songs contained no instances of fifths or sixths. All three samples share a comparable proportion of intervals of a third or a fourth. However, of greatest interest is the fact that in the repetition of pitches (unison melodic intervals) *khawhar zai* exposes its greatest affinity to the older repertoire, since *solfa zai* contain markedly fewer repetitions.

By contrast, by far the most common interval in *solfa zai* appears to be the second, whereas *khawhar zai* and the older songs again share a much smaller proportion. A general rule for *khawhar zai* and the older songs could be that the bigger the melodic interval, the less frequently it will occur (proportionally), whereas the trend for *solfa zai* is quite different due to the greater emphasis on stepwise melodic movement in seconds. This data, therefore, indicates that whereas *khawhar zai* bears the melodic influence of *solfa zai* through the expansion of its melodic range, it has retained the melodic style of the older songs by preferring repetitions of pitches to stepwise seconds.

It was also noted in chapter three that *khawhar zai* often share with the older songs a continuity between the melodic and rhythmic material of the verse and chorus, which was termed coherence in section 3.3.3. However, there are again a number of exceptions. Those that maintain a distinctive difference between the verse and chorus perhaps belong more closely to the strophic-with-chorus structure of western hymns. Indeed, in many cases the choruses to the evangelical hymns were distinct and subsequent additions by other composers that became fixed to older hymn verses. Unlike *khawhar zai* and the older songs analysed in chapter three, they would rarely share the same musical material. Anne Gilchrist gives the following explanation of the process of transforming an English hymn into an American camp-meeting song in the early nineteenth century (1928: 62):

The chorus was an important -almost indispensable- part of the hymn, though it must be confessed that it was sometimes of an irrelevant character; but as none of the old gospel-hymn writers of the eighteenth century had dreamt of refrains or choruses to their common, short, and long metre verses, such embellishments had to be borrowed or invented. Sometimes the quatrains were reduced to couplets, inter-lined with refrain (even a hymn in 8 8 6.8 8 6 metre may be found thus reduced by omitting lines 3 and 6), and followed by a lusty chorus.

She uses as an example William Cowper's '*There is a fountain filled with blood*' of 1772, in which a refrain for each verse was created by the manipulation and repetition of the last line. The same process is repeated for each verse.

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

*Lose all their guilty stains, lose all their guilty stains;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.*

Two other examples are worthy of note since they have, like Cowper's song, found their way into the translated Mizo repertoire. They exhibit a much greater textual and musical disjunct with the original verses than Cowper's example. Phillip Doddridge's '*O happy day*' of 1755 was popularised with a chorus that is cited in hymn-books as of 'anonymous' composition, suggesting its origin to be in the same camp-meeting tradition that Gilchrist describes:

O happy day that fixed my choice  
On Thee, my Savior and my God!

Well may this glowing heart rejoice,  
And tell its raptures all abroad.

*Happy day, happy day,  
When Jesus washed my sins away!  
He taught me how to watch and pray,  
And live rejoicing ev'ry day;  
Happy day, happy day,  
When Jesus washed my sins away*

The chorus similarly added to Isaac Watts' 'I'm not ashamed to own my Lord' of 1707 has also endured in the Mizo repertoire. The exuberance of the revivalist chorus is somewhat at odds with Watts' devotional text, exemplifying what Gilchrist described as the sometimes 'irrelevant character' of the added choruses:

I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,  
Or to defend His cause;  
Maintain the honour of His Word,  
The glory of His cross.

*At the cross! At the cross!  
Where I first saw the light,  
And the burden of my heart rolled away,  
It was there by faith I received my sight,  
And now I am happy all the day!*

It is more than likely that on their re-introduction to Britain, evangelical audiences familiar with the original hymns would have noticed these new refrains that had been introduced. It serves to illustrate the flexible approach to hymns at the time that would have mitigated some of the concerns of the missionaries regarding the subsequent modification introduced by Mizo congregations and poets.

Of the present sample of *solfa zai*, nine of the thirteen songs have choruses which are musically distinct from (though sometimes not completely unrelated to) the verse. Among *khawhar zai*, those that do not display a close relationship between the verse and chorus include K5, K6, K9 and K10. These are also among the songs that were characterised by greater melodic anomalies from the normative features of *lêngkhâwm zai* and *khawhar zai*. Except the last phrases of the verse and chorus, which demonstrate the characteristic fall from *mi* to *doh*, there is little melodic unity between the verse and chorus in K6, shown in Figure 3.18.

(a) Verse:

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled 'Ka nghâkhlel Zion khawpui thar.' (K6). The score is written in 4/4 time and consists of two systems of two staves each. The first system starts at measure 14 and the second system starts at measure 37, labeled as '(b) Chorus:'. The melody is primarily composed of eighth and quarter notes, with some slurs and ties. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots at the end of the second system.

FIGURE 3.18 K6, 'Ka nghâkhlel Zion khawpui thar.'

This brief analysis of the melodic and pitch-related aspects of *khawhar zai* that seem to indicate a musical relationship with *solfa zai* has shown that some of the anomalies identified in chapter three can instead be treated as features which exhibit an influence from *solfa zai*. Indeed, if a song exhibits such an influence in one area, such as the prominence of ascending triadic movement, then it is more likely to have other features also related to *solfa zai*, such as the expanded melodic range and a musically-independent chorus.

### 5.2.2 HARMONY AND CONTOUR

Inevitably, the encounter with *solfa zai* also brought a new dimension to sung music, which was the awareness of harmonic possibilities as exemplified in four-part western hymns. This was reinforced by the popularisation of choir singing by the Welsh missionaries, particularly Katie Hughes. The hymns introduced the concepts of part-singing, harmony and tonality for the first time. Although *khawhar zai* is a monophonic tradition like the older songs, it is possible to identify elements of the melodies that are suggestive of a harmonic awareness not present in the older repertoire.

Unlike the older songs, tonal and harmonic suggestions are made in the phrase endings, which have made it possible to harmonise the songs with modern instruments such as guitars and keyboards in recent years. Whereas all the songs sung by P.C. Thangvunga end on what can be called *doh*, 'Ka hmaah lui râl khaw mawi chu a awm' (K5) contains lines which also end on *sol* (suggesting dominant harmony) and even *re* (also suggesting dominant harmony or a passing minor modulation). As C. Chhuanvawra

and K. Thanzauva discuss in an interview,<sup>241</sup> it should be remembered that many of the Welsh hymn tunes, unlike their English and American counterparts, were in a minor key. Therefore, the appeal of a minor modality implied in some of the tunes might have come not only from the earlier Mizo songs but also from exposure to Welsh hymns. However, this has not informed current practice, since modern instrumental accompaniment invariably persists in a major key, despite the minor quality of the tunes as they are sung due to the flattened *mi*. Whether or not the composers intended such possibilities to be recognised, it is evident that the cadential structure of the western hymns had a considerable influence on their melodic style.

FIGURE 3.19 K5, 'Ka hmaah lui râl khaw mawi chu a awm.'

For example, an examination of S13 shows a strong correlation between the cadential patterns at the ends of the lines and those of K5 (Figure 3.19). In the following chart, the last three phrase finals of each line have been given in abbreviated form. For the Mizo example, only a 'possible cadence' has been suggested based on these phrase finals, since the song was not originally composed with specific harmonic intentions. Only four lines are given for S13 because the cadential structure of the verse is repeated in the chorus. The chart is illustrative of the fact that the phrase finals of the songs lend themselves to being harmonised with cadences that could credibly situate them within the hymn tradition to which *solfa zai* belong. This is not to say that this is a frequent occurrence, nor that there are not many other alternative cadential harmonisations possible for the given phrase finals. However,

<sup>241</sup> 9 April 2014.

the melody is evidently constructed in a way that suits such cadences, whereas the older Mizo songs sung by P.C. Thangvunga, invariably closing all phrases in the same manner, do not.

	Will the Circle be Unbroken? (S13)			Ka hmaa lui râl khaw mawi chu a awm (K5)	
	Phrase finals	Cadence chords	Cadence	Phrase finals	Possible cadence
Line 1	D L <sub>1</sub> S <sub>1</sub>	IV IV I	Plagal	D L <sub>1</sub> S <sub>1</sub>	Plagal
Line 2	R M R	II <sup>7</sup> I <sup>9</sup> V	Imperfect	M M R	Imperfect
Line 3	D L <sub>1</sub> S <sub>1</sub>	IV IV I	Plagal	D L <sub>1</sub> S <sub>1</sub>	Plagal
Line 4	M R D	Ic V <sup>7</sup> I	Perfect	M R D	Perfect
				S <sub>1</sub> D M	Perfect
				M R D	Perfect

FIGURE 3.20 Chart comparing phrase finals of examples of *solfa zai* with *khawhar zai*.

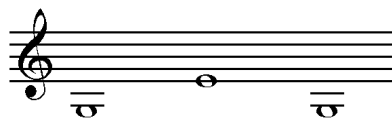
Passing reference has been made to the falling contours shared by *khawhar zai* and the older songs, but in chapter three some of the most common contour types found in *khawhar zai* were not found to have been prevalent in the older songs. These were contour types C, D and E, as repeated below:

Type C:  $\hat{5}_1$  with prominence of  $\hat{6}$



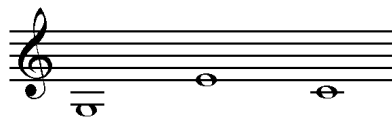
K1, K2, K6, K9, K10

Type D:  $\hat{5}_1 - \hat{3} - \hat{5}_1$



K1, K3, K4, K8

Type E:  $\hat{5}_1 - \hat{3} - \hat{1}$



K1, K4, K6, K9

Maintaining the 'best-fit' approach applied in chapter three, types D and E are both exemplified in K4 (Figure 3.21):

FIGURE 3.21 K4, 'Ka dam lai thlipui a râl hunin.'

Of the sample of *solfa zai*, eight out of the thirteen songs exhibited contours that were identifiable with either types D or E. See, for example, S6, at Figure 3.22:

FIGURE 3.22 S6, 'No longer we'll wander in darkness and night.'

Contours C, D and E all share a low *sol* as the starting point for a phrase, sometimes rising to a peak of *mi* before falling to either *doh* or *sol*. Though these seem to conform to the traditional pitch functions of *khawhar zai*, these contours actually confirm the harmonic suggestions made above, since types C and D require a phrasal ending on *sol*, implying a possible dominant closing harmonisation. Since the older songs invariably ended on *doh*, contour types C and D would never have been a familiar melodic



line before the encounter with *solfa zai*. This emphasis on *sol* and its harmonic possibilities also supports some of the earlier melodic findings of this section in which traditional pitch roles occasionally became re-defined. In all three of these examples, *sol* gains a new emphasis that is distinct from its traditional roles outlined in chapter three. What is also clear from the above summary is the suitability of the contours for application to the analysis of the western hymns. Perhaps their harmonic possibilities reflect this fact.

Having explored a number of musical features of the sample of *khawhar zai* that conform to some of the western songs known to have been practiced at the time that *khawhar zai* were first developed, the chapter will now close with a study of how the practice of *khawhar zai* itself is one which also shared social significance with the domestic experience of the Victorian missionaries, especially at times of death.

### 5.3 ZAIKHÂWM AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO EVANGELICAL RESPONSES TO DEATH

Chapter three (section 3.4) highlighted the way in which the ‘singing together’ of *khawhar zai* reflects the traditional Mizo practice of *zai khâwm*. This section intends to offer a parallel analysis of the same aspect of *khawhar zai* but from a nineteenth-century evangelical perspective of singing practice at times of death. It is important to consider the approach to death to which the British missionaries would have been accustomed, in order to identify whether any aspects of *khawhar zai* practice demonstrate an influence that would be less easy to identify from the perspective of the present British context.

Chapter two identified that death for the Mizo people is often understood to have represented a life stage in which a person’s basic needs remained unmet unless the person had lived a specific life of sacrifice to earn a place in Pialrâl. By contrast, British evangelicals in the nineteenth century often regarded death as a moment of spiritual enlightenment. The mourners were to be comforted with the thought that there would be no more sin after death, and it was an evangelistic opportunity to convert (Bebbington et al. 2007: 190). Bebbington describes a Baptist death of 1852, in which the dying person spoke of his assurance of sanctification, the absence of future clouds and the imminent release from suffering. It was said after he died that ‘death was here the conquered, not the conqueror’ (Ibid: 192). This prevalent attitude of conquering death by dying may be interpreted in terms of Bloch’s rebounding violence theory (1992). However, rather than a ritual, it was the reality of death which was conquered

by dying, and rather than return victorious to life, the victor would enjoy his transcendent status in heaven free from the fear of the evils of life on earth. It is in this way that the use of Pialrâl to refer to heaven among Mizo Christians may be understood, since the victorious identity of the *thangchhuah* man and his hope in a future state free from fear, matched the Christian hope for certainty and transcendence after death. As Zakunga wrote in an article for *Kristian Tlangau* in December 1911, '*thihna chu nunna ani*': for Christians, 'death is life.' This represents a significant shift in the attitude towards death among the Mizo Christians.

Evangelicals in Britain were particularly influenced by the ideal of the 'good death,' in which deathbed scenes became the subject of evangelistic tracts and romanticised sermons and art which 'showed people how to die' (Jalland 1996: 21). Ian Bradley describes this as the 'Victorian cult of deathbed morality' (1976: 187). Dying with earnest piety was the culmination of evangelical assurance of salvation and eternal life. Unlike the spiritual uncertainty associated with death among the Mizo people, there was a determined and resolute certainty in the discourse and rhetoric of evangelical Christians. On the other hand, Patricia Jalland (2002: 52) offers the reminder that the reality of death in the nineteenth century rarely matched the published stories:

But edifying deathbed declarations were rare outside the published didactic deathbed literature, as were good Christian deaths, and the very few examples came from the most devout families. Dying people were often unable to communicate or were unconscious in the final stages, while fever and delirium from common infectious diseases prevented clarity of thought and expression.

This section therefore acknowledges that although the rhetoric of death at the time expressed certainty and victory, the actual experience of many families might have been much closer to the despair, hopelessness and crisis of certainty that characterised the Mizo context at death. This also reinforces the argument of the previous chapter that whereas evangelicalism promoted the certainty of heaven and the possibility of an ideal death, the experience of most evangelicals would have involved a great deal of doubt and uncertainty about the subject, as is to some extent indicated in Habershon's hymn analysed earlier in this chapter.

By the late nineteenth century, there were increasing calls for moderation, decrying the extravagance and wastefulness of Victorian funerals. As early as 1875, George Phillips of Birmingham published a

pamphlet about ‘funeral reform,’ complaining that ‘the whole system of “funerals” and “mourning” is a standing reproach to the English nation’ (1875: 8). In addition to the expense incurred to the bereaved family, he also addressed his frustration with the many people who ‘flock to the houses where funerals are to be held, to pamper the paunch... under the false pretence of doing honour and respect to the dead. These individuals are skilled in warbling lamentations.’ Though the gathering at the *khawhar in* has never been referred to in such a negative light, there are evident parallels in the continued practice of members of the public visiting the house of bereavement and sharing in a feast. Again, this section makes the suggestion that although the Mizo practice seems to have existed prior to Christianity, it would not have seemed unusual to the missionaries.

Phillips’ description of ‘warbling lamentation’ is more problematic, since other sources suggest that singing at funerals, and especially at burials, was discouraged for much of the nineteenth century, as part of the call to seriousness that characterised the era. Jalland’s study of death in the middle and upper classes of Victorian Britain found that hymns about death were often recited or read instead of being sung to aid mourning, and were a source of spiritual strength as important as Bible passages (1996: 133-135, 281). Perhaps singing was considered a more working-class response to death, which is an attitude that Phillips’ derisory opinion of it may reflect. James Walvin supports this with the claim that Victorian funerals, especially among the working classes, became exceedingly musical with the appearance of brass bands marching to the grave and the rise in congregational singing (1982: 366). Jalland herself states that the scope of her study was deliberately limited to certain classes because of the great gulf between working class practices and other practices (1996: 1-2), so it is certainly possible that singing together rather than meditating on poetic texts together at times of death became associated with the lower classes of society.

Therefore, although the missionaries might not have shared the Mizo enthusiasm for singing for several nights to comfort the bereaved, it might not have been a wholly unfamiliar practice. It is indeed highly unlikely that the practice was a missionary suggestion. Kitty Lewis, from an aristocratic political family, described the Mizo practice in the following way, the exclamation mark perhaps revealing her upper-class sensibilities:<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Letter to her parents, 20 May 1923.

Another Lushai custom when anybody dies is to sing hymns in the house all night for two or three nights!

Nevertheless, hymns about death and heaven were certainly prevalent in nineteenth-century Britain. They might have been sung in the church rather than in the home, and were also popular at evangelistic revival meetings, which sought to convince people of their need to die with the certainty of heaven. Influenced to some extent by John Calvin's approach to music, the missionaries would have been convinced of the vertical and horizontal significance of hymns in their effect on communal prayer and the building up of the church (Begbie 2007: 108). Moreover, since the early nineteenth century if not before, the domestic singing of hymns as a family cultivated a 'non-acquired piety' from within, and it was among nonconformist evangelicals in particular that the value of hymns in reinforcing faith beyond the institution of the church was recognised (Ibid: 143).

Well-suited to a congregation of new worshippers in Mizoram, these hymns supplied the suitable vocabulary and terms with which to address God and to understand the Christian hope they shared. In this way, they were also more suitable than the sermons in developing a Mizo articulation of Christian hope. They therefore fulfil the formative and hope-inspiring qualities of Christian music proposed by Wren at the beginning of this chapter. Their ability to inspire hope was especially true at death; the hymn texts that had reassured the pious British evangelicals at death and bereavement came to be treated in a similar manner among Mizo Christians seeking terms with which to comprehend their hope but also their grief.

These hymns were among those introduced at an early stage by the missionaries to Mizoram. Of the hymns known to be popular at funerals in nineteenth-century England, translations of '*Abide with Me*' (S1) and '*O God our help in ages past*' (S7) have remained in the Mizo repertoire (Bradley 1997: 197). Although they are no longer sung in funeral contexts, they were probably among the few available at early Christian funerals. In 1909, Fraser wrote in a letter that a Mizo father who lost his baby daughter had found particular comfort in the hymn '*I have heard of a land far away*'<sup>243</sup> (S4). His wife wrote another letter in the same year that an orphan girl's last words had been the Mizo words to the chorus of '*Take the name of Jesus with you*' (S9).<sup>244</sup> These accounts attest to the fact that early Mizo Christians

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<sup>243</sup> Letter to Rev. R. Williams, 25 September 1909.

<sup>244</sup> Letter to Mrs. Williams, 10 December 1909.

embraced evangelical hymns about death and heaven for similar purposes. However, the way in which missionaries presented their adoption in the accounts noted above perpetuated the popular evangelical ideal of the good death, similarly referring to hymn texts as poetic illustrations of the plight of the dying or mourning person. Lorrain and Savidge give an early account of a Christian funeral from 1906, and similarly articulate it in a manner reminiscent of Victorian sentimental descriptions of the evangelistic (conversionist) potential of times of death (MGCC 1993: 27):

The scattered converts saw how wonderfully the consolations of the Gospel upheld the bereaved family, and, while the young men dug the grave on a hill-top hard by, many sat around the beloved dead, speaking of the land beyond the tomb, to which her spirit had gone. When the evening shadows began to lengthen, she was laid to rest, and, as we stood around the grave in the midst of that grove of waving banana trees, many of the converts witnessed for the first time a Christian funeral, and realised, as never before, that the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

The scene, which involves young men digging the grave and the burial taking place on the day of the death according to Mizo custom that survives today, is furnished with a new hope in Christian terms which offers consolation to the bereaved and the hope of future eternal happiness. The missionaries explicitly suggest that their funeral arrangements served to offer a new vocabulary and basis for hope, which encouraged a positive emotional attitude towards death.

Further evidence for the singing of evangelical songs at bereaved family homes of Christians, lies in the account of the beginning of the revival of 1913 in the village of Hmunhmelṭha near Champhai. Lalsâwma and Lalsangkima Pachuau both narrate that the revival began with the repeated singing of the Sankey hymn, ‘*Come, O Holy Spirit*’ at one of the gatherings at a *khawhar in* (Pachuau 2002: 121; a detailed account is given by Lalsâwma 1994: 217). This further affirms the association between revivalism and *khawhar zai* made in the previous chapter, since they share an emphasis on the hopeful pursuit of certainty in spite of earthly troubles and grief.

However, the adoption of hymns at the *khawhar in* also led to the decline in the spontaneous lamentation forms such as *ṭah hla*, mentioned in chapter three. In the contemporary context, it is widely accepted that *ṭah hla* no longer exists in the form that it used to. The bereaved may address the dead while they weep in loud, semi-musical voices (‘Supplementary Files’ folder of DVD 2, Track 2), but the poetic

devices of *tah hla* are not a part of this mourning. Now people cry out with simple expressions such as ‘Oh, why have you passed away?’ and ‘*Ka pa!*,’ ‘My father!’, for example. Margaret Zama agrees that *tah hla* is not as prevalent as it used to be, but remembers her sister’s death in 1979 when her elderly aunt chanted, ‘Let me weep, these people don’t know how to weep... you are too young to live, you are not fully bloomed but you know you have been snapped, plucked too early.’ Her father and grandfather also wept over her grandmother in a similar manner, and her grandfather used to complain if he went to a *khawhar in* that there was not ‘proper weeping.’<sup>245</sup>

Faced with the decline of this form and the rise of *khawhar zai*, it would be tempting to conclude that Mizo Christians have developed a funeral tradition out of the use of evangelical hymns that has replaced the longing for the individual through *tah hla* with a repertoire of songs that are exclusively intended for general edification. It does seem to reflect a shift towards the canonisation or standardisation of a collection of poetic compositions for certain settings reminiscent of the evangelical tradition.

Though the loss of *tah hla* is undeniable, it should be maintained that *khawhar zai* have become a Mizo musical form that emerged out of but was not adopted directly from the missionary hymn tradition. To Sherinian, the development of new musical styles among Christian Dalits in South India has been ‘the means of expression and transmission of indigenized theology.’ In other words, not only has Christianity been communicated in the vernacular language and in vernacular forms that contain local markers of identity, but the music itself has also been able to do this through its embodiment of the appropriate ‘aesthetic and social values’ (2014: 71).

Other scholars have frequently found a variety of composed and improvised repertoires employed at times of death, including Lila Abu-Lughod (1993) and Adrienne Kaeppler (1993b). In her study of Tongan laments, Kaeppler makes the useful distinction between *tangi*, which are performed ‘because of’ emotion, and *laulau*, which ‘trigger’ emotion and ‘demand contemplation and knowledge of the sociocultural system’ (Ibid: 497). The latter characteristic explicitly connects songs of bereavement with the indigenous knowledge systems and values of the Tongan people. It may also be argued that the difference between *tah hla* and *khawhar zai* have also fulfilled these separate functions, the latter in particular offering a means by which the wider community can know how to emotionally respond

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<sup>245</sup> Interview, 26 March 2014.

according to the cultural values, with the former being the spontaneous outpouring of grief of only the closest family members. The following part will address these social functions of *khawhar zai*.

#### 5.4 SUMMARY TO PART THREE

Part three has discussed over the course of two chapters the way in which *khawhar zai* was influenced by the evangelical values of the missionaries as well as the hymns which they brought, most of which belonged to the late nineteenth-century gospel hymn repertoire. Chapter four focused on the evangelical values in a way that expanded upon Bebbington's four main aspects of evangelicalism (2003 [1989]) to acknowledge the potential of hymns and poetry to express the doubt and uncertainties of life and its pursuit of certainty. This depended on application of Fiddes' suggestions about the differences between poetic and doctrinal metaphor (2000), as well as the studies of Marini who has similarly challenged common assumptions about evangelical hymns in the North American context (2002). This expansion is one that may contribute to future studies of worship in evangelical contexts, especially in its re-evaluation of millennialism as an attitude of hope whose presentation in songs is more nuanced than its doctrinal reputation may suggest. In developing the over-arching theme of hope, this part has also acknowledged that 'gazing to heaven' in the evangelical manner was not as exclusively prospective an attitude as might be expected; as Moltmann's theology of hope explains (1967), it depended on the retrospective gaze towards the Calvary event and the moment of conversion and salvation. *Khawhar zai* evidently contains significant allusions to Calvary both in the poetry and in its musical associations with hymns sung on Good Friday.

One reason for the ability of hymns to communicate doubts and uncertainties lies in their predominant composition by lay Christians. Saliers (2007) and Begbie (2002) have both explored this trend, and it certainly reflects the Mizo context in which many of the composers of *khawhar zai* were new to Christianity and had not necessarily had access to a complete translation of the Bible in their own language. Recognition of the 'lay' status of the local composers (although many went on to become ordained) contributes to a better understanding of the nature of their agency when responding to *solfa zai*. As the previous part noted regarding Patea, many of the composers were well-acquainted with the traditional Mizo systems of hope, belief and knowledge, and this would have informed their attempts at Christian poetry and songwriting.

Whereas several studies have addressed the reception of western missionary hymns by different cultures, ethnomusicologists, whose focus is primarily on the processes of agency and reception that took place, rarely attempt the theological exploration modelled in chapter four. These studies have instead informed chapter five's musical analysis, which has suggested specific musical ways in which local agents modified *solfa zai* in Mizoram. However, it has also shown evidence for traces of *solfa zai* that were retained in *khawhar zai*, such as the bigger melodic range, the increased autonomy of certain pitches and the introduction of harmonic possibilities into the monophonic melodic lines.

As in McNally's (2000) and Barz's (2003) studies of the active manipulation of foreign repertoires for local singing contexts, the Mizo example shows that *khawhar zai* was preceded by an adoption of evangelical hymns for a variety of local contexts which the missionaries might not have envisaged. This included the secular settings of *kaihlek* as well as the nightly *zaikhâwm* held at the *khawhar in*. However, this chapter has also shown that both satirical settings of hymns and domestic singing at times of death might not have been as unfamiliar to the British missionaries as might be supposed, though they would not have explicitly encouraged the practices.

*Khawhar zai* therefore offered Mizo Christians a way to mourn for their dead in a way that was appropriate to their sense of identity and matched the social values by being able to convey the sentiments of *lunglênna* and *ngaihna* through the poetry and several aspects of the musical style. This enabled them to claim ownership of the Christian repertoire. The primary question of this thesis asks how *khawhar zai* has survived instead of the *solfa zai* that remains a prominent repertoire in other worship settings in Mizoram. The local ownership of the repertoire, forged through local agency, may be one explanation, and the following part will demonstrate that this sense of ownership and local significance persists in modern practice, especially at times of bereavement.



## PART 4

### GAZING TOGETHER: THE PRACTICE OF KHAWHAR ZAI IN MODERN MIZO COMMUNITIES

*Lalmami had quickly taken me under her wing when I had arrived at her relatives' home in Champhai Bethel. My guide was nowhere to be seen, and I surmised that he would be sitting outside with some of the other men, many of whom were his own friends and distant relatives, chewing kuhva (betel nut) and exchanging entertaining stories. The afternoon sun was streaming into the home and I could sense little sorrow in the benevolent faces that surrounded me. It felt like a family reunion, some relatives having travelled all the way from Lunglei to be there. As the singing resumed, I was surprised to see several men and women stand in their places and shuffle their feet as if dancing. They did not proceed in a circle as I had witnessed in other lêngkhâwm zai settings, but their feet mimicked the same steps as they closed their eyes and lifted their hands while singing. I asked Lalmami whether this was customary. She told me that it depended on the family. 'You have to understand,' she said, 'the old man you see there is the head of our family. Everyone knows he is such a spiritual man. He loves to dance. People around here always feel comfortable coming to our home, they always feel free. They know that when they come here today they can be free to dance and praise God, and that is a blessing for us also.' I expressed my surprise and admiration for the atmosphere that had been created. She was gratified by this, repeating the comment to other relatives and treating it as a personal compliment to her family and locality.*

*Back in England, I was processing the many recordings that I had brought back with me. I opened the folder from the khawhar in I had attended in Theiriat, a village near Lunglei. As I listened to the audio files, I was moved to tears as the exuberant voices sang songs of hope and joy. I remembered the smiling welcome of the elderly widow, taking me off-guard by her handful of clearly pronounced English phrases. The battered drum with its distorted beat sent a pulsating resonance through my earphones. More typical of southern practice, the songs tended towards the solfa zai style and employed a keyboard as an additional rhythmic instrument, but the singing moved the participants in the same way as I had witnessed in Champhai Bethel: many stood in their places and shuffled dance-like steps, gazing up with eyes closed and hands raised. The hla hriltu's voice was amplified to the extent that it rang in our ears and compelled us to keep singing with all the energy we could muster. An interview with the widow the*

*next day had revealed that the village was in the midst of a spiritual revival, hence the damaged drum, and her own husband had been an enthusiastic participant at such events. She found the singing at her home to be a fitting reminder of and tribute to her husband.*

*Re-captivated by the experience as I sat at my desk in England, I sent a quick message to H. Muansangpuia who had been my guide on that occasion. I told him that the recordings from Theiriat had made a real personal impression on me. He was delighted with the comment, and promised to post it on the Theiriat YMA Facebook group as an encouragement. I had not intended my comments to be repeated, but Lalmami and H. Muansangpuia's responses reminded me that the practice of khawhar zai carries strong implications for local group identity and the positive enactment of the ideal community.*

This part reflects upon the gathering of the community that takes place when people die, drawing from a range of fieldwork experiences from 2014 as well as historical accounts. Its purpose is to understand the current state and significance of the *khawhar zai* repertoire for bereaved communities in Mizoram. Having discussed the retrospective and prospective aspects of 'gazing' in *khawhar zai*, the following two chapters therefore turn to the fact that *khawhar zai* involves gazing 'together,' as a group. The chapters will make particular reference to the song '*I hmangaihna zâra lâwma inkhâwm hnute*' (K3) by Thanherha, one of the songs that was sung at Champhai Bethel, although it will also refer to other songs and case studies. This part will offer a development of existing theories about the gathered singing community at times of bereavement by offering a theological analysis that identifies the community with eschatological themes. The second chapter (chapter seven) will attempt to question the degree to which the practice of singing as a community at the *khawhar in* achieves 'empathy' and 'collective memory.' Though there are greater convergences between 'context' and 'practice' than in the previous two parts, the division has been retained here in order to indicate that the first chapter's theological suggestions offer possible interpretative bases for the practice, whereas aspects of grief and memory are more immediately accessible and recognisable among Mizo practitioners.

This part benefits from one recent text on death in contemporary Mizo society, a chapter entitled 'Death and Locality in the Creation of Mizo Identity' in Joy Pachuau's book, *Being Mizo* (2014). It is an excellent study that challenges the prevailing view that Mizo society continues to be defined by its remoteness and tribalism, an attitude that chooses to ignore the urban experience of many Mizos who

are well-connected with the rest of India and the world. A weakness of her research on death is that she limits herself to an affluent urban locality (Ramhlun North) in Aizawl with little acknowledgement of the situation in rural areas and the dismissive opinion of Aizawl practices expressed by many who live outside the state capital. Therefore, though her findings in Ramhlun North shed interesting light on her theory that the urban *veng* (locality) is at the heart of modern Mizo identity, it is difficult to accept them as representative of the wider Mizo context. Nevertheless, her linking of local identity to funeral practice certainly reflects the experiences noted in the vignette above, in which my personal response to *khawhar zai* was received as a comment upon the whole locality.

One of the earliest ethnomusicological monographs on the subject of music and death was J.H. Nketia's *Funeral Dirges of the Akan People* (1955), containing a translated compendium of categorised texts and melodic transcriptions from his fieldwork in the then Gold Coast, now Ghana. He attempted to highlight the 'synthesis' in dirge forms between linguistic, literary, musical and performative aspects. Appropriate to the era in which it was written, the focus is primarily on 'literary expression,' through generating a typology of texts. He also draws attention to the social function of the dirge as providing a transition into the music and dance stage of the funeral, so he evidently does not consider the dirge to be a musical form. As such, the weakness of the study is that it maintains a distance from the emotional depth of funeral singing that would characterise later studies, although he does acknowledge that the dirges are intended to 'invoke sorrow as well as sympathy' (1955: 18). Though the remark is undeveloped, it is certainly prescient of later work on the evocation of emotions such as grief and empathy through musical practice that has influenced the present thesis.

A more recent publication on the subject is Magowan's *Melodies of Mourning* (2007a). Part two introduced her work due to its emphasis on the music's ability to evoke a learned habitus about nostalgia for a past time and place. However, she also explains the empathetic power of the music for the community through their collective participation. Building on Stanley Tambiah's theory of performative utterances (1968, 1979), she states that performative emotions are central to musical ritual and performance, demanding the total participation and exhibition of emotion in order for emotions to be effectively shared. This theory has been developed by other writers as shall be seen below, yet Magowan's unique contribution to the field lies in her bold harnessing of the theology of *perichoresis* (the communitarian participation of the Trinity) in order to contextualise her anthropological

observations in the Christian context of the Yolngu people (2007a: 142). Though this thesis will apply a different theological framework emphasising the eschatology of *koinonia*, it attempts to follow the methodological example set by Magowan.

Another ethnomusicologist who has achieved an effective engagement with theology is Jeffers Engelhardt in his study of choirs and congregational singing in Estonian Orthodox churches (2014). He associates notions of 'right singing' with the 'rightness' that underpins orthodoxy in theological and practical (orthopraxis) terms. Reflecting the findings at the end of chapter three, he notes the significance of the varied and localised musical styles which each claim a 'rightness' for their own locality and congregation. This he directly relates to the importance of 'praxis' in Christian worship as an engagement with the local and what he calls the secular. The following chapters share with his study an emphasis on praxis as a theological dimension of the use of music among Christians but resist interpretations based on aesthetic ideals of 'rightness' and 'transcendence' (See Engelhardt and Bohlman 2016) that seem remote from Mizo discourse about *khawhar zai* and Christian worship.

In addition to her ethnographic article, specifically examining a funeral tradition in Thailand (1998), Deborah Wong's book *Sounding the Center* (2001) offers more applicable theoretical ground for the study of ritual performance. Taking Victor Turner's influential view that ritual is performance, she finds certain rituals in Thailand (*wai khruu*) to be self-reflexive, ritually enacting references to ritual, music and performance in a way that constructs knowledge and power about ritual through its own discourse. She terms this 'metaritual' as an expansion of the notion of 'metaperformance,' in which there is an intensity of the shared experience that itself imparts knowledge about the ritual form. Like Magowan, she draws from Tambiah's theory that ritual involves a multimedia performance that combines formality, stereotypy, condensation and redundancy, which are experienced performatively, intensively and through indexical references. Such an approach can illuminate aspects of the music and performance of *khawhar zai*, which are to some extent self-reflexive in that in their very ritual performance they enact the imagined ritual performance of a heavenly gathering.

Richard Wolf's extensive studies of the music of the Kota people in South India have also regularly included references to the funeral context, and his book *The Black Cow's Footprint* (2006) particularly addresses theoretical aspects of ritual that relate to the ceremonial and identity implications of the manipulation of time and space in ritual settings. One of his primary spatio-temporal forms found in

various types of ritual is ‘anchoring,’ which can either be a micro event in the music or part of the overarching temporal structure of the ritual that orients the gathered participants to moments of collective agreement. However, in other articles (2000, 2001a, 2001b) Wolf has explored a more provocative theory introduced by the historian William Reddy about ‘emotives’ and found this to be of illuminating significance in the Kota funerary context.

Wolf has been one of the first ethnomusicologists to take consideration of Reddy’s theory, yet it has much in common with other studies since it again shares a debt to Tambiah’s performative utterances. He describes emotional expression as a type of speech act that can be self-altering and thus performative, giving rise to his term ‘emotive.’ Music is not Reddy’s area of research, yet Wolf has successfully harnessed the term for his analysis of funeral music since the music’s performance involves the self-altering articulation and translation of internal emotions. He has subsequently influenced other ethnomusicologists such as Mills, who cites emotive theory as a possible interpretation for the lament-like weeping songs in traditional South Korean funeral rituals, since the songs serve as a ‘sign of an emotional state and... an instigator of the same state’ (2012: 151).

Although Reddy’s case study is revolutionary France, the first half of his book *The Navigation of Feeling* (2001) represents a thorough exploration of the current state of psychological (biological) and anthropological (cultural) research into emotion, proposing emotives as a possible reconciliation of both approaches. He aims to establish that emotions are ‘largely (but not entirely) learned’ (Ibid: xi), thereby attempting to unite both the universality but also the cultural relativity of emotions. Perhaps this is again reminiscent of Macquarrie’s articulation of a ‘universal’ framework for hope that contains culturally-specific cognitive/intellectual terms. As a historian, Reddy asserts that emotions also have and are a part of history and finds that this is rarely but occasionally acknowledged by ethnographers, such as Renato Rosaldo who found that emotions have a ‘force’ or trigger that can often be a historical moment or life event. He ultimately claims that his theory successfully ‘restores’ the sense of agency and historical significance to the self, which he believes both psychological and anthropological studies have generally ignored (Ibid: 111).

Dueck’s study of wakes amongst the Ojibwe people in Canada has found that through the singing, ‘groups of people constitute themselves as communities’ (2013: 104). Though his identification of ‘traditional eschatology’ in some songs was a minor aspect of his work that contributed to the second

part of this thesis, his primary focus is on the contrast between ‘imaginaries’ (social formations imagined through the mass mediated circulation of performances) and ‘intimacies’ (social formations involving the interaction of face-to-face activities in performance).

While the context of *khawhar zai* is neither mass-mediated nor involves a performer-audience relationship, there remain theoretical resonances with his articulation of music in public spaces as a site in which imaginaries and intimacies interact as a ‘civil twilight.’ In fact, the Mizo setting adds a layer of complexity since *khawhar zai* takes place in the private space of a family home that is transformed into a temporary public space for the local community. No invitation is required to enter the space where the collective face-to-face practice of singing generates a sense of intimacy among the participants, yet this also contributes to the collective imagination of the eschatological social formation of heaven. Following the frameworks of hope devised by Macquarrie, which have informed this thesis (1978), it can be understood that the presence of the members of the *veng* at the *khawhar in* restores the certainty in the future security and stability of the *veng*, both in the present and as a future memory that gives hopeful assurance.

It is also important to consider that the multi-dimensional quality of musical practice can simultaneously contain a multiplicity of grief processes that other media could not adequately embrace. The anthropologists Davies and Arnold van Gennep may offer the reminder that while the experience of grief at a funeral may be a rite of passage for the intimate family members, it might also be a rite of intensification for wider community members, who are reminded of past grief and loss (Davies 2011: 102-109). The experience of grief therefore varies within the gathered community. It opens up the problem of empathy, and the degree to which participants in a group, especially at a funeral, feel empathy with each other and the bereaved family.

By depending on Reddy’s theory of emotives introduced above, it is possible to suggest that ritual singing at funerals enables the mourners to both announce their grief collectively and to experience it more intensely as an individual. Like performatives, emotives are not the same as the emotion, but are instrumental in changing, shaping and intensifying the emotions to which they refer (Reddy 2001: 128-129). Thus, the intention of music is not simply to express grief, but also to transform the experience of grief. Among the Yolngu people, Magowan writes in similar terms (2007b: 465):

While it should be recognised that consistency does not necessarily occur between performers' emotive expressions, inner states, and evidence of transformative potential in ritual performance, social expectations are such that singers must perform until some tangible evidence of emotional transformation has been achieved.

This resonates with Steven Feld's chapter in his edited volume *Senses of Place* (Feld and Basso 1996: 91-136), in which he proposes the term acoustemology to describe the exploration of sonic sensibilities as a means to make sense of one's place and to acquire knowledge. It is associated with the 'pursuit of knowledge' already referenced in this thesis, which Feld claims can be achieved through the sonic medium of singing.

It is a position which has subsequently influenced the work of Qureshi and Shelemy, the latter exploring the power of 'sung reminiscence' in her book *Let Jasmine Rain Down* (1998). In the Bosavi context that Feld studies, singing involves an 'intensification of place memories through song' in which 'places are laminated to memories, biographies and feelings' (1996: 114). This thesis has already established the way in which *khawhar zai* musically and historically contains associations with the past, yet this part will explore the personal memories triggered for participants through the singing. In evoking a shared experience of remembering the dead and identifying with the local place, the sense of the imagined community is intensified.

If the practice of *khawhar zai* at the *khawhar in* is to be considered as something inclusive and contributing to empathy among the gathered members, this suggests a perspective on community that can be both ecumenical (crossing denominational boundaries) and social. As this review has shown, the latter has received much anthropological attention, but the former depends on a theological framework that is rarely applied to music. The following chapter therefore directs itself towards a tentative theological suggestion about the enactment of the longed-for Kingdom of God through the singing.

Far from being an imposition of western theological frameworks, the approach taken here to analyse the singing of *khawhar zai* as a foretaste of the Kingdom of God is inspired by the songs themselves and their allusions to the community experience of heaven as well as the frequent designation of the repertoire by Mizo commentators as 'songs of longing for heaven.' The previous part showed how the songs as compositions contain a 'gaze' towards heaven, but chapter six will examine the enactment of this hope through the practice of singing.

Monique Ingalls is one of the key innovative contributors to the eschatological interpretation of contemporary Christian music practice. She is among the few to have attempted to mediate between the theology and anthropology of community as an ethnomusicologist. In an article highlighting the eschatological implications of musical practices at contemporary Christian conventions, she specifically situates her analysis in terms of the ‘imagined community’ or ‘narrative utopia’ of heaven enacted by the gathered congregation (2011: 264), a term borrowed from the work of Phillip Wegner (2002: xvi). She argues that this enactment through the musical performance (which may be described as a ritual much along the same frameworks as Wong suggests), participants gain a shared sense of knowledge and certainty about their hope in the gathering of heaven.

Alastair Borthwick, Trevor Hart, and Anthony Monti in their chapter in *Resonant Witness* (Begbie and Guthrie 2011: 271-294) seek to find out how ‘eschatological resonances’ take place in music (Ibid: 273). They claim that ‘visual and musical models of praxis might even be thought of as themselves embodying dimensions of theological praxis through their continual modelling of the processes of human creativity and communicativity.’ They bring together the areas of creativity and eschatology that music theology can offer to the present study. They make a refreshing call for theologians to engage in public liberative praxis in a way that musical performance can do (Ibid: 252-253). This sets a challenge not only for theologians but also for ethnomusicologists to apply a praxis-oriented approach to the study of music in Christian communities: one that, in this case, takes account of the performative and participatory aspects of the music practice of *khawhar zai*. Chapter six will expand further on the theme of praxis by examining a greater range of pertinent literature.

This literature review has spanned ethnomusicology and theology in setting the theoretical ground for the following two chapters. It has highlighted the existing studies that have drawn attention to the fact that participation in musical ritual involves the articulation and experience of ‘performative emotion’ (Magowan) or ‘emotives’ (Wolf and Reddy). These, in turn, provide the acoustic setting in which associations with memories of past places and people can be evoked. The complex dimension of the public and private nature of the setting of *khawhar zai* contains possibilities for the enactment of an imagined community with a temporarily shared identity, and the Christian context permits a further theological leap to be made towards an eschatological interpretation of this imagined community. These



theoretical foundations will inform the subsequent two chapters, which will bring this thesis to its conclusion.

## CHAPTER 6

### IN CONTEXT: THE GATHERED COMMUNITY AT THE KHAWHAR IN

As has been shown in the previous two parts, the texts of *khawhar zai* contain numerous metaphors that teach participants how to imagine heaven, life after death and the presence and Kingdom of God. These combine metaphors drawn from the older Mizo beliefs about life after death, as well as biblical metaphors often located in Israel. Despite the diversity of poetical and musical devices used, they are all enacted in the same way, through the singing together of the songs as a gathered community, irrespective of social status or denomination. As Joy Pachuau makes clear in her study (2014: 225), it is often the fellowship of the *veng* through the gathering at the *khawhar in* that determines who 'belongs' to the community. This chapter will explore the significance of this act of gathering to sing by exploring the inclusiveness of the tradition and proposing a theological interpretation of it. The song that will form the primary case study in this and the following chapter will be Thanherha's '*I hmangaihna zâra lâwma inkhâwm hnute*' (K3) which was sung at the *khawhar in* at Champhai Bethel described in the previous vignette.

Thanherha (1894-1977) had served in France during World War I and composed forty songs after his return between 1920 and 1924. He therefore was composing in the earliest years of the development of *khawhar zai*, yet unlike Patea, whose experience and context was almost entirely based in the way of life before Christianity, he had been exposed to western Europe in some of its darkest moments, and had had his faith tested by war and the challenges of living in a different culture. Given this background, it is interesting to note that his songs, in both the words and the music, belong very much to the *khawhar zai* tradition, evoking the sentiments and hope found in other examples. There is little if any influence of his life in Europe, and it is possible to speculate that the horrors he had witnessed had planted in him an even greater longing and nostalgia for a peaceful existence that he expresses in his songs. In this way, he epitomises the poetic voice of this crisis period that has been located in and around 1919, following the war, influenza epidemic and famine, that seems to have provoked a collective attitude of mourning not only for the dead but also for a past way of life.

This chapter will therefore sustain the theme of hope and longing. Having addressed the various directions of the hopeful 'gaze' in the previous two parts, this chapter will examine the inclusive and

communal nature of the act of ‘gazing’ in hope during the practice of *khawhar zai*. This reflects Macquarrie’s volitional aspect of hope (1978) since the act of gathering and negating social and religious differences is an act of social critique that strives for greater unity among participants. The theological interpretation that this chapter will offer in its final section will also be articulated in intellectual and cognitive terms of hope familiar to Mizo Christians.

## 6.1 INCLUSIVITY AT THE KHAWHAR IN

K3 was composed in 1923 following a convention in Manipur after which the villagers were heartbroken at having to see the visitors depart. Thanherha composed this song about the difficulty of separation (more generally understood as bereavement in its current usage) which became the new revival song of that village and spread rapidly throughout Mizoram (Lalrâwna 2011: 420). It is therefore classed not as a ‘longing for heaven’ song but an ‘*inlâwmna leh inthlahna*’ (greeting and farewell) song. Thanherha expresses an aspiration for permanent unity without future separation common to evangelical hope but also important to the gathered singers at the *khawhar in*:

*He lei hi zawng tapa inthenna hmun a ni,  
Aw Lal Isu, i hmangaihna zârah,  
I chatuan ram mawia ka lèn hun chuan,  
Kan inthen tawh lo vang ringtute hi.*

This whole earth is a place of weeping and separation,  
Oh, Lord Jesus, because of your love,  
When I come to your beautiful eternal land,  
We believers will not depart again from each other.

Thanherha refers to the separated people as ‘abandoned lonely children,’ including all those who had met together at the convention and had then been forced to part from each other. He calls upon Jesus to remain not only with himself, but also with all the participants. In doing so, he hints at a spiritual gathering between disparate people that endures, as long as they believe that Jesus remains with each of them.

*Aw, chêng rêng la Lal Isu, kan hnênah,  
Min awmpui la khawhar riangvai fate;  
I hmêlah lâwmna a awm si,  
Ka ngai tâwp thei lo’ng che.*

Oh, always remain, Lord Jesus, beside us,  
Remain with us, the abandoned lonely children;  
In your face there is joy,  
I will not be able to stop longing for you.

To some extent the singing of a song such as Thanherha's may be considered 'meta-ritualistic' according to Wong's terminology, since the song contains articulations of the importance of the gathering which is taking place during the singing. This self-reflexive nature of the song is found in other examples as will be shown later in this part, and in so doing the singing of the song constructs knowledge about the significance of the gathering at the *khawhar in*. By singing together about the pain of separation and the hope for reunion, an 'anchoring' (in Wolf's terms, 2006: 2) takes place in which the participants agree upon the nature of their ritual gathering together as a symbolic fulfilment of the song's aspiration.

It has been implicit yet not fully discussed in this thesis so far that the community gathering at the *khawhar in* welcomes all members of the locality, regardless of their denominational affiliation or socio-economic status. Although communitarianism is often cited as an important aspect of Mizo culture, contemporary society bears witness to certain divisions along the lines of denomination, political affiliation and even clan or tribe. It is at the *khawhar in* that a community may truly meet without any of these distinctions. The gathered community will come from all the local churches in the area, and the service rarely bares any significant denominational features. A leader of a well-known sect in Tlangsam, Lalzâwna, also confirmed in an interview that his members attend other people's burials just as any other community members.<sup>246</sup>

This marks a contrast from the past in which religious worship took place on an individual and familial level with the priest. Communitarian occasions included festivals and feasts but these did not usually involve acts of religious worship. McNally has also identified the way in which hymns used at funerals among the Ojibwe people have become symbolic of a national identity rather than a religious one, and people of all religious persuasions are able to meaningfully participate (2000a: 847). Joy Pachuau has similarly found that some non-Mizo people are able to find acceptance into the Mizo locality in which they live by participating at the *khawhar in*. She states that, 'it is participation in the practices surrounding death that brings about acceptance or exclusion as Mizo' (2014: 225). She refers to the Hindu and Muslim migrants from neighbouring states and countries but even my own research experience as an outsider affirmed her hypothesis. The fact that I had attended a *khawhar in* in a particular locality was sometimes mentioned on subsequent occasions by members of that locality as a

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<sup>246</sup> 7 February 2014.

good reason to trust and talk to me. K.L. Biakchungnunga points out the uniquely non-divisive nature of the modern funeral gathering in Mizoram:<sup>247</sup>

When someone dies, we put away all our differences, come together, cry together, sing together.

R.L. Thanmawia explains in more detail.<sup>248</sup>

You know there are so many church denominations here in Mizoram with deviance of doctrine, with some of us like antagonist, attacking, stealing sheep<sup>249</sup> and all this, but we sing the same hymns, we sing the same thing together, there is no denomination in any public gathering.

Other participants in group interviews also expressed their appreciation for the unity that they experienced during *khawhar zai*.<sup>250</sup> What is interesting about R.L. Thanmawia's comment, however, is that although he was being interviewed about the *khawhar in*, he chose to extend his statement to 'any public gathering.' This is worthy of some investigation since the majority of public gatherings that include singing in Mizoram, such as church meetings, crusades and the Christmas *zai khâwm* are actually marked by denominationalism. By 'public gathering,' he seems to be referring instead to events which are not made public by the space they inhabit but by the relationships between the participants. It is beneficial to regard 'public spaces' in the manner in which Dueck defines them, as spaces in which the differences between face-to-face intimacies and public imaginaries can be mediated (2013: 8). Those who gather at the *khawhar in* may not know everyone present but engage in face-to-face interaction and collective singing which enacts their intimacy. Their very awareness of the diversity of the participants contributes to the 'imaginary' of performing with and for an imagined wider public. It is this nuanced relationship between participants that leads to comments such as R.L. Thanmawia's which extend the experience in the *khawhar in* to wider social conclusions. My experiences narrated in the previous vignette also attest to the fact that the performance of the singing is imagined to be of wider public significance, representative of the whole locality's spirituality or musicality, regardless of whether every member of the locality was present.

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<sup>247</sup> Interview, 13 May 2014.

<sup>248</sup> Interview, 18 March 2014.

<sup>249</sup> 'Sheep stealing' is an informal term for enticing Christians to move church or denomination.

<sup>250</sup> For example, Kapveli and Lalnghinglova, 31 January 2014.

The experience of equality, peaceful co-existence and Christian fellowship that interviewees mentioned relates to what biblical scholars refer to with the Greek term *koinonia*. The term is relevant to numerous aspects of Mizo Christian life, from the ethic of *tlâwmngaihna* to the structure of the *zaikhâwm* singing sessions. However, *koinonia* in its truest sense refers to a foretaste of heavenly existence, a brief but memorable experience of the quality of fellowship that might be enjoyed in heaven. In the New Testament, it occurs for a fleeting moment in the earliest days of the first Christian community, as described in the book of Acts, in which the early followers shared all their food and possessions so that they ‘had all things in common.’<sup>251</sup> A brief experience of *koinonia* on earth serves to provide a basis for a Christian’s eschatological hope for such fellowship in heaven or in the new Kingdom of God.

The context of the composition of ‘*I hmangaihna zâra lâwma inkhâwm hnute*’ (K3) seems to be a response to a brief *koinonia* experience. Thanherha expresses longing and nostalgia for a past moment in which he experienced the intensification of fellowship at a Christian convention as a form of *koinonia*. This thesis has located the ‘past’ gaze of hope towards the past Mizo way of life but Christian hope also involves a past gaze towards memories and events that have provided a foretaste of the hoped-for future. In part three this was located in the Calvary event that is the basis of evangelical hope, but for individuals the memory of past experiences can also be articulated in their longing for a future reunion.

Several examples from the sample of *khawhar zai* also express hope for heaven as a place where joys will not fade, deliberately contrasting it with the temporary experiences of joy and fellowship experienced on earth. In K1 (‘*A chatuan ro luh tumin i bei zêl ang*’), Thangvungi acknowledges the temporary nature of the earth’s beauty, describing it as a place where ‘joy is only fleeting’. The second and fourth verses are given below:

*Lei mawina tinrêng pawh hi a la râl ang,  
A chuai lo bâng chatuan lalna chu;  
An hril zêl ang thangthar thlengin,  
A ram a kin lo vang.*

All the beauty of this earth will pass away,  
The eternal kingdom will never fade;  
The new generation will forever proclaim,  
His kingdom will never come to an end.

*Lei hlimna râl leh mai thîn hmuna chêngte,*

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<sup>251</sup> Acts 2: 42-47 (NRSV).

*Then tawh lohna ram min siam sak vângin,  
Haleluia! Chhandamtu chu,  
Fakin awm zêl rawh se.*

For us who live in a land where joy is only fleeting,  
He is preparing a land where there will be no more separation,  
So 'Halleluia!' to the Saviour,  
Who should be praised without ceasing.

In K5 ('*Ka hmaah lui râl khaw mawi chu a awm*'), Zumi anticipates heaven as a place where songs of praise and joy will never end, and where she 'would not stop praising.' She evidently writes out of the experience of times of wonderful joy and praise, but these moments have always passed away. Like Thangvungi and the other composers, her hope is for a place where those experiences will be repeated in perpetuity in heaven. The last two verses illustrate this below:

*Hre Chiang teh ila aw, ka fak ning lo 'ng,  
Râlîtinaah lêng mah ila;  
Vân hmun ropui thlen hunah chuan,  
Fakna hla daiin ka ring lo.*

If I fully comprehended, I would not stop praising,  
Though I wander through a land of no freedom;  
At the coming of the glorious heaven,  
I don't believe the songs of praise will ever fade.

*Aw, vân Thlarau Thianghlim lo lêng ang che,  
Thinlung sual kalh hawng leh ang che;  
I ram mawiah min hruai ang che,  
Lâwmna kin tawh lohnaah chuan.*

Oh, come Holy Spirit of heaven,  
Unlock this sinful heart;  
Lead me to your beautiful land,  
Where joy will never end.

The theologian Steve Guthrie adds that there are practical aspects of the communal music event that can also serve as an 'enactment' of Christian unity in Christ. These include the way in which music enables participants to engage in 'differentiated unity' in their respective roles, 'freedom in submission' to music leaders, and 'sensitivity to and awareness of others.' Indeed, he specifically applies this to funeral wakes, finding contexts of mourning to be among the rare moments when the broader community can truly be experienced as such (Begbie and Guthrie 2011: 109). Without addressing any particular cultural context, his comments strongly relate to the case of *khawhar zai*, as he appreciates the 'corporate character' of wakes in general as 'integrative, presenting opportunities to acknowledge, affirm, or realise roles as family, friends, members of the community and contributing musicians' (Ibid: 108). This helpfully moderates any suggestion that participants gather without any individual identity.

Rather, they gather as equals but each have a certain role that determines the manner of their interaction with each other.

Certainly, in the Mizo context, the unity that reflects *koinonia* is also distinguished by the ‘differentiated unity’ of the range of roles and identities of the participants. Hmingthansanga, a YMA President in Champhai, takes pride in the way the YMA enables the rest of the community to offer help to the bereaved family.<sup>252</sup> Active men will help to collect the wooden benches owned by the YMA and arrange them in the home of the bereaved family as well as outside wherever there is space. The house itself will be prepared for the large crowd, with panels of the interior walls being detached to increase space, and obtrusive furniture being stored in a private place. Other young men will be involved in making a coffin and digging the grave. Young women make use of the YMA urns and cups to organise the refreshments of either tea or water. Traditionally, younger teenage girls would collect extra firewood from neighbours that would be needed to cater for the large number of guests, however in urban areas where gas is more common, this practice is in decline and they might collect money and rice instead. A typical YMA money box is shown in Figure 4.6.

Two men known to be reliable and skilful drummers will be nominated to lead the singing, usually belonging to the same church as the deceased.<sup>253</sup> This ensures that the style of the singing is appropriate to the bereaved family. A woman will also be appointed to sit beside or between them, equipped with a hymn-book and microphone if there is one available. She is the *hla hriltu*, the song-proclaimer, who announces the words of the songs as they are sung. She can also have a powerful impact on the atmosphere of the singing as noted in chapter three. Prominent musicians appointed by both the Baptist and Presbyterian Churches have continued to place importance on the training and education of these two leaders of *khawhar zai*. Lalromawia of the Presbyterian Church holds practical workshops<sup>254</sup> in which he teaches the material that he has presented and published in other contexts (Synod Music Committee 2013) and C. Thanseia and C. Zaṭhuama in Lunglei have produced unpublished documents for use in their equivalent workshops for the Baptist Church.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Interview, 23 January 2014.

<sup>253</sup> Interview with C. Thanseia, 25 April 2014.

<sup>254</sup> I attended a *khuang* workshop held by Lalromawia in Tanhril, 29 May 2014.

<sup>255</sup> Both C. Thanseia and C. Zaṭhuama provided me with copies of their seminar materials



This differentiated unity is suggestive of another biblical form of ‘imagined intimacy,’ which is the metaphor of the Church (all Christians) as the ‘body of Christ.’ Through the Calvary event, Christians consider themselves to be joined to one another as ‘one body,’ and this language is used throughout the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul explains the concept in terms that affirm both the differentiated unity of this body and the inclusivity that it entails:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ... there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.

Elsewhere in the same passage, Paul recognises the fact that each member of the body fulfils different functions within it, just as the human body consists of a variety of parts. However, he concludes in the extract given above that the Christian body is marked by its mutual concern and inclusivity, negating any possible divisions that might arise.

This supports the application in this section of Dueck’s terms of intimacies and imaginaries, since the gathered participants at the *khawhar in* believe they are intimately related to each other as members of Christ’s body, despite their other differences. By participating in the singing, they participate in the public imaginary of the wider body, which consists of all other Christians in their locality, in Mizoram and the world. The temporary space of the *khawhar in* is the site in which the singing of *khawhar zai* both enacts and imagines these two elements. Before developing the theological implications of this understanding, the following section will attempt to provide a necessary balance by considering cases of exclusion in Mizo society, especially at times of death.

## 6.2 INSTANCES OF EXCLUSION AT TIMES OF DEATH

Having analysed the importance of the unity practised at the *khawhar in* especially through *khawhar zai*, it is also important to recognise cases of exclusion from this unity. This serves to qualify some of the assertions made about inclusivity but also to reinforce its importance as an ideal aim of the *khawhar in*. Wong (2001: xxiv) asserts that ritual ‘maintains the terms of exclusion’ by creating insiders and outsiders. Joy Pachuau’s claim that participating at the *khawhar in* can make an outsider an insider actually supports this notion, since it recognises that people become insiders through their very

attendance and participation in the ritual at any appropriate level of the differentiated unity described above. Those that do not participate, whether Mizo or non-Mizo, are by implication outsiders.

This section will begin by addressing cases in which individuals self-marginalise themselves from society and the consequences this can have when they die. It will conclude with cases of unexpected death, and show that a more inclusive attitude toward such situations has emerged. The section will argue that this is a consequence of the introduction of different intellectual/cognitive terms about death and hope following Christianity, in which some situations that would have inspired fear can now be responded to with hope, especially through the demonstrated support of the gathered community.

It is at this point that this thesis, which has focused on the Christian hope for heaven, must make mention of notions of hell. Today, orthodox Christian belief in Mizoram would hold that hell, in some form of being without and apart from the presence of God in eternity, is what all people face until they become a Christian. This is why a high importance is placed on the activism and conversionism of evangelicalism, since there is a sense of urgency that people must be saved from this fate. However, it is interesting to note, that despite its admittedly important status as a motivating factor for evangelistic activities, it is rarely explicitly discussed, described or articulated in Mizo discourse, whether in songs or sermons. This was affirmed in a joint interview with Tlânghmingthanga and K. Thanzauva and was supported by my own experience in Mizo churches<sup>256</sup>. It is exemplified in the fact that Patea may have been motivated to compose as a result of his dream about hell, but composed a song that focused instead on heaven (Chapter two).

In addition to the intuitive suggestion that Christians prefer to speak about heaven than hell, it is also important to acknowledge that hell, even in western scholarship, is an ambiguous and much-debated existence given its varied representations in the Bible, depending on the historical and cultural setting of its multiple biblical references. Discussions primarily centre on the distinction between the Hebrew *Sheol* (a general underworld that dominates the Old Testament references) and *Gehenna*, (a place of eternal punishment that is described in the New Testament). In fact, biblical references to all forms of life after death (including the resurrection of the dead) as well as their resulting interpretations by a range of Christian communities throughout history are highly complex and non-uniform, such that it is

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<sup>256</sup> 16 April 2014.

really beyond the scope of this study to meaningfully situate the Mizo perspective within those of the missionaries and subsequent Christian influences.

While it may be argued that ‘heaven’ is equally varied in its biblical appearances, the book of Revelation offers at least a rich and extensive visionary description that has stimulated the Christian imagination with poetic imagery that has easily been adopted in songs. It is possible that a lack of clarity in Christian discourse about hell may have been imparted by the missionaries and persists today as it does in many other Christian communities. Indeed, the fact that the *khawhar in* is a distinctly non-denominational setting suggests that diverse doctrinal positions on the nature of hell are not considered problematic. This suggestion would be supported by the fact that notions of sin and transgression were also slow to be assimilated by Mizo Christians, as was discussed in chapter four. In the context of the present section, it must simply be acknowledged that self-marginalisation from the Christian life in Mizoram, while it may be held to lead to hell, is not specifically said to do so within the funeral setting<sup>257</sup>. Similarly, on occasions of unexpected death, responses rarely if ever question the fate of the individual. This is perhaps with the exception of cases of suicide, which the following discussion will reveal to be a complex issue for Mizo Christians.

### 6.2.1 SELF-MARGINALISATION

Death represents the ultimate intensification of otherness. In death, every person becomes an ‘other,’ unable to contribute to the community and with an existence difficult to explain or comprehend. Davies mentions this as a major source of religious practice, in which communities feel compelled to create an ancestor out of the newly ‘othered’ or marginalised member of their community. Following Hertz, he understands funeral and burial rites to be processes in which a person becomes reintegrated into the society as an ancestor (2005: 52-53; 2011: 97, 103). The inclusivity of the funeral practices resolves their exclusion from the community occasioned by their death. As chapter seven will demonstrate, it is certainly the case in Mizoram that the atmosphere of the singing reflects the spiritual and social status of the deceased and is an important part of the reintegration process.

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<sup>257</sup> I probed several interviewees on this point, none of whom were willing to engage with the problematic nature of the fate of such individuals.

However, for some people, marginalisation or exclusion has already taken place in life and can adversely affect their treatment at death. As described above, the first few days after a death demand the involvement of all members of the community. There is an expectation for everyone to play their part in helping the bereaved family to cope with their loss, whether by digging a grave or making an appearance to sing. This relates to the ethic of *hnatlang*.

Closely related to *tlāwmngaihna*, *hnatlang* is an ethic that Zaichhawna Hlawndo claims to be one of the main aspects of Mizo society that has continued to characterise the Mizo church (2011: 36). Roughly translated as ‘voluntary work in the community,’ it includes almost any activity that involves community members working together for the sake of the wider society. Here, the basic value of minimising labour highlighted in chapter two expresses itself in the communal effort involved in ensuring the burden of work does not depend on a minority. Both now and in the past, this means helping in construction projects, keeping public places clean, preparing a feast or collecting firewood. Many church buildings have in part been funded and constructed by organised *hnatlang*.<sup>258</sup> Even public roads are often built and maintained in part by voluntary effort. Perhaps the most pertinent example of *hnatlang* in the past was the carrying of a dead body to its home village. If this involved travelling some distance, villagers would compete with each other for the honour of fulfilling the task in a game called *inzawnchuh* (Sangkima 2004: 62).

However, there are some individuals who pointedly refrain from such involvement. For a host of possible reasons, they are involved in neither church nor YMA activities and alienate themselves from society. Perhaps their lifestyle is condemned by the majority, or perhaps they deliberately reject the Mizo cultural expectations. They might also have died in what would locally be considered to be shameful circumstances. For such individuals, there is less compulsion felt to reintegrate them as ancestors through the customs of the *khawhar in*. In their lifetime, they are content to live an isolated existence, and by tacit agreement, it is possible that the rest of the community will resolve not to honour their deaths. Their absence from other funerals will have been noted, and their own funeral will therefore be poorly attended, the young men will be unwilling to dig a deep grave for someone who never dug

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<sup>258</sup> For example, see Roberts’ letter home dated 12 July 1957, ‘We have been collecting for the new chapel for about four years now and a lot of voluntary labour has gone into the carrying and breaking of stones and sand for the concrete. When built it will be the first reinforced concrete building to be built in Lushai.’ Held in the National Library of Wales.

for others, and the singing will not be heartfelt.<sup>259</sup> In rare cases where an individual had no church affiliation, the YMA will take over the burial function usually provided by the person's local church. Lallungmuana recounted two such instances in an interview.<sup>260</sup> Therefore, nobody is left utterly neglected, but fewer people will make the effort to attend the home and the singing will be lighter in mood.<sup>261</sup> Only the concern for the bereaved relatives will motivate some to make a show of support.

The reputation of the family is therefore also important.<sup>262</sup> The system of *râlna*, the giving of symbolic gifts to the bereaved family, means community members give consideration to the integrity of the family to whom they are generously giving money and provisions. R. Thangvunga recounted the death of a man in his locality who left behind his alcoholic sons. After the YMA obligations were finished, the community did not have any inclination to attend the house again, saying, 'only those drinking sons are there, there is no meaning in going there.' According to R. Thangvunga, the sons did not welcome guests with the proper courtesy, and they were thought to have spent the condolence money on alcohol.<sup>263</sup>

Several pastors explained their approaches in such situations. Vanlalchhuanawma said:<sup>264</sup>

While in my own locality there in Laipuitlang, whenever there is such event happened, then the elders would like to call on me to conduct funeral. Fortunately or unfortunately! I used to feel a little bit reluctant as they do also, but I know I have to face when I was called upon to face the situation. It is not easy because whatever be the cause of death, whatever be the reason of death, then we have to be pastor not only to the bereaved family, even to the dead person.

The pastor R. Zolâwma also found himself in a difficult position with a man who had died with an outstanding record of service in the church and in the YMA, both of which were recorded faithfully in documents for him to check. However, the man had died from excessive alcohol consumption while visiting a distant village. The cause of his death was at odds with his documented character and reputation, and R. Zolâwma in his pastoral role was required to address the shock of the community and family members.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Such a view was expressed on numerous occasions, such as in a joint interview with R. Thangvunga and R.L. Thanmawia for example, 18 March 2014.

<sup>260</sup> 1 April 2014.

<sup>261</sup> Interview with Margaret Zama, 26 March 2014.

<sup>262</sup> Interview with R. Lawmzuala, 8 May 2014.

<sup>263</sup> Interview, 18 March 2014.

<sup>264</sup> Interview, 19 March 2014.

<sup>265</sup> Interview, 24 February 2014.

Although the YMA do not usually make any obvious distinction and fulfil the same responsibilities for everyone, there is one exceptional case called *ensan*. This term literally means ‘to turn one’s eyes away from.’ It is of sufficient social significance that it has been included in the Mizo Customary Law (Government of Mizoram 2006). Though originally given by the chief or elders of a village, it is now a punishment declared and enforced by the YMA to individuals who disobey either the YMA or the Village Council and has a fixed duration of one or two years. R. Lawmzuala explains that if the person dies while under the discipline of *ensan*, their family will not receive any support except from the church, and the burial would have to be arranged privately.<sup>266</sup> However, the sociologist Lallungmuana suggests that in reality it is much more moderate:<sup>267</sup>

But in actual practice, if any misfortune happens to the person, we will still come forward. It is a kind of threat. Like for example the wine sellers and the wine brewers, they are there. Some YMA branches issue some kind of *ensan* on this. It’s formal, but if some misfortune really happens then they are not forgotten, people come forward, but few in number.

*Ensan* is perhaps as close as a person can get to ostracisation in Mizoram’s close-knit society. Without the adequate rite of reintegration, these dead souls become stuck in transition, half-forgotten by the society to which they never fully belonged (See Davies 2002: 125). It may be just a threat, but it is the fear of such treatment that is also part of the inspiration that has kept the Mizo funeral traditions and community demands so faithfully followed even today.

This section has acknowledged that exclusion can happen in Mizo society, especially as the result of self-marginalisation on the part of the individual, by not participating in social life and by not attending at the deaths of other members of the community. This affirms the significance that Joy Pachuau assigns to the *khawhar in*, as an important ritual that establishes which members of the community are insiders.

### 6.2.2 UNEXPECTED DEATH

The response described above is directed to those who self-exclude themselves from the community during their lifetime. However, in cases such as accidental death or death in unfortunate circumstances,

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<sup>266</sup> Interview, 8 May 2014.

<sup>267</sup> Interview, 1 April 2014.

Christian practice seems to have brought a decline in the stigma once associated with them, so that the dead are given equal opportunity to be reintegrated after death. This section will examine some of these cases and highlight how there is now a greater degree of inclusivity practiced than in the past.

*Sarhi* is a traditional term that embraces all unnatural or untimely deaths, from accidents to murders or suicide. A *sar* is a small rainbow that glimmers for a short time. It was thought that if a *sar* was seen, then a premature death was imminent, hence the name *sarhi*: rainbow-death.<sup>268</sup> If the rainbow was large, then it was believed that a chief was soon to die. Traditionally, on the occasion of *sarhi*, the rites would remain similar but there would be less of an obligation for members of the community to attend or bring gifts, since the circumstances of the death were associated with fear (Parry 1976 [1932]: 408).

K. Zawla (1981 [1964]: 55-60) states that such deaths in the past could be attributed to the spirits Sanu,<sup>269</sup> Manghauva, Lalthakhupa, for fatal convulsions, and Dawi, for fatal stomach problems. Another spirit, Zachham, was thought to seize a hundred spirits each day. It is to this spirit that the idiomatic term *zachhamlak* ('taken by Zachham'), for sudden death, is owed. These beliefs accompanied a fear of haunted natural sites and objects, especially those that resembled grave mounds, as places of imminent death. Missionaries actively challenged these beliefs by including arguments within their primers and school texts, which stated that such things were not to be feared. Perhaps because of this assertive approach, *sarhi* is no longer considered especially frightening or evil. Most such deaths today receive exactly the same treatment as any other death. It is evident that the introduction of new cognitive terms that replaced fear with defiant hope transformed the nature of the hope associated with such unfortunate deaths. However, as found in parts two and three, the acceptance of such teachings was by no means immediate. It required, first, the revivalist experience that inspired Mizo Christians to engage their own agency in accepting and negotiating the terms of hope offered by the missionaries.

Suicide was also *sarhi*. The introduction of teaching that associated it with murder meant that suicide came to be considered an especially terrible death. It became more associated with the Christian notion of sin, than the misfortune of *sarhi*. This perhaps means that it was treated as an even more serious matter than it had in the past, but the response certainly became less associated with fear. Its former

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<sup>268</sup> Interview with R.K. Lalhluna, 25 April 2014.

<sup>269</sup> Wife of Pu Pawla, the spirit who guarded the entrance to the afterlife. See McCall 1949: 81.

associations with *thianglo* (bad luck) are understood to have led to a fear-induced inactivity (in Macquarrie's terms) on the part of the community members who may have taken ritual rest instead of attending the house of the bereaved.

Habert Sailo, who researched the Mizo response to suicide as part of his theological studies, is of the view that the insurgency period in the 1960's and 1970's seemed to diminish the value of life because of people's frequent experience of violence. After this period, suicide, especially by hanging, became more common (2010: 26-28). Habert Sailo's research indicates that the majority of suicides today take place in the urban centre, the city of Aizawl. Most victims are young unemployed males who choose to end their lives due to either drug abuse or relationship problems. Shame having been brought to a person's family is a major cause, as well as families being ashamed to seek help. However, suicide also brings shame in a Christian society, since the majority of churches continue to teach that victims of suicide cannot hope to go to heaven (Ibid: 35). As such, a normal funeral is given but some churches do not ring the bell as they would on the occasion of other deaths, and Joy Pachuau claims that the Presbyterian Church did not even acknowledge suicides in the past (2014: 144).

On the other hand, pastors face the challenge of responding to individual contexts, and the Baptist pastor Vanlalchhawna Kiangte narrates one funeral he conducted of a girl who had hanged herself:<sup>270</sup>

Hanging, killing herself... that kind of suicide may be kind of murder, we say like that. But to me it was not exactly like murder. Out of despair, desperation, she could not help herself and finally took her own life. But if she was pushed to that extent by her experience unexpectedly, I feel that God still can save her. So it depends upon her experience with Christ before. That is my own conviction.

The Christian response to suicide evidently remains complex, and the tragic nature of the death is likely to bring greater, not lesser, attention of the community who feel compelled to comfort the bereaved.

If a person dies unexpectedly away from home, every effort is made to return the body to the home as soon as possible. The importance of being buried in one's own community gave way to the custom of carrying the dead body to their home village. Until the early twentieth century, volunteer messengers would send the news ahead to each village, and young men were expected to be ready in all conditions.

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<sup>270</sup> Interview, 26 February 2014.



The missionary D.E. Jones records a notable instance in 1927 in which Howard Dinwiddie, an American surveyor for North East India General Mission died in Champhai and was carried to Aizawl in this way, such that the men covered eighty-seven miles in thirty-two hours (Thanzauva 1997: 79).

Lorrain records another death in Lunglei in 1906 in the following way (MGCC 1993: 27):

It was arranged that Buka's dead body should be carried home, a distance of three ordinary days' journey over the mountains. After committing the bereaved ones in prayer to the Heavenly Father, the corpse was wrapped in a sheet, and then lashed to a pole, and several of the young men started with their sad burden as soon as they had eaten a hasty breakfast. It is the custom in Lushai, when a body is being carried home in this way, for the youths of every place through which it passes to turn out and carry it on to the next village. In this manner, enormous distances are covered in a single day. So Buka returned to his poor old mother...

Although modern transportation exists for such situations today, the same dedication is still expected of young men when the coffin is to be carried from the home to the grave, and it is a fundamental cultural expression of *hnatlang* amongst these young members of the community (Nag 1993: 181). A later missionary, Horace W. Carter, described it as such in an article for the *Missionary Herald* in March 1938 (54). He used the example of Lushai schoolboys carrying a body home from a hospital and missing their classes as a result to demonstrate the way in which 'breaks' in the routine 'cannot be termed holidays for they mean not pleasure and games, but hard work and service for others.'<sup>271</sup>

A mother dying in childbirth is called *raicheh*. In the past, her baby would be buried alive with her. This arose out of a belief that the baby would not survive a year without its mother because her spirit would come to take the baby away, so it would be better to let the baby go with her immediately (Lawmsânga 2010: 76). *Cheraw kan*, a lively bamboo game, was practised at the funerals of such victims in order that the mother's spirit might be sure of a safe passage to Mitthi Khua (Margaret Pachuau 2009: 13). From a pragmatic perspective, there really might have been little chance of a baby surviving long without its mother. Twins were another special case, and Lawmsânga claims that one of the pair was considered to be a manifestation of an evil spirit, so that both were 'left in the forest to die' (2010: 91). Again, it might have seemed inconceivable that a mother could nourish and care for two babies at the same time. Lorrain and Savidge's wives found as early as 1905 that their work in caring

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<sup>271</sup> Lloyd (1986: 215) cites a similar occasion from Ngopa in 1919.

for orphans contributed to the cessation of these practices, since they demonstrated that babies could survive even in unlikely circumstances (Lorrain 1905 in MGCC 1993: 20).<sup>272</sup> The acceptance of these new methods shows that babies had not been buried out of contempt or religious fear as such, but out of past experience and knowledge of the fate that awaited motherless babies. Orphanages continue to form a prominent part of the charitable work in Mizoram, organised both by churches and non-denominational NGO's, indicating the change in attitude that has come with the possibility for vulnerable children to survive even without their mothers.

Though the examples given here reflect a general shift towards inclusive community responses to all types of death, an exception that is still undergoing change is the case of *hlamzuih*. *Hlamzuih* refers to the death of a baby or young child, or to stillborn babies. Parry's observation was that (1976 [1928]: 388):

Lusheis call such babies *hlamzuih*, but observe no *hrilh* and bury them in an earthenware pot, under the house or in the garden.

According to Lorrain, *hlamzuih* was not limited to babies, but referred to those for whom an animal was not sacrificed at their death, such as families too poor to do so (1940). For babies, this sacrifice was not only unnecessary but considered *thianglo*, or taboo. Similarly, not observing *hrilh*, the day of rest, was usually equally tabooed, but not in the case of *hlamzuih* infants. Thus, there was an inversion of conventional duties in the case of *hlamzuih* and such deaths went almost unnoticed by the community.

Today, in cases of *hlamzuih*, there will be no church or YMA organisation of any mourning ceremony. There is no obligation for the community to offer any condolence. Knowledge of the death is spread by word of mouth but there is no official announcement (*zualko*) and the death is virtually ignored. Today, more conventional burials are conducted, since burials at home are now forbidden, but there is no singing and no gathering.<sup>273</sup> Recently, the Presbyterian Synod passed that their churches will begin to offer more public support to families in which there has been *hlamzuih*, but the Central YMA subsequently resolved that they, on the other hand, would not make any changes to the practice. R. Lawmzuala claims that the proposals of the churches simply represent an extension of the current

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<sup>272</sup> And subsequent female missionaries. Glover (1944: 16-17) gives an account of the similar experiences of Edith Chapman and Olive Dicks, among the earliest female Baptist missionaries.

<sup>273</sup> Interview with R. Lawmzuala, 8 May 2014.

practice, since the church will offer a prayer at the home without singing, whereas in the past there would have been no acknowledgement of the death. It is a controversial subject, and on a local level, changes are taking place. For example, in February 2014 in Khawbung, all the local churches, YMA and NGO's agreed to cease the *hlamzuih* tradition within their village.

R. Zolâwma, a Baptist pastor and scholar, identifies the fact that traditional society did not place a high value on children, especially when they were at an age when they could not make any contribution to society.<sup>274</sup> As this chapter has shown, contribution to society affected one's treatment at death, and babies were mere dependants who had not yet acquired value in the community. It is strikingly similar to the tree burials of babies observed by Caroline Humphrey in Mongolia; the justification was given that a normal funeral was not possible since babies had not yet had the 'integration rite' performed at five years of age (1996: 198). In Mizoram, without having been fully integrated by participating in and contributing to community activities, the reintegration function of *khawhar zai* and the *khawhar in* become somewhat redundant. Vanlalchhawna Kiangte makes the point that the maintenance of *hlamzuih* practices can have the practical advantage of minimising the trouble to society, and that some churches follow the YMA procedure but offer a normal Christian funeral and burial for the close family at any time of the day instead.<sup>275</sup>

One reason for the confusion surrounding *sarhi* and *hlamzuih* is that they seem to be difficult to explain when the majority of people believe that death always happens at God's appointed time. Habert Sailo's survey showed that 78.3% of his respondents agreed with this latter concept, but then were reluctant to accept the necessary implication that *sarhi* and *hlamzuih* are deaths appointed by God (2010: 35). As long as such a belief prevails, it is clear that the church response is bound to remain ambiguous. This reflects the inherent uncertainty in the evangelical experience highlighted in chapter four, in which Christians may absolutely believe the doctrinal truths associated with evangelicalism, yet they encounter experiences and events that remain difficult to comprehend.

The sorrow and confusion associated with these particularly distressing forms of bereavement have been represented in several *khawhar zai* composed on such occasions that have remained important in comparable bereavement contexts. In the *Lêngkhâwm Hla Bu* (2008) edited by C. Manvela for Kahrawt

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<sup>274</sup> Interview, 24 February 2014.

<sup>275</sup> Interview, 26 February 2014.

Veng YMA in Champhai, thirty-one songs are listed in the section specifically intended for occasions of the death of an infant. Saihnûna composed several of these. As has been seen elsewhere in this thesis, he frequently composed songs following the commissions of other bereaved families, so it is likely that those whose children had died often requested him to compose a song that would respond to their particular situation of grief<sup>276</sup>. The existence of these specific songs and their continued publication demonstrate the important role *khawhar zai* can play in providing a means by which the community can participate in and actively (volitionally) express a hope that admits the uncertainty and doubt of the circumstances.

This section has shown that most unexpected deaths today are treated with equal inclusivity. The circumstances of the death no longer adversely affect the community's response, largely because the terms of hope have, according to the contemporary narrative, shifted to a hopeful vocabulary rather than one that leads to the inactivity of fear in response to certain types of deaths. Cases of suicide might be an exception, since the church remains ambiguous about the nature of future hope concerning such cases, but the individual responses of pastors seems to involve an active concern for the bereaved family and some examples of *khawhar zai* offer a nuanced expression of hope and longing specifically for such contexts. Individual attitudes towards *hlamzuih* also seem to be changing faster than institutional practices and guidelines. The previous two sections have shown that the nature of a person's treatment at death in the present Christian context depends more on how they lived than how they died. Having established the context of death in modern Mizo communities in greater detail, this chapter will close with a section that proposes a theological basis for its interpretation, returning to Thanherha's song (K3) as a stimulus for discussion.

### 6.3 ENACTING THE KINGDOM BY GATHERING TOGETHER TO SING

Although K3 is a song of sorrow at departing, it is important to note how the first line acknowledges that the parting takes place after having 'gathered with joy.' Rather than dwell on the sorrows of earth, Thanherha remembers the joy of fellowship that has taken place. This memory is what impels him to

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<sup>276</sup> One example from these thirty-one songs is Saihnûna's '*Hringniang an liamna thlafam khua chu e,*' ('The land of the dead where the living go') in which the parent directly calls upon and misses their child with common terms of affection such as '*ka nau*' and '*bawihthe*'.

hope for another such gathering of joy in the future, in heaven. The hope for reunion is based on the immediate experience of a happy gathering.

*I hmangaihna zâra lâwma inkhâwm hnute,  
Kan lo inthen darh hianin Chhandamtu,  
Min hnêmtu an awm love, khawvêlah,  
Aw Lal Isu, kan hnênah lo lêng la.*

When we who have gathered with joy because of your love  
Depart from each other, Saviour,  
There is no one in this world to comfort us,  
Oh, Lord Jesus, come and walk beside us.

This happy gathering is what connects bereavement contexts such as those described in the vignette that opened this part of the thesis, with revival settings. Chapter four already made this connection in a soteriological sense, but it can be explored here in a way that emphasises the act of gathering together to sing as an enactment of the hoped-for Kingdom. Even the composer Saihnûna claimed that poetry was a ‘bridge to heaven,’ making the hope for it more convincing (Thanmawia 1998: 90). Poets often referred to heaven as a city, house or street, emphasising the importance of community in their conception of it. Some examples are given below from the present sample:

*Aw, chu hmun ngei chu maw lo ni,  
Kan chatuan in tûr chu.*

Yes, indeed, this very land,  
Will be our eternal home.<sup>277</sup>

*Tin, chu khawpui mawi ka thlen hun chuan,  
Kan lénna ram reh lam hi ka hawi tawh lo 'ng;*

Then, when I reach this beautiful city,  
I will not look back on this lonely land where we are but visitors.<sup>278</sup>

*Ka hmaah lui râl khaw mawi chu a awm,  
Thlen ka nghâkhlel khawpui mawi chu;*

There is a beautiful city before me on the river-bank,  
I am impatient to reach that beautiful city;

*Chu khawpui mawi lam chu i pan zêl ang,*

Let's keep pressing forward to this beautiful city,<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> From K1.

<sup>278</sup> From K4.

<sup>279</sup> From K5.

In these examples, heaven is expressed in the familiar terms of ‘city,’ ‘home’ and ‘land.’ The word translated city, *khawpui*, literally refers to a large town or village, and it is worth remembering that the majority of composers and singers of this era had never encountered a city that exceeded the scale of a large village. This was the greatest picture of urban space that could be imagined at the time, though for modern Mizos the scope of a *khawpui* has of course become much greater. Nevertheless, the term still implies a sense of urban domesticity and homeliness, a curiously public intimacy, which is well-suited to the popular conception of heaven in the songs.

This final part of this chapter will propose a theological interpretation for the communal and inclusive aspect of the practice of *khawhar zai* highlighted so far. The suggestion made earlier that the Christian congregational singing can offer a momentary experience of *koinonia* that provides a foretaste and hopeful desire for the Kingdom of God has been explored by other ethnomusicologists. For Ingalls, the eschatological discourse of an entire event at a Christian conference is largely shaped by the songs. The sound of the singing itself is often likened to the sound of heaven. She has found the use of music at Christian conventions to ‘reinforce’ the certainty of the eschatological beliefs of the congregation (2011: 262):

This pervasive linkage of actual conference worship with ideal heavenly worship strongly suggests that attendees’ musical performances created a space where their social ideals and religious beliefs were conjoined and mutually reinforcing... participants are also encouraged to interpret their corporate worship experiences as a foretaste of worship with the heavenly community.

She explains how congregational singing can ‘create new constellations of social relations’ that are brought to bear on their ordinary life together (2011: 264). In this way, it appears to be a liminal stage from which a community returns with a transcendent attitude towards the world around them, enacting an ‘imagined community’ of the body of Christ as suggested earlier in this chapter. Her suggestion also reflects a similar negotiation of public and private relationships between participants to that which Dueck describes (2013). Wood and Wild-Wood have similarly described the role of hymn-singing amongst Congolese Anglicans in creating an ‘alternative community’ (2004: 157). Clive Seale, in his overview of sociological literature about death and bereavement, has argued that many people who are bereaved find means by which they can ‘assert membership of an imagined community’ (1998: i). This,

he says, achieves a ‘maintenance of the human social bond in the face of death,’ which is a ‘resurrective practice’ (Ibid: 2).

The recognition of the significance of the imagined community in the ethnomusicological work of Ingalls (2011) and the sociological work of Seale again begs a theological extension in Christian contexts to the imaginations of heaven and the community of the Kingdom. Particularly when informed by Seale’s suggestions about bereavement, the importance of asserting membership of the Kingdom of God at the *khawhar in*, effectively achieved through the singing of *khawhar zai*, is established as part of the grieving process. This religious assertion parallels the social assertion of membership of the local *veng* through participation in *khawhar zai* that this chapter has equally demonstrated to be the case. Writing on the Mizo context, an elderly scholar F. Lianchhinga explains that ‘the poetical words [of *khawhar zai* had a] far-reaching effect to the bereaved hearts to visualize in imagination the heavenly realms where there is no sorrow, sickness and death... we are evident that the old world view which has no hope is substituted by new expectation attaining everlasting life.’<sup>280</sup>

Application of the term ‘Kingdom’ is deliberate since it implies an existence with a fixed social structure. Its earthly connotations reflect the urban domesticity of heavenly metaphors highlighted in the songs above, as well as the multiple ‘imagined communities’ which are asserted through participation, both religious and social. When the social structure of a Kingdom is expected to take the form of *koinonia*, something which Christians might at one point have experienced, the hope for the rule of that ‘Kingdom’ to come on earth, as is prayed in the Lord’s Prayer,<sup>281</sup> is more deeply understood. Mizo Christian hope can therefore be expressed as a longing for the imagined community of the local *veng* to match the imagined community of heaven.

Feld observes that the weeping context among the Kaluli people is one which, unlike other social situations, ‘does not involve creating tensions’ because the purpose for coming together is mutually understood and not set upon ideological differences. He continues, ‘they go with the ability and often with the explicit desire to suspend their thoughts, to reflect on feelings, and to be moved’ (1990: 222). In Mizoram, it is uniquely in such a context as the *khawhar in*, that participants gather with a shared sentiment through which there is no debate or argument to be had, but an inner sense of identification

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<sup>280</sup> Type-written note following interview on 16 May 2014.

<sup>281</sup> See Matthew 6: 9-13 (NRSV).

with the shared belief in heaven. The experience is momentary, as Rochungnunga affirms the relief gained from singing *khawhar zai* rarely lasts beyond the singing period,<sup>282</sup> but this conforms to an understanding of *koinonia* as a temporary condition. Through musical practice, the imagined Kingdom briefly aligns with the imagined *veng*, offering an experience that can form the basis of the hope that is sung. Though such enactment has rarely been considered in cases of Christian funeral rituals, the concept is not new to anthropologists.

On temporary metaphorical enactments in the ritual context, Turner offers an example of the Ndembu people for whom one ritual symbol, the *chijikijilu*, metaphorically ‘connects the known world of sensory perceptible phenomena with the unknown and invisible realm of the shades,’ by which he means death (1969: 9, 14). While explaining the different planes of classification, he adds that these metaphorical connections are temporary and last only the duration of the ritual process for which they are relevant (Ibid: 41). He is also clear that ritual symbolism comes from experience, so must be developed over time and not taught outside the ritual context (Ibid: 43). This supports Wong’s theory of the ‘metaritual’ in which the components of the ritual themselves teach and provide knowledge about the significance of the ritual. Parts two and three have shown this to be the case in the way *khawhar zai* contains terms of hope from older Mizo and evangelical traditions that teach participants how to articulate their hope at times of death. However, it is apparent at a deeper level through the enactment of the hoped-for Kingdom through practice of *khawhar zai* that substantiates the hope for the Kingdom that the songs express.

The notion of enactment, as expressed by ethnomusicologists and anthropologists, finds its theological equivalent in terms of praxis. Theological praxis is the kinaesthetic and quotidian practice of theology beyond the confines of the academic institution. It is an especially dominant theme in liberation theology discourse, usually characterised by an agenda for active social change, harnessing the volitional moral critique of Christian hope. C.S. Song, a Taiwanese liberation theologian, has for example written that the ‘mandate of heaven’ is to live heaven on earth with a human spirit of ‘agony and hope’ (1982: 145). In Mizoram, where K. Thanzauva has pioneered the development of ‘tribal

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<sup>282</sup> Interview, 7 February 2014.



theology' particularly in the Mizo context, theology is considered of little worth without praxis.<sup>283</sup> He rejects any theology that cannot be articulated through acts of praise and worship, such as in music. The enactment of *koinonia* and hope for the Kingdom of God through collective singing demonstrates a praxis-oriented form of eschatology that is particularly welcome among Mizo Christians today.

Paul Tillich's definition of praxis as 'the self-creation of life in the personal-communal realm' (1963b: 65) is helpful here, since it can be brought to bear on the creative process of congregational music at times of death to 'create' an experience of life as a community. Just as Davies' 'words against death' verbally refute the lifelessness which death asserts (1997: 6-8), music can similarly challenge the finality of death at the *khawhar in* through praxis by creatively enacting the communal and abundant life of the Kingdom of God. Tillich's use of the term 'personal-communal realm' once more suggests a return to Dueck's theory, since praxis is defined as taking place in a space that is at once intimate and invoking of an imagined public. Praxis necessitates the intimacy of personal interactions as well as the concern for an imaginary wider community. Since the *khawhar in* has already been offered as a unique space in the Mizo context in which this can happen musically, then it is reasonable to locate the praxis of hope for the Kingdom of God in the same space.

This section has mentioned the emphasis on praxis made by theologians in Mizoram, and there is none more relevant to the subject at hand than Tlânghmingthanga's own analysis of *lêngkhâwm zai* from an eschatological perspective (1995) that has already made valuable contributions to the present thesis. He summarises his review of biblical eschatology by saying, 'the reason God grants us a view of the future is to encourage us to witness Christ and serve him in the present and to wait faithfully for his second coming with hope' (Ibid: 28). This effectively expresses the equal importance of the past ('witness'), the present ('service') and future ('wait') that this thesis has similarly found to contribute to Christian hope. To him, the ultimate hope as found in the Bible is the Second Coming of Christ. Whatever the particular eschatological (and millennial) position adopted, the aim associated with the Second Coming is the establishment of the new Kingdom on earth, referred to variously as the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven, in which the returned Jesus is Lord or King.

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<sup>283</sup> For K. Thanzauva's most recent treatment of praxis in theology, see 'A Synthetic Praxis: A Coordinating Principle of Contextual Theology,' an unpublished paper presented at *Seminar on Methodology for D.Th Candidates* at Senate of Serampore College in 2014.

‘Kingdom hope’ in Christianity is often associated with millennialism, primarily discussed in chapter four. However, as stated previously, Vanlalchhuanawma has argued that the Mizo notion of the Kingdom has less to do with Christ’s real reign over earth and more to do with the passing of the present age into the eternal one. Rather than focusing on a real millennium to take place on earth, he argues that Mizos understand it more generally to herald ‘the ending of the present age and the ushering in of the new age that will be for eternity.’ To him, rather than the typical western ‘other-worldly’ manifestation, ‘it is with this consciousness of citizenship of heaven that they [Mizos] live on the earth to transform the earth as people of heaven, transforming the earthly existence towards heavenly existence.’<sup>284</sup> This reflects the findings of this chapter in which Mizo conceptions of heaven and the Kingdom often find their expression in domestic terms that long for the new domesticity of the heavenly city.

Liangkhaia serves as a suitable model for this perspective, having led the revivals of 1919 as a prominent evangelist, two years before he was ordained and shortly after his theological studies. The Kingdom of Heaven he believed meant ‘the rule of the Gospel, the coming of heaven to earth’ (Lalchungnunga in Khiangte 2013a: 105<sup>285</sup>). Today, the Kingdom can therefore be observed wherever Christ reigns, in other words in the form of the church. This ongoing establishment will be perfected in eternity, and is ‘the eternal plan of God, and the deepest point in theology.’ Liangkhaia would certainly have viewed gatherings of believers as tangible moments of the Kingdom on earth. He was also convinced of the future bliss of heaven and added that ‘those who are moved by the Spirit can have a foretaste of this future bliss even while on earth’ (Ibid: 107). The early composers of *khawhar zai* often directly referenced the Kingdom itself, whether in terms of the ‘eternal land’ or even Zion. These isolated verses from K1 and K6 respectively are representative of the language that is present throughout the sample in Appendix A:

*Lei mawina tinrêng pawh hi a la râl ang,  
A chuai lo bâng chatuan lalna chu;  
An hril zêl ang thangthar thlengin,  
A ram a kin lo vang.*

All the beauty of this earth will pass away,  
The eternal kingdom will never fade;  
The new generation will forever proclaim,  
His kingdom will never come to an end.

*Chungtianga lêngin thla an zâr,*

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<sup>284</sup> 19 March 2014.

<sup>285</sup> Lalchungnunga’s source is Liangkhaia’s text, *Pathian Chatuan Remruat* (1974).

*Natna leh lungngaihmaten;  
Thihna tlâng chhîpa chuang kan ni,  
Nunna ram i thlîr ang u.*

They roam around the sky and spread their wings,  
Sickness and sorrows;  
We are at the peak of the mount of death,  
Let's gaze towards the kingdom of life.

The latter example, in particular, reinforces the collective act of gazing from the mountain top towards the Kingdom, despite being beset by present troubles. The songs clearly situate their hope in the Kingdom as a place that is longed-for with a melancholy gaze. As chapter four highlighted, it falls perhaps to the openness of musical and poetic forms to communicate intelligibly the beauty and nature of the imagined Kingdom. Indeed, Lalzâwna, the leader of a sect near Champhai, put forward his conviction in an interview that *khawhar zai* is surely the kind of music the angels sing in heaven.<sup>286</sup> The beauty of the music determines the nature of his imagination of heaven, as Ingalls has similarly observed at Christian conventions in North America (2011). It is important to draw attention to the prominence of 'singing' within the text of *khawhar zai*. The following lines of Patea's '*Ka ropuina tûr leh ka himna hmun*' describe singing:

*Chatuan lâwm hla chu kan sa rual ang*

We sing the eternal song of joy together

*Haleluia! Ka fak ning lo vang*

Halleluia! I will not tire of praising

Mizo scholars have rarely, if ever, noted the fact that many *khawhar zai* compel the singers to sing about singing. Although these phrases and allusions to singing in heaven are probably derived from translations of the western hymns, it is important to recognise that when a song references singing in heaven, it encourages participants to imagine that singing to sound like the singing in which they are presently engaged. This meta-musical activity should certainly have a profound impact on their imagination of heaven and it is possible that the community singing at the *khawhar in* is an enactment of that imagined heavenly singing, especially since the songs describe it explicitly. Again, this directly

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<sup>286</sup> Interview, 7 February 2014. A recording of worship from his sect is included on DVD 2, 'Supplementary Files,' Track 4.

lends *khawhar zai* to an analysis framed in terms of metaritual, since the songs also train and evoke the importance of singing because they reinforce the hope in the fact that there will be singing in heaven.

This chapter has therefore provided the context necessary to this part, which seeks to explore how *khawhar zai* enables participants to gaze and hope together through singing. It has drawn from ethnomusicological and anthropological literature to describe the ritual function of the singing as self-reflexive in nature, singing about the very terms and aspirations of the hope it seeks to inspire. The chapter has acknowledged instances of exclusion in a way that in fact reinforces the wider significance of the gathering at the *khawhar in* as a behaviour that determines a person's identity as an insider. Finally, tangential theological concepts appropriate to Mizo Christian discourse have been identified that can situate the practice of *khawhar zai* in a praxis-oriented enactment of *koinonia* and the hoped-for Kingdom of God.

## CHAPTER 7

### IN PRACTICE: PERFORMING EMOTION THROUGH KHAWHAR ZAI

The previous chapter established how the gathered community expresses itself in the singing of *khawhar zai* in general terms, with reference to both theological and anthropological issues of praxis and the imagined community. This chapter will turn to some specific ways in which this is achieved in practice, through the emotional responses to death and the evocation of collective and individual memory expressed through the singing. This will draw from the literature about performative emotion introduced at the beginning of this part, treating *khawhar zai* as a practice that can have a transformative emotional effect on its participants.

Several Mizo respondents claimed that the *khawhar in* is intended to console the bereaved family, strengthen the community and provide an opportunity to receive spiritual blessing.<sup>287</sup> The songs are crucial to achieving these aims, and whereas the latter two aims reflect the discussion of chapter six, the emotional concerns of the bereaved family are the subject of the present chapter. Some conclusions in this chapter may point towards more universal musical aspects about the expression of grief and others may be more specific to the Mizo context. Reflecting upon the title of this part of the thesis, this chapter will show how participants ‘gaze together’ in memory of the dead and in an empathetic experience of grief transformed by hope through the singing.

#### 7.1 ENCOUNTERING DEATH TOGETHER: PERFORMING EMOTION AND EMPATHY

This section explores how the practice of *khawhar zai* enables participants to perform and learn to collectively express emotions suited to the Mizo response to death. Such a discussion may begin by interrogating the significance of the word ‘*khawhar*’ to describe the repertoire and practices associated with bereavement. In another verse of Thanherha’s song (K3) referred to in the previous chapter, the composer describes himself as ‘lonely,’ following the departure of his friends:

*Khawharin Lal Isu, tânah ka au a che,*  
*Lo lêng ta che, ka thinlung sualah hian;*  
*Vârpah arsi aiin i êng mawi zâwk,*

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<sup>287</sup> Interview with Vanlalchhuanawma, 19 March 2014. Also, conversation and unpublished document presented to the author by Lalnunmawia Hnamte of Khawbung.

*I hmēlah thlamuan leh lāwmna a awm.*

Lonely, Lord Jesus, I now cry out to you,  
Come to my sinful heart;  
You shine more beautifully than the star of heaven,  
There is comfort and joy in your countenance.

Although the separation to which Thanherha referred was that of departing having gathered for a conference, the language of the song has since become meaningful in the bereavement context, since the word ‘*khawhar*’ has become so deeply associated with bereavement through terms such as *khawhar zai* and *khawhar in*.

Some have pointed out that *khawhar* might not be an appropriate adjective to use for such terms because the community gathering ensures that the bereaved family are not lonely at all. A historian of the Mizo church based in Birmingham, Zaichhawna Hlawndo, expressed this concern to me in person.<sup>288</sup> A bereaved father in Champhai Vengsang also said in a public speech during the burial service, ‘*kan khawhar lo*’ (we are not lonely), because of the number of people who had come to comfort them.<sup>289</sup> There is an element of defiance in the determination of a community to encounter and respond to death together through practices that are otherwise described as ‘lonely.’

*Khawhar* remains the term by which the songs are popularly identified, and the inherent tension between the support of the community and the individual expression of grief through the singing of *khawhar zai* will form an important part of this chapter. It discusses how Mizo people encounter death ‘together’ rather than alone, in part due to the role of *khawhar zai*. The previous chapter alluded to the manner of gathering together that takes place at the *khawhar in* and this section will begin with an ethnographic description of this gathering before offering an analysis of the emotional and empathetic implications of the practice.

### 7.1.1 GATHERING AT THE KHAWHAR IN

The community gathering at times of death ensures that the bereaved are rarely alone, and everyone finds a role to contribute based on their age, gender and relationship to the family. This section will briefly highlight the manifestation of this in practice. The community preparations begin the moment a death is known to have taken place. The terminology and scheme of events varies according to the time

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<sup>288</sup> 1 December 2013.

<sup>289</sup> 21 January 2014.

of death. If a person dies before 10 a.m.,<sup>290</sup> the burial will be on the same day at approximately 1 p.m. If a person dies after this time, the burial will be held on the following day. As long as the body remains in the house, the home is called *mitthi in*, a house of a dead person.

The body will lie in an open casket, cushioned by traditional Mizo cloths (*puan*) as well as flowers (*pangpar*), which can be both fresh and artificial. The closest female relatives will be surrounding the coffin, weeping and singing over the body. Other close friends and relatives will fill the home, along with any others who arrived early enough to obtain a seat. With the exception of breaks for refreshments or speeches, people sing *khawhar zai* for as long as they are gathered in the home. It is part of what announces the death to the public, and a person entering the home is likely to find a seat after greeting the bereaved family, bow their head to quickly pray and join the singing immediately. They do not need to read the words from a hymn-book since the *hla hriltu* is proclaiming the text, and they have heard and sung these songs on repeated occasions throughout their lives. Since childhood, they have learnt how to participate in and perform the songs appropriately and effectively.

Remaining guests and those who are less inclined to sing will be sitting on the benches just outside the home. As indicated in the vignette that opened this part, people are at greater liberty to make conversation outside the house and to enjoy tea and tobacco together. If the deceased or the bereaved family is particularly admired or well-known, the crowd may be such that the road is almost blocked with benches extending up and down the street, with some people being hosted in the courtyards of neighbouring homes. The logistical demands of the size of the home and the desire to hold conversations without disturbing the singing can both be offered as pragmatic motivations for sitting outside, in contrast to suggestions that theorists have made in other contexts about wanting to protect the home from malevolent spirits.<sup>291</sup>

The previous chapter highlighted the significance of the way in which the private home becomes a temporary ‘public space’ in which imaginaries and intimacies can intersect. The informal gathering of men outside the home clearly marks the boundary of this space, temporarily creating a border around what may be described as the ritual space of the *khawhar in*, reinforcing the notion that participation inside or as a part of the space can make a person become an ‘insider.’ It also offers an interesting

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<sup>290</sup> Or a similar time as decided by the local YMA.

<sup>291</sup> See Bloch 1971: 142. He makes this suggestion regarding the similar practice of wakes in Madagascar.

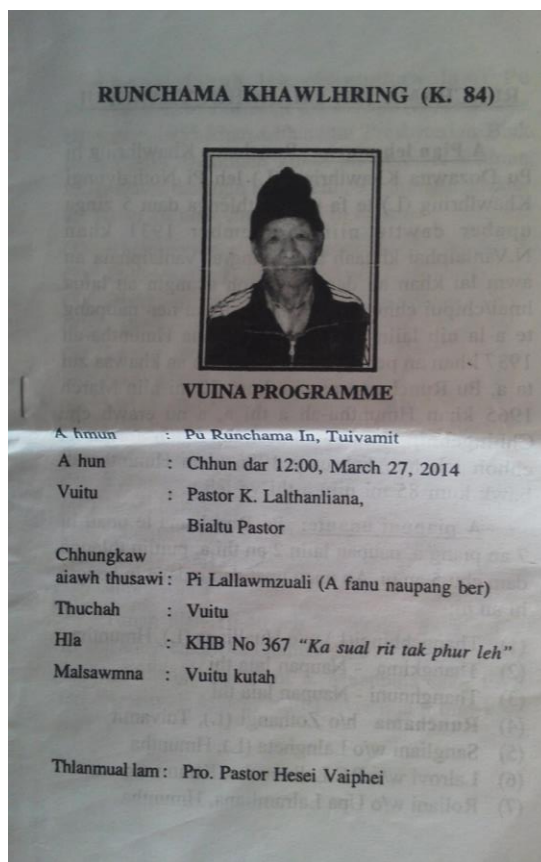
counterpoint to the suggestion of the private home as a public space, since the otherwise public space of the road conversely becomes a private and intimate space through which no one can pass without at least acknowledging the occasion of the recent death and bereavement.

The burial service takes place in the home about one hour before the planned time of burial. The singing will stop at the appointed time, and the pastor who has been sitting close to the musicians in the centre of the home will stand and lead the service. Each denomination has published small guides for church leaders, which include suggested prayers, readings and orders of service for burials, including variants for deaths in exceptional circumstances. Pastors are trained in these procedures, but the flow remains informal and non-liturgical.<sup>292</sup> As well as offering a short homily and a selection of songs from the *khawhar zai* repertoire, the pastor offers time to a few family members, friends and associates to make speeches.

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<sup>292</sup> The Catholic Church is an exception, and Catholic families will normally provide printed sheets containing the necessary liturgy for participants to follow.





**FIGURE 4.1** Programme provided at a burial service in Aizawl, March 2014. Author's photo.

If the death was expected or if there was opportunity to do so in advance, an information sheet might have been printed to be distributed to all present, giving details of the deceased's life and family. The programme shown in Figure 4.1 consists of two stapled sheets: the cover contains the burial programme and information with a photo of the deceased; the details inside describe his birth situation, list his relatives, and give some further biographical comments, particularly about his church involvement and final illness. To some extent, these details reinforce the identity of the person as an 'insider' worthy of the treatment offered by the community; statements about the person's Christian life also form the basis of the evangelical hope of reunion that can help to console the bereaved family.

The service does not last more than an hour. For the closing song, the congregation are invited to stand, after which the lid of the coffin will be brought in by the young men and the coffin prepared for burial. At this time, most people will leave the house and congregate outside. Before the burial, there will be a photo session with the coffin. It will be brought outside the house onto a trestle table, with flower gifts from well-wishers arranged around it. The notice-board of information hanging outside the home will be placed in front of the coffin. Family and friends will have their photo taken sitting in a row behind the coffin.

A list of groups to have their photo taken will be prepared and announced, in the same manner as at a wedding. Joy Pachuau notes that the 'photo session delineates categories' and forces community members to self-identify the categories to which they belong more acutely than the way in which they choose the social 'zone' or 'layer' in which to sit at the *khawhar in* (2014: 204). These photos will eventually be included in memorial and anniversary videos, often shown on television, and are an important form of bidding farewell as well as achieving some of the necessary ritual 'reintegration' of the dead by including them within photos of the various 'categories' and social groups to which they formerly belonged.





**FIGURE 4.2** A selection of burial photos from different decades in the twentieth century. Synod Archives.

If close relatives are still travelling from distant villages, the wait can be lengthy, since the body will not be buried before all the family have arrived. Again, this establishes the importance of encountering the death ‘together’, as well as the avoidance of any kind of separation apart from the separation of bereavement. This extends to the importance of restoring the body to their home before burial, even if a person died far away from home, such as in another city in India. This all forms a part of the reintegrative aspect of the community response to death, and reflects the hope and aspirations of the poetry of *khawhar zai*, which long for a place where there will be ‘no more separation.’<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> From K3.

Eventually, it will be time to proceed to the burial ground (*thlânmuâl*). This is normally a short walking distance away. In the procession, the coffin is usually preceded by the church elders and leaders, and followed by the remaining community members.



**FIGURE 4.3** Carrying the coffin of a Baptist church elder in Theiriat, Lunglei.<sup>294</sup>

Other young men will have been busy digging the grave throughout the burial service; this process is called *thlân laih*. The depth of the grave is sometimes indicative of the respectability of the person who died, since the work is voluntary. In the case of *lenglai thlân*, the burial of a young person, Lalhmingchuanga Zongte says that the grave will be deeper since the loss feels more severe. In one experience of his, he writes, ‘All the young men tried their best to dig the grave extraordinarily deep to show their respect to the deceased’ (2008: 30). As Lloyd points out, ‘Grave digging was a task which nobody relished, for the ground was often very rocky, but it was a chore which no Mizo would ever refuse’ (1986: 215). It is indeed one of the most important demonstrations of *hnatlang*, as the previous chapter noted that avoidance of such work could affect a person’s own treatment at death. By taking part in the digging, a young man asserts his membership of the community and his expectation that he will be also properly reintegrated after he dies. After the coffin has been prepared at the burial ground, the pastor will read the Bible and say a prayer over the grave, before it is filled in by the young men.

<sup>294</sup> Photo in possession of H. Muansangpuia.

After this, the crowd is free to disperse, although some will return to the house to continue singing *khawhar zai* and console the bereaved family.



FIGURE 4.4 A burial, probably mid-twentieth century.<sup>295</sup>

If a person dies after the fixed morning time, the burial takes place the next day. In this case, even at night, the body will be in the home and the all-night wake in the company of the deceased will be called *ruang thlak zân*. More specifically, the singing session organised by the YMA is called *mitthi lu men*, in this instance. The young people gather in the home, and unlike at the *khawhar in*, which rarely lasts more than three hours, the singing will continue through the night until sunrise.

On the evening after the burial, at around 7 p.m., all the young people of the locality will join the close relatives to begin the few nights of *khawhar lenpui*,<sup>296</sup> singing sessions organised by the YMA to comfort the bereaved. At this point, the home is no longer a *mitthi in* but becomes the *khawhar in*, house of bereavement, as has been done throughout this thesis. The remainder of the practices are therefore more concerned with expressing solidarity and empathy with the bereaved family than with the reintegration of the dead person into the community.

The day after the burial is called *thlân nghah ni*. The older people gather in the home and the members of the family's church will make a special effort to console and provide for the needs of the family.

<sup>295</sup> Photo in possession of Lalhruaitluanga Ralte.

<sup>296</sup> Also known as *khawhar in lén*.

Every day, mostly in the afternoon, members of the community will have been coming to pay their respects and to sit and sing in the home. These are usually older members of the community; the atmosphere is relaxed and some individuals may stand and dance on the spot while they sing as described in the vignette. At around 6 or 7 p.m., they will disperse and give way to the young people who will have started to arrive for the night. The YMA provide all the seating and equipment, and finance the refreshments. All of the young people (unmarried people aged between 18 and 40) are expected to attend every night and assist as necessary. In both the day and the night, there is no fixed programme. The drummers are responsible to start and lead the singing, and there will be time given for speeches and announcements, as well as a refreshment break. For the last song, the people will stand, after which they usually recite the Lord's Prayer. This community mourning process will last between three days and one week.<sup>297</sup> The duration depends on the convention of the particular locality or YMA, although Lalnunmawia Hnamte, a head-teacher in Khawbung, claims that the fixed limit of three days emerged as late as the 1990's, to encourage the equal treatment of different families.<sup>298</sup>

The prominent role of the YMA in organising many of the funeral and condolence arrangements including the singing of *khawhar zai* suggests one way in which people acquire and learn the performative significance of the practices at a young age. By expecting its young members to take up various responsibilities associated with the practices, most young people need to attend a *khawhar in* at some point during the process to fulfil a specific duty and are therefore exposed to the singing. The nightly singing together is intended to comfort the bereaved but there is also an explicit intention that the young people are being trained in the singing by participating, so that they will be able to maintain the practice in the future when they are of the generation that participates in the less formally-organised singing in the afternoons. The local YMA president at Champhai Vengsang made a speech during one of the nights of singing which exhorted the young people to seriously learn and engage with the songs so that they will be competent to comfort bereaved families in the future (22 January 2014). This highlights the way in which the evening singing performs a self-reflexive function that intended to train the young people to participate meaningfully.

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<sup>297</sup> Seven days used to be more conventional, according to a YMA President Hmingthansanga (Interview, 23 January 2014).

<sup>298</sup> Unpublished document presented to the author.



**FIGURE 4.5** Drummers at Champhai Bethel, January 2014. Author's photo.

After the YMA nights have finished, any subsequent gatherings are purely voluntary on the part of the community members and bereaved family. They may continue to the end of the week. If there are distant acquaintances who could not be present in the first few days, there may be an extension of the period of condolence. Elderly people are not mourned for as many days as the unexpected deaths of younger people. The Mizo approach is by no means unusual in treating the loss as more acute in the latter case. Humphrey states of the Mongolian context that 'a young person's death was *gomdoltoi* (with grief) but Urgunge [her primary informant] said that the death of an old person was not regarded as a traumatic event' (1996: 194). Benedicte Grima has found the Paxtun Muslim women in Afghanistan and Pakistan to follow a similar trend, although to an even greater degree, such that the death of an elderly person is mourned in silence, compared with the loud weeping that accompanies the death of a young person (2004: 61).



**FIGURE 4.6** YMA money box, Champhai Vengsang, January 2014. Author's photo.

Similarly, since a primary function of the community gathering is to comfort the bereaved family, there will be less motivation to gather at the home of somebody who left few grieving relatives behind. In Khawbung, I attended a home on only the third night after the death of an elderly man who had lived alone for a long time as a widower with no other close relatives. Already, the singing had stopped and the gathering had become a fellowship of tea and lively conversation, strengthening community ties through small-group interaction rather than giving comfort to the bereaved (30 January 2014). This supports the suggestion made in this part that *khawhar zai* offers a transformative emotional effect on participants and an intensification of the shared grief experience. In circumstances where there are few or no bereaved family members, there is a negation of the necessity to transform or intensify such emotions and this function of *khawhar zai* is lost.

This brief ethnographic description of practices of gathering together that follow a death in Mizoram has engaged with the themes introduced in the literature review by highlighting how the elements of the rituals following a death temporarily transform public and private spaces, reintegrate the dead into the community and train the younger generation in the performative and intensifying significance of the singing. This resonates with Turner's famous notion of *communitas*, which is characterised by a shared emotion or mood among the participants in ritual or regular worship (1969). By this standard, the shared emotion of longing for heaven achieves *communitas*, thus intensifying the feeling of hope



for the gathered people.<sup>299</sup> Expressed in more theological terms, the ritual of the *khawhar in* takes place in an eschatological setting from which the communities emerge as a post-death community healed from the bereavement. They emerge from the ritual with a renewed confidence in the hope and certainty of heaven, as chapter six emphasised. The preceding part will therefore serve to provide the backdrop against which the following part of the section will articulate how shared empathy and transformative emotions of hope and longing can be harnessed through the ritual singing of *khawhar zai*. Though much of what is described here may also be understood as sympathy, the use of the term empathy or shared empathy is intended to amplify the significance of the shared emotions for the community and the bereaved family. It also responds to chapter six in emphasising how the sense of shared empathy contributes to the imagined ‘oneness’ of the community, whereas a focus on sympathy obscures the greater unity which is at stake in both theological and social terms.

#### 7.1.2 EMPATHY THROUGH PARTICIPATION

Like all congregational singing, *khawhar zai* is a participatory form of music. As the previous section has delineated, it involves the activity of a group of people who gather as the result of the crisis of death. Superficially, the unison singing of the songs can be perceived to generate empathy among the singers for the grief of the bereaved family. However, an alternative suggestion might be that the singing of *khawhar zai* conceals the internal differences and variations of emotional experience within the community. This chapter will later note that singing *khawhar zai* can evoke memories of the deceased, especially in the imaginations of the immediate bereaved family. However, the majority of people gathered at the home, and indeed those who are participating in the majority of the singing, have less direct connection to the deceased. Although many assert that their presence helps to comfort the mourners, it is important to examine the real nature of their own participation and the different sense of nostalgia that the singing can evoke for these peripheral members.<sup>300</sup> It will be argued here that the most prevalent sensation for them is the memory and longing for their own relatives who have died in the past. There is a depth to the individual experience of *khawhar zai* that may truly be described as emotionally ‘lonely.’ With their imaginations located in personal situations of bereavement, the

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<sup>299</sup> Turner specifically used millenarianism to illustrate *communitas*, since liminal behaviour was found in the homogeneity, equality, anonymity, absence of property, sexual agreement and many other factors, which are all ‘phenomena of transition’ (1966: 111).

<sup>300</sup> Interview with Hmingthansanga, 23 January 2014.

question remains as to whether this enhances or diminishes the degree of empathy shared with the present bereaved family at the moment of singing. Once again, the subject returns to the nature of the intimacy that is being performed through the face-to-face interaction during the singing.

In Mizoram, several people shared that when they join a community to sing at the *khawhar in*, they sing and remember their own family members who have died, rather than grieving for the person who has recently died. Khuangseli, a participant in a group interview, recognises that the singing reminds participants of the people they themselves have lost, so heaven is visualised as a place of reunion for the whole group: ‘We *lunglêng*, we close our eyes, almost as if falling asleep, as we imagine our lost relatives.’<sup>301</sup> Numerous other studies of lamenting and singing at times of death have highlighted a similar phenomenon, especially in cases, unlike Mizoram, where professional lamenters are employed (Danforth 1982: 73; Wickett 2010: 71, 99). In Wolf’s study of the emotive power of funeral music among the Kota people, he searches for the ‘affective significance’ of the music (2001a: 380) generated by those involved. He finds that rather than distancing the individual’s personal emotional experience by participation, the process of sharing the musical experience with others both intensified and diversified their emotions. This is exactly the type of intensification that Feld articulates in his notion of acoustemology, in which the musical practice evokes memories that provide the participants with an assured sense of place and knowledge about the present situation.

*Khawhar zai* triggers emotions of collective retrospection, longing and nostalgia that recognise the reality of grief and engage with the problems of existential doubts and uncertainties that death presents to bereaved Christians. The musical and poetic way in which *khawhar zai* achieves this has been the subject of the previous two parts. However, the songs are able to express the grief not only of the original composers and their contemporaries, but also of generations of bereaved families that have followed. Wissler suggests that the bereaved Q’eros people persisted in the funeral ritual that she was documenting, ‘despite’ their profound grief (2009: 46). In other words, the ritual was an act of defiance and activity that would not allow grief to paralyse them. This reflects the defiance that has been found to characterise Mizo expressions of hope against death and fear through *khawhar zai*. For Wissler, the songs of the Q’eros people also provided them with a means to express their grief articulately and with specific reference to their personal bereavement context (Ibid: 45):

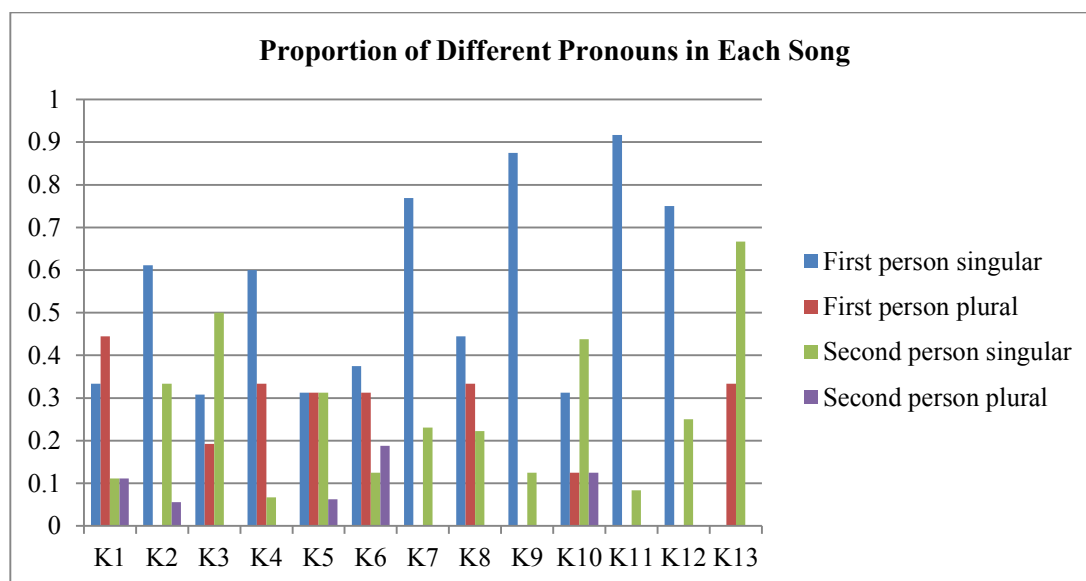
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<sup>301</sup> Translated from an interview, 31 January 2014.

Music was the constant thread that allowed Isaac, Juana and Víctor an unfolding of shared pain and deep sadness, a processing of grief through song.

One way in which the song texts of *khawhar zai* can be analysed for their empathetic potential is by evaluating the prevalence of first person singular pronouns in the texts. Schilling claims the focus of western gospel hymns is certainly more on ‘I’ than on ‘We’ (1983: 181). He mentions this first person singular attitude as a criticism, but the juxtaposition between these individualist texts and the communitarian singing suggests the deeper role that the difference might have to play, since the musical practice subverts the textual implications, just as it subverts the connotations of ‘loneliness.’

The following analysis of pronouns in *khawhar zai* shows that there is a great degree of diversity within songs, showing little discernible pattern. However, it is clear that Schilling’s description of western hymns may be applied to *khawhar zai*, in the dominance of singular pronouns (blue bars) rather than collective pronouns (red bars). Green and purple bars represent second person pronouns in their plural and singular form respectively.



**FIGURE 4.7** Chart showing proportion of different pronouns in each song in the present sample of *khawhar zai*

There are, on average, 7.92 occurrences of first person singular pronouns per song in *khawhar zai*, which far outnumbers the other types of pronouns analysed. By proportion, as Figure 4.7 illustrates, first person singular pronouns represent 0.51 of a song’s pronouns on average, just over half. By this standard, Thanherha’s song may seem rather an anomaly with a first person plural persona appropriate to his writing about the end of a community event. Nevertheless, all the different types of pronouns are

highlighted in the song as an illustration of the way in which they are used. Although the data was obtained from the original Mizo texts, the English version of K3 is annotated below:

When we who have gathered with joy because of your love  
 Depart from each other, Saviour,  
 There is no one in this world to comfort us,  
 Oh, Lord Jesus, come and walk beside us.

*Oh, always remain, Lord Jesus, beside us,  
 Remain with us, the abandoned lonely children;  
 In your face there is joy,  
 I will not be able to stop longing for you.*

This whole earth is a place of weeping and separation,  
 Oh, Lord Jesus, because of your love,  
 When I come to your beautiful eternal land,  
We believers will not depart again from each other.

Lonely, Lord Jesus, I now cry out to you,  
 Come to my sinful heart;  
You shine more beautifully than the star of heaven,  
 There is comfort and joy in your countenance.

When will we see the land where there will be no more separation,  
 Leaving behind this world of sorrows and troubles;  
 Because of your love, when I reach there  
I will see my friends of this earth who have gone.

There are no instances in this song of second person plural pronouns, which are very rare in *khawhar zai*. All second person phrases address God, and these pervade the whole song. There is a transition through the song from a first person plural persona to a first person singular persona, which suggests an eventual shift from the communal attitude to an introspective one. This shift also reflects the narrative of the song, which begins with the delight in the memory of the recent gathering, and ends with a reflection upon the loneliness that follows the gathering. The song therefore mirrors the emotional journey that participants might experience during the course of the rituals following death in Mizoram in which the shared enthusiasm during singing, and the vibrant experience of a crowded home, might be followed by a solitude that is particularly poignant for any members of the bereaved family.

The prevalence of first person language in the majority of songs may contribute to the fact that participants tend to think of their own deceased family members rather than the person who has recently died. Rather than critique this phenomenon, Lalthangliana Hnamte offers a positive interpretation of this in the Mizo context: it enhances the imagination of the people who are already in heaven in the

company of the person who has just died, and therefore helps them to sing ‘very deeply.’<sup>302</sup> Indeed, this is perhaps the truest form of empathy, not to be confused with sympathy but equally affirming of the shared nature of the grief, despite the different triggers for each individual. The case of Sanghleii, an elderly woman in Chhipphir, exemplifies this.<sup>303</sup> She believes the singing reminds the bereaved family members that other people have also been through the same experience, and it is through this display of empathy by singing that they may be comforted. Everyone is able to sing with tears as they long for heaven, not just the bereaved family. For Saithanga in Khawbung, closing his eyes helps him share the feelings and intentions of the composer, and identify with the dead people he imagines to be ‘eight miles underground.’<sup>304</sup>

The kind of imagination expressed by Saithanga is crucial to understanding how *lunglênna* and *ngaihna* are important in *khawhar zai*. R. Lawmzuala and his wife F. Lianchhingi speak in an interview of the *thlamuanna*, the ‘comfort’ of the singing and the imagination of reaching heaven.<sup>305</sup> Another widower whose grief has been characterised by vivid imagination is H. Lalbânga in Theiriat who explained his perspective in an interview.<sup>306</sup> He does not belong to a mainstream church denomination and has a unique way of responding to his wife’s death. His response to the death was especially defiant, explaining that his wife had instructed him not to grieve, but also maintaining that he did not long to go to heaven because God was already with him on earth. He narrates experiences of times when he did feel the pain of grief and went to find comfort from others, only to be deterred by the persistent presence of a bird, which he believes was sent by his wife’s spirit.

Superficially, both husband and wife would appear to be firmly committed to a ‘denial of death’ approach to grief. However, H. Lalbânga’s admission that he did want to seek comfort in the company of other people and his interpretation of the bird suggests that he also has a deep-felt painful experience of loss and grief. Indeed, his favourite song at the time was ‘*Ṭapin an rûm ngai lo*’<sup>307</sup> by R.L. Kamlala, a song that epitomises the desire to reach heaven where there will be no more weeping. Many examples of *khawhar zai* exhibit this common theme. In his musical preference then, he reveals the importance

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<sup>302</sup> Interview, 8 May 2014.

<sup>303</sup> Interview, 5 May 2014.

<sup>304</sup> Interview, 31 January 2014.

<sup>305</sup> Interview, 8 May 2014.

<sup>306</sup> Interview, 12 May 2014.

<sup>307</sup> ‘They will never weep and mourn.’

of expressing lamentation and longing through song that he felt constrained from expressing in other ways. His example is a present-day epitome of the significance of *khawhar zai* highlighted in chapter four in voicing the more difficult aspects of the Christian experience.

This part of the chapter has emphasised the emotional significance of participating in the *khawhar in* and singing *khawhar zai*. It has responded to the suggestions that the singing involves a metaritualistic praxis by examining how the songs and the singing inform and train the empathy and transformative emotions of the participants. This section has also begun to bring this thesis to its close by returning to themes of nostalgia and longing that the closing part of this chapter will develop, by addressing how the singing of *khawhar zai* evokes personal memories among the participants.

## 7.2 REMEMBERING THE DEAD TOGETHER

It is clear that by the time Thanherha reaches the last line of K3, he is no longer missing the friends from whom he has just parted, but those who have already died. With this verse, the song establishes itself as one that expresses grief at bereavement rather than separation that has made it an effective member of the *khawhar zai* repertoire.

*Eng tikah nge kan hmuh ang then lohna ram chu,  
He khawvêl lungngaih buaina kalsanin;  
I hmangaihna zâra ka thlen hun chuan  
Ka hmu ang khawvêla ka thian then te.*

When will we see the land where there will be no more separation,  
Leaving behind this world of sorrows and troubles;  
Because of your love, when I reach there  
I will see my friends of this earth who have gone.

This section completes the somewhat circular route that this thesis has taken by returning to aspects of nostalgia, memory and hope expressed in *khawhar zai*, particularly in the practical evocation of memories of past deaths and the hope for reunion experienced during the singing of songs such as Thanherha's. It is evident that singing *khawhar zai* enables the bereaved to imagine, remember and long for their dead. Qureshi explains how shared musical associations contribute to a culture's 'stability and coherence,' but also enable participants to 'live other people's memories' (2000: 827). This is true of *khawhar zai*, in which through singing, participants experience the memories and loss of the composers as well as past generations. This will form the closing theme of this chapter, which will first focus on the importance of memory in *khawhar zai* as it is practised at the *khawhar in*, before closing with an

extension of the analysis to other situations in which *khawhar zai* is practised beyond the ordinary *khawhar in* setting.

### 7.2.1 MUSIC AND MEMORY AT THE KHAWHAR IN

Memory has been an important theme in other studies of music and grief. Maschio in particular writes on the subject in the context of Rauto songs (1994: 192):

Such acts of remembering are viewed in this essay as imaginative and feeling attempts to recover the spiritual and valued essence of presences that have been lost.

This is connected with the local terms of memory and longing which, like *lunglenna*, are often translated as nostalgia (Ibid: 215), as noted in chapter two. Marini also notes that Sacred Harp singing is a unique type of non-religious Christian music, valued for its ‘connotations and associations of a past world’ (2003: 89). This directly relates to the Mizo context of *khawhar zai*, where Christian songs are found in a context much more concerned with affirming fellowship and community than the institution of the church, and a prime connotation of the singing is memory, whether of a deceased family member or of past tradition.

Interview participants in 2014, from a wide range of social and educational backgrounds, agreed that the atmosphere of the *khawhar in* was largely determined by the personality and reputation of the individual who had died. The previous section already alluded to the fact that the level of grief expressed seems greater when someone has died young or in tragic circumstances. However, it also seems to be the case that the atmosphere can specifically evoke the memory of the dead, including the manner in which they used to worship.

If the individual was a Christian who had a tendency towards charismatic expression in their worship, through dancing or shouts of joy in church for example, some of the participants at the *khawhar in* will also behave in this way at the funeral, not only because it matches their own temperament, but because it is thought to evoke the memory of the person that died. Vanlalchhawna Kiangte describes such an occasion during the erection of a memorial stone in Khawnglung in 2014.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Interview, 26 February 2014. He had just returned from this event.

We sang happily, many people were dancing. Tempo is usually slow but still they can dance, circle, dancing circle<sup>309</sup> also. Even in the funeral itself sometimes people dance... in our house the pastor said that we must keep a space for dancing but when people come together they fill it more and more and there was a little space, even then they were going around... Even the bereaved family themselves used to dance, praising God with tears...

This suggests a further means by which a positive member of the community can be reintegrated after they die, as the community emulates the spirituality of the deceased through singing *khawhar zai*.<sup>310</sup> Their social existence endures and their charismatic presence continues to be felt in the worship, if only by their emulation by friends and relatives. Though this should not be misinterpreted as mimicry, a musical environment is created in which the deceased would once have felt comfortable to participate. R. Zolâwma describes the situation:<sup>311</sup>

For example if a person is very churchly, I hope you understand, the one who is very spiritual, in the sense who is a regular church-goer, who loves singing, who loves dancing, see, the dead person has that environment already, so everybody will sing from their hearts. But people who never came to the church, never had the concern for the church, when they died, for them something is there. The person could not really move the people who gather.

In R. Zolâwma's manner of expression, the deceased person's lingering personality actually has the power to move or not move the gathered community. These observations were supported by several other people, including in a joint interview conducted with senior theologians Chuaŋthuma and K. Thanzauva, in which the latter remarked:<sup>312</sup>

Last Sunday there in Chaltlang one PWD<sup>313</sup> engineer died there in Calcutta. So I attended the singing there in the home. Somehow ok, not very vibrant, not very celebrative, not at all. Then I went down to ITI,<sup>314</sup> one very prominent church lady who was the leader of Presbyterian Hmeichhe Pawl<sup>315</sup> died. Oh, the way they sang and danced, it was tremendous! So many 'hallelujahs'!

<sup>309</sup> For a description of the circle-dancing associated with *lêngkhâwm zai*, see Heath 2013: 122. It is extremely rare in the *khawhar zai* context.

<sup>310</sup> Also affirmed in an interview with R. Lawmzuala and Lalthangliana Hnamte, 8 May 2014.

<sup>311</sup> Interview, 24 February 2014.

<sup>312</sup> Interview, 8 April 2014.

<sup>313</sup> Public Works Department.

<sup>314</sup> A locality in Aizawl named after the Industrial Training Institute.

<sup>315</sup> The women's fellowship in the Presbyterian Church.



The performance atmospheres of several different *khawhar in* were documented for the purposes of this research in 2014 and can be found on DVD 1 and DVD 2. The example of the bereaved family was often found to determine the atmosphere. In the video from Tuikual South (DVD 2, ‘Supplementary Files’, Track 3), the young people sway gently together from side to side. Most of their eyes are open and they look tired; some only sing a few lines, perhaps only the ones they remember well enough. Clapping can be heard on the video, but this is maintained by the elderly members who sit away from the centre of the house. Far from suggesting that the loss is less acute, an alternative inference is that the young people are following the example of the bereaved mother who sits at the heart of the gathering. She remains completely still, moving only to receive a cup of water. Almost paralysed, she sings very little of the songs. The young people who sing without distracting enthusiasm support her deep contemplation of grief. Though not captured on video, the family atmosphere at the conclusion of the gathering was remarkably jovial by comparison. The family members were cheerful and accommodating to all who sat for some extra time to take tea with them. The solemnity lasted only as long as the singing, reflecting the suggestion of this and the previous chapter that the performative intensification that takes place is a temporary effect of the ritual participation.

A similar context took place in Zonuam, where many people sitting outside did not join the singing or clapping, and the majority of people had their eyes open (DVD 2, ‘Supplementary Files,’ Track 5). The moment captured on video was one of acute tragedy, since the body of the deceased who had died in an accident had been brought into the home from the hospital moments earlier. The bereaved family weep loudly over the body, in the closest approximation to *tah hla* that exists today, the mother addressing the deceased directly as ‘my child, my child.’ During the video, some bereaved women enter the rest of the gathering, apparently seeking relief from the high emotional atmosphere of the adjacent room that contains the body. They sit quietly with the others, singing minimally. During the burial service, the relative that makes a speech on behalf of the family gives a frank account of the deceased’s troubled life and struggle to identify with the Christian community. The subdued atmosphere of the gathered people reflects the mood of the family.

By contrast, several other contexts were characterised by exuberant joy. In Theiriat, as mentioned in the vignette, the singing as found in the ‘Supplementary Files’ folder of DVD 2 (K10 and K13) is

reminiscent of a *chawimawina* fellowship<sup>316</sup>. Although it is true that Lunglei's localities are known to sing more *solfa zai* than their counterparts in Aizawl and Champhai do, the mood of the singing was especially striking. In an interview, the widow S. Thansiami highlighted two reasons why it was important to sing in the manner of her husband: firstly, the songs provoke *lunglenna*, as she herself acknowledged. By this, she meant that the songs increased her longing for the past when her husband used to be able to worship with her. At the same time, she says she gazes ('*thlir*') towards heaven ('*Vânram*') where she sees in her imagination her husband healed from his illness and enjoying God's presence. Secondly, she mentioned her husband's longing for their children and grandchildren to return to a more Christian way of life. The only pain she feels is the thought of her children's conduct, which causes her '*rilru a na*,' her heart to be troubled. She and her husband both hoped that the songs and the singing at his death, and the memory of her husband's spirituality, would inspire them to make changes in their own lives.<sup>317</sup> This may account for the revivalistic atmosphere of the singing when he died.

However, the best-documented situation was that of Bethel in Champhai, which I attended from the day of the burial until the day after the YMA nights of singing had finished. The most senior member of the family, K. Lalduha, was a particularly influential character to observe during the process. Evidently admired and respected by all the members of the community, he was also a prominent member of the church. From the first day, he was actively participating by often standing and dancing on the spot during the singing, raising an arm occasionally and closing his eyes for the majority of the singing. As mentioned in the vignette, I was informed that the family as a whole had a reputation for worshipping in a particularly expressive way, which encouraged others to join them without inhibitions.

In their singing of K4, '*Ka dam lai thlipui a râl hunin*,' as found on DVD 1, one woman stands at the very moment the singing begins and another woman stands from the first verse, although K. Lalduha remains seated, physically involved by raising his hands but not standing to dance. A lengthy charismatic prayer by one of the women follows this song at the end of the recording, responding to the mood evoked by the singing. Older members of the community attended these occasions during the day. '*Thlarau Thianghlim: meialh leh chhûm*'<sup>318</sup> by the composer Zasiama, sung on the same occasion, provokes many more to stand and dance as K. Lalduha does (DVD 2, 'Supplementary Files,' Track 9).

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<sup>316</sup> See, for example, DVD 2, 'Supplementary Files,' Track 1.

<sup>317</sup> Interview, 12 May 2014.

<sup>318</sup> 'Holy Spirit: Fire and cloud.'

At the third and final YMA night (K13 on DVD 1), the young people are less expressive, few clapping and most keeping their eyes open. Nevertheless, it is K. Lalduha who remains the most active in standing to participate, even obscuring the camera for much of one of the songs.

However, it should be remembered that although most agree that such an atmosphere only emerges if it matches the worship style of the deceased, many maintain firm objections to it. For example, Saithanga and Biakthansanga both agree that *khawhar zai* should be strictly '*lusunte hnêmtu*,' 'comforting to the bereaved,' whereas any revivalist or charismatic traits defeat the purpose of consolation. C. Thanseia says it can be abused by those who just wish to enjoy singing faster and louder:<sup>319</sup>

Even in *lêngkhâwm zai* funeral service, if those people are there they insist we sing faster, so sometimes we *khuangpu* and *khuangtepu*<sup>320</sup> there is some clash of ideas. At the time when the corpse is there, we like to sing slower, this *lêngkhâwm zai* original slower pace, but those people they normally feel that if they sing faster then somebody will dance then it is more spiritual then it is better, they have that idea.

Saikhûma complains about people that come only to dance and not to console, and who bully the drummers into beating faster (2005: 56). The main problem for him is that it requires the drummers and singers to work physically harder to serve their selfish desires.<sup>321</sup> He compares it with '*mi lu lam*,' a triumphant and mocking dance around a dead body of an enemy, practised before Christianity (Ibid: 58). C. Thangvunga in Chhipphir remembers the death of a man in 1952, during which a female relative started dancing. This angered the father who felt that she seemed to be rejoicing about the death. However, C. Thangvunga also accepts that dancing has become a much more acceptable practice in the present day, especially in the conditions already stated in this section.<sup>322</sup> Though it is common to find objections, it must be remembered that in many cases the people that initiate this style of worship are often among the closest bereaved family members. This was observed during fieldwork in Tuivamit and Champhai Bethel, where those that danced the most often were the immediate family members of the deceased. Their example encouraged others to join them.

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<sup>319</sup> Interview, 25 April 2014.

<sup>320</sup> Drummers of the large and small drums.

<sup>321</sup> See his book (2005) for numerous quotations from individuals who object to lively singing and dancing at the *khawhar in*.

<sup>322</sup> Interview, 4 May 2014.

It is evident that although the lamentation form of *tah hla* has been supplanted by the *khawhar zai* repertoire, as noted in previous chapters, there are still ways in which the individual person who has died is specifically remembered, through evoking their manner of worship and spirituality. This is reflected in the fact that some early examples of *khawhar zai* were commissioned by bereaved relatives. Saihnûna, many of whose songs were commissioned, seems to have composed many that were originally intended to offer a Christian alternative to the *tah hla* while maintaining the poetic significance of weeping in his texts. R.L. Thanmawia has found that out of fifty-eight of Saihnûna's Christian songs, the word *tap* (the root word for weeping from which *tah hla* is derived) occurs forty-five times. The two songs by Saihnûna that were included in the sample for this thesis serve as suitable examples. The final verse of K7 reads:

*Khawpui mawi, rangkachak ram nuam,  
Thleng ila pialrâl khawpui chu;  
Nun hlui ram ka han thlîr ang a,  
Ka tahna rêng ka ngai lo vang.*

The beautiful city of gold, lovely land,  
If only I could reach the city of Pialrâl,  
I will gaze back upon the land of my former life,  
And I will not miss that land of weeping.

Similarly, the chorus of K8 describes the earth as the 'land of weeping':

*Tah leh ram lungngaihna,  
Khawvêl ka chênna hi;  
Lungrualna Zion tlâng chung  
Kan lèn hun ka nghâkhlel.*

The land of weeping and sorrows,  
Is this earth where I dwell;  
On top of the mount Zion of peace  
I cannot wait to dwell.

Language about weeping pervades Saihnûna's composed songs, despite their non-spontaneous character (1998: 90). Even the vocalisation of grief through song asserts the supremacy of life over death. It is the power of the act of making, listening and doing music that offers an essential vitality to the funeral context. In some cultures, instrumental music is performed to 'give a voice to grief' while the bereaved sit in silence. However, in Mizoram, there is no instrumental music or performance before an audience; rather, all of the music depends on active participation. It is true that some individuals prefer to sit and listen, and the closest bereaved family, who sit alongside the body, often do not take part in the singing. They might remain silent, or weep loudly while the community continues to sing.

In this case, the singing is primarily an activity for the other people in the home, to create the sonic atmosphere in which the death can be accepted and the memory of the dead evoked.

Begbie agrees that music is ‘primarily an art of actions’ involving physiological (bodily) and physical (acoustic) implications based on the context in which it takes place (2007: 38). Fulfilling a similar function to weeping, music can articulate what words cannot (Ibid: 146). Thus, in a song or a sung lament the quality of vocalising what cannot be verbalised is able to enhance the grief process. Lallungmuana agrees that the act of singing is important, because ‘you just cannot sing without the use of your brain, so body and soul they come together.’ He adds:<sup>323</sup>

Of course, the longer we sing the better it is. We consider it better. Like, for example, in villages, the singing takes a longer time for more days and everybody would say, even the Aizawlite, the people here in Aizawl would say it is quite ok, it is good that they can sing for more days like that, it is considered as good because of its impact, its effect on the family.

The generation of an atmosphere reminiscent of the worshipful life of the dead person, and the creative aspect of the act of singing both contribute to the ability of the bereaved to bring forth the dead in their imagination. Pakunga in Khawbung<sup>324</sup> narrated his memory of a local man who sang with his eyes closed when his wife died. He visualised them both walking and living together as they used to do, inspired by the words of reunion sung by the rest of the community through the *khawhar zai*. He chose a song recalling past travels, and it was sung enthusiastically. However, he complained that the song finished before he had finished walking around the whole village of Khawbung with his wife. Similarly, the dead are often imagined in a state in which they are healed from their sickness and are worshipping God.<sup>325</sup> This demonstrates how vivid the imagination of the dead can be at times of grief and singing, but also the importance of appropriate music in sustaining that imagination.

### 7.2.2 BEYOND THE KHAWHAR IN

Remembrance of the dead not only happens through the singing of *khawhar zai* within the first few days of death. As in most cultures, there have been and continue to be practices of remembering the

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<sup>323</sup> Interview, 1 April 2014.

<sup>324</sup> Interview, 31 January 2014.

<sup>325</sup> Interviews with C. Lalthanzuali, 12 May 2014, S. Thansiami, 12 May 2014, K.L. Biakchungnunga, 13 May 2014.

dead on periodic occasions in Mizoram, some of which return to the use of *khawhar zai*. This final section briefly outlines some of the Mizo practices of remembrance but primarily focuses on the role of *khawhar zai* and music at these other occasions.

As Davies writes, the memorial rites and memory of the dead ensure that the relationship between the living and the ancestor is sustained (2011: 104). This further contributes to the reintegration function of elements of the funeral noted in the previous section. Although most churches in Mizoram do not offer specific opportunities for remembrance of the dead, many graves are regularly tended with fresh flowers, and the gifts of artificial flowers presented by members of the community at the time of death are often kept within a special display cabinet in the home along with photos of the deceased. The Catholic Church is the only exception, offering regular prayers for the dead souls and marking all the appropriate saints' days and memorial days according to the Vatican calendar.<sup>326</sup>

Formerly, the festival of *Mim Kût* used to cater for the need to remember the dead each year. Celebrated around September, it functioned as both a harvest festival and a festival for the dead, in which the first-fruits were offered to the spirits of those who were starving in the afterlife, based on the legend of Ngama who discovered the pitiful condition of his wife Tlingi in Mitthi Khua. It did not share the joyful atmosphere of the other festivals, and Sangkima writes that it was also called *Tahna Kût*, 'Weeping Festival' (2004: 103; 1992: 106). Chapter three noted that such festivals usually involved the singing of pre-Christian forms of *khawhar zai*, which bore some musical relationship with the *khawhar zai* practised today.

In the traditional series of feasts required to attain *thangchhuah* status and access Pialrâl, paradise, it is interesting to note that the third feast of this series was also dedicated to the memory of the host's dead ancestors. This united past and future deaths in the family since remembrance of the dead at this stage helped to contribute to the host's hope of reaching Pialrâl. At such a feast, effigies of the dead would be prepared, made with cloths draped around frames of wood, about two feet high. These effigies would be erected on the bamboo *khuanghlang* platform, adorned with much decoration and they were made to 'drink' along with the other revellers. Lawmsânga elaborates (2010: 42):

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<sup>326</sup> Interview with Bishop Stephen Rotluanga, 17 April 2014.

In the middle of the effigies, one *thlahpa* (ancestor) was made taller and bigger than the other effigies. *Thlahpa* was the central figure in this ceremony representing the original ancestor of the clan. At the inauguration, the performer gave all the effigies rice-beer on the platform and started crying out loudly, calling their names. Then the platform was carried to the centre of the village, beating with the gong. The whole villagers were watching with great respect and awe. After that, the *mithun* was again killed and continued the feasts.

On the next day, *sedawi chhûn* would be danced. The platform, on which a human skull or a human volunteer would also be placed, would be carried around the dancers three times. They would be paraded 'with much shouting and laughter' (Shakespeare 1922: 279). Parry also mentions the mourning that took place during the *mitthirawplam* feast, held in honour of the feast-giver's ancestors (1976 [1928]: 105):

People who have recently lost relations get much affected at the sight of these images [effigies of the dead] and women often weep when they go to look at them.

Shakespeare (1912: 88) describes a similarly public expression of grief during the same feast:

The oldest living member of the clan then comes slowly from his house, bringing with him a gourd of *zu* [rice-beer], and gives each effigy in turn a little *zu*, muttering a charm as he does so; he arranges his tour so as to reach his own father's effigy last, and when he has muttered his charm and given it the *zu* he dashes the gourd down on the ground and, bursting into tears, rushes into his house, whence he must not emerge for a month.



**FIGURE 4.8** Effigies of the dead made for *mitthirawplam*. The first from Angus Archives; the second from Synod Archives.

However, the most popular and traditionally-rooted form of remembrance is the *lungphûn*. This is the erection of a special headstone at the grave, and perhaps the construction of a more long-lasting tombstone. In the past, this could also take the form of the *lungdawh* platform illustrated in chapter two (Figure 2.3) as an inspiration for one of Patea's songs.



The epitaphs on a *lungphûn* would reveal the achievements of the person and the family's hope for their future destination. Before there was a written script, surviving stones show that the number of animals hunted could be marked on the stone as a sign of a man's prowess. As late as 1919, Lorrain observed two memorial stones and copied them into his log-book.<sup>327</sup> They both record the number of maidens seduced by each man (twenty and thirty-one respectively), achievements that guaranteed their access to the paradise of Pialrâl.

Figure 4.9 shows an extant stone in Khawbung from 1926, explicitly stating that the deceased was a *thangchhuah* due to his great hunting skill, and would also enter Pialrâl. Figure 4.9 shows Christian gravestones from 1929 that assert that the person that had been buried had 'believed in Jesus,' the Christian evangelical requirement for entering heaven.



FIGURE 4.9 Memorial stone in Khawbung. Author's photo.

<sup>327</sup> A copy is held at Aizawl Theological College Archives.



FIGURE 4.10 Christian grave stones from 1929.<sup>328</sup>

When the first Christian, Khuma, died in 1917, it was resolved that a memorial would be erected in front of the church. This was clearly an action appropriate to the traditional Mizo forms of memorialisation but also suited the Christian traditions. The missionaries who died in Mizoram, including Sandy<sup>329</sup> and Evans, were also given elaborate memorial stones at their graves in Durtlang in the 1920's (Lloyd 1986: 139). Even on the death of Fraser in Wales<sup>330</sup> it was resolved that a memorial would be erected in his honour.

The *lungphûn*, normally made of granite today, is now engraved with the name of the person and their immediate relatives, a few words about the person, and sometimes a picture. S. Thansiami of Theiriat states that it is the responsibility of the children and grandchildren, and may be erected several years after the death. For her, it serves the practical function of marking the boundary of the grave.<sup>331</sup> Due to the expense of the *lungphûn*, most families wish to consecrate it with a large community event. Elegant invitations, resembling wedding invitations, will be sent to close family and friends, as well as church

<sup>328</sup> Photos from the visit of Mr. Angus in 1929, collection held in the Angus Archives, Oxford: IN/5/36/42.

<sup>329</sup> A letter from Mrs Sandy to the Lewises thanking them for their condolence on an unspecified date. Held in Aizawl Theological College archives.

<sup>330</sup> Minutes of Presbytery, 18-19 March 1920. Held at Aizawl Theological College Archives.

<sup>331</sup> Interview, 12 May 2014.

members and colleagues. Some relatives will travel a very long way and take several days' leave from work to attend such a ceremony.<sup>332</sup> On 5 June 2014, I attended a particularly grand occasion, which had involved the exhumation of the parents so that they could be buried together on a family plot closer to the present relatives' home.

The ceremony will usually be held in the warm afternoon in the first few months of summer. This is a change from the former tradition of erecting a memorial during *Mim Kût* (Lloyd 1991: 12-13). A canopy may be erected in the courtyard of the house to accommodate and shelter the people. To all appearances, the function is hardly distinguishable from a burial service: benches accommodate a hundred or more people, and large steel urns provide a constant supply of tea. One prominent difference is that this is privately financed by the family without the involvement of the church or YMA. People are also free to dress in more cheerful but formal attire. The same repertoire of *khawhar zai* will be sung, combined with some appropriate *solfa zai*, and the closest relatives may weep tears as they did years ago, much as seems to have been done at *Mim Kût* and other feasts in honour of the dead. The *lungphün* itself will have been already erected, and there is no function at the grave itself. Instead, a large banner depicting the stone might be displayed outside the house.

An invited leader will take charge of the proceedings, which will involve acknowledgement of all of the relatives, speeches from the bereaved family, and a short sermon and prayer from an invited church leader. After almost two hours, the function will come to a close and a large feast will be given to all of those gathered. It will be a buffet of rice, meat and vegetables, mostly prepared on a mass-catering scale outside the house. This is an extravagant offering, and to some extent honours the gifts that had been given to the family at the time of the death. To Joy Pachuau, the ceremony represents the final 'closure of the mourning period' (2014: 210). It also bears striking similarity to the feast held by aspiring *thangchhuah* in honour of their ancestors, and the custom of feeding the community while remembering one's dead seems to have survived in this form as a very honourable and generous act on the part of the family.

The singing of *khawhar zai* at such events is evidently directed more to the evocation of memory than offering comfort and empathy for the bereaved. Not only is it sung on the occasion of remembrance of

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<sup>332</sup> At a ceremony attended in Champhai in 2014, members had travelled all the way from Aizawl, even those with professional commitments.

the dead, but also its singing will enable participants to recall the gathered singing that took place when the person died. The participation in the singing is therefore a means by which the memory is effectively ‘performed’ collectively by the community. In recent years, the use of music has been extended to the production of memorial videos by bereaved families. During the first burial service a small team will have been employed to take photos and videos; this was the case in almost every event I attended. These will be edited into a lengthy remembrance DVD to be shared amongst the relatives. There are no apparent taboos regarding filming and photographing the bereaved family, the gathered community and even the open casket.

The same footage may be used to make a personalised music video, which is given to the local cable television channels and broadcast alongside videos submitted by other families. However, although visual images of the people singing *khawhar zai* are often included in these videos, the sound is usually replaced by a studio recording of a relevant song chosen by the family as the soundtrack to the entire video. This means that *khawhar zai* as a community practice is featured visually as part of the remembrance of the dead, but often the sound of the singing is not preserved. This may be due to the practical difficulties in combining a chosen soundtrack with audio from the videos, as well as the fact that the actual sound of the *khawhar zai* is so familiar and likely to be very similar to any other such occasion; it is more important to be visually reminded of the people that participated and sang.

The song chosen as a soundtrack might be by a soloist or choir and will often be of a more contemporary or western musical style than the *khawhar zai* sung in the home, although the song itself might originally have belonged to the *khawhar zai* repertoire. This relates to the relatively recent development of the recording of *khawhar zai* by solo artists, as my own experience in the vignette that opened part three illustrated. Ruotmawii and Siampuii Sailo are among the numerous women who have made their careers in part by recording *khawhar zai*.<sup>333</sup> Although the practice may appear to be at odds with the very community ethos which has been found to have been a deeply important aspect of the genre, not only sociologically but also theologically, it is through these re-contextualised treatments of the songs that part of their continued relevance might be found in the modern Mizo context.

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<sup>333</sup> An undated vintage recording of K1 sung by J. Vanlaldiki is included on DVD 2, ‘Supplementary Files’ folder. The recording is provided courtesy of Aizawl All India Radio who supplied me with several recordings, though better quality examples may readily be found online.

The relocation of funeral music to a new sphere is not unheard-of. Dueck has found that the informal gathering to sing hymns that formed the coffeehouse tradition in Winnipeg was directly inspired by the meaningful social interactions of funeral wakes that took essentially the same form (2013: 101). The Mizo practice of making memorial videos for television release has led to the great popularity of these solo recordings for use as background music to the videos. Television programmes that broadcast such videos are now one of the most common places to hear *khawhar zai* outside the ordinary funeral context. As a result, the repertoire has perhaps found its new site of relevance in the contemporary cultural context. Indeed, it is perhaps a very specific manifestation of what Dueck has described as the mass-mediation of music from intimate performance spaces to an imaginary public.

### 7.3 SUMMARY TO PART FOUR

This part has looked at *khawhar zai* from a modern ethnographic perspective, taking account of the context in which it is practiced in Mizoram today at times of death and bereavement. However, it has pursued an original disciplinary direction in chapter six by suggesting that the act of gathering together may have further theological implications relating to the eschatological hope for the Kingdom that conventional anthropological frameworks would not normally account for. This involved recognising that the temporary experience of non-denominational unity and equality, which could otherwise be called ‘*communitas*’ can be interpreted in terms such as *koinonia*. Both chapters six and seven proceeded to explore the further implications that this had when considering Dueck’s theory of imaginaries and intimacies, finding that the ritual environment of the *khawhar in* is well-suited to providing the temporary public space necessary for the enactment or imagination of an imagined community during the course of face-to-face interaction in performance.

Whereas chapter six explored the significance of gathering together from a theoretical perspective, chapter seven examined the emotional and performative aspects of *khawhar zai*, primarily drawing from fieldwork observations and findings. This aspect of analysis was informed by other scholarship that has engaged with performative utterance theory, particularly addressing how participants learn and acquire the necessary emotional awareness that the ritual singing demands. In *khawhar zai* it was found that the self-reflexive texts that narrate the emotional journey and the differentiated unity of participants in which the younger generation are given ample space in which to ‘practice’ the singing in context both contribute to this aspect of the ritual. It questioned the degree to which ‘empathy’ is achieved

through singing as a community at the *khawhar in* but ultimately found that by invoking shared sentiments of longing and hope, as the rest of the thesis has demonstrated, the repertoire is well-suited to encouraging an empathetic performance of emotion even if it is acknowledged that the particular experience of grief for each individual can vary. Indeed, the communal nature of the musical practice performs the ritual function of reconciling these divergent experiences and emotions and using them as a stimulus for a temporary and intensified moment of empathy through participation.

This thesis as a whole has put forward the notion that, by participating in *khawhar zai*, singers are able to simultaneously look back upon past tradition and look forward to heaven, while appreciating the gravity and reality of the present moment of death. This part in particular has contributed to this argument by showing that the act of gathering together ritually enacts the hoped-for Kingdom, the practice of singing can evoke memories not only of the past but of those who have died, and the ritual setting of singing at the *khawhar in* generates a necessary awareness and empathy regarding the present situation of bereavement. R. Zolâwma mentioned in an interview that in his own pastorate two decades ago in the southern villages, a difficult period of famine and epidemics meant ‘they really long for the future. The future means the Kingdom of God or heaven, so heavenly life.’ He explicitly connects the Mizo Christian hope amid suffering with the Kingdom of God as chapter six established.<sup>334</sup> C.L. Hminga specifically associated this with the singing of *khawhar zai*.<sup>335</sup>

If we join in singing these songs which can be, which has deep meaning, not only the people but those who participate will have some inspiration and a new understanding of the hope of Christians.

This quote suitably brings this part to a close in preparation for the final conclusion to this thesis. It highlights the importance of participating in the singing of the songs not only to comfort or grieve but to acquire knowledge and a basis for hope that is suited to the Mizo context, both reminiscent of past traditions but aware of the Christian evangelical hope that dominates modern Mizo society. Perhaps the present research has been able to present a ‘new understanding of the hope of Christians,’ at least in Mizoram, by engaging with the repertoire both in context and in practice.

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<sup>334</sup> Interview, 24 February 2014.

<sup>335</sup> Interview, 22 April 2014.

## PART 5

### CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to respond to the following question:

*In a culture which more than a century ago saw a rapid transformation into a Christian society, how did the Mizo tradition of 'khawhar zai' funeral singing offer a hope that neither the missionary hymns nor the lamentations of the earlier Mizo society could provide? Why has it remained an important Mizo practice? What can such a study of 'khawhar zai' contribute to future studies of funeral singing in Christian communities?*

At its most basic level, *khawhar zai* remains a repertoire capable of offering comfort to the grieving members of a community. Vanlalchhawna Kiangte says in an interview:<sup>336</sup>

I personally believe that we will meet again in heaven and that is the belief of the general people, the Mizo Christians. It is with this belief that we can comfort each other in the situation of death, in bereavement.

The belief that they will meet again in heaven is the substance of the Mizo Christian hope, which is articulated in the music and practice of *khawhar zai*. This hope is one that conforms to the framework of hope suggested by Macquarrie, which involves emotional, volitional and cognitive aspects. The transformation into a Christian society referred to in the main question involved a change in cognitive/intellectual terms, which has led to a hope for reunion in heaven. The activity of gathering together and singing together manifests the volitional aspect of this hope, which leads to activity rather than fear-induced inactivity (the latter being Macquarrie's term). Combining these volitional and cognitive aspects contributes to the emotional aspect of the hope, which is transformed and intensified through the singing of *khawhar zai*.

In order to explore how this has been achieved and why other musical repertoires have not been as enduring or satisfactory, the thesis has consisted of three central parts, which each explore different aspects of the 'hopeful gaze' invoked through *khawhar zai*. The first part (part two) explored that gaze

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<sup>336</sup> 26 February 2014.

to the past Mizo way of life and early Mizo songs that pre-date Christianity. Part three addressed the new gaze towards heaven that was adopted with the introduction of Christianity and the evangelical values and music that new Mizo Christians encountered in the process. The final part offered anthropological and theological interpretations that establish the emotional and social efficacy of the present *khawhar zai* practice.

Part two began with a contextual chapter that introduced the Mizo terms of longing and nostalgia including *lunglenna*, *ngaihna* and the verb *thlîr*. This situated the analysis in local cognitive terms that were helpful in understanding the compositional situation of the composers as *mi lunglêng* but also in approaching the texts of the songs. The songs were found to contain several of these terms as well as other terms that invoked a longing for the past way of life. Chapter three found that these textual resonances with the older songs were complemented by musical resonances, especially in the limited pitch behaviour and melodic characteristics. By comparison with a sample of older Mizo songs that have survived only in the memory and deliberate effort of a few individuals, strong similarities were found that reinforce the suggestion made in this thesis that *khawhar zai* musically and textually can generate a retrospective gaze to the past. Whereas the older Mizo songs did not survive the encounter with the new Christian terms of hope and the evangelical hymns offered by the missionaries, local agency was able to compose evangelical songs of hope that retrospectively acknowledged the significance of the music and lamentation practices of the past. This part therefore made a more general methodological contribution to the wider disciplines of anthropology and ethnomusicology by demonstrating the possibility of applying local terms to musical analysis in addition to the poetic texts and using analytical models that have the potential to be applied in other research contexts. Since such analysis has been shown to have been fruitful in the areas of melody, rhythm, pitch and structure, future studies in Mizoram and in other comparable contexts might be able to consider a broader range of parameters not given attention here, such as the intensity and timbre of the singing voices and the associated physical gestures.

The thesis has explored the diverse ways in which *khawhar zai* enables singers to voice hope by looking to the past as a basis for imagining the future. At the time of composition, the songs were an outpouring of a Christian longing for heaven in the midst of social tragedies and crisis. When the former Mizo way of life and the evangelical Christianity of the missionaries failed to offer an adequate response to times



of war, famine, disease and persecution, *khawhar zai* voiced the hope for a restoration in the future, which led to a local form of millennial hope. This formed the subject of the first chapter in part three, in which the gaze towards heaven was articulated in the evangelical frameworks suggested by Bebbington. It was found that while *khawhar zai* do conform to these frameworks in both their compositional context and their poetic texts, they also provide voices for the doubts and uncertainties of the time. The suggestion that a more nuanced hope can be articulated through the hymns than other evangelical discourses might permit was found to apply not only to *khawhar zai* but also to other evangelical hymns in a manner rarely acknowledged. This challenges popular literature about evangelicalism and offers new possibilities for ethnomusicological studies of music in evangelical communities, which have rarely explored the specific theological orientation and foundations of the repertoires involved. It is hoped that the application and expansion of Bebbington's frameworks in this thesis will influence future musical studies of evangelical music, particularly repertoires that have their roots in nineteenth-century evangelicalism or non-conformist missionary activities.

The relationship between the evangelical hymns and *khawhar zai* was subsequently explored through musical analysis, which showed that the repertoire bears the influence of *solfa zai* in addition to the influence already discussed from the older Mizo songs. In considering the primary question of this thesis, it is possible to respond that *khawhar zai* embraced enough of the musical and textual aspects of the two other repertoires that rendered them redundant at the *khawhar in* context. Bearing in mind the prevailing theme of hope in this thesis, it is important to note that *tah hla* lamentations of the older Mizo songs were almost exclusively retrospective in their gaze, whereas the evangelical hymns bore an emphasis on the gaze towards heaven. However, it was also highlighted that they depended on a retrospective gaze towards the Calvary event. Neither repertoires could have fulfilled the needs of the Mizo Christian community independently, and *khawhar zai* seems to have offered the effective synthesis. Western hymns such as those used in the analysis of *solfa zai* have rarely been subject to rigorous musical analysis, particularly for comparative purposes, and again it is hoped that such an approach as demonstrated in chapter five may contribute to future studies of Christian contexts in which such hymns have been known to have had a musical influence.

The nature of the hope produced through this synthesis formed the subject of the final part, which explored the eschatological and emotional significance of the singing in the Christian context. Whereas

parts two and three were concerned primarily with the situation in Mizoram at the time of the emergence of *khawhar zai*, the final part responded to its present context as a repertoire used at times of death and bereavement as was encountered during fieldwork in 2014. This is essential to responding to the primary question, which inquires about the present state of *khawhar zai* and the fact that it has survived several decades of rapid social change. The first chapter of part four suggested that the inclusivity enjoyed by participants at the *khawhar in* enacts the hoped-for Kingdom of God and that the songs themselves act metaritualistically in this regard by articulating the same hope in their texts. To most of the interviewees in this study, there was no conceivable possibility that the *khawhar in* could ever be a place of no singing. Vanlalchhuanawma says removing the singing would mean ‘removing what is considered to be the strongest source of comfort and peace for the bereaved family thus far... When all of us consider ourselves to be comforters of the bereaved people, then all that we can express we express by means of singing, in terms of singing this *khawhar zai*.’<sup>337</sup> The final chapter examined how the gathering together of participants occurs in practice and how this participation enables memory and nostalgia to be harnessed at an individual and communal level.

This thesis has explored two of the main theological aspirations about the future that the singing of *khawhar zai* and its evocation of nostalgia and longing for the past can provoke. Emphasising both the soteriological hope of Christians for redemption and the resurrection of the dead in chapter four, and the eschatological hope for unity in the new Kingdom in chapter six, this completes the understanding of hope that has been laid out in this thesis, following Moltmann’s model that looks to the past in order to pursue and acquire certainty about the future. Tlânghmingthanga agrees that for the Mizo context, ‘as of now we need to depend more on Moltmann’s understanding, then we can go on the right track.’<sup>338</sup> Tlânghmingthanga believes that a thorough exploration of the old Mizo way of life is essential to the understanding of Christian hope in Mizo terms, ‘joining present life and future life.’ In the same interview, K. Thanzauva, who was also present, said, ‘*khawhar lèn* [gathering at the *khawhar in*] is also just like that. Looking back and express our frustration, deep longing, then our longing, pointing for the future.’ Both of them articulate the significance of Mizoram’s musical and cultural past in shaping the future hope of Mizo communities.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Interview, 19 March 2014.

<sup>338</sup> Interview, 16 April 2014.

<sup>339</sup> Interview, 16 April 2014.

By seriously engaging with theological themes of eschatology, soteriology and praxis in the context of an ethnomusicological study, an innovative disciplinary path has been forged that will contribute to future studies of Christian music in theology, anthropology and ethnomusicology. Despite the growing literature on ‘music theology,’ it was found that there was a comparative silence within that field on the subject of congregational singing, especially in non-conformist Christian communities and in non-western contexts. The present study of *khawhar zai* in Mizoram has therefore provided the ideal case study in which to experiment with the disciplinary possibilities that may be encountered by attempting to comprehend the theological experience of Mizo Christians through ethnographic methods and musical analysis. Much can still be achieved in this area, and it is hoped that this study will alert the field of music theology in particular to the new possibilities for research. The thesis also presents a challenge to ethnomusicologists of Christian music and scholars within the growing field of congregational music, to take similarly serious account of the theological implications of their research.

This thesis has offered a response to the primary question in terms of why *khawhar zai* was preferred against older Mizo songs and *solfa zai* at times of bereavement, but this does not respond to the problem of how *khawhar zai* survived subsequent social change. As was indicated in the introduction, the period of composition lasted not much more than two decades, yet the songs have remained an integral part of Mizo life. Many interviewees attribute the cessation of composition of *khawhar zai* to spiritual reasons. For example, C. Chhuanvawra suggested that the composers were no longer inspired to compose by the Holy Spirit.<sup>340</sup> Darchhawna more pragmatically thinks composition has stopped because people are satisfied with the existing songs available.<sup>341</sup> However, Lallungmuana suggests that the same hope that characterises *khawhar zai* is still latent despite modern developments:<sup>342</sup>

Our hope I believe remains the same, but... many people who enjoy life and who do not have much struggle do not think about that hope very often. But... even though they have lots of money, materials, then there is a thirst in their mind, a longing for the other life, so in those times they think again about this hope... in general most of the Mizo Christians still have the same hope, that is how I understand.

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<sup>340</sup> Interview, 9 April 2014.

<sup>341</sup> Interview, 14 April 2014.

<sup>342</sup> Interview, 1 April 2014.

It is therefore conceivable that the singing does indeed ‘awaken’ or ‘trigger’ hope that is already ingrained in the Christian society, as was suggested in the previous chapter. The defiant hope that characterised the beginnings of *khawhar zai* does seem to have persisted through the subsequent decades at times of even greater strife. Gwen Rees Roberts made an evocative recording of herself outside her house, while the curfew was being enforced at the very start of the insurgency period. It was Easter, and she recorded the sound of people singing with drums in their homes in defiance of the fact that they could not venture out to church (1967):<sup>343</sup>

It’s curfew time and I can’t go out any further than this but if you listen carefully you can hear the drums, there is someone singing just below us in a house and some of the ministers and elders in the town have had permission to go round the town with two jeeps, stopping here and there to preach. You can hear the drums, probably two lots of people singing in houses. The crickets and the cicadas chirping away, but no one able to be out.

There is much potential and enormous scope for further study of the musical developments that took place in Mizoram in the later parts of the twentieth century, both in Christian and secular domains. This thesis has not attempted such a study, which could have the potential to enrich and inform the findings of the present research.

Today, Mizo Christians enjoy great liberty in their worship. There is no persecution, and the economic standard of living has rapidly improved so that the struggles that provoked the composition of *khawhar zai* are no longer so keenly felt. As Mizoram progresses towards becoming a society in which the frequency and immediacy of death is less common, responses to death are sure to change. Nevertheless, at times of death and bereavement the repertoire of *khawhar zai* remains an important element in most places, as this thesis based on recent fieldwork has demonstrated. Perhaps the most emphatic expression of their essential role at times of death was made in an interview with the writer Darchhawna who said, ‘without these songbooks I think no one can die!’<sup>344</sup> For the moment, at least, the repertoire that gives voice to the hope of its singers seems to have a hopeful future of its own.

*By way of an epilogue, my final research visit to Mizoram in August 2015 affirmed the enduring relevance of khawhar zai in Mizoram, which remains a society marked by enthusiasm for periodic*

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<sup>343</sup> Recording available at the National Library of Wales.

<sup>344</sup> Interview, 14 April 2014.

*revivals and spiritual volatility. In the year leading up to the visit, I had been increasingly aware of the growing excitement surrounding a revival taking place in the village of Kel kang, bearing a strong resemblance to the famous and well-documented revival that had taken place in 1938 in the same village.*

*In recent years, to hear nightly loud singing from a church had not been not uncommon, and would suggest that they were holding their annual organised 'revival,' 'evangelistic crusade' or 'camping meeting.' However, from my first night in August I was struck by the fact that every church near my residence seemed to be producing the same exuberant music on a nightly basis. A recent death had also resulted in a nearby house being filled with nightly ecstatic singing of khawhar zai. It became apparent that the Kel kang revival had influenced most towns and villages in Mizoram to varying extents.*

*The church I attended regularly from February to June 2014 was one in which only few would usually feel comfortable to dance, but by August 2015 the pews were having to be pushed back to accommodate everyone in the dancing space. In another village church, the distinctive Kel kang gesture of performing 'bingbilet' (somersaults) instead of conventional dancing had been brought back by those who had visited. Groups of children would go from house to house weeping loudly about spiritual matters and singing songs. The question, 'Have you been to Kel kang yet?' would punctuate most social conversations.*

*Every night, the sound of solfa zai, lêngkhâwm zai and khawhar zai resonated through the hills, now almost indiscriminately. As this conclusion suggested, revivalism and the eschatological hope of the Mizo people belongs as much to the present context as to the time of the early twentieth-century revivals. Khawhar zai continues to play an important role in expressing and affirming that hope in salvation, redemption and the coming Kingdom expressed not only at death but also at times of revival.*

## APPENDICES

**Appendix A:** The full texts from the sample of *khawhar zai* (K1-K13) listed in the introduction. Texts are taken from the *Mizo Kristian Hla Thar Bu* (2007). All translations are by Joanna Heath with later assistance from Joseph L. Renthlei. They are intended to remain as close to the original meaning as possible, so no attempt has been made to conform the English text to the musical lines. Full transcriptions of the music into staff notation have also been given. Transcriptions are from recorded performances of the songs at a variety of different *khawhar in*. They have been transposed to C.

**Appendix B:** Extracted texts and transcriptions of the songs sung by P.C. Thangvunga, referred to in this thesis as ‘old Mizo songs,’ introduced in chapter three (O1-O10). Texts were provided by P.C. Thangvunga. The archaic language is difficult to understand and only approximate non-versified translations have been offered, obtained largely thanks to the assistance of R. Zochhawna. Transcriptions of the music into staff notation have also been given. They have been transposed to C.

**Appendix C:** The full texts from the sample of *solfa zai*, introduced in chapter five (S1-S13). Full transcriptions of the melodies transposed to C have also been given. Their Mizo titles and translators have been indicated; when a song’s first publication date is known this is listed as an approximate year of composition. The same source hymn-books were used as those listed in the *MKHTB: Sacred Songs and Solos (Revised and Enlarged Edition)* and *Alexander’s Hymns No. 3*. The shorthand references ‘SSS’ and ‘III Alex’ are the same as those used in the *KHB* and *MKHTB*.

**Appendix D:** List of audio and video tracks provided on each DVD.

## APPENDIX A: KHAWHAR ZAI SAMPLE

### K1 (MKHTB 331 – Thangvungi)

**A chatuan ro luah tumin i bei zêl ang,**  
Lungngaihna a lo lên lai hian;  
Ka kiangah awm zêl ang che aw,  
Ka Chhandamtu duh tak.

Keep working for his eternal inheritance,  
When sorrows come;  
Remain forever by my side,  
My dear and precious Saviour.

*Aw, hlimna ram i pan ang u,*  
*Chawlh hlenna tûr;*  
*Aw, ka ngai e, then te zawng*  
*Kimna tûr ram khi.*

*Oh, let's keep pressing on to the land of joy,*  
*For the place of eternal rest;*  
*Oh, how I miss all those who have gone*  
*The land up there where we will be together.*

Lei mawina tinrêng pawh hi a la râl ang,  
A chuai lo bâng chatuan lalna chu;  
An hril zêl ang thangthar thlengin,  
A ram a kin lo vang.

All the beauty of this earth will pass away,  
The eternal kingdom will never fade;  
The new generation will forever proclaim,  
His kingdom will never come to an end.

Mita hmuh loh ram nuam kan tân a buatsaih,  
I pan zêl ang aw le chu ram chu;  
Aw, chu hmun ngei chu maw lo ni,  
Kan chatuan in tûr chu.

He is preparing for us a lovely land that is not seen,  
Won't you keep pressing on towards this land;  
Yes, indeed, this very land,  
Will be our eternal home.

Lei hlimna râl leh mai thîn hmuna chêngte,  
Then tawh lohna ram min siam sak vângin,  
Haleluia! Chhandamtu chu,  
Fakin awm zêl rawh se.

For us who live in a land where joy is only fleeting,  
He is preparing a land where there will be no more  
separation,  
So 'Halleluia!' to the Saviour,  
Who should be praised without ceasing.

*NB: Discrepancies in the second line of the verses have been addressed in section 3.3.*

A cha-tuan ro luah tu - min i bei zêl ang,  
Lei mawi-na tin - rêng pawh hi a la ral ang,  
9 Mi - ta hmuh loh ram nuam kan tân a buat - sai,  
Lei hlim-na ral leh mai thîn hmu-na chêng - te,  
Lung-ngaih - na a lo len lai hian;  
A chuai lo vang cha - tuan(lal - na) chu;  
16 I pan zêl ang aw le(chu ram) chu;  
Then tawh loh - na (ram min siamsak vângin).  
Ka kiang-ah awm zêl ang che aw, Ka Chhan-dam - tu duh tak.  
An hril zêl ang thang thar thleng - in, A ram a kin lo vang.  
25 Aw, chu hmun ngei chu maw lo ni, Kan cha - tuan in tûr chu.  
Ha - le - lui - a! Chhan-dam - tu chu, Fak - in awm zêl rawh se.  
34 Aw, hlim-na ram i pan ang u, Chawlh hlen - na tûr;  
Aw, ka ngai e, then - te zawng Kim - na tûr ram khi.

K2 (MKHTB 279 – Patea)

**Aw Lalpa, Davida leh a thlah Arsi,**  
 I felna ram atân nangin min buatsaih;  
 Ka lâwmna tuifinriat angin a liam a,  
 Thih lui kamah zaiin i hming ka fak ang.

*Aw Lalpa, zaiin i hming ka fak ang,  
 Khawvêla i siam zawnng zawnng zai se;  
 Lalpa chawimawi nân awte chhuah r'u,  
 Leilung hi zaiin a lo khat ang.*

Mihring ka nih hma pawhin Lalpa Isu,  
 Thisena man dang beisei lova min tlan;  
 Chhiar sêngin han hrethiam teh rêng ila aw,  
 Khawvêl zaia tikhat tûrin ka bei ang.

Lalpa, khawiah nge ni hmun mi buatsaihna?  
 Daniela angin tukverhah ka thlîr ang;  
 Rangkachak thianghlim leh a hmun ropui chu,  
 Hrehawmah pawh thingthi talin ka thlîr ang.

Aw, Imanuel lei leh vân thar siam chu,  
 A dung leh vângah te han lêng ve ila;  
 Buaina tinrêng tuara ka then tâkte kha,  
 Vân ropuina hain an hmêl ka hmu ang.

Oh Lord, David and his descended Star,  
 You are preparing me for your land of righteousness;  
 My joy is swelling like an ocean,  
 By the bank of the river of death I will sing praises to  
 your name.

*Oh Lord, I will sing praises to your name,  
 Let all creation sing your praise;  
 In praise of the Lord, lift your voices,  
 The earth will be filled with singing.*

Even before I was born, the Lord Jesus  
 Unconditionally redeemed me with the blood price;  
 Even if I could read and comprehend it all,  
 I would try to fill the world with singing.

Lord, where is the land you have prepared?  
 As Daniel looked through his window I will gaze  
 towards it;  
 To the glorious and holy place of gold,  
 Even in times of trouble I will gaze on my knees.

Oh, Immanuel, in the new heaven and earth you are  
 creating,  
 Let me explore the length and breadth of it;  
 All the troubles I endured when others left me,  
 I will see their faces in the glorious heaven.

Aw Lal - pa, Da - vi - da leh a thlah ar - si,  
 Mi - hring ka nih hma pawh - in Lal - pa I - su,  
 10 Lal - pa, khaw-iah nge ni hmun min buat-saih - na?  
 Aw, I - man - u - el lei leh vân thar siam chu,  
 I fel - na ram a - tân nang - in min buat- sai; Ka lâwm-na tui - fin - ri  
 Thi - se - na man dang bei - sei lo - va min tlan; Chhiarsêng - in han hre-thiam  
 23 Dan - iel - a ang - in tuk - verh - ah ka thlîr ang; Rang - ka-chak thiang- hlim leh  
 A dung leh vâng - ah - te han lêng ve i - la; Buai - na tin - rêng tuar - a  
 ang - in a liam a, Thih lui ka-mah zai - in i hming ka fak ang,  
 teh rêng i - la aw, Khaw - vêl zai - a ti - khat tû - rin ka bei ang.  
 37 a hmun ro-pui chu, Hre-hawm-ah pawhthing - thi ta - lin ka thlîr ang.  
 ka then tâk-te kha, Vân ro - pui - na ha - in an hmêl ka hmu ang.  
 50 Aw Lal - pa, zai - in i hming ka fak ang, Khaw - vê - la i siam zawnng zawnng zai se;  
 57 Lal - pa chawi - mawi nân aw - te chhuah r'u,  
 Lei-lung hi zai - in a lo khat ang.



**K3 (MKHTB 432 – Thanhherha)**

**I hmangaihna zâra lâwm inkhâwm hnute,**  
 Kan lo inthen darh hianin Chhandamtu,  
 Min hnêmtu an awm love, khawvêlah,  
 Aw Lal Isu, kan hnênah lo lêng la.

When we who have gathered with joy because of your love  
 Depart from each other, Saviour,  
 There is no one in this world to comfort us,  
 Oh, Lord Jesus, come and walk beside us.

*Aw, chêng rêng la Lal Isu, kan hnênah,  
 Min awmpui la khawhar riangvai fate;  
 I hmêlah lâwmna a awm si,  
 Ka ngai tâwp thei lo'ng che.*

*Oh, always remain, Lord Jesus, beside us,  
 Remain with us, the abandoned lonely children;  
 In your face there is joy,  
 I will not be able to stop longing for you.*

He lei hi zawng tãpa inthenna hmun a ni,  
 Aw Lal Isu, i hmangaihna zârah,  
 I chatuan ram mawia ka lèn hun chuan,  
 Kan inthen tawh lo vang ringtute hi.

This whole earth is a place of weeping and separation,  
 Oh, Lord Jesus, because of your love,  
 When I come to your beautiful eternal land,  
 We believers will not depart again from each other.

Khawharin Lal Isu, tûnah ka au a che,  
 Lo lêng ta che, ka thinlung سواله hian;  
 Vârpah arsi aiin i êng mawi zâwk,  
 I hmêlah thlamuan leh lâwmna a awm.

Lonely, Lord Jesus, I now cry out to you,  
 Come to my sinful heart;  
 You shine more beautifully than the star of heaven,  
 There is comfort and joy in your countenance.

Eng tikah nge kan hmuh ang then lohna ram chu,  
 He khawvêl lungngaih buaina kalsanin;  
 I hmangaihna zâra ka thlen hun chuan  
 Ka hmu ang khawvêla ka thian then te.

When will we see the land where there will be no more  
 separation,  
 Leaving behind this world of sorrows and troubles;  
 Because of your love, when I reach there  
 I will see my friends of this earth who have gone.

I hmang-aih - na zâ - ra lâwm - a in - khâwm hnu - te, Kan lo in - then  
 He lei hi zawng tã pa in - then - na hmun a ni, Aw Lal I - su,  
 Khaw-har - in Lal I - su, tûn - ah ka au a che, Lo lêng ta che,  
 9 Eng tik - ah nge kan hmuh ang then loh - na ram chu, He khaw-vêl lung -  
 darh hian - in Chhan dam - tu, Mìn hnêm - tu an awm lo ve  
 i hmang-aih - na zâ - rah, I cha - tuan ram mawia - ka  
 17 ka thin - lung soal - ah hian; Vâr - parh ar - si ai - in i  
 ngaih buai - na kal - san - in; I hmang-aih - na zâ - ra ka  
 khaw-vêl - ah, Aw Lal I - su, ka hnên - ah lo lêng la.  
 len hun chuan, Kan in - then tawh lo vang ring - tu - te hi.  
 26 êng mawi zâwk, I hmêl - ah thla - muan leh lâwm - na a awm.  
 thlen hun chuan Ka hmu ang khaw - vêl - a ka thian then te.  
 36 Aw, chêng rêng la Lal I su, kan hnê - nah, min awmpui la khaw - har riang - vai - fa - te;  
 I hmêl - ah lâwm - na a awm si, ka ngai tâwp thei lo'ng che.

K4 (MKHTB 416 – Patea)

**Ka dam lai thlipui a râl hunin,**

Ka Lal, Chhandamtu hmêl chu ka hmu ang a;  
Chutah ka lâwmna a chuai lo vang,  
A hmêlah vân pangpâr a vul rêng a.

*Aw nunna thing, i zâr hnuaiah,  
Vân angel rual hlimin an lêng;  
Aw, chutah kan la châwl ve ang,  
Israel tlâng thianghlimah chuan.*

When the storm of my life has passed away,  
I will see the face of my Lord and Saviour;  
There my joy will never fade,  
In his countenance the heavenly flower always blooms.

*Oh tree of life, beneath your branches,  
The angels of heaven joyfully gather;  
Oh, there even we will take our rest,  
At the holy mount of Israel.*

Chu khawpui mawi thlîra ka rûmna  
Chuan lungngaih, buaina, thihna thlen thei sela;  
Tlanna thisen zâra lungduhte,  
Khawvêlah hian aw, ka lo ðhen tawh ang a.

I kal zêl ang aw, Zion fate,  
Kan zalênna ram ropui a hnai ta e;  
Tûnah lungngaih, ðah leh buaina hi,  
Kan lâwmna pangpârah an la vul ngei ang.

Tin, chu khawpui mawi ka thlen hun chuan,  
Kan lènna ram reh lam hi ka hawi tawh lo'ng;  
Berâmno leh a lalðhutthlêng chu,  
Ennawm mak tak leh ka lâwmna tikimtu.

If my groaning in gazing for this beautiful city,  
Could take away troublesome sorrows;  
Loved ones who have been saved by the blood,  
They would already have left this world.

Oh children of Zion, let's keep on going,  
Our glorious land of freedom is near at hand;  
These sorrows, weeping and troubles,  
Will become the bloom of our flower of joy.

Then, when I reach this beautiful city,  
I will not look back on this lonely land where we are but  
visitors;  
The Lamb upon his throne,  
Is wonderful to see and the perfecter of my joy.

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20  
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K5 (MKHTB 327 – Zumi)

**Ka hmaah lui râl khaw mawi chu a awm,**  
Thlen ka nghâkhlel khawpui mawi chu;  
Lungduh zawng zawng an lènna hmun,  
Hmuh châkin ka thlîr bâng thei lo.

There is a beautiful city before me on the river-bank,  
I am impatient to reach that beautiful city;  
It is the gathering place of all our loved ones,  
I want to see it so much I can't stop gazing at it.

*Aw, kal lai kan ni,  
I châwl lo vang;  
Lalpa chakna ringin,  
Khawpui mawi i pan ang.*

*Oh, we are travellers,  
Let's not take rest;  
With faith in the Lord's strength,  
Let's press forward to the beautiful city.*

Chu khawpui mawi lam chu i pan zêl ang,  
Chau lovin i kal zêl ang u;  
Râlmuang hmun rêng hi a awm lo,  
Lalpa hnên kan thlen hma hi zawng.

Let's keep pressing forward to this beautiful city,  
Let's not grow weary but keeping going;  
There is no true place of freedom,  
Until we enter the presence of the Lord.

Hre Chiang teh ila aw, ka fak ning lo'ng,  
Râl-titnaah lêng mah ila;  
Vân hmun ropui thlen hunah chuan,  
Fakna hla daiin ka ring lo.

If I fully comprehended, I would not stop praising,  
Though I wander through a land of no freedom;  
At the coming of the glorious heaven,  
I don't believe the songs of praise will ever fade.

Aw, vân Thlarau Thianghlim lo lêng ang che,  
Thinlung sual kalh hawng leh ang che;  
I ram mawiah min hruai ang che,  
Lâwmna kin tawh lohnaah chuan.

Oh, come Holy Spirit of heaven,  
Unlock this sinful heart;  
Lead me to your beautiful land,  
Where joy will never end.

Ka hma - ah lui râl khaw mawi chu a awm, Thlen ka nghâk -  
Chu khaw - pui mawi lam chu i pan zêl ang, Chau lo - vin  
Hre Chiang teh i - la aw, ka fak ning lo'ng, Râl - tih na -  
9 Aw, vân Thla - rau Thiang - hlim, lo lêng ang che, Thin-lung sual  
hlel khaw - pui mawi chu; Lung - duh zawng zawng an kim - na hmun,  
i kal zêl ang u; Râl - muang hmun rêng hi a awm lo.  
ah lêng mah i - la; Vân hmun ro - pui thlen hun - ah chuan,  
18 kalh hawng leh ang che; I ram mawi - ah min hruai ang che,  
Hmuh châk - in ka thlîr bâng thei lo. Aw, kal lai kan ni, i châwl lo  
Lal - pa hnên kan thlen hma hi zawng.  
Fak - na hla dai - in ka ring lo.  
29 Lâwm - na kim tawh loh - na - ah chuan.  
vang; Lal - pa chak - na ring - in, khaw - pui mawi i pan ang.

**K6 (MKHTB 415 – Hleithangpuia)**

**Ka ngâkhlel Zion khawpui thar,**  
Lal lènna vânrâm ropui;  
Lunglên changin ka thlîr fô thîn,  
Lei hrehawm hnutiang chhawnin.

*Aw, ram thianghlîm, nunna ram êng,  
Lalna ram mawî hmuh ka nuam e;  
Ka thlen hma chuan aw Lal nunnêm,  
Thlah lovin min hruai zêl ang che.*

Chungtianga lêngin thla an zâr,  
Natna leh lungngaihntaten;  
Thihna tlâng chhîpa chuang kan ni,  
Nunna ram i thlîr ang u.

Dam lai khawvêl hi thlîr teh u,  
Lungngaih chhûm a zing fô thîn;  
Lei ram pêla nun thar ngaiin,  
Ka tãp Lal nunnêm hmaah.

Fam ngai min nhêm ang che Lalpa,  
Thihna fate kan lâwm nân;  
Fam ngaih lêngkâwl a thiàng zo ta,  
Zion ram i thlîr ang u.

I am impatient for the new city of Zion,  
The glorious heavenly land where the Lord roams;  
I often gaze at it longingly,  
Putting the troubles of this world behind me.

*Oh, holy land, the shining land of life,  
I long to see the beautiful land of the Lord's reign;  
Oh gentle Lord, until I reach,  
Always guide me without letting me fall.*

They roam around the sky and spread their wings,  
Sickness and sorrows;  
We are at the peak of the mount of death,  
Let's gaze towards the kingdom of life.

World of the living, gaze,  
Clouds of sorrows are always overshadowing;  
Longing to leave this earth for the new life,  
I weep before the gentle Lord.

Lord, comfort us when we miss the dead,  
That we the bereaved may be happy;  
The time of missing the dead is already passing,  
Let's gaze towards the land of Zion.

Ka ngâk-hlel Zi - on khaw-pui thar, Lal lèn - na vânrâm ro - pui;  
Chung-tiang - a lêng - in thla an zâr, Natna leh lung-ngaih - na - ten;  
Dam lai khaw - vêl hi thlîr teh u, Lung ngaih chhûm a zing fô thîn;  
14 Fam ngai min nhêm ang che Lal - pa, Thihna fa - te kan lâwm nân;  
Lung - lên châng - in ka thlîr fô thîn, Lei hre hawm hnu-tiang chhawn - in.  
Thih - na tlâng chhîp-achuang kan ni, Nun-na ram i thlîr ang u.  
Lei ram pê - la nun thar ngai - in, Ka tãp Lal nun-nêm hma - ah.  
26 Fam ngaih lêng - kâwl a thiàng zo ta, Zi - on ram i thlîr ang u.  
37 Aw, ram thiàng-hlîm, nun-na ram êng, Lal-na ram mawî hmuh ka nuam e;  
Ka thlen hmachuan aw Lal nun- nêm, Thlah lo-vin min hruai zêl ang che.

**K7 (MKHTB 290 – Saihnûna)**

**Ka taksa lungngai mah sela,**  
 Vânramah thlain ka lêng thîn;  
 Tûnah chauvin rûm mah ila,  
 Nakinah thlain ka thlâwk ang.

Even though I have fleshly sorrows,  
 I fly around in the heavens;  
 Even though I now groan with weariness,  
 Later I will fly with wings.

*Dam lai ni a râl hma chuan Lalpa,*  
*Nunna hlîm rêng rêng ka nei lo;*  
*Chatuan Zion khua, lo vâv tawh la,*  
*Buaina zawng zawng lâwmna chang rawh se.*

*Lord, before the days of this life pass away,*  
*My life has no joy at all;*  
*Dawn upon us, eternal city of Zion,*  
*Let joy take the place of all troubles.*

Sual thiin thim zîngah hian,  
 Chatuan êng lam chu ka zawng a;  
 Kei rethei, chau leh saruak hi,  
 Hlimnain min tifamkim rawh.

In the midst of this darkness of sin and death,  
 I am searching for the way of eternal light;  
 I, who am poor, weary and naked,  
 Restore me with joy.

Khawpui mawi, rangkachak ram nuam,  
 Thleng ila pialrâl khawpui chu;  
 Nun hlui ram ka han thlîr ang a,  
 Ka tahna rêng ka ngai lo vang.

The beautiful city of gold, lovely land,  
 If only I could reach the city of Pialrâl,  
 I will gaze back upon the land of my former life,  
 And I will not miss any of my weeping.

Ka tak - sa lung - ngai mah se - la, Vân ram - ah thla - in ka lêng thîn;  
 Sua - la thi - in thim zîng ah hian, Chatuan êng lam chu ka zawng a;  
 13 Khaw-pui mawi, rang - ka-chak ramnuam, Thlengi - la pial - râl khaw-pui chu;  
 25 Tû - nah chau - vin rûm mah i - la, Na - ki-nah thla - in ka thlâwk ang.  
 Kei re - thei, chau leh sa - ruak hi, hlim-na-in min ti - fam - kim rawh.  
 Nun hlui ram ka han thlîr ang a, ka tah na rêng ka ngai lo vang.  
 36 Dam lai ni a ral hmachuan Lal - pa, Nun-na hlîm rêng rêng ka nei  
 44 lo; Cha-tuan Zi - on khua, lo vâv tawh la,  
 Buai - na zawng zawng lâwm - na chang rawh se.

## K8 (MKHTB 280 – Saihnûna)

**Khawvêl chhuahsan ila, hnutiang hawi tawh lovin,**  
 Lâwma kal hmasaten,  
 Pialrâl ram mawiah min nghâk e,  
 Kumkhaw nawmnaah chuan.

Let's abandon this world without looking back,  
 Those happy people who went before us,  
 They wait for us in the lovely land of Pialrâl,  
 The place of everlasting joy.

*Tah leh ram lungngaihna,*  
*Khawvêl ka chênna hi;*  
*Lungrualna Zion tlâng chungna*  
*Kan lên hun ka nghâkhlel.*

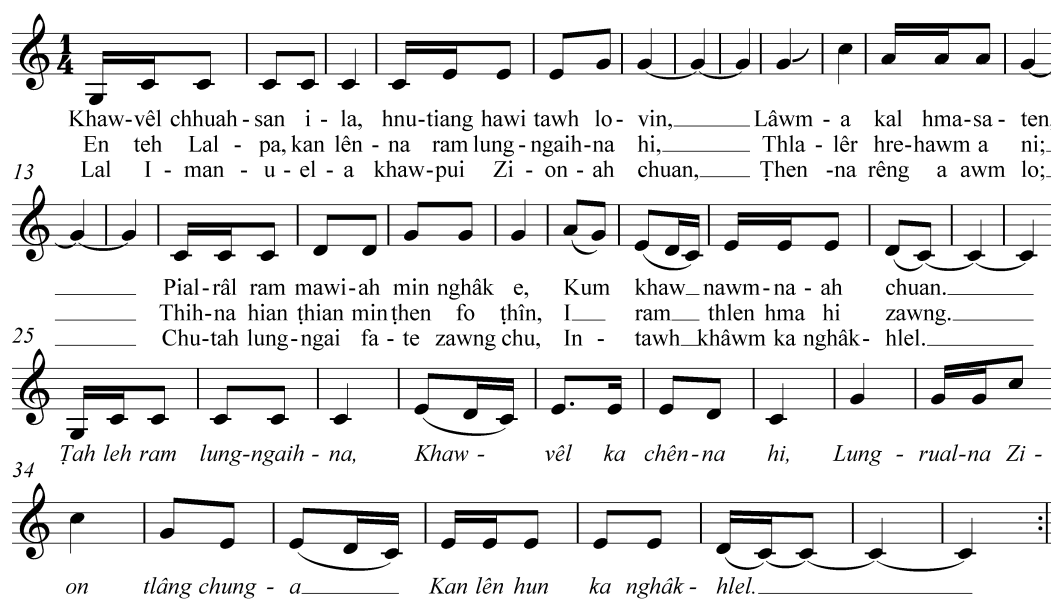
*The land of weeping and sorrows,*  
*Is this earth where I dwell;*  
*On top of the mount Zion of peace*  
*I cannot wait to dwell.*

En teh Lalpa, kan lênna ram lungngaihna hi,  
 Thlalêr hrehawm a ni;  
 Thihna hian thian min then fo thîn,  
 I ram thlen hma hi zawng.

See, Lord, the sorrows of this earth where we gather,  
 It's a rough wilderness;  
 Death often separates us from our friends,  
 Until we reach your land.

Lal Imaneula khawpui Zion-ah chuan,  
 Thenna rêng a awm lo;  
 Chutah lungngai fate zawng chu,  
 Intawh khâwm ka nghâkhlel.

In Zion, the city of Lord Immanuel,  
 There is never any separation;  
 There among the children of sorrows,  
 I am impatient for our reunion.



Khaw-vêl chhuah-san i-la, hnu-tiang hawi tawh lo-vin, Lâwm-a kal hma-sa-ten,  
 En teh Lal-pa, kan lên-na ram lung-ngaih-na hi, Thla-lêr hre-hawm a ni;  
 13 Lal I-man-u-el-a khaw-pui Zi-on-ah chuan, Thên-na rêng a awm lo;  
 Pial-râl ram mawi-ah min nghâk e, Kum khaw\_nawm-na-ah chuan.  
 25 Thih-na hian thian min then fo thîn, I ram thlen hma hi zawng.  
 Chu-tah lung-ngai fa-te zawng chu, In-tawh khâwm ka nghâk-hlel.  
 34 Tah leh ram lung-ngaih-na, Khaw-vêl ka chên-na hi, Lung-rual-na Zi-  
 on tlâng chung-na Kan lên hun ka nghâk-hlel.

**K9** (MKHTB 414 – L. Kamlova)

**Lung min lèn ka thlîr ning dâwn lo,**  
 Lei lungngaih piah ram saw;  
 Dam lai lungngaih chhûmpui zîng hi,  
 Ka pèl ang tahna ram.

I am longing for it, I won't tire of gazing,  
 That land beyond the land of sorrow;  
 These spreading dark clouds of life's sorrows,  
 I will pass from this land of weeping.

*Lei lungngaih mittui a hul ang,*  
*Ka tahlai ni a râl ang;*  
*Aw Lalpa hmêl hmuh ka nghâkhlel,*  
*Aw, râl mai rawh lei ninawm.*

*The tears of the land of sorrows will dry up,*  
*My days of weeping will pass away;*  
*Oh, I am impatient to see the Lord's face,*  
*Oh, pass away, this troublesome land.*

Kalvariah ka hrêng ropuian,  
 Vânrâm kawngkhâr a hawng;  
 Va chuan ta la, aw ka thlarau,  
 I ram hlun tûr a lang.

At Calvary, my glorious God,  
 Opened the gates of heaven;  
 Go on, Oh my soul,  
 Your everlasting land has come.

Ka tahlai zân thim a râl ang,  
 Jordan lui râlah khian;  
 Aw ka ngaih ka lâwmna berte,  
 An lènna ramah khian.

My dark nights of weeping will pass away,  
 Up there at the river Jordan;  
 Oh, I long for it, my greatest joy,  
 The land where they are gathering.

Aw, eng tik nge ka thlen ve ang,  
 Ka chung khua nuamah khian?  
 Luikawr thim ka dai kai hunah,  
 Tahna ram ka ngai lo'ng.

Oh, when will I reach,  
 My wonderful city above?  
 After I have crossed the dark river,  
 I will not miss the land of weeping.

Lung min lèn\_\_\_ ka thlîr ning dâwn lo, Lei lung-ngaih piah ram\_\_\_ saw;\_\_\_\_\_

Kal - va - riah\_\_\_ ka hrêng ro - pui - an, Vân - ram\_\_\_ kawng- khâr a hawng;\_\_\_\_\_

14 Ka tah lai\_\_\_ zân thim a ral ang, Jor - dan\_\_\_ lui râlah khian.\_\_\_\_\_

Aw, eng tik\_\_\_ nge ka thlen ve ang, Ka chung\_ khua nuam-ah khian?\_\_\_\_\_

Dam lai lung - ngaihchhûmpui zîng hi, ka pèl\_\_\_ ang tah - na ram.\_\_\_\_\_

Va chuan ta\_\_\_ la, aw ka thla - rau, I ram\_\_\_ hlun tûr a lang.\_\_\_\_\_

27 Aw ka ngaih\_\_\_ ka lâwm - na ber - te, An lèn - na ramah khian.\_\_\_\_\_

Lui-kawr thim ka dai kai hun - ah, Tah na\_\_\_ ram\_ ka ngai lo'ng.\_\_\_\_\_

40 Lei lung ngaih\_\_\_ mit - tui a hul ang, Ka tah lai\_\_\_ ni a ral ang;\_\_\_\_\_

Aw Lal - pa\_\_\_ hmêlhmuh ka nghâk - hlel, Aw, ral mai rawh lei nin - awm.\_\_\_\_\_

**K10 (MKHTB 278 – Patea)**

**Ni ropui a lo thleng dâwn ta,**  
 Kan nghâk Lal Imanuel;  
 Sual leh ramhuai tlâwmna ni chu,  
 Chhandam fate kan zalênna tûr chu.

The day of glory is near at hand,  
 We are awaiting the Lord, Immanuel;  
 The day sin and evil spirits will be defeated,  
 When we the saved children of God will be free.

*Chumi hunah chuan hlimin ka zai ang,*  
*Lal ram buatsaih chatuan hmun ka chang ve ang a,*  
*Aw, a va nuam dâwn êm!*  
*Aw, a va hlimawm dâwn êm!*  
*Hlim tâwp hlau lovin ka lêng ang.*

*At that time I will sing with joy,*  
*Even I will be given a place in the eternal land prepared*  
*by the Lord,*

*Oh, how lovely it will be!*  
*Oh, how enjoyable it will be!*  
*I will join in without fear of my joy running out.*

Eng tikah nge ni ang Lalpa,  
 Hnehna ni kan hmuh hun tûr,  
 Thlâwkin Jordan ka lo kaia,  
 I tân vân arsi angin ka ên ang?

When will that day be, Lord,  
 When we will see the day of victory,  
 And I will fly over to Jordan,  
 And shine like a heavenly star for you?

A ni tak e, chatuan Lalpa,  
 I khawpui siam tharah chuan,  
 I thisena i lei tawhte,  
 'Ka hnênah lo kal r'u,' i tih thîn kha.

It is really so, eternal Lord,  
 That in your newly-fashioned city,  
 Those you already bought with your blood,  
 You say to them, 'Come to me.'

Aw khawpui thar, i mawi mang e,  
 I chhôngah hnehtu an lêng;  
 An hnênah hla thar sak tûr chu,  
 Khawvêl râl hun atân an dah ta e.

Oh new city, you are so beautiful,  
 Within you the victors are gathering;  
 The new song that will be sung with them,  
 They have reserved until the world passes away.

Ni ro - pui a lo thleng dâwn ta, Kan nghâk Lal I - man - u - el;  
 Eng tik - ah nge ni ang Lal - pa, Hne - hna ni kan hmuh hun tûr,  
 A ni tak e, chat-uan Lal - pa, I khaw - pui siam thar - ah chuan,  
 13 Aw khaw-pui thar, i mawi mang e, I chhông - ah hne - htu an lêng;  
 Sual leh ram-huaitlâwm-na ni chu, Chhan-dam fa - te kan za-lên - na tûr chu  
 Thlâwk-in Jor - dan ka lo kai - a I tân vân ar - si ang-in ka ên ang?  
 I thi - sen - a i lei tawh - te, 'Ka hnê-nah lo kal r'u,' i tih thîn kha.  
 24 An hne-hna hla thar sak tûr chu, Khaw - vêl râl hun a - tân an dah ta e.  
 Chu - mi hun-ah chuan hlim - in ka zai ang, Lal ram buat-saih  
 36  
 46 cha-tuan hmun ka chang ve ang a, Aw, a va nuam dâwn êm! Aw,  
 a va hlim - awm dâwn êm! Hlim tâwp hlau lo - vin ka lêng ang.



**K11 (MKHTB 397 – Lianrûma)**

**Ni tla ngai lo, Zion khawpui,**

Ngaiin ka rûm, ka ÷ap chhûn ni tinin;  
Puan ropui sinin an lêng tlan sate,  
Ka tân hmun a awm ve'm chu ramah chuan?

The city of Zion, where the sun never sets,  
Every day I longingly weep and groan for it;  
Those who wear the robes of glory gather there,  
In that land is there a place even for me?

*Ka va ngai êm! Ka va ngai êm!  
A hmun ropui, a mawina zawng aain,  
Hmangaihtu, Lal Krista hmêl duhawm chu,  
Hmuh ka nuam ka lungkham bânna tûrin.*

*How I long for it! How I long for it!  
More than the glorious place and all its beauty,  
I long to see the loving Lord Jesus Christ's lovely face,  
And there my anxieties would cease.*

A mawizia sawi sên loh ram chu,  
Thisenin a hawng ta, zalênna ram;  
Ka thlarau, chu ram mawlh chu zawng ve la,  
Khawvêl ram zawng a la chuai dâwn a ni.

The land whose beauty cannot be expressed,  
By the blood it has opened, the land of freedom;  
My soul, seek this beautiful land,  
All of this world will fade away.

Lungduh chhandamte lénna hmun,  
Thlen theih loh ka hlau mang e, Chhandamtu;  
Thisenin min sil la, Thlarauvin min hruai se,  
Lal lungnhêm ram mawi chu ka ngai mang e.

The place where our saved loved ones wander,  
Saviour, I fear I will not be able to reach it;  
Wash me in the blood, lead me by the Spirit,  
How much I long for the comforting Lord's beautiful  
land.

*NB: Discrepancies in the first and third verses have been addressed in section 3.3.*

Ni tla ngai lo, Zi - on khaw - pui, Ngai - in ka rûm,  
(A mawi - zia sawi) sên loh ram chu, Thi - sen - in a  
11 Lung - duh chhan - dam - te lén - na hmun, Thlen theih loh ka  
ka ÷ap chhûn ni tin - in; Puan ro - pui si - nin an lêng  
hawng ta, za - lén - na ram; Ka thla - rau, chu ram mawlh chu  
19 hlau mang e, Chhandam - tu; Thi - se - nin min sil la, (Thlarauvin)  
tlan sa - te, Ka tân hmun a awm ve'm chu ram - ah chuan?  
30 zawng ve la, Khaw - vêl ramzawng a la chuai dâwn a ni.  
min hruai se, Lal lung - hnêm ram mawi chu ka ngai mang e.  
42 Ka va ngai êm! Ka va ngai êm! A hmun ro - pui, a mawi - na zawng ai  
51 in, Hmang - aih - tu, Lal Kris - ta hmêl duh - awm chu,  
hmuh ka nuam ka lung - kham bân - na tûr - in.

**K12 (MKHTB 50 – Thanglêra)**

**Rinna thla zâr ila,**

Kalvari mual lam va fang ila,  
Ka Lal thihna hmunah chuanin,  
Ka chênna tûr Salem thar ka hmu ang.

*Ka lei lungngaih, ka tah ka bâng ang a,  
Lâwmna pâr mawi vulna ka thlîr chuan.*

Kalvari tâng chung a,  
Thisen hlu zâm, Chhandamtu nâkah,  
Hnam tin sil fainaah chuanin,  
Aw ka thlarau, tah chuan chêng ang che.

Jerusalem thar khi,  
A lanna tâng dang a awm lo ve;  
I thlîr ang Kalvari tângah,  
Tahchuan a lang, Chhandamtu nâkah chuan.

Aw ka thlarau, thlâwk la,  
Va fang rawh, i Chhandamtu thihna;  
Nangmah vânga a tuarna chu,  
A thisen zâmah inbual ang che.

Spread the wings of faith,  
Explore the ground of Calvary,  
It's the place where my Lord died,  
I will see the New Jerusalem where my dwelling place  
is.

*My earthly sorrow and weeping will cease,  
When I gaze where the beautiful flower of joy blooms.*

At the mount of Calvary,  
The precious blood flowed from the Saviour's side,  
Where the nations are cleansed,  
Oh my soul, dwell there whenever you weep.

That New Jerusalem,  
There is no other mount from which it can be seen;  
Let's gaze at it from the mount of Calvary,  
It can be seen from there, at the Saviour's side.

Oh my soul, fly there,  
Explore the place where your Saviour died,  
Where he died for you,  
Bathe in the streams of his blood.

Rin-na thla zâr i - la, Kal-var - i mual lam va fang i - la;  
Kal-var - i tâng chung - a, Thi-sen hlu zâm Chhan-dam-tu nâ - kah,  
Jer - u - sa - lem thar khi, A lan - na tâng dang a awm lo ve;  
11 Aw ka thla - rau, thlâwk la, Va fang rawh i Chhan-dam-tu thih - na;  
Ka Lal thih - na hmun-ah chuan - in, Ka chên-na tûr Sa - lem thar ka hmu  
Hnam tin sil fai - na - ah chuan - in, Aw ka thla - rau, tah chuan chêng ang  
I thlîr ang Kal - var - i tâng - ah, Tan chuan a lang, Chhan-dam - tu nâ-kah  
21 Nang-mah vâng - a a tuar - na chu, A thi-sen zâ - mah in - bual ang  
ang. che. Ka lei lung - ngaih, ka tah ka bâng ang a, che.  
chuan. che.  
30 Lâwm-na pâr mawi vul - na ka thlîr chuan.

**K13** (MKHTB 411 – Thanga. See S13 for original song by Ada R. Habershon)

**Vân hmun ropui hmangaih ram khi,**  
 Mi thianglimte in a ni;  
 Anni hnêna chêng ve tûrin,  
 Khawvêl thilte chu paih la.

That glorious place up in heaven, the land of love,  
 Is the home of the saints;  
 In order to dwell with them,  
 Get rid of worldly things.

*Khawvêl ni hi a râl hunin,*  
*Nakinah in nuamah,*  
*Mi thianglimte lènna ramah,*  
*Vân inah kan chêng ang.*

*When this time on earth comes to an end,*  
*In the pleasant future home,*  
*In the land where the saints wander,*  
*We will dwell in that heavenly home.*

Chatuan in nuam ropui taka,  
 Lêngte zawg chhûngkhat an ni;  
 Chu in nuama chêng ve tûrin,  
 Chi tin, hnam tin an sâwm a.

In the glorious and comfortable eternal home,  
 All who go there are as one family;  
 To join them in dwelling in that lovely place,  
 They invite every nation and race.

Chhandamtu thihna hmun ropui,  
 Hmangaihna hi an hril vêt;  
 Inbuatsaih hun a kim chhûngin,  
 A hmangaihna chu ring la.

The glorious place where the Saviour died,  
 They speak and tell of his love;  
 When the time of preparation is over,  
 Believe in his love.

Pakhat zêla an kal bovin,  
 An kiam thîn chhûngkaw tinrêng;  
 Lungduh zawng zawng chatuan hmunah,  
 Kim leh ni a awm ang em?

One by one they leave and disappear,  
 Every family eventually departs;  
 All the loved ones, in the eternal place,  
 Will there be a day of reunion?

Vân hmun ro - pui hmang - aih ram khi, Mi thiang- hlim - te in a  
 Cha - tuan in nuam ro - pui ta - ka Lêng - te zawng chhûng - khat an  
 Chhan - dam - tu thi - hna - hmun ro - pui, Hmangaih - na hi an hril  
 14 Pa - khat zê - la an kal bo - vin, An kiam thîn chhûng - kaw tin -  
 ni; An - ni hnê - na chêng ve tû - rin, Khaw - vêt thil - te chu  
 ni; Chu in nuam - a chêng ve tû - rin, Chi tin, hnam tin an  
 29 vêt; In - buat - saih hun a kim chhûng - in, A hmang - aih - na chu  
 rêng; Lung - duh zawng zawng cha - tuan hmun - ah, Kim leh ni a awm  
 paih la. Khaw vêt ni hi a ral hu - nin, Na ki - nah in nuam  
 sâwm a.  
 ring la.  
 46 ang em?  
 ah, Mi thiang - hlim - te lèn - na ram - ah,  
 56 Vân in - ah kan chêng ang.

## APPENDIX B: OLDER MIZO SONGS SAMPLE

## 01 Lumtui – Chawngchen Zai

Lumtui tha phei tuakhkuang kan lakna, Chalvawm chhaina dai a thim reng e.

Ka han thlir a, chhaktiang kan pianna, Chumchi leng romei a kai chiaie.

Tlâng khuaah ngosai a kual inti, Luai lungah kirin ka ring lo ve.

*At the point in Lumtui where we collect firewood; The place where the bears live is very dark.*

*When I gaze over to the East, to the place of my birth, I see the thick mist covering it all.*

*They say the wild elephants roam in the West; I don't believe they will return here.*

In free time, half-spoken



Lum tui tha phei tuak kuang kan lek - na, Chal vawm chhai na dai a thim reng e. Lum

2 Sung



tui tha phei tuak kuang kan lak - na, Chal vawm chhai -

9



- na dai a thim reng e.

16 In free time, half-spoken



Ka han thlir a chhak-tiang kan pian- na, Chum-chi leng ro-mei a kai chiaie. Ka

17 Sung



han thlir a chhak- tiang kan pian - na, Chum

26



chi leng ro - mei a kai chiaie e. Chum

35



chi leng romei a kai chiaie e. Tlâng

44



kua - ah ngho - sai a kual in - ti.

51



Luai lung - ah kir - in ka ring lo - ve.

## O2 Darlenglehi Zai

Lenan chhawklei ainawn a pâr chul thîn e, Chul lo te a; Darlenglehi chhimtlângpui mawi rêngah e.  
Rila lo put limnghate pian nanah e, Thlavarsiauvîn; Darlenglehin, chawi na ngai e zingtianah.

*The chhawklei and ainawn flowers always fade, I wish they would not; Darlenglehi never fades.*

*At the place where Darlenglehi goes to draw water, the fish are always swimming and glistening.*

7 (Aw) Le-nan chhawk-lei ar-nawn a pâr chul thîn e, (Aw) Chul lo te a

12 Dar-leng-leh-i chhim-tlâng pui mawi rêng ah e. Chhim

18 tlâng pui mawi rêng ah e. (Aw) Ri-la lo put

23 lim-ngha-te pian na-nah e. (Aw) Thla-var-siau vîn, Dar-leng-leh in,

28 chawi na ngai e zing-tian ah. (Aw) Chawi na ngai e zing-tian ah.

31 (Aw) Thla-var-siau - vîn, Dar-leng-leh - in,

chawi na ngai e zing - tian ah.

Some discussion takes place


### 03 Darthiangi Chente

Lo tho rawh e ka u Darthiangi – zuruiin maw chham ang i zal a?  
 Zuruiin chham ang ka zal lo ve – Chera ngiah chham ang zalpui ing e.  
 Chera ngaih chham ang zalpui lo la – Chente bungpui vul leh na i e.  
 Chente bungpui vul lehna hmani – Chera ang lungdi ka tawng lawng e.  
 Zawl lo kian u, lamzawl lo kian u – Chera lam nan zawl lo kian u.  
 Darnam te nun khuangthing a lak ni'n – Sanghal hriama zing ka zin sual e.  
 Fiara tui hman chun kilin a chawi – lamsial zopui chhuak i dawn dun ang.

*Get up, sister Darthiangi – are you sleepy from drinking?  
 I am not sleepy from drinking – I am sleepy because I miss Chera.  
 Don't miss Chera any more – Even the Chente tree bears more fruit.  
 I can't wait for the Chente tree – I will never have another like Chera.  
 Make some room in the dancing space – For Chera to dance.  
 My gentle and wonderful lover died in the woods where he was hunting.  
 Just like the pure water we call Fiara's water, let's drink this excellent wine.*


*All lines are derivative of the first couplet, transcribed below:*

In free time, half-spoken




Lo tho rawh e \_\_\_ ka u Dar-thiang-i \_\_\_ zu-rui-in maw chham ang i zal a? \_\_\_

2 Sung



Lo tho rawh \_\_\_ e \_\_\_ ka

6

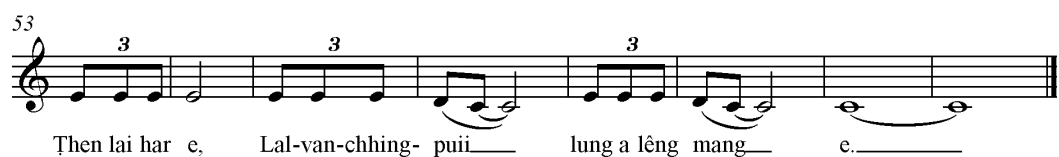
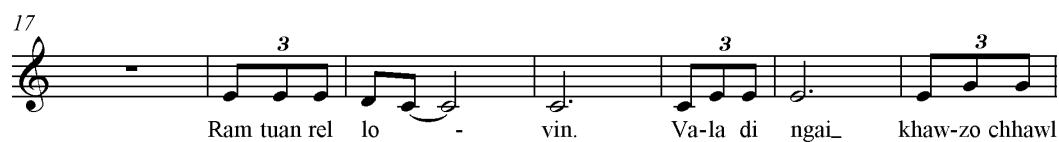


u \_\_\_ Dar - thiang - i. \_\_\_

#### O4 Kawrnu Zai

Kawrnu tapin thing lenbuang a awi, vala di ngai khawzo; Chhawl ang ka uai e ram tuan rel lovin.  
Runtui thlehriat râl han kai ing e, thenlai har e; Lalvanchhingpuii lung a lêng mang e.

*The cicada cries out of loneliness, she is missing her lover, 'I am so lonely I dare not even work.'*  
*Just as the Runtui river meanders, so it is hard to take leave of each other, Lalvanchhingpuii is so lonely.*



## 05 Lianchhiari Zai

Amin tluang pem min ti, lianlai chhung kai mahni,  
 Cherbela ningzu dawn, lianchhung kan chi hrim e.  
 Ka nu e cherchhan chhung, ka pa e tluangza chhawn,  
 Ka kungpui ah min zawt, sairual e kan si lo.  
 Kan tawng a uang em ni, tlangin lo ngai rawh u,  
 Zova siahthing ril khi, a din chhung kei mahni.  
 Ni len ka tum lo ve, tlaivar ka tum lo ve,  
 Thadang anka ka bi a, ni len ka tum leh e.  
 Kan in tawh nan emaw khawnthianga zu kan dawn,  
 Kan inthen nan emaw chhiarthlang ar zaa khuan.

*People think we are simple immigrants but we belong to a very big family,  
 Many people like to drink a lot in our house, which shows we are well-established.  
 My mother is reliable and my father is wise,  
 People consult him and we are very wealthy.  
 As long as the Zovathing tree stands, so will we also remain.  
 Please excuse us if we seem proud.  
 Even though I am not desperate to be with my lover all the time,  
 Whenever I meet him I find it hard not to stay a long time with him.  
 We drink to celebrate whenever we get to meet each other,  
 And we only leave when the cock starts crowing, telling us to part.*

*Most lines are derivative of the second couplet, transcribed below:*

7 Ka nu e cher-chhan chhung, ka pa e tluang za chhawn, Ka  
 12 kung-pui-ah min zawt, sairual e kan si lo.  
 17 Kan si lo, sairual e kan si lo. Cher-be-la ning-zu  
 dawn, sairual e kan si lo.



## O6 Liandova Nupui Hla a and b

A: Liandova's wife Chhiahchawngi, when taking water from the river, sings:

Ka kal lamah pal siau siau ing,  
 Ka kik lamah runtui a lian a.  
 Runrui chungah chawnban a kaih,  
 Ka thai Chawngi pam ta lua hi e.

*As I was walking in the Runtui river, my feet would kick up and splash the water,  
 But when I was coming back the river had swollen and the water was reaching my calves.  
 I, Chawngi, died, drowning in the river.*

B: With a different tune:

Hmanah singai sum tin phur, rulpuin chhunrawlah nei,  
 Liandovate unau lung lawmah.

*A long time ago, there was a serpent that contained a lot of treasure,  
 This was the happiness of Liandote.*

The musical score is written in a single system with a treble clef and a 7/8 time signature. It consists of eight staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words underlined. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and triplets (indicated by a '3' above the notes). The lyrics are as follows:

10 Ka kal\_ la- mah\_ pal siau\_ siau ing,\_\_\_ ka kik\_ lam - ah\_ run - tui\_ a lian\_\_\_  
 17 e.\_\_\_\_\_ Run - rui\_\_\_ chung - ah\_\_\_ chawn - ban\_\_\_ a kaih,\_\_\_ ka  
 24 thai\_ Chawng - i\_\_\_ pam ta\_\_\_ lua hi\_\_\_ e.\_\_\_\_\_

32 Hman-ah sing - ai\_\_\_ sum tin phur, rul-pui-in chhun\_\_\_ rawl-ah  
 40 nei, Liand-o-va - te\_\_\_ u-nau lung lawm - ah. Liand-o-va  
 46 te\_\_\_ u-nau lung lawm - ah. Rul-pui-in chhun\_\_\_  
 rawl-ah nei, Liand-o-va - te\_\_\_ u-nau lung lawm - ah.

### 07 Pi Hmuaki (Ngente) Zai

Ka ngente khua, khua nun nuama kha,  
 Ka thla ki fam hma'n ka nghilh rua lo ve.  
 Mi an piang mi tinrêng, thangurpui an piang,  
 Thangtawna pa tluk an piang lo ve.  
 Neihchawnga zu valan ka rui e,  
 Ka ngaih leiah zai tin ka chhiar.  
 Nau-a te u, nauhaia te u,  
 Tha tete khan min han chhilh ula.

*My village of Ngente, where the life is so pleasant,  
 Will never be forgotten until I die.  
 There have been many different people born in Ngente, even chiefs,  
 But there is no one like Thangtawna's father.  
 Like a young man I am getting drunk with Neihchawnga's beer,  
 I pass my time in this land lonely and singing,  
 Young fellows, young fellows,  
 Be sure to bury me well.*

Ka ngen - te\_\_\_\_\_ khua,\_\_\_\_\_ khua nun nuam a\_\_\_\_\_ kha,\_\_\_\_\_

10

(ka)thla ki fam\_\_\_\_\_ hma'n\_\_\_\_\_ ka nghilh rua lo\_\_\_\_\_

19

ve.\_\_\_\_\_ ka nghilh rua lo\_\_\_\_\_ ve.\_\_\_\_\_

28

Mi an piang\_\_\_\_\_ mi tin - reng,\_\_\_\_\_ thang - ur

37

pui an piang,\_\_\_\_\_ Mi an piang\_\_\_\_\_ mi

46

tin - reng,\_\_\_\_\_ thang ur pui an\_\_\_\_\_ piang,\_\_\_\_\_

55

Nau - a te\_\_\_\_\_ u,\_\_\_\_\_ nau - hai - a te\_\_\_\_\_ u,\_\_\_\_\_

64

Tha te - te\_\_\_\_\_ khan\_\_\_\_\_

69

\_\_\_\_\_ (min)han chhilh\_\_\_\_\_ u - - - la.

discussion and half-spoken chanting of the next words

### O8 Tiau kan hnu Zai – Mangkhai Khelte

Ka nun tuichhin lamzawl a phiat a, keiin dara runin ka phiat a.  
 Dara sawngka lerah ka chuan a, kan Champhai khua thlohvang thlir ing e.  
 Khua lo thal e romei a kai chiaie, chung kawngo ang len nuam ing e.  
 Bualte sahlamah uai ta hnu kha, Mangkhaia kirin ka ring lo ve.  
 Mangkhaia kirin ka ring lo ve, tui leh luang kirin ka lêng zawk e.

*My mother is swipping the dancing place by the river; I am sweeping the floor of Dara's house.  
 I step out on to the edge of Dara's verandah, I gaze towards Champhai, like a bird on a branch.  
 In the spring the mist hangs in the air, I wish I could fly above it like a bird.  
 In Bualte the carcasses hang from the post, I don't believe they will come back to life.  
 Rather than come back to life, it is more likely that the river would start flowing backwards.*

*Most lines are derivative of the second line, transcribed below:*

7 Ka nun(e) tui-chhin lam-zawl ka phiat a, kei-in dar-

15 a run-in ka phiat a. Da-ra sawng-

22 ka ler-ah ka chuan a. kan Cham -

phai khua thloh-vang thlir ing e.

### O9 Zailam Hla

Leiri chhung inah, zu lovina vuai a ka lam ngai lo, Leiri chung inah  
 Challiana kan lak zova siahthing Challiana kan lak, lamtual savung e.  
 Ngaiin min au ve a thang viai e, thinlai nghawr dim e, ngaiin min au ve.  
 Ka khua a hla e, ka kal nan e runtui a lian e, hmar zawl a chhün e.

*In Leiri's house, I don't dance without drinking,*

*We have taken Challiana away from her, so we are not enjoying the dancing.*

*Because of that, they are calling for me with longing and a broken heart,*

*I can't come because my village is too far and the Runtui river is flooded.*

8  
 Lei - ri chhung in - ah zu lo - vin

15  
 -a vuai a ka lam ngai lo, Lei - ri chhung in -

22  
 -ah Chal - lian - a kan lak zo - va

30  
 siah thing Chal - lian - a kan lak, lam - tual sa -

37  
 vung e. lam - tual sa - vung e.

45  
 Ngaih - in min au ve a thang viai

52  
 e, thin - lai nghawr dim e, thin - lai nghawr

59  
 dim e, Ka khua a hla e,

65  
 ka kal nan(e) run - tui a lian e, hmar

zawl a chhun e, hmar zawl a chhun e.

### O10 Lunglên Zai – Sailo Zai

A thlum mang e hmana mi dawn hnu, sialki varin chhingpuii u nen,  
 Dawn ruai ruai ka nuam mang e.  
 Tlai var e bawharin zai a sa e, kawl a eng e laldang tho rawh,  
 Dawvankai an leng leh e.  
 Tlang phe duai e, hlawhleng thingsir hnuaiah e.  
 Darkhang bun mawi bahsam puan ang, kan zar lai ka ngai mang e.  
 A pawl mang e tinrengin a pawl mang e,  
 Chhaktiang daingul ka sial dumphaw mihrang thingang a tlu e.

*How sweet it was to drink beer from the sial's horn with Chhinpuii's elder sibling,  
 It was so enjoyable.*

*We sang and made merry the whole night; Laldang, get up, the dawn is breaking,  
 The others are already awake.*

*I miss the open hill, under the gum tree,*

*Where we would collect valuables for making jewellery.*

*How very sad, how very terrible indeed,*

*That the brave man fell like a tree.*

*Most lines are derivative of the first couplet, transcribed below:*

8 A thlum mang e hman-a mi dawn hnu, sial-ki var  
 16 in chhing-puii u nen, Dawn ruai ruai ka nuam mang e.  
 23 Dawn ruai ruai ka nuam mang e. Sial-ki var - in  
 29 chhin-puii u nen, Dawn ruai ruai ka nuam mang e.

## APPENDIX C: SOLFA ZAI SAMPLE

S1 (SSS 297 – Text by H.F. Lyte, Tune by W.H. Monk)

KHB 265: ‘Ka Lalpa duh tak, min awmpui ang che’ *tr.* D.E. Jones c. 1903.**Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;**

The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.  
 When other helpers fail and comforts flee,  
 Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day;  
 Earth’s joys grow dim; its glories pass away;  
 Change and decay in all around I see;  
 O Thou who changest not, abide with me!

Come not in terrors, as the King of kings,  
 But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings,  
 Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea;  
 Come, friend of sinners, thus abide with me!

I need Thy presence every passing hour.  
 What but Thy grace can foil the tempter’s power?  
 Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?  
 Through cloud and sunshine, oh, abide with me!

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;  
 Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.  
 Where is death’s sting? Where, grave, thy victory?  
 I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Hold Thou Thyself before my closing eyes;  
 Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.  
 Heaven’s morning breaks, and earth’s vain shadows flee;  
 In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!

A - bide with me: fast falls the e - ven - tide; The dark-ness deep - ens;

7  
 Lord, with me a - bide: When o - ther help - ers fail, and com-forts

12  
 flee, Help of the help - less, oh, a - bide with me!

S2 (SSS 878 – Text by César Malan *tr.* J.E Arnold, Tune by James McGranahan)

KHB 421: 'Chhandamtu, i ropui zârah,' *tr.* Durra Chawngthu.

**How sweet, my Saviour, to repose**

On Thine almighty power!  
To feel Thy strength upholding me,  
Thro' ev'ry trying hour!

*Casting all your care upon Him,  
Casting all your care upon Him,  
Casting all your care upon Him,  
For He careth, He careth for you.*

It is Thy will that I should cast  
My ev'ry care on Thee;  
To Thee refer each rising grief,  
Each new perplexity.

That I should trust Thy loving care,  
And look to Thee alone,  
To calm each troubled thought to rest,  
In prayer before Thy throne.

Why should my heart then be distrest,  
By dread of future ill?  
Or why should unbelieving fear  
My trembling spirit fill?

5 How sweet, my Sa - viour, to re - pose On Thine al - migh - ty power! — To

9 feel Thy strength up - hold - ing me, Thro ev - ry try - ing hour. —

13 'Cast - ing all your care up - on Him, — Cast - ing all your care up - on

15 Him, — Cast - ing all your care up - on

Him, — For — He car - eth, He car - eth for you.'

## S3 (SSS 321 – Text by Fanny Crosby, Tune from Auld Lang Syne)

KHB 502: 'Fak leh dîl hun lâwmawmah hian,' tr. Laibâta c. 1911.

**How sweet the hour of praise and prayer,**

When our devotions blend,  
 And on the wings of faith divine  
 Our songs of joy ascend!  
 'Tis then we hear in tones more clear  
 The gracious promise giv'n,  
 That, though we part from friends on earth,  
 We all shall meet in Heav'n.

*We all shall meet in Heav'n at last,  
 We all shall meet in Heav'n;  
 Through faith in Jesus' precious blood,  
 We all shall meet in Heav'n.*

How sweet the tie of hallowed love  
 That binds our hearts in one;  
 When gathered in the blessed Name  
 Of Christ, the Father's Son!  
 And though the parting soon may come,  
 Yet in His Word is giv'n  
 The blessed hope that by and by  
 We all shall meet in Heav'n.

Yes, soon our worn and weary feet  
 Will reach the golden strand,  
 Where those we love our coming wait  
 In yonder summer land;  
 A few more days, a few more years,  
 By storm and tempest driv'n,  
 With songs and everlasting joy  
 We all shall meet in Heav'n.

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of five staves of music. The lyrics are placed below the notes, with measure numbers 6, 11, 16, and 21 indicated at the start of their respective lines. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

6 How sweet the hour of praise and prayer, When our de-vo-tions blend, And on the wings of  
 11 faith Di-vine Our songs of joy as - cend! 'Tis then we hear in tones more clear The  
 16 gra - cious pro mise giv'n, That, tho' we part from friends on earth, We all shall meet in  
 21 heav'n. We all shall meet in heav'n at last, We all shall meet in heav'n; Thro'  
 faith in Je - sus' pre - cious blood, We all shall meet in heav'n.



S4 (OS 287 – Text by William Cushing, Tune by Ira Sankey)<sup>345</sup>KHB 480: ‘Rinin ram nuam a awm ka hria a,’ *tr.* Lianhmingthanga c. 1908.

**I have heard of a land far away,**  
 And its glories no tongue can declare;  
 But its beauty hangs over the way,  
 And with Jesus I long to be there.

*To be there, to be there,  
 And with Jesus, I long to be there;  
 To be there, to be there,  
 And with Jesus, I long to be there.*

There are foretastes of Heaven below,  
 There are moments like joys of the blest;  
 But the splendors no mortal can know,  
 Of the land where the weary shall rest.

In that noontide of glory so fair,  
 In the gleam of the river of life,  
 There are joys that the faithful shall share;  
 O how sweetly they rest from the strife!

There the ransomed with Jesus abide  
 In the shade of the sheltering fold;  
 Evermore by Immanuel’s side,  
 They shall dwell in the glory untold.

I have heard of a land far a-way And its glo-ries no tongue can de-  
 4 clare, But its beau-ty hangs o-ver the way, And with Je-sus I long to be there. To be  
 9 there, to be there, And with Je-sus I long to be there, To be  
 13 there, to be there, — And with Je-sus I long to be there.

<sup>345</sup> OS refers to an earlier edition of SSS containing 750 songs rather than 1200.

## S5 (III Alex 4 – Text and Tune by Charles H. Gabriel)

KHB 136: 'Aw hmangaihna sawi thiam ila,' tr. Zâwngauva.

**I stand amazed in the presence**

Of Jesus, the Nazarene,  
 And wonder how he could love me,  
 A sinner, condemned, unclean.

*How marvelous, how wonderful!*

*And my song shall ever be:*

*How marvelous, how wonderful  
 is my Savior's love for me!*

For me it was in the garden,  
 He pray'd 'Not my will, but Thine';  
 He had no tears for His own griefs,  
 But sweatdrops of blood for mine.

In pity angels beheld Him,  
 And came from the world of light  
 To comfort Him in the sorrows  
 He bore for my soul that night.

He took my sins and my sorrows;  
 He made them his very own;  
 He bore the burden to Calvary  
 And suffered and died alone.

When with the ransomed in glory  
 His face I at last shall see,  
 'Twill be my joy through the ages  
 To sing of his love for me.

5 I stand a-mazed in the pres - ence Of Je - sus the Naz - a - rene, And

9 won - der How He could love me, A sin - ner, con-demned, un - clean.

13 How mar - vel - lous! How won - der - ful! And my song shall ev - er be:

How mar - vel - lous! How won - der - ful! Is my Sa - viour's love for me!

## S6 (SSS 970 – Text and Tune by J.H. Alleman)

KHB 479: 'Sual thimah hian kan vâkvai rei tawh lo vang,' *tr.* Taisêna.**No longer we'll wander in darkness and night,**

When the beautiful gates unfold;  
 We'll walk in that city where God is the light,  
 When the beautiful gates unfold.

*When the beautiful gates unfold.  
 When the beautiful gates unfold;  
 There happy we'll be, for the Lord we shall see,  
 When the beautiful gates unfold.*

My loved ones will wait at the harbour for me,  
 When the beautiful gates unfold;  
 To welcome me home, where from sin I'll be free,  
 When the beautiful gates unfold.

No sickness, no sorrow, no pain as before,  
 When the beautiful gates unfold;  
 With joy we'll commune with our friends, as of yore,  
 When the beautiful gates unfold.

A rapture unspeakable then shall be mine,  
 When the beautiful gates unfold;  
 As there I behold Him so pure and Divine,  
 When the beautiful gates unfold.

A halo of glory will shadow us o'er,  
 When the beautiful gates unfold;  
 With joy we will sing on that faraway shore,  
 When the beautiful gates unfold.

The burden of life will no longer annoy,  
 When the beautiful gates unfold;  
 With Christ we will love in perpetual joy,  
 When the beautiful gates unfold.

5 No longer we'll wan-der in dark-ness and night, When the beau-ti ful gates un- fold;— We'll

9 walk in that ci - ty where God is the light, When the beau-ti - ful gates un - fold. *When the*

13 beau - ti - ful gates un - fold, — *When the beau - ti - ful gates un - fold; — There*

*hap - py we'll be, for the Lord we shall see, When the beau - ti - ful gates un - fold. —*

## S7 (SSS 513 – Text by Isaac Watts, Tune by William Croft)

KHB 26: 'Kan Pathian, kan Puipa pângngai,' *tr.* E Rowlands c. 1922.**O God, our help in ages past,**

Our hope for years to come,  
 Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
 And our eternal home:

Under the shadow of Thy throne  
 Thy saints have dwelt secure;  
 Sufficient is Thine arm alone,  
 And our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood  
 Or earth received her frame,  
 From everlasting Thou art God,  
 To endless years the same.

A thousand ages in Thy sight  
 Are like an evening gone,  
 Short as the watch that ends the night  
 Before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,  
 Bears all its sons away;  
 They fly forgotten, as a dream  
 Dies at the opening day.

O God, our help in ages past,  
 Our hope for years to come,  
 Still be our guard while life shall last,  
 And our eternal home!

O God, our help in a - ges past, Our hope for years to come, Our  
 5  
 shel - ter from the storm - y blast, And our e - ter - nal home.

S8 (SSS 568 - Text by L.W.,<sup>346</sup> Tune by J.H. Burke)

KHB 45: 'A hmangaihnaa ka chawlhin,' *tr.* Romuala.

**Precious thought—my Father knoweth!**

In His love I rest;  
For whate'er my Father doeth  
Must be always best;  
Well I know the heart that planneth  
Naught but good for me;  
Joy and sorrow interwoven,  
Love in all I see.

Precious thought—my Father knoweth!  
Careth for His child;  
Bids me nestle closer to Him,  
When the storms beat wild;  
Though my earthly hopes are shattered,  
And the teardrops fall,  
Yet He is Himself my solace,  
Yea, my 'all in all.'

Oh, to trust Him then more fully!  
Just to simply move  
In the conscious calm enjoyment  
Of the Father's love;  
Knowing that life's chequered pathway  
Leadeth to His rest;  
Satisfied the way He taketh  
Must be always best.

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is primarily composed of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words hyphenated across bar lines. The second staff continues the melody and lyrics, starting with a measure rest of 6 measures. The third staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and repeat dots.

6 Pre - cious thought-my Fa - ther know-eth! In his love I rest; For what-e'er my  
Fa - ther do - eth Must be al - ways best; Well I know the heart that plan-neth  
11 Naught but good for me; Joy and sor-row in - ter-wo-ven, Love in all I see.

<sup>346</sup> Cited only as 'L.W.' in SSS; full name or meaning could not be identified.

## S9 (SSS 91 – Text by L. Baxter, Tune by W.H. Doane)

KHB 414: 'Lal Isua hming i pu ang u,' tr. Vânychônga c. 1904.

**Take the name of Jesus with you,**  
 Child of sorrow and of woe;  
 It will joy and comfort give you,  
 Take it then where'er you go.

*Precious name, oh how sweet!*  
*Hope of earth and joy of heav'n;*  
*Precious name, oh how sweet!*  
*Hope of earth and joy of heav'n.*

Take the name of Jesus ever  
 As a shield from ev'ry snare;  
 If temptations round you gather,  
 Breathe that holy name in prayer.

Oh, the precious name of Jesus!  
 How it thrills our souls with joy,  
 When His loving arms receive us,  
 And His songs our tongues employ!

At the name of Jesus bowing,  
 Falling prostrate at His feet,  
 King of kings in heav'n we'll crown Him  
 When our journey is complete.

5 Take the name of Je - sus with you, Child of sor - row and of woe;

9 It will joy and com-fort give you - Take it then wher-e'er you go. *Pre - cious*

13 *name, oh, how sweet! Hope of earth and joy of heav'n; Pre - cious*

*name, oh, how sweet! Hope of earth and joy of heav'n.*

**S10** (SSS 138 – Text by McLeod Wylie, Tune by George Stebbins)

KHB 57: 'Krista thisen hlu tak chhuak chu,' *tr.* P.D. Sêna c. 1915.

**The blood has always precious been,**

'Tis precious now to me;  
Through it alone my soul has rest,  
From fear and doubt set free.

*Oh, wondrous is the crimson tide  
Which from my Savior flowed!  
And still in Heav'n my song shall be,  
'The precious, precious, blood!'*

'I will remember now no more,'  
God's faithful Word has said,  
'The follies and the sins of him  
For whom My Son has bled.'

Not all my well-remembered sins  
Can startle or dismay;  
The precious blood atones for all  
And bears my guilt away.

Perhaps this feeble frame of mine  
Will soon in sickness lie,  
But resting on the precious blood  
How peacefully I'll die.

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of four staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is simple and hymn-like. The lyrics are: 'The blood has al - ways pre - cious been, 'Tis pre - cious now to me; Thro' it a - lone my soul has rest, From fear and doubt set free. Oh, won - drous is the crim - son tide, Which from my Sa - viour flowed! And still in heav'n my song shall be, 'The pre - cious, pre - cious blood!'

5  
9  
13

## S11 (SSS 819 – Text by Fanny Crosby, Tune by W.H. Doane)

KHB 466: 'Thihna lui piahah khawpui mawi tak chu a awm,' tr. Liangkhaia.

**There's a city that looks o'er the valley of death,**  
 And its glories may never be told;  
 There the sun never sets, and the leaves never fade,  
 In that beautiful city of gold.

*There the sun never sets, and the leaves never fade;  
 There the eyes of the faithful their Saviour behold,  
 In that beautiful city of gold.*

There the King, our Redeemer, the Lord whom we love,  
 All the faithful with rapture behold;  
 There the righteous forever will shine like the stars,  
 In that beautiful city of gold.

Ev'ry soul we have led to the foot of the cross,  
 Ev'ry lamb we have brought to the fold,  
 Will be kept as bright jewels our crown to adorn,  
 In that beautiful city of gold.

5 There's a ci - ty that looks o'er the val - ley of death, And its glo - ries may ne - ver be told; There the  
 9 sun nev - er sets, and the leaves nev - er fade, In that beau - ti - ful Ci - ty of Gold. *There the*  
 14 *sun nev - er sets, and the leaves nev - er fade; There the eyes of the faith - ful their*  
 Sa - viour be - hold, In that beau - ti - ful Ci - ty of gold.



S12 (SSS 964 – Tune by J.P. Webster)

KHB 146: 'A hmangaihna fakin i zai ang,' *new words by* Thangkima Sailo.

**There's a land that is fairer than day**

Since only the tune was used for the basis of a new Mizo composition, the full English text is not given here.

5 There's a land that is fair - er than day, And by faith we can see it a - far, For the

9 Fa - ther waits o - ver the way, To pre-pare us a dwell-ing place there. In the

13 sweet by - and - by We shall meet on that beau - ti - ful shore; In the

sweet by - and - by We shall meet on that beau - ti - ful shore.

S13 (III Alex 15 – Text by Ada R. Habershon, Tune by Charles H. Gabriel. See also K13)

KHB 489: ‘Vân hmun ropui hmangaih ram khi,’ *tr.* Thanga.

**There are loved ones in the glory,**  
Whose dear forms you often miss;  
When you close your earthly story,  
Will you join them in their bliss?

*Will the circle be unbroken  
By and by, by and by?  
In a better home awaiting  
In the sky, in the sky?*

In the joyous days of childhood,  
Oft they told of wondrous love,  
Pointed to the dying Savior;  
Now they dwell with Him above.

You remember songs of heaven  
Which you sang with childish voice,  
Do you love the hymns they taught you,  
Or are songs of earth your choice?

You can picture happy gath' rings  
'Round the fireside long ago,  
And you think of tearful partings,  
When they left you here below.

One by one their seats were emptied,  
One by one they went away;  
Here the circle has been broken:  
Will it be complete one day?

5 There are loved ones in the glo - ry Whose dear forms you of - ten miss; When you  
9 close your earth - ly sto - ry Will you join them in their bliss? *Will the*  
13 *cir - cle be un - bro - ken by - and - by, by - and - by, In a*  
*bet - ter home a - wait - ing In the sky, in the sky?*

## APPENDIX D: DVD CONTENTS

### DVD 1:

DVD 1 contains two folders of audio and video files relating to the main samples used in this thesis:

#### KHAWHAR ZAI SAMPLE

- K1 *A chatuan ro luah tumin i bei zêl ang* (Thangvungi)  
Sung on the night following a burial at Champhai Kahrawt Veng, 12 February 2014.
- K2 *Aw Lalpa, Davida leh a thlah Arsi* (Patea)  
Sung as part of a group discussion and singing session at Khawbung, 31 January 2014.
- K3 *I hmangaihna zâra lâwma inkhâwm hnute* (Thanherha)  
Sung at night on the day after a burial at Champhai Vengsang, 22 January 2014.
- K4 *Ka dam lai thlipui a râl hunin* (Patea)  
Sung on the day following a burial at Champhai Bethel, 23 January 2014.
- K5 *Ka hmaah lui râl khaw mawi chu a awm* (Zumi)  
Sung on the night following a burial at Champhai Kahrawt Veng, 12 February 2014.
- K6 *Ka nghâkhlel Zion khawpui thar* (Hleia)  
Sung on the night following a burial at Champhai Kahrawt Veng, 12 February 2014.
- K7 *Ka taksa lungngai mah sela* (Saihnûna). The video is very dark.  
Sung on the night following a burial at Champhai Vengsang, 21 January 2014.
- K8 *Khawvêl chhuahsan ila* (Saihnûna), followed by another recording of K2  
Sung on the third night following a burial at Khawbung, 30 January 2014.
- K9 *Lung min lên ka thlîr ning dâwn lo* (L. Kamlova)  
Sung on the day following a burial at Champhai Bethel, 23 January 2014.
- K10 *Ni ropui a lo thleng dâwn ta* (Patea)  
Sung at night on the day after a burial at Champhai Vengsang, 22 January 2014.
- K11 *Ni tla ngai lo, Zion khawpui* (Lianrûma)  
Sung at night on the day after a burial at Champhai Vengsang, 22 January 2014.
- K12 *Rinna thla zâr ila* (Thanglera)  
Sung on the night following a burial at Champhai Kahrawt Veng, 12 February 2014.
- K13 *Vân hmun ropui, hmangaih ram khi* (Thanga). The camera is obscured for much of the song.  
Sung on the final night of singing following a burial at Champhai Bethel, 26 January 2014.

#### OLD MIZO SONGS

All songs performed by P.C. Thangvunga and his friends, 6 February 2014.

- O1 *Lumtui – Chawngchen Zai*  
O2 *Darlenglehi Zai*  
O3 *Darthingi Chente*  
O4 *Kawrnui Zai*  
O5 *Lianchhiari Zai*  
O6 *Liandova Nupui Hla a and b*  
O7 *Pi Hmuaki (Ngente) Zai*  
O8 *Tiau kan hnu Zai – Mangkhai Khelte*  
O9 *Zailam Hla*  
O10 *Lunglên Zai – Sailo Zai*  
O11 *Hlado* (a chant rather than a song, not included in the sample used in this thesis)

## DVD 2:

The second DVD contains other recordings referred to in this thesis:

## SUPPLEMENTARY FILES

- 1 Dancing leading to healing prayer at a *chawimawina* at Mualthuam, 17 May 2014.
- 2 *Khawhar in* at Zonuam, Aizawl. Focus on the women beside the coffin, 27 February 2014.
- 3 *Khawhar in* at Tuikual South, Aizawl. Focus on the bereaved mother, 29 March 2014.
- 4 *Thu mak ka sawi*, sung at regular worship at Pu Zâwna Pawl, Tlangsam, 8 February 2014.
- 5 *Ka awm khawhar changin*, sung at *khawhar in* at Zonuam, Aizawl, 27 February 2014.
- 6 *Han thlîr teh u*, sung by T. Thangkima and Party. Recording provided by All India Radio, Aizawl.
- 7 *Han thlîr teh u*, sung by C. Thangvunga during an interview, 4 May 2014.
- 8 *Aw hmangaihna, khawvêl Entu*, sung by Chhuanvawra during an interview, 9 April 2014.
- 9 *Thlarau Thianghlim: Meialh leh chhûm*, with dancing, sung at Champhai Bethel, 23 January 2014.
- K1 *A chatuan ro luah turin*, sung by J. Vanlaldiki. Recording provided by All India Radio, Aizawl.
- K2 *Aw Lalpa, Davida leh a thlah Arsi*, sung by Siampuii Sailo during an interview, 7 April 2014.
- K10 *Ni ropui a lo thleng dâwn ta*, sung in *solfa zai* style at a *khawhar in* in Theiriat, 29 April 2014.
- K13 *Vân hmun ropui hmangaih ram khi*, sung in *solfa zai* style at a *khawhar in* in Theiriat, as above.

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**Hlukungpui Mual** <http://www.hlukungpui.com/welcome.php>  
**YMA** <http://www.centralyma.org.in/>  
**Zoram Khawvar** <http://zoramkhawvar.blogspot.co.uk>

Music Videos of 'Ni tla ngai lo, Zion Khawpui':

**Michael V.L. Rema** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P07ZGy6\\_0KA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P07ZGy6_0KA)  
**Pensy B.** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3cjX03bnfk>  
**Ruotmawi** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cpFkQX\\_Law](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cpFkQX_Law)

Population and Health Data:

<http://censusindia.gov.in/>  
<http://knoema.com/INDAT2012/india-development-indicators-2012>  
<http://www.prb.org/pdf07/futurepopulationofindia.pdf>  
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## ARCHIVE MATERIALS

Published books, academic theses and hymn-books consulted at the following archives have been included under 'Printed Literature' and 'Hymn-books.' Sources shown below are only a sample of those consulted, deemed most relevant to the present thesis.

### ANGUS ARCHIVES, OXFORD

Report of the visit to Lushai of **Mr and Mrs H.M. Angus and Mr D.S. Wells**, India Secretary, October 29- November 10 1932

Papers of **Marjorie Clark**

Papers of **H.W. Carter and Bessie Carter:**

Various correspondence, 24 June 1929, 6 October 1932  
 10 October 1937, copy of an extract from the minutes of the Committee of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales

Papers of **E. Chapman:**

1 August 1923, letter to Miss Lockhart  
 18 December 1931, letter from the schoolgirls at Serkawn  
 10 February 1933, letter to Miss Bowser

**P.H. Jones.** *The Lushai Hills*, unpaginated book.

Papers of **J.H. Lorrain:**

23 March 1916, letter to C.E. Wilson  
 6 December 1916, letter to C.E. Wilson  
 25 October 1939, letter to Angus, having returned to London  
 21 October 1940, letter to W.J.L. Wegner

Correspondence regarding his illness in 1943

Manuscript of *Whilom Headhunters*, autobiography

Papers of **F.J. (Frank) and Florence Raper:**

July 1935, letter from Florence Raper

*Tlāwmngaihna* magazine for the Scouts, Vol. 2, No. 4, July 1939

August 1939, letter from E Chapman

9 February 1940, letter describing the revivals

Papers of **F.W. Savidge**, particular correspondence relating to his pension shortly before his death, 1934-1935.

BMS Reports up to 1946

Order of service for jubilee day morning service January 11 1944

Papers regarding the sponsorship received from the Arthington Trust

Photograph collections:

Angus Collection

Lorrain and Savidge Collection

Lushai Hills, Village Life, Hill Tribes

## BRITISH LIBRARY

### **A.I. Bowman** collection:

'Border Patrol: memoir of Lushai Hills and North Arakan 1942-43,' manuscript.

Papers and notes relating to the Mizos and their situation on the eve of Independence, 1947.

Letters and cards from people in Mizoram and from Mizos living abroad, 1952-85.

Letters from Phumthanga Sainghainga and Sailovi, 1959-1970.

Letters from Kiaulinga, 1954-76.

Correspondence concerning the Mizo rebellion of 1966.

Draft notes and illustrations used for talks, 1948-73.

Miscellaneous maps, pamphlets and articles on the Lushai Hills, Mizoram.

### **A.G. McCall** Collection:

Correspondence and papers relating to religious missions in the Lushai Hills, 1932-33

Anonymous Mizo letter and translation relating to the 'improvement and advancement of Lushai' including comments on traditional customs, 1937

Extracts from McCall's Tour Diary of the Lushai Hills, 1938-41

Papers and correspondence relating to medical matters, common diseases and dietary habits in the Lushai Hills, including notes on local cures; also a pamphlet: Tribal Beliefs concerning Tuberculosis in the hills and frontier tracts of Assam by ES Philipson, 1939 (1939-44)

Reports and correspondence relating to morale among the Lushai Hill people, including fortnightly reports from McCall's political assistant, 1942-43

Correspondence from Shakespear recounting his experiences of the Lushai Hills as Superintendent until 1905

Undated summary of Lushai History 1777-1927, landmarks of history attributed to Shakespear

Notes and papers relating to rights, dues and traditional customs of Lushai peoples, 1937

Out of all eternity: Tales from the East, manuscript, c1953

**Lalrimawia.** Paper on Education. Historical Journal of Mizoram, 1982

### **Thomas Herbert Lewin** Collection:

Family correspondence, 1855-1875

Manuscript notes and typescript copy of memoir by TH Lewin, superintendent 1965-74 entitled 'Thanglien,' photo of him. 1987

Microfilm of **Hutton** files.

Letter from **N.E. Parry**, Superintendent of Lushai Hills to the Commissioner of Surma Valley and Hill Division, and papers relating to reforms for Lushai, 1928

**Brojo Nath Shaha.** A Grammar of the Lushai Language, to which are appended a few illustrations of the Zau or Lushai popular songs from Aesop's fables, 1884.

**John Shakespear papers, 1890-1901:**

Undated papers of Shakespear relating to the kidnapping of Mary Winchester in 1871

**J.D. Willis.** Notes on a walking trip through the Chin Hills of Burma into the Lushai Hills of India and back, Dec 1947-January 1948

Official Diaries of Political Officers, North Lushai Hills, 1887-1897

A.W. Davis, April-May 1894 – Political Officer, North Lushai Hills. April-May 1893.

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File 701: Lushai Hills; Case of Missionary Dr. Fraser, Reports on the 'boi' or 'bawi' custom in the Lushai Hills, Protest from the Anti Slavery Society (October 1910-October 1914)

File 312: Missionary Work in the Lushai Hills: Exclusion of Missions other than the Welsh Presbyterian Mission; Protests from the Roman Catholic Mission and the Salvation Army; Activities of Mr. Watkin R Roberts. (January 1927-June 1932)

Photograph Collections

Photographs showing Lushai Hills and illustrating the way of life of the people, 1931-43

Reports from the Lushai Hills, 1894-1898

**EAP Mizoram Online Collection:**

Criticisms, 1937, of a school lesson – a teacher evaluation book probably from Serkawn Baptist Mission School

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Educational and ecclesiastical paper records, 1901-1913

Paper records of Khamliana Sailo Lal (1897-1933), famous chief of Lunglêng

*Robawm*, South Lushai Hills newspaper, January 1946-November 1946

Notebook, 5 August 1942, C.S. Zawna's personal notes (8/23)

Paper records of Liangkhaia (1911-66)

## NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES

Papers of **Dr. Peter and Mary Catherine Fraser**, 1908-1932:

Notes and papers relating to the 'bawi' controversy.

Papers of **Kitty Lewis**:

Typescript copies of letters written by Kitty Jones to her family, winter 1924.

Papers of **Rev. John Meirion and Anne Lloyd**, 1941-1944.

Papers of **Rev. E. Lewis and G.M. Mendus**:

Addresses and songs in English and Lushai welcoming them on their return c. 1949.

Journals of Mrs G.M. Mendus, October 1935 – February 1944.

Notebook of the Rev. E. Lewis Mendus, 1922.

Some twenty-eight letters, in Lushai, mainly addressed to Lewis Mendus, 1928-1949.

Songs and choruses (words and music).

Twenty-three notebooks of E. Lewis Mendus, 1911-1945.

Papers of **Gwen Rees Roberts**:

Autobiographical notes written for Mizo church centenary celebration booklet.

Diary, 1966-1967.

From Headhunting to Hallelujah chorus, 1958, introduction by Gwen Roberts, manuscript.

Gwen Rees Roberts Circular letters 1945-[1990s]

Items relating to the visit of the Mizo Gospel Choir to Wales, 1984.

Letters, press cuttings and articles, 1952-2000.

Pamphlets and articles, 1960-1994.

Sound Recordings (Part of Gwen Rees Roberts collection):

Easter service, Mizoram.

Deuwch am dro" I, Mizoram.  
 Gwen Rees Roberts Interviewed by D. Winter.  
 Gwen Rees Roberts: Lala of Mizoram.  
 Katie Hughes with Gwen Rees Roberts.  
 Singing from Mizoram.

Miscellaneous:

Mrs Eirlys Ellis (née Williams) article and papers mainly relating to Mizoram, c.1944-1987.  
 Correspondence relating to the Baptist Missionary Society and South Lushai, 1901.  
 Correspondence relating to the Salvation Army and Lushai, 1933-1934.  
 Miscellaneous printed material, relating to Mizoram, 1962-1985.

AIZAWL THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE ARCHIVES

**Kitty Lewis** Papers:

20 May 1923, letter to parents  
 31 May 1923, letter to Aunty Mary  
 24 June 1923, letter to parents  
 6 August 1923, letter  
 1926, letter from Maggie Sandy to Sir Herbert and Lady Lewis

**J.M. Lloyd** Papers:

8 January 1924, letter to Mr. Williams  
 The Church at Work, notes for a talk  
 16 November 1962, letter from L.M. Chhing  
 Eirlys Smith: Recollections of life in Mizoram  
 Joan Lloyd: Recollections of life in Mizoram

Copy of log-book belonging to **J.H. Lorrain**

**Pasena**. The Work of the Welsh Mission in N. Lushai Hills, manuscript.

Lêngkhâwm Zai seminar papers, undated

R.L. Thanmawia: Mizo Lêngkhâwm Hla Zirchianna  
 Vanlalchhuanawma: Mizo Kristian Hlâ Bihchianna

Photograph Collection, donated by Gwen Rees Roberts

Synod Minutes

1 October 1914 Presbytery  
 15 March 1918 Presbytery, Aijal  
 18-19 March 1920 Presbytery

MIZORAM STATE ARCHIVES

**Cole**. 'Short Note on Education in the Lushai Hills,' Camp Thiak, 10 July 1907

**McCall, A.G.** 'General Note on the subject of Dancing in Lushai Churches, for necessary action by the authorities of the Welsh Mission'

Files from the inquiry conducted by McCall into the Kelkang Revival, 1938-1939

**Shakespeare, J.** 'Notes on Clans in Lushai Hills,' 1901

Census Notes, 1901

'Notes for Administrative Report, Lungleh,' 1907-1908

Papers relating to the dispute regarding **Vanlalsiama**'s book *Mizo History* (1959)

**W.E. White**. 'The relation of missionaries in the Government and to their own mission councils,' undated

Correspondence:

1897, between Porteous and Chief Commissioner of Assam  
 13 September 1913, Lorrain to Superintendent  
 1919, Savidge educational petitions and reports  
 1937, between McCall and Mendus

SYNOD ARCHIVES, PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF MIZORAM

Autobiography manuscript of **D.E. Jones**

Copy of log-book belonging to **J.H. Lorrain**

Photograph Collection

**Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Bu** ('Mizo and Vai Newspaper')

Numerous editions consulted between 1910 and 1931.

**Krista Tlangau** ('Christ's Herald')

Numerous editions consulted between 1911 and 1912.

**Kristian Tlangau** ('Christian Herald')

Numerous editions consulted between 1914 and 1921.

## INTERVIEWS AND RECORDING SESSIONS

### INTERVIEWS / GROUP DISCUSSIONS

23 January 2014: Hmingthansanga, Champhai Vengsang

27 January 2014: Biakluanga, Champhai

Champhai Bethel Group Discussion

28 January 2014: C. Lalsiamthanga, Champhai Government College

31 January 2014: Khawbung Group Discussion

7 February 2014: Lalzâwna, Tlamsam

Rochungnunga, Champhai

24 February 2014: R. Zolâwma, Academy of Integrated Christian Studies

26 February 2014: Vanlalchhawna Khiangte, Academy of Integrated Christian Studies

18 March 2014: R.L. Thanmawia with R. Thangvunga, Mizoram University

19 March 2014: Vanlalchhuanawma, Aizawl Theological College

26 March 2014: Margaret Ch. Zama, Mizoram University

1 April 2014: Lallungmuana, Pachhunga University College

7 April 2014: Siampuii Sailo, Luangmual

8 April 2014: Chuathuama with K. Thanzauva and R. Zochhawna, Aizawl

9 April 2014: B. Lalthangliana with K. Thanzauva, Aizawl

C. Chhuanvawra with K. Thanzauva, Aizawl

14 April 2014: Darchhawna, Kulikawn

Lalrammawia Ngente with R. Zochhawna, Luangmual

16 April 2014: Tlânghmingthanga with K. Thanzauva, Aizawl Theological College

Lâwmsanga with K. Thanzauva, Aizawl Theological College

17 April 2014: Stephen Rotluanga with R. Zochhawna, Aizawl

22 April 2014: C.L. Hminga, Ramzotlang, Lunglei

25 April 2014: C. Thanseia, Lunglei

R.K. Lalhluna with Lalthangliana Hnamte, Lunglei

28 April 2014: C. Zaṭhuama with Lalthangliana Hnamte, Lunglei

4 May 2014: C. Thangvunga with Raltâwnga, Chhipphir

5 May 2015: S. Saidâwla and R. Sanghleii with Raltâwnga, Chhipphir

8 May 2014: R. Lawmzuala and F. Lianchhingi with Lalthangliana Hnamte, Sethlun

R.K. Lalhluna with Lalthangliana Hnamte, Lunglawn

9 May 2014: C.L. Bika with Lalthangliana Hnamte, Lunglei

10 May 2014: K.L. Biakchungnunga, Lunglei

12 May 2014: S. Thansiami, Theiriat

H. Lalbânga, Theiriat

C. Lalthanzuali, Theiriat

13 May 2014: C. Hrangdûla, Lunglei

16 May 2014: F. Lianchhinga, Ramzotlang

23 May 2014: K. Chhawṅthuama, Aizawl

27 May 2014: A.F. Vanlâwma, Aizawl

31 May 2014: F. Lalzawnga, Aizawl

2 June 2014: Lalhruaitluanga Ralte, Synod Press

## DOCUMENTED SINGING / KHAWHAR IN ATTENDANCE

- 21 January-23 January 2014: Champhai Vengsang  
23 January 2014-27 January 2014: Champhai Bethel  
28 January 2014: P.C. Thangvunga  
30 January 2014: Khawbung  
6 February 2014: P.C. Thangvunga  
8 February 2014: Pu Zâwna Pawl, Tlangsam  
11 February 2014: Champhai  
12 February 2014: Champhai, Kahrawt Veng  
27 February 2014: Zonuam, Aizawl  
27 March 2014: Tuivamit  
28 March 2014: Drum workshop with Lalromawia at Tanhril  
29 March 2014: Tuikual South  
29 April 2014: Theiriat  
17 May 2014: Mualthum chawimawina with Sangziki  
5 June 2014: Lungphûn ceremony, Leitan